

Peter McCallion  
Committee Clerk  
Room 376 Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

I am a single mother coping with the challenges of caring for two children with special needs. They both attend mainstream schools and they are both statemented.

I would like to offer some of my opinions (born from experience) re. the SEND Bill which I have taken time to read and understand.

Clause 1: Duty on the Authority to have regard for the views of the child.

I welcome the changes that the SEND Bill proposes because I have found that school meetings create incredible anxiety for my teenage son. He has not been able to voice his views and concerns due to lack of support i.e. speech and language therapist being present at annual reviews and other school meetings.

Clause 3: Duties of Boards of Governors in relation to pupils with special educational needs.

In my experience I haven't seen the Board of Governors in my schools as being very effective in monitoring SEN provisions.

As a parent I am frustrated that the Board of Governors have failed to address any issues or concerns I have had in relation to Statements and IEP's not being implemented. I hope that with this Bill the Board of Governors will communicate more effectively with the qualified Learning Support Co-ordinator. I also hope they will become more responsible in ensuring the new PLP will be kept under close review and all children with SEN should have a PLP.

Clause 4: Duty of Authority to request help from Health and Social Care bodies.

Hopefully with the addition of this clause, things will change for the better because in the past I felt that too much time was taken up gathering evidence from Health and Social Services which has caused me immense stress and delays in meeting the needs of my children.

I feel there should have been more responsibility placed on the Authorities to obtain the relevant documentation. My children did not access the curriculum while this slow process was in motion.

I feel strongly that my children could have benefited greatly with some support in school from Health and Social Services at this crucial time. If the Authority and Health and Social Services were more effective in their communication, my children would have been better supported.

Clause 8: Mediation in connection with appeals

I thoroughly agree that this clause be part of the Bill. I can see that Independent Mediation Service could be a positive step as I feel it could provide me an opportunity to express my utmost concerns in a safe and neutral environment. However I think this should be my choice and my hope is that these services are carried out by professionals qualified in SEN. It would also help in this situation to have an advocate accompany them.

Sincerely  
A parent.