



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

21 April 2026

Dear Rt Hon Bridget Philipson MP

**Re: SEND White Paper Consultation**

I hope you are well and congratulations again for the tireless work you and your team have done to bring about this SEND White Paper.

I am writing to share the feedback from educators and families that attended the SEND consultation roundtable I hosted in Broxtowe on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

I am extremely grateful to all the parents and educators that attended and shared their valuable knowledge and experience of the SEND system. I am pleased to share with you their contributions in the hope that they will help to inform the reforms.

Our discussions focussed on the following:

- How plans for reform can best support every child.
- Experts at Hand service in schools.
- SEND training for all teachers.
- How to ensure that young people and their families can get a genuine say.

**Child-centred support**

1. Contributors consistently stressed that the SEND system must be fundamentally child-centred, with support designed around the individual child rather than targets, categories, or administrative structures.
2. The consultation is broadened to young people that have experienced the SEND system through personal experience
3. There was opposition to categorising children into rigid “layers”, with repeated emphasis that needs are fluid and change over time.
4. Rather than attendance metrics or academic performance alone, decisions should prioritise wellbeing, emotional regulation, and long-term

outcomes.

5. The proposed inclusion hubs will require significant funding to ensure there are enough places in each school to cover anticipated demand.

### **Workforce recruitment and retention**

1. Teaching Assistants were repeatedly described as undervalued, underpaid, and employed on insecure contracts, leading to high turnover and loss of expertise.
2. Participants were concerned that children with the most complex needs are often supported by the least qualified and least well-paid staff.
3. Participants want to see these roles professionalised with recognition reflected in the pay scale.
4. Frequent turnover in these staff roles means that the teaching assistants' relationship and knowledge of the child is lost, which is to the detriment of the child and the school.
5. Recruitment difficulties, poor retention, and lack of clear career progression were seen as barriers to successful reform.
6. For these reforms to be successful, improved pay, professional recognition, and retention strategies for the education workforce will be required.

### **Experts at Hand Service**

1. There was strong support for the principle of early expert involvement, particularly Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and mental health professionals.
2. Contributors expressed concern that the proposed Experts at Hand model highlights workforce capacity that does not currently exist and will require significant workforce expansion and considerable funding to be consistently effective across all schools in the UK.
3. Participants highlighted that expert input must occur early, before placements fail or needs escalate, and must not be restricted to an advisory role without authority or resources.

### **Legal rights and accountability**

1. A consistent message from attendees was that legal rights for children with SEND must not be weakened.
2. Participants strongly opposed any reduction in enforceability, including limits on access to tribunal, tribunal powers or statutory duties.
3. Participants raised significant concerns that assigning responsibility to schools for assessing SEND needs, including determining whether a child requires an ISP.
4. Whether implementing that provision, would lead to a substantial increase in administrative and professional workload. This increased burden is likely to exceed schools' existing resources and capacity.
5. School staff do not possess the professional knowledge to make such

decisions.

6. Participants also expressed concern about the enforcement mechanisms associated with ISPs, stating that these have not been clearly defined.
7. Participants were concerned that the current reforms do not provide a clear or accessible pathway for appeal where there is disagreement with the provision offered through a child's ISP.
8. Participants felt that accountability through schools' internal complaints processes may exacerbate conflict between parents and schools rather than resolve it.

### **Trust and communication**

1. Parents reported feeling forced into confrontation simply to secure provision that should be routinely available.
2. Improved advocacy support was repeatedly requested, particularly for families navigating complex systems or supporting children who cannot articulate their needs independently.

### **Health services and support**

1. Major barriers in the SEND system are delays in health services. Participants highlighted long waiting lists and insufficient capacity across CAMHS and wider NHS provision.
2. Participants raised that the responsibility to meet pupils' health needs is increasingly shifted onto schools without an equivalent increase in funding or resources or meet these needs.
3. Early mental health intervention was seen as critical, with delays described as leading to escalation, exclusion, and long-term harm.

### **Training**

1. Key training priorities included understanding behaviour as communication, anxiety and sensory needs, masking and early identification of needs.
2. Attendees rejected short, one-off or online-only SEND training as ineffective, calling instead for mandatory, ongoing professional development for all educators, not just SEND specialists.
3. Training should be delivered by appropriately qualified professionals, including Educational Psychologists and practitioners with lived experience.
4. Initial teacher training was criticised for insufficient SEND content, with strong calls for mandatory rotation placements in a SEND setting as part of teacher training, and sustained exposure to specialist settings.
5. Concerns were raised that there is not a mandatory qualification for teachers only guidance from DfE.
6. Academies are recruiting and training teaching staff themselves which means that some teachers are not meeting the guidance standard.

### **Environment, accessibility, and class sizes**

1. Participants emphasised that accessibility must be understood broadly, extending beyond physical access to include sensory environment,

lighting, seating, movement, noise, and flexibility around uniform and behaviour policies.

2. Large class sizes and frequent movement between multiple teachers were widely described as dysregulating and harmful for many children with SEND.
3. Participants argued strongly for smaller classes, consistent staffing, and stable relationships as foundational elements of effective support.
4. Without changes to environment and class size, contributors felt that even well-designed interventions would be undermined.

I hope you will find these insights useful, and that serious consideration will be given to them in your final proposals in the months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Juliet Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J' that loops around the first part of the name.

Juliet Campbell MP  
**Member of Parliament for Broxtowe**