



SUPPORTING
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INFLUENCING

Young Disabled Musicians Responses to the open Consultation on SEND reform: putting children and young people first

EASY DIGEST SUMMARY



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Q1) How can we make sure children, young people and their families have a genuine say in these decisions?

- Resources should be available for all to learn about the process for support.
- Prioritise direct and accessible communication with children, young people and their families, ensuring their experiences and needs shape decision-making from the outset.
- Collaboration with SEND specialists and organisations can help interpret and embed these insights into evidence-based practice.
- Families should be offered the opportunity to choose what is best for their child, not what is best for the setting, school, or organisation.
- Employ a SEND champion per local area that parents and young people can engage with.

Young people should have the opportunity if they wish to experience a setting or project, or trial a way of working, before committing or making a decision. There should be no assumptions made; Just because they ‘coped’ with a setting, this does not mean it’s their first choice or that they liked it or felt safe.

Q7) How do you think early years settings, schools, and colleges can best support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people?

- **Personalised support plan:** Each child or young person with SEND should have a tailored plan based on their individual strengths, needs and access requirements.
- **Whole-setting approach to wellbeing:** Embed emotional literacy, safe spaces, sensory regulation tools and trauma-informed practice across the environment and all teaching spaces.
- **Strong key adult relationships:** a consistent, trusted adult/s that rotate on a monthly basis to reduce co-dependency, improve confidence, engagement and emotional regulation.
- **Reasonable adjustments:** flexible timetables, quiet areas, sensory adaptations and assistive technology.
- **Family collaboration:** regular communication ensures consistent strategies between home and setting.
- **Early intervention:** access to counselling, educational psychology and wellbeing programmes.

*"A
'one size
fits all'
approach
does not
work."*

Q7) How do you think early years settings, schools, and colleges can best support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people? (cont.)

- Openly discuss mental health and wellbeing; actively working to minimise stigma in education environments.
- Take part in initiatives such as Mental Health Awareness Week.
- Providing safe spaces for open conversation and ensuring access to appropriate support.
- Ensure staff are actively trained on mental health, neurodiversity, and SEND. The training should be regular.
- Look into ‘anti-behaviourism’ policies.

“All children should be treated as individuals, and when considering a child’s well-being, adaptations should be put in place to respond to needs as soon as they arise. There shouldn’t be crisis management here.”

Q12) What are the most important issues for national training to cover, to help support children and young people with SEND?

- Neurodiversity and disability awareness
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Mental health awareness and training
- Adaptive teaching strategies
- Legal responsibilities under the Equality Act and SEND Code of Practice
- Effective communication with parents and guardians
- Inclusivity: helping children and young people to engage and feel included in settings beyond a SEND environment

"I would like training to ensure each school builds a register of teachers with SEND themselves. As a person with ASD, if I have an issue I would like to talk to a teacher who has ASD. It's getting the best qualified person to help and that's not always qualifications, but people who have been through it before."

Q16) How can we ensure Individual Support Plans are clear, concise and practical for professionals to use?

- Limit to 2–3 pages (maximum)
- Clear sections: needs, outcomes, strategies, responsible staff, review date
- Written in plain English
- Include child/young person voices
- Visual summary page for quick reference
- Reviewed termly and updated promptly
- Consistent format across services

“During my secondary school, I had an EHCP and found it difficult to read and understand, as some of the language was not accessible. Using more digestible and comprehensible language would make Individual Support Plans clearer and more practical to understand by the individuals and families they are designed for.”

Q17) How can we best support transition for young people with SEND, so that they are well supported into post-16 provision and further education, training or employment?

- Begin planning by Year 9 at the latest, allowing them to be a part of the process as early as possible
- Include careers advice tailored to SEND
- Supported internships and work experience with a separate pot of money for access needs
- Transition visits and phased starts
- Clear sharing of support plans with colleges
- Independent travel training where appropriate

"Transition from child to adult services should not feel rushed, and support should not be dropped."

Q17) How can we best support transition for young people with SEND, so that they are well supported into post-16 provision and further education, training or employment? (cont)

- *Signposting to relevant specialist institutions and charities that can support continued development post-16.*
- Give the resources to develop their own access document/ISP

"I'd like to see a national IT system that allows education establishments or employers to download my Individual Support Plan and see my history and be able to contact the relevant person if required to find out about me the individual.

I certainly would not like to start explaining at the age of 17 to someone new, the difficulties I had when I was a 10 year old. If this information is recorded at the time, it should be available for the relevant parties to see."

Q27) What information and support do parents need to make a decision about which setting will be best for their child?

- Transparent data on outcomes
- Clear explanation of support available in each setting
- Visits and open days
- Honest discussion of strengths and limitations
- Peer support networks
- Information about transport and funding
- Encouragement and resources for parents to find the best setting for their child, under recommendation or consultation of stakeholders to the child
- A named individual to communicate with, including asking questions

Q27) What information and support do parents need to make a decision about which setting will be best for their child? (cont.)

