

Our ref: AW/KH
Your ref:
Please contact: Cllr Wilkinson
Email: councillor.awilkinson@calderdale.gov.uk
Date: 28th July 2025

Children and Young People's Services

Calderdale Council
Town Hall
Crossley Street
Halifax
HX1 1UJ

Dear Cllr Prashad

Re: Response to question from Council Meeting held on 23rd July 2025

Question:

Bearing in mind that major announcements regarding SEND are expected from the government later this year, would the Cabinet member outline the issues of concern that have been raised by members or officers of this Council to ministers or officials in the Department for Education?

Response:

In October 2024 all Directors of Children's Services in the Yorkshire & Humber wrote to their MP's expressing their concerns about the SEND system. These concerns were:

1. More children and young people than ever before are being identified as having SEND. The year-on-year increases in EHCPs have not been below 9% since 2016. This increase has outstripped the rise in the overall population. The increase in the identification of SEND appears to have been greater in England than in other large European nations. The increase in EHCPs is not evenly distributed across all types of need. Pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, or speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) account for 88% of the total increase in pupils with EHCPs between 2015/16 and 2023/24.
2. There are more children and young people than ever before whose needs are not being met in mainstream education, and thus require specialist provision. There has been a steep increase in the number of pupils placed in special schools and in independent and non-maintained special schools.
3. More money than ever before is being invested in SEND, but it is significantly less than what is actually being spent by LAs, health services and education settings. High needs funding has risen but is not sufficient to meet demand. Estimates suggest that the cumulative high needs deficit has risen from £300 million in 2018/19 to £4 billion

currently. Half of all local authorities say that they would become insolvent within one year if the statutory override (currently in place for high needs funding) were removed.

4. Despite rapidly rising expenditure, outcomes of children and young people with SEND and families' day-to-day experiences of the system have not improved. There is little evidence to suggest that increased identification of SEND, increased placements in specialist provision, and increased expenditure have delivered better outcomes for children and young people, and better experiences for families. Data shows that despite there being a far greater proportion of young people with an EHCP, the educational outcomes are now far worse than they were 10 years ago, when proportionally far fewer young people had an EHCP.
5. The SEND tribunal system is more adversarial now than before the reforms and needs to be reviewed as the volume of appeals is leading to substantial delays and backlogs in the system.

Question:

Specifically, has adequate guidance been received from the government to enable this Council to press ahead with the construction of its own SEND school at the Threeways site?

Response:

The Cabinet has committed capital and land to open a new primary and secondary special school on the Threeways site in North Halifax. Councils are not able to open a new school - this has to be done by establishing a new academy school, called the 'free school presumption route'. So the application for this has been submitted to the Department for Education for approval and we are awaiting their response.

Question:

Has the issue of independent providers of SEND education being able to set their own fees been raised with government?

Response:

This issue has been raised with the government, and we have written to our local MPs.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Adam Wilkinson
Portfolio Holder - Children and Young People's Services