

Special Interest Group annual report to LGA Board

SIG Name	f40
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Lead Officer	Secretary: Karen Westcott

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<p>Membership</p> <p>As of 1 April 2025, f40 has 43 member authorities, namely:</p> <p>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</p>	<p>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</p>
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<p>Aims</p> <p>f40 leads a cross-party campaign group with the aim of obtaining fairer and increased funding for education across England, along with a solution to the SEND crisis. Our campaign focuses on Early Years, schools, and SEND up to age 25.</p>
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Despite the introduction of the National Funding Formula, education and High Needs funding continues to be grossly unfair.

Currently, there is more than £5,000 per pupil difference between the highest and lowest funded local authorities for School funding. With regards High Needs, the highest funded authority area receives well over £3,000 per pupil, while the lowest funded receives less than £1,000 per pupil.

We appreciate there will always be a difference in funding levels, depending on pupil and school need, and local area costs, but there is no justification for the very wide disparity we currently see. We are campaigning for a major review of the whole funding system to ensure children have equal access to resources and opportunities, regardless of where they live.

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 major reform of the education system, with greater investment in mainstream and SEND, and a focus on inclusion, early intervention, resources and training. We would also like to see greater accountability for inclusion, along with guidance on what ordinarily available SEND support in mainstream school looks like. Currently, schools are just doing their own thing, some well and some not so well.

We would also like to see better regulation of the independent SEND sector to ensure supports matches need, and that value for money is provided.

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. It is estimated that the cumulative local authority High Needs deficit in England will be around £5bn by April 2026. Many councils fear their deficits will lead them to bankruptcy unless they are dealt with before the Statutory Override comes to an end next year.

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

Key activities / outcomes of work undertaken

Summary of activity from April 2024 – March 25

- Wrote to all prospective parliamentary candidates and newly elected MPs following the 2024 General Election, inviting them to work with f40
- Launched a new f40 website
- Appointed 3x new Vice Chair MPs, representing Lab, Cons, Lib Dems
- Hosted a parliamentary briefing for almost 80 MPs and their representatives
- Submitted written evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry on SEND
- Hosted a webinar for f40 members on the SEND crisis and Isos Partnership research
- Submitted written evidence to Education Select Committee inquiry on SEND crisis
- Gave oral evidence to the Education Select Committee inquiry on SEND
- Worked with the National Governance Association to circulate a letter to all school governing bodies, which they could share with their MPs on the SEND crisis
- Hosted f40 conference in London for members
- Urged f40 MPs to lobby Government for investment and systemic change in SEND
- Interviewed on BBC Radio 4 about LA perspective of the crisis in SEND.

This activity has raised the profile of the f40 group and has highlighted our concerns and explained how we believe improvements can be made to both the distribution of funding and the provision of SEND. f40 positions itself as a trusted, expert organisation that Government/DfE and local authorities can rely on for meaningful insight into both the problems and solutions with education funding.

Strengthening Our Partnerships

During 2024, f40 continued to strengthen its relationships with other groups working to benefit education, such as ASCL, CCN, LGA, NEU, NAHT, EYA and NGA.

Representatives from all of these groups now regularly attend f40 Executive Committee meetings, ensuring that we work together where we are aligned to combine our strength and efforts in a bid to secure the greatest outcomes for schools and children.

In the coming weeks, we are also meeting with a number of representatives from family and children-focused organisations, such as Contact and Disabled Children's Partnership to strengthen those relationships further too.