



National SEND Forum  
LPEC  
PO Box 17475  
Bromsgrove  
B60 9LR

The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP,  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

Dear Mr Hammond,

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Special Educational Needs and Disability Forum (NSENDF). We are an organisation bringing together leading representatives of significant national special educational needs and disability (SEND) organisations at both national and local level.

The National SEND Forum (NSENDF) is politically neutral, drawing together the providers, champions and commissioners of services for the most vulnerable across the 0-25 age range in the maintained, non-maintained and independent sectors.

We meet regularly to discuss the issues that are arising across the country within education, health and social care that impact on children and young people with SEND, their families and the professionals who support them.

At a recent meeting there was much discussion again about the funding crisis that is currently being experienced by all local authorities and healthcare trusts. This is having a significant impact on the education, health and well-being of the most vulnerable children and young people in our schools.

The SEND reforms that were introduced in September 2014 have been slowly implemented over the last four years; the promise being that education, health and social care would work in partnership to support the country's most vulnerable children and young people aged 0-25. At exactly the same time we have seen an erosion of funding from all public sector departments trying to do more with less.

To put this expectation of doing more with less into perspective, there is little in public policy that reflects evidence of the government's own departments taking account of the increasing numbers, identification, novelty, frequency, severity, complexity and longevity of special educational needs and disabilities in both the child and adult population.

We appreciate the constraints of public finance but without sufficient funding and a more coherent approach, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015 are nothing more than empty promises from the government to parents and children.

There are a number of local authorities who are struggling to set a balanced budget for the next financial year and this is having an impact on the amount of funding that is going to be available to schools in the next twelve months. Many local authorities have deficits in their high needs budget and since there is no longer the opportunity to transfer significant sums of money into the high needs budget from other sources it is going to be very difficult for these to be balanced in the foreseeable future.

There are a number of factors that have led to this crisis, all of which need to be considered when allocating high needs funding to local authorities and subsequently schools.

- In 2017 the number of pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND) increased from 1,228,785 (2016) to 1,244,255 and then again in 2018 to 1,276,215. This is an increase of 47,430.
- With the introduction of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 we saw the SEND system expand to all pupils aged 0-25. This meant an additional number of pupils identified with SEND between the ages of 0-5 and 19-25, however no additional funding was allocated to support this expanded number of pupils eligible for support.
- The number of pupils with an EHCP and attending a special school has also risen over the last two years by 2% with a greater number having to access non-maintained and independent schools due to their complexity of need and lack of local provision.
- Every local authority has seen a significant loss of specialist support and provision much of which is now traded and commissioned. This means schools are having to “buy-in” costly support at a time when their school budget is being drastically reduced.
- The amount (£10,000 per place) that is provided for special schools has never been reviewed and is now insufficient to meet the needs of many complex pupils who require not only additional educational support but have significant medical and personal care needs as well.
- The notional SEND budget introduced in 2013 is formulated through a calculation based on prior attainment, free school meals and deprivation. This has nothing to do with how many pupils a school may have to be supporting on SEN Support or with an EHCP and yet every school is expected to find up to the first £6000 of additional provision for every-one of their SEND children and young people. This is funding that comes from the school’s block and is not ring-fenced so can and is being used to fill the gap that schools are seeing in their budget allocation.

We cannot forget the number of young people experiencing significant mental health issues with no access to CAMHS and the rise in the number of SEND pupils who are excluded, off-rolled or home educated.

We know from many years of research and evidence that early identification and intervention is the key to support children and yet the number of children identified in early years is still very low. Many local authorities have not been able to fully introduce the two-year development check for all children as promised by the Children and Families Act 2014.

We have seen significant closures of resourced provision or specialist bases situated at mainstream schools – what happened to inclusion?

The recent NAHT report *Empty Promises: The crisis in supporting children with SEND*, very clearly sets out the challenges that schools are having in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, often

having to provide services delivered by health professionals but paid for from an education budget. This is not right at a professional, moral or ethical level.

The funding crisis in schools is not only about cuts to education budgets but also the cost to the most vulnerable children and their families of cuts to a range of critical health and social care services as well.

We urge you to re-consider the funding that is being allocated to local authorities and health services to ensure that we do not let down our most vulnerable citizens of the future.

Yours Sincerley



David Bateson OBE

Chair of National SEND Forum

