Solving the Send Crisis

Takeaways from the Education Select Commitee

Agilisys Transform

Solving the Send Crisis

Our team attended an energising two-hour call to evidence on the SEND crisis, hosted by the Education Select Committee.

The session brought together a diverse range of voices, including educators, policymakers, SEND coordinators, and, most moving of all, young people and parents directly experiencing the SEND system. Their stories were incredibly uplifting and served as a powerful reminder of why this work matters.

Our main takeaway points:

- The urgent need to elevate SEND support to a statutory standard equivalent to EHCPs

- The heavy administrative burden that delays EHCP approvals and how it affects support quality

- Uplifting personal accounts from SEND young people and parents that highlight real challenges and hopes

- The potential for digital tools, including generative AI, to streamline bureaucracy while preserving the human touch

- The critical role of SEND Coordinators and why they should be integrated into leadership teams
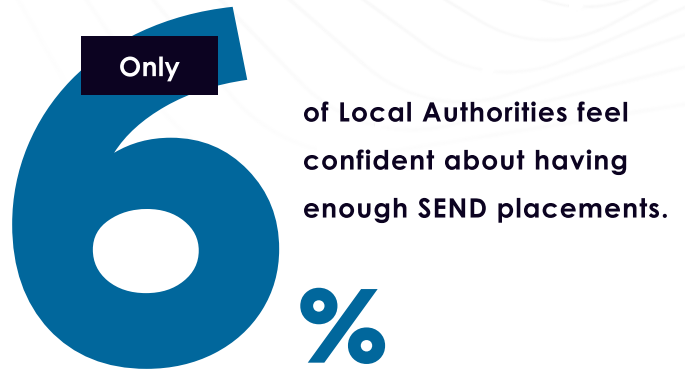
Rethinking SEND Support

A major theme of the session was the need to elevate SEND support to the same statutory status as EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans). Speakers argued that the creation and maintenance of EHCPs should be held to a high standard—one that goes beyond merely ticking statutory boxes to truly meeting the individual needs of children. Proposals included developing standard formats and structures, providing clearer government guidance, and integrating SEND support seamlessly into every aspect of education. This shift is essential for ensuring that every child's needs are met in a consistent and comprehensive manner.

Tackling Bureaucracy and Delays

Many participants highlighted the overwhelming administrative burden that causes lengthy delays in EHCP approvals, ultimately compromising the quality of support. Schools and local authorities are often caught in a cycle of provisional, patchwork provisions while awaiting full EHCPs. Educators shared heartfelt accounts of how bureaucracy forces them to focus on paperwork rather than the individual needs of their students.

and ensuring clarity and consistency. Such tools could enable educators to devote more time to meaningful interactions and personalised support, rather than being mired in red tape.

Only 6%

of Local Authorities feel confident about having enough SEND placements.

"The SEND system is not meeting the needs of young people but rather meeting the bureaucratic needs of creating EHC plans."

There was considerable interest in exploring how digital tools - such as generative AI - could help streamline the EHCP process. Imagine a digital platform that assists in drafting and verifying EHCPs, reducing manual workload,

The Heart of Inclusion: Listening to Those Affected

One of the most inspiring aspects of the session was hearing directly from SEND young people and their parents. Their firsthand accounts of navigating the SEND system were both eye-opening and uplifting, underscoring the need for a system that goes beyond bureaucratic formalities to genuinely support their well-being and educational journeys. The discussions emphasised that inclusion should be a fundamental part of the school ethos—not merely an add-on—ensuring that every child receives both academic and emotional support.

"Unless we tackle the bureaucracy and admin burden of creating EHC plans and look at ways AI can help create EHC plans, we will not establish long lasting improvements in SEND provision."

The Role of SEND Coordinators: A Call for Leadership

A particularly poignant discussion focused on the role of SEND Coordinators (SENDCOs). Despite the critical nature of their work, many SENDCOs are not currently included in senior leadership teams—a situation that was widely criticised during the session. Their roles, encompassing everything from organising support to providing pastoral care, are too important to be sidelined. The consensus was clear: SENDCOs should be recognised as strategic leaders within their schools. Integrating them into leadership teams would not only validate their contributions but also enable them to drive a whole-school approach to inclusion more effectively.

Some speakers also highlighted the potential for digital tools, including generative AI, to support SENDCOs. These tools could offer data-driven insights and automate routine tasks, allowing SENDCOs to focus more on strategic decision-making and less on administrative burdens.

A Path Forward

The session concluded with a clear call to action. With only 6% of Local Authorities feeling confident about having enough SEND placements, it is evident that the system requires significant reform. The way forward involves not only reducing bureaucracy and standardising processes but also ensuring that every decision is made with the child's best interests at heart. The integration of digital tools offers a promising avenue—but must always be balanced with the human touch that is so critical in education. Our goal should be to create a system where technology complements human expertise, streamlines administration, and ultimately frees educators to focus on nurturing every child's potential.

Reflecting on this vibrant session, I left feeling both challenged and inspired. The passion of the speakers, particularly the uplifting voices of young people and their families, reinforced that solving the SEND crisis requires bold ideas, a willingness to embrace change, and a steadfast commitment to putting people first.

Let's continue this important conversation and work together to create an education system that is inclusive, efficient, and truly supportive of every child.