



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Carrie Britton and Sarah Thomas
National Network of Parent Carer Forums
209-211 City Road
London
EC1V 1JN

12 July 2013

Dear Carrie and Sarah,

As we approach the summer break I wanted to take the opportunity to thank the National Network of Parent Carer Forums and the parent forums which it represents for all of your hard work. It was a pleasure to meet members of the NNPCF Steering Group in June and thank you again for inviting me. I was impressed by the examples of parent participation that the Steering Group gave me when we met and I was struck by how in tune you are with what is happening on the ground in your own areas and across the country.

I value the partnership that the Government has with the National Network. The recently extended contract that the Department holds with Contact a Family recognises the important role that NNPCF plays as a representative voice of parent carer forums nationally. Through your involvement in the SEN reforms, both locally in pathfinder areas and nationally through our pathfinder and advisory groups and the development of the Code of Practice, you demonstrate the effectiveness of co-production. I welcome your approach, because it's by working together that we can get the very most from the opportunity that the Children and Families Bill provides to make a lasting change for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

We have now completed the House of Commons stages of the Children and Families Bill and the Bill is now being debated in the Lords. There has been very careful scrutiny of the Bill. The debates in the Bill Committee and in the House have been challenging and constructive. As the reforms continue to develop through the legislative process, pathfinder learning and the new SEN Code of Practice it is important that we can continue our constructive dialogue.

As you know, I have committed to maintaining the protections in the current system, but the system is also changing – so that protections for parents are strengthened and so parents and young people are placed at the very heart of the system, both individually through person centred planning and strategically at each step of the reform process.

The NNPCF has a unique reach to parent carers throughout the country through parent carer forums; please do keep me informed where you are coming across issues that parents are concerned about. NNPCF and parent carer forums have a really important role to play in helping parents and professionals understand the SEN reforms and my officials will be working with the NNPCF to help support this.

As you will know, the Council for Disabled Children are our reform partner and are working on a "countdown to change" programme with information about the reforms. They have recently published a leaflet about school funding changes which explains that the funding changes do not change the legal responsibilities of schools and local authorities for children with special educational needs. The leaflet is available from the CDC website <http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news/january-june-2013/school-funding-changes-and-children-with-sen-in-mainstream-schools-a-briefing-for-parents> .

We spoke about the implementation of the reforms and how to manage the changeover from the current system to the new one when I met with members of the NNPCF steering group. The pathfinder champions have begun working with non-pathfinder areas, and parent-carers have been well represented at the first champion regional conferences in early July, making important contributions to the discussions. Learning from pathfinders, including parents, have informed a series of information packs, which are available from the pathfinder website here www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/infopacks.

I spoke at the Association of Directors of Children's Services conference on 4 July and announced that we will be providing £9m in 2013-14 to support local areas to prepare for implementation. I anticipate local areas drawing from evidence from pathfinder experience and the examples that you talked me through when we met, which emphasises the value of early engagement with parents and parent carer forums. We will be publishing more information in early autumn to continue to support implementation.

Please do send this letter on to parents, young people and voluntary sector organisations in your network. I am also writing to the Council for Disabled Children.

With best wishes



Edward Timpson MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families