



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Claire Coutinho MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

6 December 2022

Dear Claire,

We wanted to get in touch to express our concerns about the increase in casework we have all seen relating to SEND provision in Oxfordshire. Over recent months, SEND has been a consistent theme in constituency correspondence. While we have raised these cases through the usual channels at Oxfordshire County Council, we are finding that progress is glacial and there are significant communication difficulties between the relevant authorities.

We are sympathetic to the unprecedented pressures the County Council is facing, particularly following the pandemic. However, parents feel that Oxfordshire County Council is not meeting its statutory responsibility to secure the provision set out in Education, Health and Care Plans for children under its duty of care. Demand for specialist school places far exceeds supply, and provision in mainstream schools is inconsistent across the county.

A disproportionate number of parents have been forced to seek redress through the Tribunals system to gain recognition of their children's needs, only to face further difficulties when rulings are made. Parents have told us that they find the Council unreceptive and inaccessible, with many experiencing significant delays in the implementation of EHCP recommendations, and plans occasionally referring to different children by error. We are particularly concerned that children are missing out on entire key stages of their education, through no fault of their own.

We recognise that the Government has been making significant progress in this area. The publication of the Green Paper in March this year was welcomed by us all. It sets out ambitious proposals to improve consistency in how needs are identified and supported. However, we would welcome the opportunity to meet you to discuss the issues our constituents are facing, and how we can help bring about improvements in SEND provision for all those we represent in Oxfordshire.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Victoria Prentis KC MP

David Johnston OBE MP

Robert Courts MP

John Howell OBE MP