

Special Interest Group annual report to LGA Board

SIG Name	f40
Lead Member	Chairman: Cllr Alex Dale, Cabinet Member for Education, Derbyshire County Council
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Membership

As of 1 April 2024, f40 has 43 member authorities, namely:

Bath & North East Somerset Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Cambridgeshire County Council
 Central Bedfordshire Council
 Cheshire East Council
 Cheshire West and Chester Council
 Cornwall Council
 Cumberland Council
 Derbyshire County Council
 Devon County Council
 Dorset Council
 East Riding of Yorkshire Council
 East Sussex County Council
 Gloucestershire County Council
 Hampshire County Council
 Herefordshire Council
 Hertfordshire County Council
 Lincolnshire County Council
 North Lincolnshire Council
 North Yorkshire Council
 Northumberland County Council
 Oxfordshire County Council

Plymouth City Council
 Shropshire Council
 Solihull Council
 Somerset Council
 South Gloucestershire Council
 Staffordshire County Council
 Stockport Council
 Suffolk County Council
 Swindon Borough Council
 Torbay Council
 Trafford Council
 Wakefield Council
 Warrington Borough Council
 Warwickshire County Council
 West Northamptonshire Council
 West Sussex County Council
 Wigan Council
 Wiltshire Council
 Wokingham Borough Council
 Worcestershire County Council
 York City Council

Aims

To lead a cross-party campaign to obtain fairer and increased funding for education across England. Key to our campaign is mainstream schools, Early Years, and SEND funding up to age 25.

Despite the introduction of the National Funding Formula, education funding continues to be unfair, with some schools receiving £5,000 less per pupil than others. f40 is campaigning for Government to level up funding by increasing education budgets for the lower funded authorities. We appreciate there will always be some differences, due to specific school and pupil needs and local area costs, but the current differential is far too wide and appears to be only getting bigger.

We have always focused on the unfairness of education funding, but in recent years f40 has also lobbied for increased funding and is increasingly concerned about the crisis in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We are campaigning for reform of the education system, with greater investment in mainstream and SEND, and a focus on early intervention. We are lobbying for greater resources, training, and funding to enable mainstream schools to become more inclusive, and more capital SEND funding to enable local authorities to extend their specialist SEND provision, reducing their reliance on costly independent provision.

- f40 is campaigning for improvements to the National Funding Formula to make education funding fairer, and for reform of education, increased funding, and for the crisis in SEND to be resolved, with all education and SEND deficits paid off.

Priorities

Does your SIG contribute to the any of the themes and priorities in the [LGA business plan](#)?

Yes, f40's campaign work supports The LGA's business plan to support and improve local government, specifically around Theme 1 – creating a sustainable financial future.

Currently, local authorities have increasing deficit SEND budgets as education and SEND funding have not kept pace with inflation and the increased demand for EHCPs. f40 has calculated, with agreement from other organisations involved in education, that £4.6bn additional SEND revenue is required each year just to meet the current demand for SEND support. That does not include any further growth going forward.

The increased demand for EHCPs and SEND support since 2015, coupled with rising inflation and school-specific costs, has resulted in a cumulative SEND deficit across local authorities in England that is expected to be £3.6bn by March 2025. These deficits are currently being held off local authority accounts by a statutory override that is in place until 2026. However, many local authorities fear they will go bankrupt, or have to make severe cuts to their statutory SEND support, if and when the override is removed.

f40 is campaigning for additional funding for SEND and mainstream schools, as well as SEND capital investment, along with reform that will begin to turn the tide on the crisis and reduce the financial strain on local authorities.

f40 is also campaigning for the deficits to be written off by Government once measures are in place to deal with the causes of the crisis.

Key activities / outcomes of work undertaken

Summary of activity from April 2023 – March 24

Engaging and Influencing Policy and Decision Making

- Met with SEND Minister David Johnston to express our concerns.
- Met with Labour's Education Spokeswoman Bridget Phillipson MP.
- Worked with David Davis MP to secure a debate in the House of Commons on the crisis in SEND – 29 MPs spoke during the three-hour debate.
- Contributed to an All-Party Parliamentary Group session on SEND.
- Hosted a well-attended MPs' briefing in the House of Commons.
- Hosted a webinar for f40 members on our campaign focus.
- Encouraged MPs to table Parliamentary Questions on education.
- Met twice with both the DfE's SEND Change Programme team and funding team.
- Worked with f40 Conservative Vice Chair Sir Gary Streeter to gain support from MPs for a letter to the Chancellor urging him to invest in SEND.
- Wrote to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Education Secretary Gillian Keegan to request meetings and raise our concerns.

Raising Awareness

- Produced briefing papers and graphics explaining f40's concerns around SEND and the unfairness of funding, which were shared widely and were referenced by a number of MPs during the House of Commons debate on the SEND crisis.
- Secured several pieces of media coverage on the SEND crisis and unfairness of funding in The Guardian, Schools Week, TES, ITV, and in regional media.
- f40 Chair Cllr Alex Dale was featured on BBC One's Countryfile during a feature on the unfairness of SEND and school funding and its impact on rural areas.
- f40 Conservative Chair Sir Gary Streeter wrote an opinion piece for Schools Week on the SEND crisis, supported by f40.
- Contacted a number of the lowest funded local authorities for education across England, inviting them to join the f40 group.

Strengthening Our Partnerships

During 2023, f40 continued to strengthen its relationships with other groups working to benefit education. Members, including ASCL, NEU, NAHT and NGA, shared their concerns and worked with f40 to calculate that £4.6bn extra revenue was required each year to meet the current need and demand for SEND support, based on inflation and the increase in EHCPs since 2015. We also strengthened our partnership-working by meeting with leaders from:

- Early Years Alliance.
- SEND Community Alliance.
- Representatives from the Local Government Association.

County Council's Network and Early Years Alliance now regularly attend f40 Executive Committee meetings, along with ASCL and NGA. Representatives from the LGA are also invited.