- Access to a specialist would also help clarify any questions or concerns they may have. This information and support should be easy to access and available early in the process
- Information about finance and travel provision

“For me, what was happening out of school hours was as important as the school lessons. Being a musician (drummer) the ability to have different groups and bands available in after school clubs where I can express myself and be given a more of a free reign with what to play and how was important.”

“Meeting at the setting, speaking to staff at the setting and given the opportunity to speak to current parents who use the setting.”

Q32) We propose that every school becomes part of a local SEND group. Do you agree that this proposal aligns with our aim for all schools to be part of high-quality, community-based trusts?

"Yes!

As this could foster stronger connections and awareness of SEND, allowing individuals to share strategies and experiences in the field.

This would support collaboration and more consistent high-quality practice across schools and positively impacting the community."

Q36) How can we build stronger collaboration and a culture of improvement through local SEND strategic plans?

- Co-production with families and young people
- Shared measurable targets
- Annual public reporting
- Cross-sector leadership boards
- Joint training programmes.
- Encouragement to build collaboration and improvement across the entire world to provide SEND care through, easily accessible resources e.g. a public online database

"Put young people at the centre of this."

Q37) What information, advice and guidance can best support children, young people and their families to ensure greater fairness across the system?

- Clear national standards
- Accessible 'Local Offer' websites
- Independent SEND advice services
- Easy to understand documentation offered in numerous languages and formats
- Advocacy for families who need support navigating the system
- Ease of communication and access to resources
- Clear lines of legal responsibility for a child
- Guidance on how everyone can contribute to the system equitably
- Young people steering groups that genuinely impact and change things

Q37) What information, advice and guidance can best support children, young people and their families to ensure greater fairness across the system? (cont.)

- All information needs to be standardised, where young people aren't pulled in multiple directions or told completely different things between them.

“I can do anything a non-SEND person can do both physically and mentally. It just takes me longer sometimes to verbalise my thoughts and opinions and to speak up in front of strangers. Everyone is different and every case of SEND is different, it doesn't mean I am unable to take part in the same things that everyone else does.”

“Just knowing where to turn to, to ask for help. Also, not having to keep filling in forms over and over again every time you encounter a new provider/setting/council/NHS etc.”



Thoughts of one young person: interview with Sarah

When Sarah was interviewed about the consultation questions, she commented that she didn't know if she was 'the best person to answer'. She felt she knew a little about some sections but had to search the internet to understand some questions.

The proposals of changes were not clear; reading the questions led to Sarah feeling 'out of her depth', and she reflected that this may prevent others from responding and lead to isolating many relevant responses from young people.

Decision making needs to be more accessible

Sarah said; "you don't have to feel like an education expert to be involved, the language and format need to be accessible, including informal conversations and discussion with other people."

Treat people as individuals

Every individual has their own SEND access requirements; it would help if the DfE could provide examples of high-quality evidence and best practice for us to reflect on.



Thoughts of one young person: interview with Sarah

“I wish that understanding SEND needs was part of teacher training”

The best training and support

It comes back to training and awareness. When we consider what a lot of educators are up against; some workshops are not going to make them experts on all disabilities. But I wish that understanding SEND needs was part of teacher training.

Some of the best teachers are the ones that recognise that every person in their class has their own needs and they come together to play to everyone's strength.

How to work with young people with SEND should be woven through initial teacher training Programmes.



Thoughts of one young person: interview with Sarah

“I wish that understanding SEND needs was part of teacher training”

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity, as an example, is such a broad topic that you could spend at least a day training on this and still have many other disabilities and special educational needs to learn about. Rather than just focussing on one area of SEND, focus on the person and try to figure out how everyone can interact.

School training

There needs to be more training within the school environment to foster the culture where the whole staff feel like a team and they're all working together in the best interests of all the students.



Thoughts of one young person: interview with Sarah

Support mental health and well-being

“The whole education system just needs pulling apart and building back up.

I wanted to be a music teacher but looked at the training and thought I can't. I looked at school placements, and had the extra work of explaining my needs and making arrangements, and my confidence plummeted.”



Thoughts of one young person: interview with Sarah

Supporting families

Support has got to be person centred.

Support plans need to be created by families and include their voice.

Support plans need to use language that anyone can immediately understand.

Make sure young people get the skills needed for further education and work.

“A lot of focus is on academia and neglect the life skills needed. My social experiences only really developed post 16 and I personally wish there was greater emphasis on supporting social skills and development at a younger age. Make sure that the different options available are very clearly explained. This is a whole community effort, not just parents or SENCO.”

Role of local authority and support services

Someone within the local authority could meet young people and learn their needs and pair this with understanding providers around them to signpost families to suitable settings and how to access advocacy services.

Information needs to be clear and concise and only contain the essential information.



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