



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

18 May 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

### **SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First**

Please accept this letter as a submission to the Government Consultation on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reform. There has been a significant increase in Education and Healthcare Plans (EHCPs) across Hampshire, and East Hampshire particularly has a higher-than-average proportion of children with EHCPs, at 4.1%. It is important that these proposed changes to the system work for those who navigate it and ensure a positive outcome for the children who need support.

### **Individual Support Plans**

I have heard from a large number of constituents in relation to these proposals. Many have expressed concerns about the proposed move from legally enforceable EHCPs to Individual Support Plans (ISPs) in a school setting. They are concerned that this removes the statutory protections that safeguard children's entitlements for all but those with the most complex needs. There should be greater clarity on how ISPs will work in practice and how schools will be supported to deliver them in collaboration with parents.

There are significant concerns about dispute resolution. If schools become the 'gatekeepers for support', there is a risk they could, on more occasions, be placed in conflict with parents. Greater clarity is required on accountability structures to ensure schools are not placed in the difficult position of deciding provision, managing expectations, and resolving disputes without a clear statutory framework or the resources needed to meet identified needs.

## **Pupils with Down Syndrome**

As co-Chair of the APPG for Down Syndrome, I am aware of the importance of Down Syndrome specific training to support children with Down syndrome who have a well-evidenced learning, behaviour and communication profile. There is concern that the introduction of perceived 'generic packages' could undermine the existing evidence base and proven Down syndrome specific interventions that are already available. Members of the community are also worried that a reduced reliance on EHCPs risks weakening legally enforceable rights.

## **Specialist Provision Packages**

I anticipate that difficulties will arise in high needs cases with different pieces of documentation - a statement of additional need, an EHCP and a new 'Specialist Provision Package' - with a risk of overlap or contradiction between them.

As I discussed with the Minister and officials, some disabilities will not fit into the menu of 'Specialist Provision Package' options proposed in the consultation.

I would encourage the 'national panel of experts' who are developing the proposed 'Specialist Provision Packages' to engage with schools like Treloars, a non-maintained special school in my constituency, to ensure their specialist voice can be heard in this important conversation and particularly around when a child's particular needs do not fit within one of these 'packages'.

## **'Education Other Than at School' packages**

Constituents have also raised concerns regarding Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) packages. Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014 allows local authorities to arrange special educational provision otherwise than in a school or post-16 institution. The reforms make no reference to EOTAS or to the needs of care-experienced children who depend on it. Clarity in this area is needed.

## **Resource provision in mainstream settings**

Especially in an age of falling birth rates, there is an opportunity to locate more resource provision in schools closer to where families live.

Can consideration be given to how such an uplift in resourced provision can be met in mainstream settings and clarity on a proposed timeframe?

Constituents have raised concerns regarding workforce shortages and the necessary funding for schools to cover the mainstream specialist provision required. It will be important to ensure that provision is shaped by locally assessed need. Currently, elements of the reforms, such as inclusion bases, remain ill-defined and there is a risk of variation in quality of provision in SEND across the country.

The Government's proposals require careful and sustained scrutiny including from those who have first-hand experience. On behalf of constituents, I will follow closely further announcements and what comes forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', written in a cursive style.

Damian Hinds  
Member of Parliament for East Hampshire