White Paper: Every child achieving and thriving

Ros Cook - Head of Services
Liam Ryan - SENDIASS Manager

What is Amaze?

- **Amaze** is a charity started by parent carers nearly 30 years ago
- Services for parent carers and for children and young people (ages 0-25), with **Special Educational Needs** and **Disabilities** (**SEND**)
- Majority of staff and volunteers are parent carers or have neuro-differences or disabilities
- We work across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex
- Services for families but working in partnership with local authorities and health

What will be covered today:

- Information about the government's **proposals for change**
- An overview of the **proposed SEND reforms**
- How to be involved in the **consultation** to provide your views on the proposals
- Your questions – you can **add them in the Chat** as we go

What is this White Paper on SEND reform?

A White Paper gives details of a government proposal. The '**Every child achieving and thriving**' white paper was published in February 2026. It proposes ways to **address inequality** faced by many children and young people. It includes possible changes to **education and accessing services**. There are **significant changes proposed** for **children and young people (CYP)** with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The White Paper has seven chapters

1. Services working together to support children and families
2. Better experience at school
3. **Including every child (contains important SEND proposals)**
4. Working together with children and families
5. Supporting teachers
6. Schools working together
7. New and better ways of working

Why make changes?

Many families are unhappy with the current SEND provision and processes.
Some of the most frequently raised topics with Amaze SENDIASS are:

- How do I get the right support for my child?
- Getting an EHCP seems the only way to get support for my child
- I need to appeal the local authority's decision not to assess my child for an EHCP
- I don't think my child's needs can be met in a mainstream school

The Department of Education has concerns too:

- Families often feel they have to fight for provision
- Waiting lists for services
- Fewer than 20% of CYP with SEND achieve a strong pass (grade 5+) in Maths or English GCSE
- CYP with SEND have better achievement in mainstream schools
- Nearly 1/3 of YP with SEND are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Need for an inclusive system where there are the same levels of ambition for ALL CYP

Chapters 1. Services working together to support children and families

- Improved education, health and council services with better joint working
- **Best Start Family hubs with a dedicated SEND practitioner**
- Free breakfast clubs in every primary school
- **‘Mission Coastal’ to improve outcomes for YP in disadvantaged coastal areas**
- Education settings publish an Inclusion Strategy and are held accountable for how they spend inclusion and SEND funding
- **School to work collaboratively with other local schools to improve inclusive provision**

Chapter 2. Better experiences at school

- Improved transition at every stage for CYP: nursery/primary/secondary/college
- **Improved literacy, oracy and numeracy**
- Learning that prepares CYP for adulthood
- **Opportunities for additional activities at school**
- High quality careers advice and work experience
- **Work-focused ‘V Levels’ and Level 2 pathways to employment and further study**
- Improved outcomes for CYP with SEND and other disadvantaged pupil groups
- **National Inclusion Standards – digital library of identification tools and provision for CYP with SEND**

Chapter 3. Including every child – inclusive Universal offer for all CYP

Current provision: Education settings have a wide range of strategies and resources to meet the needs of all CYP. It can be difficult to hold school to account on inclusion

Proposal:

- Universal Offer ensures high-quality, timely **support for all CYP** and improves inclusion
- Working in partnership with families
- Creating a safe, respectful culture that promotes belonging and attendance.
- **OFSTED will assess the inclusivity** of settings – can lead to new school management if not meeting standards.

Positive: Aim for early intervention and high-quality teaching and learning for all CYP. **All aspects of school life must be inclusive**.

Concern: How can we ensure that CYP are moved on to more targeted support when they need to? Resources needed to rebuild relationships and trust in the SEND system.

Chapter 3. Including every child – layers of support

Current provision:

- Universal, SEN Support and EHC plans. Only EHCPs are legal documents.

Proposal:

- New national inclusion standards. Legal duties for mainstream inclusion.
- Universal provision for all CYP or **Individual Support Plan** for CYP who need additional support on one of three layers. CYP can start at any of the layers:

1. **Targeted**: for CYP with 'commonly occurring' conditions. High quality support on demand. Small groups, classroom, inclusion base

2. **Targeted plus**: for CYP with less common needs requiring specialist input or with more complex needs. Access to **Experts at Hand** (professionals available to the school) and **inclusion bases** in their mainstream school. Access to time limited alternative provision or specialist setting where required

3. **Specialist support**: for CYP with complex needs. Use of **Specialist Provision Packages (SPPs)**. **EHCP only available to CYP with SPPs**. EHCP needed to access special school or a specialist base within a mainstream school

Positive: Reinforces fact that all learning should be individualised.

