

SEND Board Summary of parental response to consultation

The Waltham Forest Parent Forum consultation response highlights significant concern from families about the direction of the proposed SEND reforms and the potential weakening of legal protections and accountability across the system.

- Strong concern about the proposed shift from EHCPs to Individual Support Plans (ISPs), particularly around enforceability, accountability, and parents' ability to challenge decisions. Families repeatedly expressed anxiety that ISPs may not provide the same legal safeguards as EHCPs.
- Calls for genuine co-production at every level of the SEND system, with children, young people, parents, and carers treated as equal partners in decision-making. Families emphasised the importance of transparent communication, accessible escalation routes, and evidence that feedback is acted upon.
- Concerns that the reforms are underfunded and unrealistic without substantial investment in staffing, specialist services, workforce training, and inclusive provision. Many responses questioned whether the proposed funding allocations would be sufficient to deliver meaningful change.
- Significant anxiety about the lack of clarity across many proposals, including how ISPs will operate in practice, accountability arrangements, transition points between support layers, support for children in alternative provision, EOTAS, AP, home education, and post-16 pathways, how Inclusion Bases and pooled funding arrangements would work, and the role and capacity of 'Experts at Hand' services.
- Strong emphasis on the need for legally enforceable support, independent oversight, transparent funding, meaningful parent participation, robust escalation and tribunal rights, and improved accountability for schools and local authorities.
- Repeated concern that mainstream settings are currently not sufficiently resourced, trained, or culturally prepared to deliver true inclusion. Families stressed that inclusion cannot succeed without increased specialist staffing, therapeutic input, SEND training, differentiated curricula, sensory-friendly environments, protected SENCO capacity, and significant cultural change within schools.
- Families highlighted the importance of holistic, joined-up systems across education, health, and social care, including better information sharing, integrated digital records, and improved access to specialists such as educational psychologists, SALTs, OTs, and mental health professionals.
- There was strong concern that children with less visible or internalised needs — including high-masking autistic children, children with anxiety, PDA profiles, EBSA, speech and language difficulties, and learning disabilities — may continue to be overlooked under the proposed framework.
- Families also raised concerns about post-16 transitions and reduced support, SEND transport, workforce burnout, inconsistent SENDIAS provision nationally, lack of clarity

around accountability in academy and independent sectors, and insufficient focus on learning disability and curriculum reform.

Overall, the response reflects a strong desire for reform that improves inclusion and early support, but widespread concern that the current proposals risk weakening legal protections and shifting responsibility onto under-resourced mainstream settings without the infrastructure, workforce, funding, or accountability required to make inclusion successful in practice.