

Overview from the Department of Education

SEN AND DISABILITY GREEN PAPER: Government calls for Views

Date: 10 September 2010

Ministers are considering how to ensure parents can send their child with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities to their preferred educational setting – whether that is a mainstream school, special school or an academy.

The plans were outlined today as Children's Minister Sarah Teather called on parents, charities, teachers and LAs to contribute to the Government's SEN Green Paper.

The paper, to be published in the autumn, aims to improve radically the entire SEN system and will cover issues including school choice, early identification and assessment, funding and family support.

Ministers are considering a range of options, including how to

- give parents a choice of educational settings that can meet their child's needs
- transform funding for children with SEN and disabilities and their families, making the system more transparent and cost-effective while maintaining a high quality of service
- prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and involve parents in any decisions about the future of special schools
- support young people with SEN and disabilities post-16 to help them succeed after education
- improve diagnosis and assessment to identify children with additional needs earlier.

Sarah Teather said:

Children with special educational needs and disabilities should have the same opportunities as other children, but the current system is so adversarial that too often this doesn't happen. I want parents, teachers, charities, teaching unions and local authorities to come forward with the changes they think are needed to make the system better for children with SEN and their families.

Parents should be in control of their child's education and future. Importantly, they must be involved in discussions and decisions about the support they need rather than feel they have to battle the system. I want to make it easier for parents to choose where their child is educated.

I want to look at every aspect of SEN – from assessment and identification to funding and education. We need to strip away the

cumbersome bureaucracy but ensure there is a better, more comprehensive service for families.

To support fundamental changes to the SEN and disability system, ministers are looking at how to identify children's needs earlier, develop fairer and more transparent funding arrangements, and streamline assessments to make life easier for parents and families.

Ministers are seeking a wide range of views to help them develop proposals for consultation that are practical to implement, reduce bureaucracy and build on current effective practice as well as make the most of the available funds.

Alongside the launch of the Call for Views, the Children's Minister today confirmed the end of the national disabled children's services parental survey. Only a limited number of parents could respond to the survey and ministers want all parents to have the opportunity to get involved in how local services are designed and delivered. The Government welcomes views on how to strengthen the process for ensuring parents' views affect the services their family receives locally.