



All-Party  
Parliamentary Group for  
**Special Educational Needs  
and Disabilities (SEND)**

**Chair** Olivia Blake MP  
**Vice chairs** Emma Hardy MP & Sally-Ann Hart MP  
**Secretariat** provided by NAHT

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**For immediate release – 16 July 2021**

**Cross party group of MPs criticise “inexcusable delay” - as Ministers push back special educational needs review**

The Government has this week confirmed they are again delaying the publication of their review of support for special educational needs, initially announced in September 2019.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities has today criticised this delay as “inexcusable” and are calling on the Government to commit to publishing the review before Parliament returns in September.

Labour MP Olivia Blake MP, who is Chair of the All-Party group, said:  
“This further delay is unacceptable and inexcusable - especially after the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on children and adults with special educational needs and disabilities, who in many cases have been left without any support over the past year. People with learning difficulties have continually been an afterthought in Government response to the pandemic – woefully neglected with terrible consequences.

Of course, it is important we get this right, but the Government has had more than enough time to increase the involvement of key stakeholders and publish this review, which was promised nearly a year ago now. Delaying again will not help those being denied support right now. We owe it to the people who have suffered this year to publish the review findings as a matter of urgency - so we can provide the essential support required and begin to undergo the transformational change we need in SEND provision.”

According to a study by Public Health England, people with learning disabilities were 6 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the general population during the first wave of the pandemic.

The cross-party group of MPs earlier this year published the findings of their inquiry into experiences of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in educational settings during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The inquiry - launched in July 2020 and consisting of a number of evidence sessions with parents, teachers and young people - concluded that the Government and Department for Education did not do enough to support the UK’s most vulnerable children and young people during Covid-19, forcing schools and families to “pick up the pieces.”

The report also highlighted issues with funding for SEND provision, which was already wholly inadequate, with local authorities, school settings and families reporting growing deficits in the high-needs budget causing a failure to ensure the needs of children and young people were being met. The report found that the impact on schools of Covid-19 related costs and loss of income had only exacerbated this crisis.



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In the report the MPs called on the Secretary of State for Education to publish the long-awaited SEND review and commit to working with the cross-party group to ensure that Children and Young People with SEND are placed at the centre of government's policies and decisions.

Earlier this month, Blake again asked the Secretary of State for Education when his Department planned to publish the findings of the review into support for special educational needs, originally announced on 6 September 2019.

On Monday, Children's Minister Vicky Ford, published her response: "The COVID-19 outbreak has unavoidably delayed the pace of the work of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Review and materially altered the context for reform. This is noted by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, in her most recent report on putting children and young people with SEND at the heart of our recovery plans.

We only have one chance to get this right and have, after careful reflection, decided we should take more time to ensure our reform plans can deliver the systemic change needed.

We will be using this time to make certain our plans complement the wider work being done on recovery and school reform, and that they have the longevity needed to offer stability to the sector. We will work at pace over the coming months, closely with system leaders, SEND organisations, schools, and parents, so that we are in a strong position to publish bold proposals for public consultation."

### Contact

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### Notes

APPG for SEND report Spring 2021: "Forgotten. Left behind. Overlooked. The experiences of young people with SEND and their educational transitions during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020"

[APPG for SEND Report Spring 2021.pdf \(naht.org.uk\)](#)