

Round Table in the Dewsbury and Batley Constituency-hosted by Iqbal Mohamed MP. (20/04/26)
‘SEND reform: putting children and young people first.’

This report captures the findings from the SEND Roundtable held in Dewsbury and Batley on the 20th of April by MP Iqbal Mohamed and is intended to support a formal response to the SEND Consultation. **‘SEND reform: putting children and young people first.’**

The purpose of the roundtable was to bring together families and specialists from our local constituency; to share grounded insights around current SEND delivery in schools with honest and shared feedback reflecting the different perspectives. What currently works and the challenges facing families, schools and the systems intended to support them.

This report shares qualitative participant evidence. It reflects the perspectives of attendees and does not constitute a statistically representative sample.

Representation included Headteachers, SENDCOs, Elected member (Kirklees Councilor), Third Sector organizations, Charities, Council-commissioned specialist services, Youth Workers, Parents and Young People.

This report is structured using questions from the SEND Consultation question pack detailed below and the feedback received. The discussions focused on five areas raised in the Consultation: Delivery and Training (Q12, Q13, Q14), Quality Assurance for ISP (Q15: Q16), Understanding and use of Inclusion Bases (Q18, Q19), EHCP Assessment (Q23, Q25) and Parental Preference (Q26, Q27).

(Q12: Q13: Q14):

Q12-What are the most important issues for national training to cover, to help support children and young people with SEND?

Participants highlighted that within initial teacher training they felt a significant gap in current SEND training, that it is either insufficient or outdated, with limited understanding of the SEND system itself.

Attendees strongly emphasised the need for a consistent, high-quality national SEND training offer, co-produced with young people and rooted in a strong, trauma-informed, neuro-affirming background.

Where teachers have knowledge and skills, participants felt they lacked the time and capacity to apply it meaningfully.

Attendees shared that SEND training should be prioritised and embedded within initial teacher training, alongside ongoing professional development.

Additionally, attendees reported that currently there is a shortage and/or difficulty in gaining access to specialist expertise such as EPs, SALTs, youth workers and mental health professionals. This access is essential to understanding the lack of implementation and specialist support for SEND children. Concerns were raised about vacancies, recruitment, and sustainability with participants questioning who will deliver this work without greater investment in people and services.

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Personalised training for parents, foster carers and kinship carers in SEND was seen as critical, alongside clearer guidance on support pathways and resources.

Q13. What practical actions can help teachers, educators and leaders manage workload whilst implementing these changes?

Currently attendees shared that a lack of multi-agency systems acting together regarding training and assessment in relation to SEND is creating a gap in the system for young people and the individuals caring for them.

Joined-up systems between education, health and social care, along with where appropriate joint training could support and embed understanding and increase consistency across strands and local areas.

Additionally funding models based on need could be an improvement to single funded pots, supporting implementation of identified practical actions.

Timely responses from multi agencies could enable children to access mainstream environments through tailored strategies.

Q14. How should the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCO) role evolve to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND?

There was a strong emphasis from attendees for SENDCOs to have a strategic leadership role, being part of senior leadership teams, to ensure SEND remains a whole-school priority rather than an isolated function.

(Q15, Q16)

Q15. What would provide assurance for families that an Individual Support Plan (ISP) is high-quality and contains the essential information?

The discussion on SEND Consultation Questions 15 and 16 emphasised that families’ confidence in the quality of Individual Support Plans (ISPs) depends on clear, robust quality assurance grounded in co-production, transparency, and consistency. Participants agreed that high-quality ISPs must be jointly developed with the child, parents or carers, schools, local authorities, and relevant professionals. These ISP’s need to be written in plain, jargon-free language, and include clear accountability and routes for challenge or review. This would help the individuals involved to know clearly what actions are taking place and when and leave no room for confusion.

Q16: How can we ensure Individual Support Plans are clear, concise and practical for professionals to use?

There was concern about inconsistency in what information is included within an ISP. This also included concerns about system limitations such as fragmented platforms and poor integration of health information. For professionals, ISPs were seen to be most useful when presented in a standardised format, supported by clear guidance and training, readily accessible, and able to be updated quickly and accurately by all involved, rather than becoming static or outdated documents. This included any specialist information being easily added to the ISP or EHCP virtually such as, GP letters and needs that have changed.

From the discussions, support was expressed for a standardised national or online system that families can access and contribute to, ensuring consistency across schools and local authorities. Participants also stressed the need for clear, measurable indicators of effectiveness for ISP’s for each child.

Adequate funding and training were seen as essential to make this approach meaningful and sustainable.

(Q18–Q19):

Q18. How can we make sure that every area can meet the full range of the needs of children and young people through Inclusion Bases?

