

f40 Special Interest Group annual report

SIG Name	f40
Lead Member	Interim Chair Phil Haslett, Assistant Director – Education at Gloucestershire County Council
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<p>Membership</p> <p><i>Please note that only those councils in LGA membership are permitted to join a LGA Special Interest Group</i></p> <p>As of 1 April 2026, f40 has 43 member authorities, namely:</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset 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 Essex 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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Aims

f40 leads a cross-party campaign group on behalf of 43 local authority members, with the aim of obtaining fairer and increased funding for education across England, alongside a sustainable, long-term solution for the SEND crisis.

Despite the introduction of the National Funding Formula, education and High Needs funding continues to be unfair for both Schools and High Needs.

Schools in the lowest funded authority areas receive more than £5,000 less per pupil than those in the highest funded areas, whilst for SEND, the lowest funded area receives less than a third of what the highest funded area receives. Even when local area costs and specific school and pupil needs are taken into consideration, there is no justification for the very wide disparity in funding that we currently see. The unfairness impacts children as schools are forced to make their budgets stretch by reducing teaching and support staff and cutting back on pastoral support and extra-curricular activities. The lower funded areas have also been forced to accumulate growing High Needs deficits as they struggle to meet the need of children on their current levels of funding. If not tackled, the deficits threaten to bankrupt many councils. Even with Government's proposal to pay off 90% of the deficits, local authorities will have to foot the bill for the remaining 10%, so f40 is campaigning to ensure councils are supported, both in terms of budgets and policies, and that the SEND system is reformed in a sustainable way to ensure deficits do not continue to grow in the future.

At this pivotal time, when Government is on the cusp of reforming the SEND system through greater inclusion in mainstream schools, improved accountability and a focus on early help, it is essential that funding levels are redressed to ensure every school and local authority has equal opportunity to make a success of the reforms. f40 is campaigning for a review of the whole school and SEND funding system to ensure funding is more fairly distributed and to ensure sufficient funding is in place to enable schools to become fully inclusive so all children have their needs met.

While f40 welcomed the Schools White Paper and SEND reforms and Government's direction of travel towards inclusion and early help, we must now ensure that the reforms are delivered in a sustainable, well thought out way, with sufficient funding to ensure they are a success. f40 continues to campaign to ensure local authorities and schools are given the funding, resources, guidance and capital investment to ensure all children can reach their potential. We believe that without sufficient planning and the right funding mechanisms, schools and the reforms themselves will be set up to fail.

Priorities

Does your SIG contribute to the any of the themes and priorities in the LGA business plan?

The f40 campaign goes to the heart of the LGA business plan as it supports the LGA's renewed purpose to strengthen local government, so that both school and High Needs communities thrive, whilst ensuring that councils have the resources, powers and support to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

The f40 campaign supports local authorities in campaigning for increased, longer-term financial settlements for education and SEND, along with greater capital investment for local authority specialist SEND provision.

Key activities / outcomes of work undertaken

f40 had a very busy year during 2025/26, focusing on the campaign for fairer funding and lobbying for sustainable reform and investment to solve the crisis in SEND ahead of the publication of the Schools White Paper and SEND Reforms. As a result of our campaigning, much of what we have been lobbying for was included in the Schools White Paper and SEND Reforms.

Our activities included two very well attended Parliamentary drop-in events for MPs in Westminster for them to better understand f40's campaign objectives. The first, in July 2025, which was attended by 35 MPs or their representatives, with the briefing session that followed attended by 16 people. The f40 Parliamentary drop-in event in January 2026 was attended by 53 MPs.

We also:

- Held an f40 conference for 100 local authority members at the LGA
- Met with former School and SEND Minister Catherine McKinnell MP
- Gave oral evidence at the Education Select Committee inquiry on SEND
- Submitted a response to the Public Accounts Select Committee inquiry on SEND
- Worked with the NGA to circulate letters to all school governing bodies, which they could share with their MPs calling for action on SEND
- Met with partner education organisations, such as the LGA, CCN, NAHT, ASCL, NEU, EYA, DCP and parent carer groups
- Held a campaign week with our members to raise awareness of unfair funding and the crisis in SEND in both national and regional media, and among MPs

The campaign week in January 2026 was organised to coincide with Education Questions in the House of Commons. On the day, f40 MPs raised questions in the House about SEND and unfair funding and wore f40 pin badges to raise awareness of the campaign. Following the debate, some 53 MPs or their representatives attended an f40 drop-in event in Portcullis House, where we were able to share our concerns and provide insight on where we were hoping to see major reform. We urged MPs to raise Parliamentary Questions and to write to both the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor on the need for greater investment and urged them to work with their local authorities to raise awareness in the media.

The campaign was greatly supported in the regions by many of our local authority members, resulting in lots of national and local media coverage, both broadcast and print. Coverage included BBC1 national TV, as well as BBC TV in the regions and lots of column inches in local newspapers.

Following the Schools White Paper and SEND Reforms, f40 submitted a response to the consultation and is now hoping to meet with the DfE funding team and an Education Minister in the coming weeks. We will also continue to engage with national and sector media.

In the months ahead, we are proposing to:

- Hold a parliamentary drop-in event in Westminster in Autumn 2026
- Continue our work with the Collaboration Group (partner organisations involved in education and parent groups) to campaign with one voice
- Meet with Ministers, policy advisors, and Shadow spokespeople and their teams
- Produce a new f40 briefing paper setting out a new suggested funding model for schools and High Needs, which we will share with the DfE.