



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HW

October 16, 2023

Dear Jeremy,

SEND funding and the Autumn Statement: A plea for action

We write to you as Members of Parliament who support the f40 education funding campaign group, which continues to lobby for fairer and increased funding across England for all schools, including SEND. Many of our respective constituencies lie within the local authority areas that receive among the lowest funding in the country, for both schools and pupils with SEND.

We are extremely concerned about the deepening SEND crisis and believe that without substantial extra funding and bold policy changes, the situation will only deteriorate further.

Demand and expectation around SEND support are far outweighing the funding and capacity available, and the issues are expected to quickly worsen without significant investment.

As a result, we urge you to deliver the following in the Autumn Statement:

- 1) Significant additional baseline High Needs funding (f40 believes £4.6bn needs to be found)
- 2) Substantial additional SEND capital funding (above what has already been promised)
- 3) The removal of historical inequalities in the National Funding Formula, which means some schools receive far less funding per pupil than others.

f40, along with a number of other organisations involved in education, believes that, based on the growth in demand for SEND support and the rise in inflation since 2015, significant additional funding should be found and added to the baseline of the High Needs Block, just to prevent the crisis from worsening.

Significant extra capital funding is also required to help provide much-needed additional SEND places. At present, a lack of locally-provided places means many children are being placed in expensive independent provision, which can cost local authorities more than twice as much.

The cumulative local authority High Needs budget deficit is estimated to be around £2.3bn and is increasing day by day. (The latest estimates conclude that the cumulative local authority High Needs budget deficit across England will be around £3.6bn by March 2025.)

f40 is clear that the deficits are the result of changes to the Code of Practice 2014 and increasing levels and complexity of demand, which funding levels have not kept pace with. The f40 view is supported by the emerging findings from the Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme (DBV), commissioned by the DfE.

While the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, published in spring, makes a number of good suggestions, it will take some years for the Change Programme to be piloted and any recommendations implemented in full – by which time the crisis will only have deepened further. Without significant further resource and funding, they will not be possible at all.

All schools, both specialist provision and mainstream, need more funding, support, and training to meet the needs of SEND pupils, and the system needs major changes to reduce the reliance on EHCPs and to encourage mainstream schools to become more inclusive.

Whilst we welcome the additional funding for education in recent years, schools are having to do far more with their budgets than previously, all while retention and recruitment of staff are creating enormous difficulties.

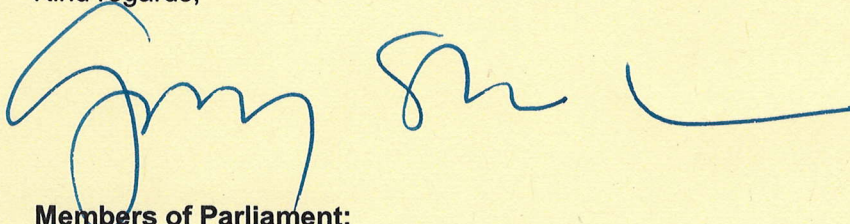
For those schools and local authorities that receive the least funding, the problems are exacerbated. We urge Government to remove existing protections and level up funding, so that all children are given the same opportunities before additional funding is added on for specific needs and area living costs. SEND funding is currently based on historical need, which bears no resemblance to the needs of today and means local authorities with similar SEND responsibilities can receive wildly different funding.

We appreciate the huge number of challenges you are facing in the current economic climate but believe supporting our most vulnerable children and young people is a priority. Without urgent investment, we fear the system will spiral out of control.

Continuing to under-resource SEND services is counterproductive. It puts huge pressure on local authorities to make savings in early intervention, which in turn puts more pressure on the higher, more costly types of support later on. It also pits local authorities against families and leads to a further loss of confidence in the system.

We urge Government to invest significantly more in High Needs, and to address the unfairness in education funding now.

Kind regards,

Three handwritten signatures in blue ink, likely belonging to the Members of Parliament listed below.

Members of Parliament:

Sir Gary Streeter MP, Vice Chair of f40 (Conservative – South West Devon)
Robin Walker MP (Conservative – Worcester)
David Davis MP (Conservative – Haltemprice and Howden)
Matt Hancock MP (Independent – West Suffolk)
Claudia Webbe MP (Independent – Leicester East)
Kim Johnson MP (Labour – Liverpool, Riverside)
The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP (Conservative - Staffordshire Moorlands)
Rachael Maskell MP (Labour – York Central)
Julian Knight (Conservative – Solihull)
William Wragg MP (Conservative – Hazel Grove)
Peter Aldous MP (Conservative – Waveney)
Tim Loughton MP (Conservative – East Worthing & Shoreham)
Nadia Whittome MP (Labour – Nottingham East)
Derek Twigg MP (Labour – Halton)
Dan Carden MP (Labour – Liverpool Walton)
Alex Sobel MP (Labour and Co-op – Leeds North West)
Richard Burgon MP (Labour – Leeds East)
Richard Drax MP (Conservative – South Dorset)
Ian Liddell-Grainger MP (Conservative – Bridgwater and West Somerset)
Dr Dan Poulter MP (Conservative - Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)



The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP (Labour – Knowsley)
Daisy Cooper MP (Liberal Democrat - St Albans)
Damien Moore MP (Conservative – Southport)
Tony Lloyd MP (Labour – Rochdale)
James Cartlidge MP (Conservative - South Suffolk)
Andrew Lewer MBE MP (Conservative – Northampton South)
The Rt Hon George Eustice – (Conservative - Camborne and Redruth)
Andrew Selous MP (Conservative – SW Beds)
Sir Peter Bottomley MP (Conservative – Worthing West)
The Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP (Labour – Exeter)
Jo Gideon MP (Conservative – Stoke-on-Trent Central)

Cc:

Cllr Alex Dale, Chair of f40
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