Q19. How can we make sure that Inclusion Bases help children and young people succeed in mainstream settings?

Attendees highlighted both the potential value and current challenges of inclusion bases. There was agreement that greater clarity, consistency and accountability are required for inclusion bases to work effectively. Participants noted that there is a limited understanding of what is currently available, what an inclusion base should look like in practice, and how success will be defined and measured.

An effective inclusion base was described as supported by skilled staff, consistent access to external specialists, and properly funded wrap-around provision.

Concerns were raised about lack of accountability in local authority decision-making, including schools refusing children with EHCPs or Local Authorities naming unsuitable placements without sufficient challenge.

Participants stressed the need for clear accountability across all participants, including needing systems to categorise and monitor appropriate support and performance indicators alongside local authorities actively challenging poor practice. Sharing best practice, integrating SEND needs within the curriculum, using inclusive assessment methods, and allowing schools appropriate autonomy were all seen as critical to ensuring inclusion bases deliver meaningful, high-quality support rather

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than becoming inconsistent or under-resourced solutions.

(Q23: Q25):

Q23. We propose that EHCPs will guarantee educational provision set out in a Specialist Provision Package, with day-to-day provision captured in Individual Support Plans.

What is needed to make these proposals work effectively?

Q25. What would you expect to be considered as part of the needs assessment, for example evidence and expert or professional input?

Attendees highlighted significant concerns about the future effectiveness of EHCPs, with a strong emphasis felt to be needed on maintaining a genuinely child-centred approach that reflects children’s lived experiences and provides appropriate legal protection.

Participants felt that accountability is already insufficient and risks being further reduced, with a lack of clear timescales, routes of challenge, and consistent, standardised responses from local authorities.

There was widespread anxiety that SEND reform is being driven by budgetary pressures rather than need, particularly given the absence of clear definitions of “complex” needs, rising reliance on private providers, and the diminishing capacity of essential services such as Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, and mental health support.

The role of teaching assistants was repeatedly described as fundamental yet underfunded, with calls for improved training and support to match the current escalating need.

Concerns were also raised regarding gaps in provision for children in transition, those entering the SEND system, and looked-after children, who were notably absent from the White Paper. Equal partnership with parents, schools, health services, and children themselves was seen as essential, alongside better engagement from health, stronger investment in the wider workforce, and access to specialists at the point of need.

In relation to Q25, contributors stressed the importance of robust, holistic assessments that move beyond “not known to this service” responses, and the need for local authorities to respect schools’ consultation feedback, particularly where schools state they cannot safely or effectively meet a child’s need.

(Q26–Q27):

Q26. What factors should LAs take into account in proposing to parents and young people a list of potential settings to name on a plan?

Q27. What information and support do parents need to make a decision about which setting will be best for their child?

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The discussion on SEND Consultation Questions 26 and 27 around parental preference highlighted significant concerns about assumptions made regarding parents’ understanding of the SEND system, their rights, and how to navigate school choices for children with EHCPs. Participants felt there is wide variation in parents’ knowledge of their child’s needs, available provision, and entitlement, with insufficient, poorly pitched information to support informed decision-making.

There was frustration expressed about lack of transparency within school consultation processes. Attendees highlighted that there was limited communication from local authorities about which settings are being considered, when consultations occur, and how parental and school responses are used. Parents and young people say they often feel excluded from reviews and consultations, with infrequent meetings that are not sufficient to reflect changing needs of SEND children.

Moving forward attendees emphasised the need for clearer guidance on navigating mainstream and out-of-area school options for parents and carers. There was a preference from attendees for consistent caseworkers to provide continuity (including for siblings), and improved coordination across education, health, and social care systems. This system would help parents, carers, schools and professionals to all be kept consistently engaged with EHCP’s and ISP’s.

Overall, participants stressed that parental preference must be underpinned by transparent communication, shared decision-making, and meaningful involvement of both parents and young people.

Conclusion

In Dewsbury and Batley particularly, the percentage of pupils receiving SEN support is 15.6%, this is higher than the National and Regional average but only 3.3% of these students have EHCP’s ([EHC Plans: reporting year 2025](#)).

Participants broadly supported the intention to improve SEND arrangements within the Education White Paper; while expressing concerns regarding; deliverability without strengthened accountability, improved national consistency, transparent communication, increased specialist and wider workforce capacity and improved multi agency working.

We had a moving speech by one young person who emphasised how young people have felt ignored by those making decisions about their education. This participant shared experiences from his time at school and how he had to fight to have his EHCP actioned and how it has impacted him into his future. Reflecting our discussions, the importance of keeping families and young people at the heart of decisions has been emphasised.