

## **Joint APPG Meeting on SEND Reforms**

**Date:** Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March

**Time:** 15:30-16:30

**Location:** Committee Room 10, Palace of Westminster

### **Attendance:**

Jen Craft MP – Chair, APPG on Learning Disability

Jo Platt MP – Chair, APPG on ADHD

Georgia Gould OBE MP - Minister for School Standards

Baroness Bull

Baroness Chisholm

Sarah Hall MP

Adam Dance MP

Greg Stafford MP

George Freeman MP

Dave Robertson MP

### **Agenda:**

#### **Meeting Opened at 15:30**

##### **1. Welcome and introductions from the Chair, Jen Craft MP**

Jen Craft MP welcomed attendees and introduced the parliamentarians and Minister.

##### **2. Education Minister Georgia Gould MP on the proposed reforms**

Jen Craft MP chaired questions to the Minister starting with reading out the pre-submitted questions. Questions then opened to the floor.

First question highlighted how people feel that they are fighting the system and finding that SEND teachers are not adequately trained.

The Minister replied highlighting that young people and families have raised similar concerns with her about teacher training. She then outlined the funding package and other measures for teacher training in the government's proposals and how voices of young people will be involved in developing future training.

Baroness Bull asked about lack of mention of supporting people with numerical processing needs within the government's proposals.

Minister replied saying that the expert panel is looking at this and an independent group will be looking at National Inclusion Standards. She also mentioned the importance of raising this issue in the consultation.

Ismail Kaji from Mencap asked a question about how local authorities can improve their websites to provide clearer information for families and what can be done to provide more community support.

Minister mentioned that the government is asking local authorities to look at how they can improve their offer to families and that there is a question in the consultation specifically around support. On community support, the Minister mentioned the creation of new community support, for example Mencap's Family Connectors, and the importance of community support.

In response to pre-submitted questions:

On children being pushed out of mainstream against their will the Minister highlighted that the legal right to attend a mainstream school will remain under the proposed reforms.

On how the new proposals will meet young people's needs, the Minister spoke about how the needs assessment will be co-designed with young people and families to reflect their need.

On the future role of tribunals, the Minister spoke about taking a more collaborative approach but recognised that tribunals are an important backstop in the needs assessment process. Under the government's proposals, tribunals can still overturn a local authority's decision about a school placement but will not identify the school. The rationale for this was to prevent tribunals dictating a school where there were no available places.

The Minister was questioned about the future role of technology in support children and young people with special educational needs

In response the Minister listed several areas where the government is seeking to roll out assistive tech

A question was asked about the impact of the use of the word "complex".

The Minister acknowledged there are difficulties around language and terminology and said the government is using the term to refer to those about those children who cannot have their needs met in mainstream schools. She also spoke about the importance of meaningful linkage between the SEND and social care systems

A point was made about how all children benefit from an inclusive environment which would prevent negative outcomes from children and young people who are using mainstream schools but at the moment are not meeting their needs.

The Minister agreed that creating more inclusive schools benefits all children but especially those with special educational needs. The Minister then listed a few examples of existing practice.

Several questions were asked about the future of post-16 education under these proposals

The Minister said the government was looking at progression opportunities including supported internships and apprenticeships as part of the wider reforms

Several questions were asked around the future of for-profit providers.

The Minister replied that the government is looking at other countries examples of mainstreaming and in response to questions on tackling excessive profits, the Minister outlined how the government intends to put a cap on this and increase capital spending on public provision.

The Minister was asked about how the government is looking at improving the social, emotional and health needs of children and young people as currently mental health needs are not being met.

The Minister said she is looking at creating stronger relationship with health services, occupational therapists, specialist teachers to ensure right mental health support is being provided

The Minister concluded the questions by asking for organisations to flag engagement events with officials at the Department for Education

### **3. Expert by experience speaker: Gavin Simpson**

Spoke about his education experience and journey to where he is today. Gavin called for a need to understand the root causes of failings in the system to ensure that reforms address these. This should include:

- The cost of tribunals

- The need to tackle high-profit making of private provision

- The need to look at how the education system meets needs of the current and future economy

### **4. Floor open to discussion on SEND reforms: Chaired by Jen Craft MP**

Jo Platt MP updated the meeting on her work speaking with parents about how to improve the system and offered to continue to listen and engage with parents as reforms are developed

George Freeman MP spoke about his work setting up two social enterprises and his experience working in Neuroscience. He updated the APPG on the need to ensure small rural primary schools are adequately supported, potentially through a hub and spoke model.

Anna Collishaw-Nikodemus from KIDS charity spoke about the need to look at the Welsh system which shows similarities to the proposed Individual Support Plan (ISP) proposals.

It was brought to the attention of the meeting that under the government's proposals a child or young person might have a EHCP but an ISP which could

provide different legal protections with the health and social care elements of support able to be legally challenged but their education support is not.

Marianne Selby-Boothroyd spoke about the impact that using the word complex has – schools can then push kids away from schools and say they have too many needs.

Adam Dance MP – spoke about his experience and the need to get the right support in each school – and the need for support in mainstream school.

## **5. Close and thanks from the Chair**