Concern: Needs clearer explanation of how CYP will be identified as needing a particular layer of support. How easy will it be to move between layers? What is the definition of "complex needs" which will be used to determine if SSPs and EHCPs? Will there still be the right to request an EHC Needs Assessment at any time?

Chapter 3. Including every child – Individual Support Plans

Current:

- Needs, outcomes, provision and progress is recorded in different ways and reviews may be irregular

Proposal:

- **Individual Support Plans (ISPs)** for every CYP with SEND**.**
- From 2029, **co-produced** to identify CYP needs, barriers to learning, provision and reasonable adjustments
- Statutory duty for **nurseries, schools and colleges to create and maintain** these digital ISPs so that support can be quickly adjusted to meet need.
- ISPs will be **reviewed at least annually**
- If ISP is not working or is not being delivered, parent carers can use school complaints process and then go to an **independent panel**, if necessary

Positive:

- The ISP travels between settings so that information sharing about SEND needs and provision is improved
- The ISP can be **reviewed at any time** so that changes can be made when needed.

Concern:

- No details on how parent carers or young people will **hold school to account** about the creation and maintenance of the ISP
- No proposed legal duty for settings **to deliver the support** recorded on the ISP
- How to ensure that **ISP reviews** are thorough and person-centred?

3. Including every child – Specialist Provision Packages and EHCPs

Current provision:

- Local authorities impose their own rules around eligibility for assessment
- EHCPs should be person-centred but may depend on what is available locally
- LAs use different EHCP formats, adding to difficulty when CYP moves out of area

Proposal:

- To provide consistent, high-quality support for CYP **with the most complex needs**. EHCPs only for CYP requiring **Specialist Provision Packages (SPPs).**
- Seven **areas of need** (rather than diagnosis) will each have a list of possible provision from which some provision will be selected for each CYP. Provision can be selected from more than one of the seven packages. The **SPPs inform the EHCP** which will all use the same template
- EHCPs **reviewed at the end of a phase** of education but the ISP, used for the day-to-day provision, would be reviewed at least termly.

Positive: Standardised packages and EHCP templates should improve experience of CYP moving to a new local authority or setting. The provision packages to choose from are designed by experts with parent carer testing and review by a national panel. CYP progress and provision monitored more regularly

Concern: What is the definition of "the most complex needs"? Can provision be added if it is not on an approved list of provision? Families are not involved in the creation of their own SPP – risk that provision essential to individual may be missed. How will Health and Social Care be integrated into SSPs? Will losing the annual review of the EHCP weaken its aims?

Chapter 3. Including every child – Specialist settings

Current provision: CYP with an EHCP can request mainstream, specialist settings or alternative provision.

Proposal:

- CYP with a specialist provision package and an EHCP can learn in specialist schools, alternative provision, mainstream schools or mainstream schools with specialist bases
- The local authority (LA) will identify settings that can deliver the individual SSP and **provide a list of these settings that families can choose from**
- Families will have **the right to pick another setting** if they are not happy with those on the list
- Reform of independent special schools – new standards and price bands

Positive:

- Having a pre-approved list of settings may reduce the long wait for individual school consultations faced by some families
- As SSP has already been agreed, the setting must deliver it

Concern:

- Possible delays if families want a setting not on the LA list
- How difficult will it be to choose the local mainstream for CYP with EHCPs if the school is not on the LA list?

3. Including every child – transition to the new system

From 2029/30

- All **CYP with an EHCP will be assessed at the end of each education phase** to determine what is needed for their next phase e.g. primary to secondary). If CYP needs a specialist package, their **EHCP will be updated** with details from the SPP. If CYP can be supported in an inclusive mainstream, they will be **moved over to an ISP**
- **CYP transitioning from the current system will still be able to request their next setting**
- All **CYP currently in Yr3 or above** will retain their EHCP until at least age 16.
- **CYP currently in Yr 2** or below will be reassessed at transition between Yrs 6-7.
- Those **already in special school in Sept 2029** will be able to stay in special school to complete their education

Chapter 3. Including every child – appeals

Proposals:

- Improved access to SENDIASS for families through investment
- More **emphasis on faster mediation** to resolve matters. Improved LA compliance with their duties
- Tribunal will be an important legal backstop for key decisions about EHCPs and Specialist Support Packages
- Tribunal will **no longer have the power to name a school**. It would only be able to **require the LA to reassess**

Tribunal Appeals will be about:

- Refusal to assess
- Whether EHCP is needed and which SPP is needed
- Which school or other setting is needed
- Decision to cease an EHCP

Chapter 3. Including every child – Experts at hand

Current provision:

- Some specialist services are available to schools but impacted by school budgets
- Some services are overstretched – leading to long wait times

Proposal:

- increased funding to **improve access to 'Experts at hand'**
- By 2029, provision will be equivalent to **40 days for a primary** school and **160 days for a secondary**

Positive: improved access and reduced wait times for specialist services including Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Educational Psychologists.

