

## Written evidence submitted by I Have A Voice (IHAV)

1. Our key concerns are:
  - i. Students with SEND are more likely than their peers to take qualifications that could be defunded as a result of the reforms. Why is this considered acceptable and not discriminatory?
  - ii. There will be a lag between reforms to T Levels 3 and 2, which could have a negative impact on this transitional cohort of students with SEND, yet there is no commitment to put in place measures that will mitigate the negative impacts of this lag for the cohort of students in FE during this period.
  - iii. Industry placements must be inclusive and provide students with SEND the opportunity to prepare for gainful employment. The Government's commitment to explore options, rather than taking timely action is not good enough.
2. As disability advocates, we have only answered the question regarding students with special educational needs and disabilities.

**The extent to which the Government's review of level 3 qualifications will impact disadvantaged groups, students from minority ethnic backgrounds, students known to the care system, and students with special educational needs or disabilities, and what measures might be put in place to mitigate any negative impacts.**

3. One in five of all students in general further education colleges have a learning difficulty or disability, rising to one in four students among 16 to 18-year-olds. That equates to around 240,000 16 to 19-year-olds with SEND across all further education colleges.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, reforms that impact students with SEND should not be considered as peripheral. IHAV is concerned that the Government's own impact assessment of reforms to T-Levels found that students with SEND are more likely than their peers to take qualifications that could be defunded as a result of the reforms. **IHAV urges the Committee to ask the Government why is this considered acceptable and not discriminatory?**
4. In the medium to long-term the Government has stated that it will also review Level 2 of the T Level qualification framework, which could address some of the concerns regarding changes to Level 3. However, these changes will not be happening in tandem, leaving students with SEND without an appropriate qualification pathway in the short-term. The lag between reforms to Level 3 and 2 qualifications must be minimised and there must be clear information on the qualification route for ALL students during this 'transition period', plus information on the mitigating measures that will be in place to prevent students in this cohort experiencing adverse outcomes. **We therefore urge the Committee to ask the Government what will happen to students in FE during this transition period and what support will be put in place for students with SEND during this period to mitigate the risk of negative consequences from these reforms?**
5. Given the negative impact of these reforms on students with SEND the Government is contradicting its commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the overarching commitment to not leave anyone behind and within Goal 4 the commitment to "Guaranteeing equal and accessible education by building

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<sup>1</sup> [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-11-15/debates/EDE122F1-58C7-41BC-AA53-BC1908D08765/SkillsAndPost-16EducationBill\(Lords\)#contribution-299A21C0-CAF0-489A-AE39-0660739D2ADF](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-11-15/debates/EDE122F1-58C7-41BC-AA53-BC1908D08765/SkillsAndPost-16EducationBill(Lords)#contribution-299A21C0-CAF0-489A-AE39-0660739D2ADF)

inclusive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for persons with disabilities”.

### Paving the way to employment

6. The purpose of T-Levels is to pave the way for young people to access skilled employment, higher apprenticeships, or further study, allowing them to keep their options open while ensuring they have the skills employers really need. This must extend to ALL students. **We urge the Committee to ask the Government how it will make sure that disabled students are able to undertake an industry placement if they chose to take this route?**
7. This question is important because employers have raised concerns that students with SEND may be unable to “undertake an industry placement” or find some of the elements of the placement difficult.<sup>2</sup> This is concerning. Industry placements must be inclusive providing students with disabilities the support and resources to help prepare them for employment. Making reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities is already enshrined in the Equalities Act 2010. Students with SEND should not be treated differently to other employees with disabilities. This could be a positive opportunity to work with employers to help them make reasonable adjustments that could have a positive impact on the rest of their workforce.
8. The Government has committed to exploring options for providing further support for students with SEND, including working with providers and employers to help them accommodate students’ needs. This is not good enough. **The Government must commit to taking action in a timely manner, not just exploring option.**

### Conclusion

9. The Government is aware that students with SEND will be impacted by the reforms to post-16 qualifications. These students already face a significant attainment and employment gap. Any reforms that could exacerbate this gap are discriminatory. We need the Education Select Committee to hold the Government to account and ensure that reforms to T-Levels do not leave students with SEND at a disadvantage. Students with SEND need a clear pathway to qualifications and employment just as much as everyone else.

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2

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