

Written evidence from Alison Prosser.

I have two children with SEND. One aged 15 who is between residential school placements and one aged 21 who is a university student receiving inadequate support. I have a large network of friends and acquaintances whose children also have SEND.

Assessment of and support for children and young people with SEND:

1. This has not improved. In fact the assessment of children in our county is being actively blocked by the LA to prevent diagnoses that can be used as evidence of the need for SEND support in schools. Specialist teaching services are not commissioned for children without diagnoses even though the input of these skilled professionals is crucial for diagnostic assessments and support while the assessments are under way.
2. The quality of assessments by specialist teachers and educational psychologists is reduced by pressure from the LA not to provide evidence that could be used by parents in appeals to the SEND tribunal.
3. Children whose school placements have failed and are being cared for at home are perceived as 'free' by LA staff and are left without educational provision for weeks and months. Parents are fobbed off by LA SEND staff who just shrug and cite long drawn out decision-making processes as reasons for not providing interim tutoring, consulting prospective schools or agreeing placements. Parents who would be fined for taking their child out of school for one day find themselves fighting to stop their children being left without provision for whole school terms. The LAs do not seem to be answerable to anyone for these delays and, the longer they take, the more money they save.
4. More and more schools are telling parents that their children need part time timetables in order to implement unofficial and illegal exclusions and reduce the demands on the school to make the right provision available for the child. The needs of the child with SEND are left unmet in order to avoid making provision that may detract from the experience of their neurotypical peers.

The transition from statements of special educational needs and Learning Disability Assessments to Education, Health and Care Plans:

5. This has been achieved in our county largely by copying and pasting the content of statements. Re-assessments have been refused to most parents and the timescales imposed by the reforms used as excuses not to produce accurate and appropriately worded documents.
6. Outcomes in EHC Plans are often worded as the child will work towards improving a skill, not that the child will have achieved an identified goal at a particular time.

7. Some LA staff are using the transfer as an opportunity to weaken the wording of documents and put provision in sections of the plan that cannot be appealed.

The level and distribution of funding for SEND provision:

8. Funding continues to be attracted by those children whose parents fight hardest and make their wishes most felt by school and LA staff.
9. The lack of ring-fencing of SEND budgets offers a perverse incentive that has caused a good number of schools in our county to turn away parents of children with SEND whose needs could be met from ordinarily available provision relatively easily. A local school which meets the needs of children with SEND very effectively has well above the number of children with SEND that could normally be expected because they get it right for them, yet has the same notional budget as the similar school that is turning these children away.

The roles of and co-operation between education, health and social care sectors:

10. CAMHS practitioners are prevented by senior management decisions from expressing their views on how educational provision is causing harm to their patients and from making suggestions for provision that could support children in school and prevent further deterioration in their mental health. Funding assessments by clinicians in private practice is often the only way for parents to ensure that their children's school provision meets their mental health needs.
11. School staff have started telling parents that health professionals are not educators and therefore cannot tell them what support to put in place in the classroom.
12. Social care do not support any but the most seriously physically disabled of children with SEND. If they are forced to assess a family who are in need of SEND support or struggling without educational provision, they will carry out an inappropriate child protection assessment then conclude that the parents pose no risk to the child (a foregone conclusion) and close the case as quickly as possible.

Provision for 19-25-year olds including support for independent living; transition to adult services; and access to education, apprenticeships and work:

13. Young people studying in universities who have SEND have no support from SENDIASS, no Code of Practice to refer to and no document outlining their needs that has any legal status. Universities often ignore the content of DSA reports and fail students who have the potential to achieve good degrees if they had the right support.