Concern: there needs to be an increase in recruitment, training and retention of specialist staff to ensure that appropriate numbers are available to be experts at hand

Chapter 3. Including every child – Inclusion bases

Current provision:

- A small number of schools have a SEN Unit, Resourced or Pupil Support Unit Provision

Proposal:

- **Inclusion bases** offering specialist teaching or targeted support in mainstream schools and colleges
- School-funded **Support Bases** for Targeted Support
- Local Authority-funded **Specialist Bases** for Specialist Support

Positive: a flexible space available for small group work, a calm area for CYP struggling with busy school environment, delivering an adapted curriculum or personal care

Concern: risk of segregation rather than inclusion; can they replicate a special school offer?

Chapter 4: Withdrawn to engaging

Current situation: 1 in 5 CYP are absent for a day or more every fortnight. Teachers report seven out of every thirty minutes of teaching time is lost to "misbehaviour".

Proposal:

- **Create calm, safe classrooms** to improve attendance, engagement with learning and improve attainment. **Clear explanation of what school should be doing** and **what is expected of parent carers**.
- Promotion of **rewards and recognition systems** for behaviour alongside sanctions
- **Suspensions completed on site**. Schoolwork set for excluded CYP to address lost learning.
- National guidance – **practical examples of reasonable adjustments** that school can make to support CYP

Positive:

- Online guidance for parent carers on how to support learning at home, transitions , sleep, online safety, behaviour and screen time
- Focus on understanding CYP needs early and putting the right support in place
- SEND reforms intended to meet CYP needs, which should improve attendance
- Acknowledgement that inclusive behaviour policies should understand a child's needs and address issues which impact on behaviour

Concern:

- Importance of the delivery of high-quality school provision to ensure partnership working with parent carers to avoid blaming families
- Some children see schoolwork as school-based only. How will this be addressed in parent carer guidance on home study?
- No timeline on the production of practical guidance on reasonable adjustments
- What sanctions may be imposed on parent carers who are not doing what is "expected" of them?

Chapter 4. Withdrawn to engaging

Working together with children and families

Current provision: many children move between different settings, e.g. to alternative provision, or managed move to another school which risks them missing parts of their education or not having their needs met.

Proposal:

- Checking that CYP are doing well at school, and they feel that they belong
- Better **information for parent carers about each school**
- Unlawful to exclude a pupil because school feels unable to meet SEND needs
- **Pupil movement will be better monitored**
- Simplified school complaints process

Positive: Parent carers better informed about each school. SEND specialist to sit on all complaints panels.

Concern: How will the use of part-time timetables be addressed where schools say they can't meet needs?

No detail of the power of the Independent Panel that families can go to if they exhaust the school complaints process.

Chapter 5: Support and investment in high quality staff

Proposals:

- 6500 more teachers
- Improved **teacher training** on SEND and inclusion
- Support to headteachers and others running schools
- Well paid **non-teaching staff** with opportunities for training
- Mentoring and training to develop excellence in leadership for schools
- Large **investment in building** maintenance and renewal

Chapter 6: Collaboration between schools and other partners

Proposals:

- Schools sharing resources and best practice in '**trusts**' (with possibility of local authorities creating a trust)
- Inspections to monitor how trusts are performing. This will lead to a reduction of school-level inspection
- Annual parent carer forums for trusts

Chapter 7. Enabling innovation and ambition

Proposals:

- **Sharing innovative work** nationally so that all schools can benefit
- Using **more technology** in schools with **training** for staff and CYP
- **Prepare CYP** for a world where technologies such as AI will be essential
- Complementing face to face teaching with **safe and effective AI tools**

Having your say about the proposals

You are encouraged to **give your views** on the government proposals

You may wish to read the full White Paper or the easy-read version of the White Paper

Give your views and share your ideas by 11.59pm on 18th May 2026

Online: https://consult.education.gov.uk/send-strategy-division/send-reform-putting-children-and-young-people-firs/

By email: SENDreform.CONSULTATION@education.gov.uk

By post: SENDAP Reform, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Questions from Chat

Stay in touch with Amaze

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (**SENDIASS**)
Phone: 01273 772289
Email: sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk

Online registration form www.amazesussex.org.uk/register-as-a-parent-carer

Information and details of Amaze services: www.amazesussex.org.uk

Sign up to the Amaze newsletter: https://amazesussex.org.uk/news/newsletter/