All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education

**All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education and All-Party Parliamentary Group for SEND**

# Meeting report on the impact of the White Paper on Students with SEND

**Wednesday 22nd October 2025, 10.00am – 11.30am**

Attendees:
Steve Witherden MP, Olivia Blake MP, Andy MacNae MP, David Taylor MP, Peter Swallow MP, Jo Platt MP, Neil Duncan-Jordan MP, Peter Prinsley MP, Jodie Gosling MP, Catherine West MP, Apsana Begum MP, Diane Abbott MP, Claire Hazelgrove MP, Mary Kelly Foy MP, David Baines MP, Anna Dixon MP

MP's represented by a staff member: Margaret Mullane MP, Pippa Heylings MP, Cat Eccles MP. Jonathan Davies MP, Fleur Anderson MP, Jade Botterill MP, Monica Harding MP ,Terry Jermy MP, Jenny Riddell-carpenter MP, Joy Morrisey MP, Sarah Sackman MP, Elsie Blundell MP, Marcus Campbell Saviours MP, Suella Braverman MP, Sarah Russell MP, Julia Buckley MP as well as Anthony Shaw, Liam Sutherland and Michael Marriott (Andy McNae MPs Office), Rachel Watkins and Bobby Crosby (Steve Witherden's office) and Grace McLeod (Olivia Blake's office)

Other attendees: Bethany Bale, Cllr Zena, Marijke Miles, Richard Michael (Everway Assistive Technology), Darren Northcott (NASUWT), Emily Savage (Pearson clinical assessment), Kate Langworth (Gaia Learning Online) Paty Paliokosta (Kingston University), Jane Coles (SEA Co-Chair), Chris Waterman, Liam Kenny (NAHT SEND), Caroline Wright (BESA). Anna Wolffe (Education APPG Secretariat), Swathy Sanjay (BESA), Peter Doyle (BESA), Curtis Meier (Community Playthings), Caroline Derby (Oxford University Press), David Russell (Pearson), Pilar Cloud (Action Cerebral Palsy), Louise O'Hare (SPRG), Michael Erhardt

## Opening Remarks & Context

- The meeting co-chairs, Steve Witherden MP and Olivia Blake MP welcomed everyone and drew on their personal experiences of SEND diagnoses, including lived experiences of dyslexia and ADHD.

## Key Themes Discussed

### 1. SEND Reform & Policy Concerns

- The government's proposed SEND reform plan was discussed, with concerns about delays and the potential tightening of eligibility for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Anxiety was expressed over whether EHCPs would remain protected, and the risk of reducing access to support for disabled young people.

### 2. Systemic Challenges

- Chronic underfunding, reduced prioritisation of support, and a cycle where families turn to EHCPs as a last resort were highlighted.
- The legal framework (Children and Families Act 2014) was referenced, noting that most pupils with SEND do not have formal support through EHCPs.

**3. Inclusion & Provision**

- Speakers emphasised the need for "inclusion by design" and anticipatory duty under the Equality Act.
- Concerns were raised about the quality of provision, large class sizes, lack of skilled workforce, and poor school infrastructure.
- The post-16 landscape was described as devastated, with limited courses and resources for older SEND students.

**4. Role of Technology**

- The potential of specialist assistive technology to create inclusive learning environments was discussed.
- Examples were given of schools successfully embedding digital inclusion, benefiting all students, not just those with SEND.
- The need for a national strategy for digital inclusion was advocated.

**5. Collaboration Across Sectors**

- The importance of joined-up working between education, health, and social care was stressed.
- Frustration was expressed that EHCPs often function as "education plans" rather than truly integrated support documents.

**6. Equity & Intersectionality**

- The intersection of race, disability, and class was discussed, with particular concern for black children's underachievement and higher exclusion rates.
- The need for better identification and support for black disabled children was highlighted.

**7. Privatisation & Funding**

- Concerns were raised about the increasing reliance on private specialist settings, high costs for councils, and the impact of privatisation on access and quality.
- The need for more state-funded support and early intervention was emphasised.

**8. Teacher Workforce & Training**

- The importance of including teachers and SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) in policy discussions was stressed.
- Issues with teacher retention, workload, and the need for cultural change in schools were discussed.

**9. Human Rights Perspective**

- The discussion repeatedly returned to SEND as a human rights issue, referencing the Equality Act, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act.
- The need to defend and strengthen disabled children's rights to education was a central theme.

**Closing Remarks & Next Steps**

- Attendees expressed interest in sharing notes and continuing the conversation.
- The meeting concluded with thanks to speakers, organisers, and campaigners.