

Good Afternoon,

Thank you fairly for the opportunity to share the difficulties I have faced. I reply to this as a parent, a teacher and a SENCO.

I have a son, [REDACTED] who has a diagnosis of autism and severe learning difficulties.

I am a teacher for 21 years and a SENCO for 3 years.

As a parent the difficulties are immense: every level of support is a battle and takes longer than it should. [REDACTED] had his diagnosis of autism at 2 years and 10 months. I requested educational psychology as a parent to try to ensure his statement would be in place for him entering nursery. I began the process and it took much longer than the 26 weeks for a final placement to be set. [REDACTED] began nursery without the much needed statement. [REDACTED] needed full time 1:1 support within school for his safety, to ensure other children in the class were able to learn and he could learn and progress within his capabilities with the adult support necessary. However he never received a full time package of hours. He remained in nursery a second year as there was no suitable place for him. After 2 years in nursery he received a place in an autism specific class. This was still not right for [REDACTED]. The class was a step in the right direction but not what he needed. It took a further 2 years before he received a much needed place in a special school. Within 2 weeks he was communicating better, was able to put on his own socks and shoes and was a happy child. It took from he was 2 until he was 7 before he was receiving the education he needed. That was 5 years.

Myself and my husband are both teachers. We know the system and we struggled. For a family who does not know the system it is impossible. It is my opinion that the current system of SPIMS to cater for children with SEN in a mainstream setting is like comparing a premier inn with the Ritz. My son has access to life skills, hydro pool, OT, SLT, ball pool, and specialist teachers daily. Children in a classroom within a mainstream do not have this umbrella of support.

As a SENCO the pressures are becoming intolerable. Children have to wait longer and longer to receive any support and increasingly this support is advice and guidance. So children who are struggling are relying on a teacher who is already over burdened to give them the extra 1:1 support they need. All while this teacher teaches 32 children. Within this 32 they may have a class with

8 children on a PLP who require individual support,

4 children who are newcomer and speak no English and so they require individual support

A further 15 children who have English as a second language and who are at various levels of learning

5 children who could, and should, be extended to support their capabilities.

How can 1 teacher, and if they are lucky, 1 assistant meet the needs of all these children perfectly each day? The simple answer is they can't. Someone is failed every day. And the teacher feels like a failure despite having worked hard and within the best of what they can with the cards dealt.

If a child is lucky enough to receive face to face 1:1 support with an adult this takes place over up to 12 weeks. Unless these adults arrive with a magic wand is a child who is struggling able to overcome all their difficulties in 12 hours? Yet as a SENCO, having spent hours on paperwork to evidence what we KNOW, this is as good as it gets for many.

Educational Psychologists are stretched to breaking point. Schools are stretched to breaking point. Speech Therapists are stretched to breaking point. And who ultimately breaks? The child. The future of our world. This is who we are failing.

Health requires funding but a lack of funding in education will only ultimately burden an already overstretched healthcare system. Research already shows that a lower level of qualifications links to a lower level of health and a higher number of inmates within the prison system have a lower level of qualifications also.

My son is now 10. In 8 years time he leaves school and his life away from me and his father ends. He has no bright future ahead of him. He has a life tied to two parents who will ultimately age. My son is kind, affectionate, loves tidying and cleaning. He could provide a role in society but there is no funding post 18 to support him.

We need to look at the pressures from birth to death of a child and adult with special educational needs. We need to list what actions need to be taken now to address these and we need to fund it so the system works. Our children and adults aren't going anywhere. In actuality the numbers are only growing. If we don't act soon or dread to think what life will be like in another 10 years.

I would love the opportunity to take part in a steering group or focus group if this was possible. I feel passionately about this. There are many many more issues I have not addressed in this already lengthy email.

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