



2022-0019767POSoS

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email: jonathan.woods@parliament.uk

19th June 2022

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 23 May, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, about support for disabled children in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) Green Paper.

The SEND and AP Green Paper sets out our proposals to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that they can fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy, and productive adult lives. This includes our proposal for a clear and consistent set of national standards across provision, processes and systems that should be made available across the country for every child and young person with SEND, including disabled children. This incorporates consistent processes for how individual needs are identified and recorded and the appropriate provision to meet those needs, including best practice in reasonable adjustments for disabled children, and the full range of appropriate types of support and provision for meeting different needs.

Where specialist provision is required, we are consulting on proposals for a simplified process where parents will be supported to express an informed preference for a suitable placement from a tailored list of settings that are appropriate to meet their child's needs.

Local areas will be required to work in partnerships, bringing together education, health, and care to undertake joint needs assessments and produce local inclusion plans, setting out the provision and services that should be commissioned in line with the national standards to effectively meet the needs of children and young people with SEND locally. This will be done in co-production with parents and carers, as co-production remains a fundamental principle of the SEND system.

Our proposals will also align system incentives and strengthen accountabilities to improve outcomes and provide value for money within the system. This includes greater oversight of local delivery through the department's new Regions Group and strengthened accountability within the health system for SEND, including statutory guidance for Integrated Care Boards, subject to the passing of the Health and Care Bill, to clearly set out how they should discharge their statutory responsibilities for SEND.

We will also empower local authorities to establish multi-agency partnerships and new backstop powers to direct admissions in schools, and work with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to update inspections. New inclusion dashboards will further strengthen accountability and offer a transparent picture of how the system is performing across education, health, and care.

A national framework of funding bands has the potential to establish a more consistent basis for the funding of provision where bandings would cluster specific types of education provision (aligned to need) as set out by national standards. This would address concerns about the inconsistency in current local authority arrangements, including when it is necessary for pupils to receive support to meet their needs from outside of their local authority boundary.

We are also consulting on how we can best develop funding bands and tariffs to mitigate unintended consequences and risks. We will continue to work with councils and stakeholders, drawing on their expertise, and, following consultation, pilot approaches on a smaller scale, before carefully sequencing implementation on a national scale.

Throughout the SEND Review, parents and carers told the department how lengthy, stressful, and often expensive, the tribunal process can be. Our proposals seek to resolve disputes earlier and improve relationships locally by strengthening mediation, including consulting on making mediation mandatory with clear national standards and support for families. Parents will still be able to go to SEND Tribunal if necessary.

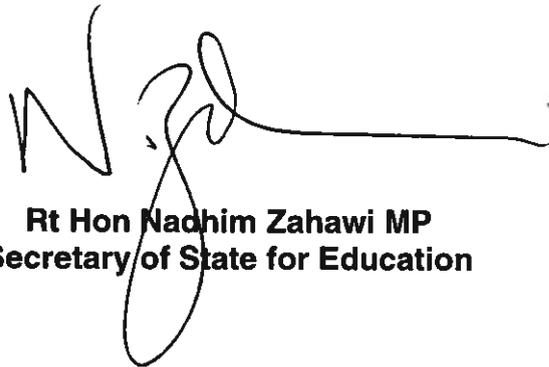
The department spoke to many parents and carers over the course of the SEND Review and heard about the additional tasks and roles that families often take on to support their children practically and emotionally, without any break. We understand the importance of respite, both for parents and carers and for children and young people. Therefore, on 1 February, the government announced a new £30 million investment over the next three years which councils will be able to bid for to set up more than 10,000 additional respite places.

This small-scale project will mean that innovative approaches to providing support will be able to be evaluated over the course of the three-year programme, with best practice learning being shared across the system so that more families can benefit.

Finally, may be interested to know that our full public consultation on the Green Paper is open until 22 July 2022, and it is critical that we receive invaluable feedback and expertise from a wide range of perspectives, including sector professionals, children, young people, and parents, before final decisions are made.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. Zahawi', with a long horizontal line extending to the right and a large loop underneath.

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education