

A close-up photograph of a woman with short, light brown hair smiling warmly. She is holding a young child with blonde hair, who is looking upwards with an open mouth, appearing to be in the middle of a conversation or play. The woman is wearing a blue jacket with a green zipper pull, and the child is wearing a grey patterned hoodie. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a wooden shelf or structure.

An impossible decision between survival and inclusion

The impact of SEND funding on the sustainability of the early years sector

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A woman with red hair in a ponytail, wearing a blue t-shirt and dark shorts, is performing a handstand on a grey rubber playground mat. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. To her right, a young child with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and blue overalls, is also performing a handstand on the same mat. The child is looking down. In the background, there is a colorful playground structure with green slides and red railings. A black metal fence is visible behind the playground. The overall scene is outdoors during the day.

Background to the financial case for support

How is the early years sector dealing with SEND cost demands?

81% of setting report having had to fund SEND costs themselves. (EYA, 2020)

49% of settings report regularly funding SEND support. (EYA, 2020)

Only 19% of Local Authorities report they have sufficient places in the early years for all children with SEND (Coram, 2020)

73% say the number of children with SEND has risen over the past two years. (EYA, 2020)

Settings having to choose between including children effectively and business survival

What is the long term impact on statutory education?

The average cost of a year in a mainstream primary school is £5000 (SEND Funding, House of Commons, 29th January 2020)

The average cost of a year in a specialist primary school is £29,437 (SEND Funding, House of Commons, 29th January 2020)

The right early intervention gives children a better chance of transitioning to - and thriving in - the mainstream

The more children with SEND we can support effectively in the early years, the greater system savings can be made



The current situation

- ◆ Settings self funding children with SEND
- ◆ Numbers of children rising
- ◆ Some settings starting to feel unable to accept more children
- ◆ Sufficiency for children with SEND very low and dropping
- ◆ Impact of the pandemic means 58% of under 5's delayed access to support and equipment (Disabled Children's Partnership 2021)
- ◆ Waiting lists are longer than ever

What would sufficient funding look like?

- ◆ Increase inclusion funding available for those with low needs
- ◆ Ringfence high needs block funding for children in the early years
- ◆ Promote starting the EHCP process when need is clear – not for transition to school
- ◆ Ensure application procedures are simple and responsive
- ◆ Fund CPD in inclusive practice and support for mainstream nurseries to open up more inclusive places in the mainstream

What happens without greater investment?

Places for children with SEND remain insufficient widening gap and stopping uptake of free entitlements

Without the right early intervention children do not reach their potential

More children than was necessary need specialist provision leading to long term cost implications

The sector has to make an impossible decision between survival and inclusion

Sufficient investment in SEND would

- to support the financial resilience of the whole sector
- to reduce exclusion and improve life outcomes
- to drive the take up of the free entitlement
- to bring down costs of statutory education
- to enable carers to work, benefitting the whole economy

Without fully funded SEND early years services, the sector cannot be truly sustainable.