

IPPR INCLUSION TASKFORCE: TERMS OF REFERENCE

July 2025

CONTEXT

1. The education system is not working for all children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is agreement in the sector that reform is necessary and urgent. The immediate priority is to build consensus on how this change can be achieved, enabling children, their families, and education providers to collaborate for better outcomes.
2. The current system is lose, lose, lose – for children, their families and education professions.
 - a. **Outcomes for children with SEND are poor:** Only 22 per cent of children on SEN Support achieve a grade 5 or higher in English and Maths, compared to the national average of 46 per cent. Children with SEND are also struggling with school engagement; half of all suspensions last year were issued to children with identified additional needs.
 - b. **The system is slow and adversarial for families:** Fewer than half of all education health and care plans (EHCPs) are issued within the statutory 20 weeks and parental satisfaction is declining, with tribunal cases increasing by over 180 per cent since 2016.
 - c. **Professionals report a lack of resources and confidence in meeting special educational needs:** Nine out of 10 teachers say they need more help supporting pupils with special educational needs. Leaders report frustrations with inadequate funding, patchy external support services, and barriers to establishing flexible, pragmatic and evidence-based support for children.
3. While identification of SEND has risen, overall rates are still lower than they were in 2010. What has changed is a dramatic doubling of EHCPs over 10 years, to 5.3 per cent in 2024, up from 2.8 per cent in 2014. This has led to a 50 per cent increase in the proportion of children educated in special schools, up from 1.3 per cent in 2019 to 2.1 per cent today.
4. The government is committed to reform of the education system to improve outcomes for children with SEND and we are expecting a schools white paper in the autumn setting out reform proposals.

PURPOSE

5. The taskforce will provide expert advice and sector leadership to support the development of a set of principles for SEND reform that deliver a positive vision for the future of the education, health and care system for children with additional needs.

SCOPE

6. The taskforce will support the delivery of a 'pathway to reform' paper. The taskforce will:
 - a. **establish shared principles** for reforming the SEND and wider education system that command broad support across children, their families, schools, local authorities and sector organisations
 - b. **build consensus** around principles for reform and the changes required to transform outcomes for children and lead public discussion on the changes
 - c. **advise on implementation approaches** that maximise the chances of successful change across the school system.

IN SCOPE

7. The taskforce will consider:
 - a. evidence base for earlier intervention and support, including in the early years and post 16
 - b. the process for allocating resources and funding
 - c. school and college organised SEN support
 - d. local authority organised EHCPs
 - e. school accountability and outcomes measurements.

ACTIVITIES

8. The taskforce will:
 - a. hear research, evidence and experiences from children, families, the education, health and care sector and the third sector, via desk research and workshops
 - b. develop set of shared principles, areas for change and implementation possibilities
 - c. support an informed public discussion on the choices and trade-offs of reform
 - d. draw on the findings and experience of expert groups, including the Department for Education's SEND Inclusion in education expert group.

MEMBERSHIP

9. The taskforce will be chaired by **Geoff Barton**, former general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders.
10. IPPR will provide the secretariat for the taskforce.

11. Up to 10 additional members will be appointed via agreement between the chair and secretariat.

OUTPUTS

12. IPPR will publish a 'pathway to reform' paper in early October. The taskforce will provide support, challenge and expertise in the development of the 'pathway to reform' paper, but the final paper will represent the independent views of IPPR.
13. The taskforce will lead the public debate and engage in discussion in advance of the paper's publication.