

24 April 2024



Rt Hon Sir Alok Sharma KCMG MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Sir Alok

High Needs Block Funding

I am writing to request your support on the critical issue of funding for the High Needs Block. This funding supports the provision for pupils and students with SEND who require additional resources to participate in education and learning, from their early years to age 25 in schools and colleges.

The funding is currently insufficient for the numbers of children and young people needing additional support, as well as the complexity of their need. This is putting considerable additional pressure on schools and educators.

We request that significant additional baseline High Needs funding is provided, with substantial additional SEND capital funding, over and above what has already been promised. We also request the removal of historic inequalities in the National Funding Formula, which means some schools receive far less funding per pupil than others.

Our education system needs considerable investment in SEND provision across all local authority areas. Prior to the recent budget, I understand a cross-party group of MPs called on the Chancellor to invest heavily in special educational needs after the latest figures showed an additional £4.6bn was required each year to meet the current need in SEND support. Members of Parliament have backed a campaign by local authority education funding group f40, stating the Government's Change Programme on SEND will take too long to implement and does not come with the additional funding and resources to make it happen.

This figure is backed by the National Education Union (NEU), National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), and County Councils Network (CCN). It is based purely on current need and does not allow for additional increases in the future. It also does not take into consideration the increasing complexity of needs in pupils, especially for those that struggled during the pandemic.

It is also understood that significant extra SEND capital funding is also required, above what has already been promised, to help provide additional SEND school places in every local authority area. At present, a lack of locally-provided places means many children are being sent to expensive independent SEND schools, which can double the cost to local authorities.

Due to a lack of funding and capacity, the majority of local authorities have deficit SEND budgets, with latest estimates concluding that the cumulative local authority High Needs budget deficit across England will be over £3.5bn by March 2025. Unless dealt with quickly, this pressure will contribute to the risk of more Local Authorities issuing Section 114 notices.

I urge you to speak to colleagues in Westminster to assist in helping us provide a better service to those young people in need of additional support in Education.

Yours sincerely



Jeff Brooks
Acting Leader of the Council