

Written evidence submitted by Hull Parent Carer Forum

Introduction As a Parent Carer Forum, we have gathered extensive feedback from the wider parent carer voice regarding the ongoing challenges within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system. The evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates systemic failings in delivering appropriate and legally required support to children and young people with SEND. These failures not only breach the rights of disabled children under UK law but also contravene the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in multiple respects. The failure of the education system to support the needs of SEND children amounts to a violation of their fundamental rights, impacting their well-being, development, and future opportunities. This statement outlines the key areas of concern and necessary reforms to create a fair, inclusive, and effective SEND system.

1. Support for Children and Young People with SEND in Mainstream Education

The current quality of SEN support in mainstream schools and early years settings is inconsistent and often inadequate. Families report a lack of reasonable adjustments, limited resources, and a failure to uphold equality and disability laws. Inclusivity in practice should mean a robust framework where all schools proactively support SEND pupils through tailored interventions, accessible learning environments, and meaningful engagement with parent carers and young people. To achieve this:

- The Department of Education (DfE) must introduce and enforce clear accountability measures for schools that fail to implement effective SEND support.
- Greater investment in workforce training is required, ensuring all staff have a foundational understanding of SEND needs and appropriate pedagogical approaches.
- SEN support should be put on a statutory footing, with mandatory frameworks for early identification, intervention, and sustained support.
- A national standardised approach should be introduced to ensure consistency in SEND support across all educational settings.

Additionally, the use of part-time timetables and alternative provision as a substitute for proper support must be addressed. Too often, children with SEND are placed in restrictive environments due to a lack of understanding or willingness to accommodate their needs, rather than being given the necessary support to thrive in mainstream education.

2. Outcomes for Children and Young People with SEND

Despite the 2014 SEND reforms, outcomes for SEND children remain poor. Many young people face barriers to accessing an inclusive and fulfilling education, leading to long-term absences, exclusion, and an over-reliance on home education. In many cases, school failures to meet the needs of SEND children result in serious breaches of their fundamental rights to education and support.

- Schools must be held accountable for demonstrating real-world outcomes for SEND pupils, not just meeting data-driven performance measures.
- Local authorities should ensure that reasonable adjustments and EHCP support are consistently implemented to prevent exclusion and school refusal.
- Multi-agency collaboration across education, health, and social care must be strengthened to ensure timely and effective interventions.
- National funding for SEND services must be increased to ensure that children receive the support they need without delay.

The current focus on attendance measures, fines, and even prosecution of parents whose children struggle to attend school due to unmet SEND needs is deeply flawed. There is no credible evidence that fining or

prosecuting parents increases attendance; rather, it exacerbates stress, trauma, and financial hardship. Many parents, including those in public service professions such as teachers and doctors, are forced to leave their careers due to the failure of the education system to support their children. This in turn places further strain on public services, the benefits system, and the NHS.

3. Workforce Development and Training

A significant barrier to effective SEND support is the lack of substantive training for teachers, SENCOs, and teaching assistants. The current system does not equip professionals with the knowledge or confidence to support SEND children effectively. To address this:

- Mandatory, high-quality SEND training should be embedded within initial teacher training and continued professional development.
 - SENCOs should be given sufficient time and resources to fulfil their roles effectively.
 - Specialist support services should be expanded to provide on-demand guidance to mainstream educators.
 - A national standard for SEND training should be developed, ensuring consistency across all education providers.
 - The reliance on unqualified or inadequately trained supply teachers must be addressed, as it leads to a lack of continuity and inappropriate responses to SEND children's needs.
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4. Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Families face excessive delays in securing EHCPs, often waiting far beyond the statutory 20-week timeframe. Additionally, assessments frequently fail to consider the social care and health needs of children adequately, resulting in incomplete or ineffective plans. This oversight hinders holistic support and contributes to poor outcomes. The EHCP process must be improved by:

- Reducing waiting times through increased investment in assessment teams and more efficient multi-agency working.
- Ensuring families receive adequate support throughout the EHCP process, including independent advocacy services.
- Strengthening accountability measures for local authorities to ensure compliance with statutory EHCP timelines.
- Ensuring that social care and health elements are properly assessed and incorporated into EHCPs.

Additionally, the wider systems of social care and health services for SEND children require their own inquiry, as they too are failing to meet the needs of families and must undergo fundamental reform.

5. Addressing Future SEND Needs

The demand for SEND provision has risen sharply since 2014, with increasing numbers of children requiring specialist support. However, local authorities continue to struggle with planning and delivering appropriate provisions due to funding constraints and systemic inefficiencies. To ensure future needs are met:

- The DfE must improve its assessment of SEND needs, using data-driven projections to plan effectively for new SEND schools and additional SEND places.
- There must be recognition that mainstream education is not suitable for all children with SEND, and provision of SEND schools and places must be made available to all - including those who are academically able but whose access to mainstream education is hindered by the environment itself which is often at odds with their sensory and social needs making it non-inclusive and traumatising for them.

- Local authorities require a sustainable long-term funding model to ensure provision keeps pace with demand.
 - The commissioning of specialist provision should be coordinated at a national level for rare conditions requiring high levels of support.
 - A dedicated national strategy should be developed to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of SEND provision.
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Conclusion The SEND system is in crisis, and without urgent reform, children and young people will continue to be failed. The current failures in education, health, and care provisions amount to a fundamental breach of children's rights. We urge the DfE to take decisive action to:

- Fully fund and enforce reasonable adjustments in all educational settings.
- Reform SEND training to build capacity and expertise in the workforce.
- Overhaul the EHCP system to make it timely, transparent, and child-centred, with proper integration of social care and health needs.
- Improve accountability mechanisms to ensure local areas deliver what families actually need.
- Facilitate better multi-agency working to prevent fragmented, ineffective provision.
- Establish a national SEND strategy to ensure sustainable, long-term improvements.

The voices of parent carers and young people must be at the heart of any reforms. Only through meaningful collaboration and systemic change can we ensure that every child and young person with SEND receives the support they need to thrive.

January 2025