



Manifesto for  
Early Years  
Inclusion

Please note that the Manifesto is embargoed until  
12:00 on Tuesday 14th November 2023

**Dingley's Promise**  
Transforming the Early Years for children with SEND

# Manifesto for Early Years Inclusion

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In our 40th year of supporting children and families with SEND, we fully recognise the incredible work our staff teams do in very difficult circumstances. Now more than ever, budgets are cut, relationships are broken and systems are failing. Dingley's Promise is committed to working collaboratively to resolve these issues and to creating a fairer, more inclusive early years education system in which every child gets the best start.

Our manifesto highlights 3 specific 'calls to action' to address the current challenges in relation to:

- **Workforce Development**
- **Funding for Inclusion**
- **Sufficiency of Places**

By addressing these fundamental building blocks, we can over time create a system which works for children, families, educators and local authorities. However, this cannot be achieved without recognition of the current failures. We require a willingness from all stakeholders to strive for change and a realisation that early intervention is the key to successful long-term outcomes.

**Catherine McLeod MBE**  
CEO of Dingley's Promise



Research carried out by  
Dingley's Promise in  
October 2023 found that:

- 79% of settings have seen a significant rise in the number of children with SEND. 95% overall have seen a rise in the number of children with SEND.
- One year ago 27% of providers said they had no more spaces for children with SEND. Once the new entitlements come in this will rise to 57%.
- One in five parents reported being turned away from a setting.
- 85% of local authorities said they currently do not have sufficient provision.
- 80% of settings felt that the ratio changes will make it harder to support children with SEND.



## Our Recommendations: A Call to Action

### Workforce Development

- Content on SEND and inclusion for the new EYE course
- Mandatory induction training for early years educators
- Access to ongoing refresher training

### Funding for Inclusion

- Unlink Disability Access Funding from the Disability Living Allowance
- Simplify Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding processes, ensuring they cover a child's whole entitlement (including under 2's)
- Ring fence High Needs Block funding for children with high needs in the early years

### Sufficiency of Places

- Include meaningful data on SEND sufficiency in Child Sufficiency Assessments
- Local authorities must actively engage with parents of children with SEND
- Train Ofsted inspectors to prioritise inclusion in their judgements

## Intended Outcomes



- Increased parental trust in the system
- Families able to return to work or remain in work
- Reduced demand for EHCPs and special education
- Improved quality of life for children
- Reduced financial pressure on early years settings
- Fewer families being turned away from settings
- More settings able to afford to be inclusive
- Increased access to early years entitlements for children with SEND
- Better life outcomes for children
- Reduced costs for primary and secondary education
- Inclusive and diverse communities for all children and families
- Decreased stress levels for early years staff
- Increases in confidence and skills for early years staff
- Improved staff retention in the sector
- Improved sufficiency planning by local authorities
- Better communication between families, local authorities and settings
- Increased early years sufficiency for children with SEND

## **Dingley's Promise to launch manifesto calling for urgent action to support early years education for children with SEND**

One in five families with children needing SEND in early years face being turned away from a provision setting due to their child's needs, new research has found. A huge increase in the number of children with SEND, combined with a lack of SEND training and complicated funding processes is creating a "tsunami of need" according to one early years provider.

Now, Dingley's Promise, a UK-wide specialist in early years education for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), is launching a manifesto which aims to influence decision makers as they roll out increased entitlements in the early years.

Without action now, the new entitlements are likely to cause even greater exclusion of children with SEND – something that is unfair to children and families and will undermine the wider educational inclusion that the Government's SEND and AP plan aims to achieve.

The manifesto was informed by research conducted by Dingley's Promise in autumn 2023. Completed by more than 550 respondents, it paints a bleak picture of the difficulties faced by families, settings and local authorities in giving children with SEND the right start in education.

The research found that 27% of settings reported that one year ago they were unable to offer any further spaces for children with SEND, rising to 57% reporting they would not be able to offer spaces following the introduction of the new entitlements. This is at a time when 95% of settings report that the number of children with SEND is increasing, resulting in one in five parents reporting that they've been turned away from settings, and 85% of local authorities saying they currently have insufficient SEND provision.



The manifesto outlines three key areas that need to be addressed to improve the situation:

- Workforce development including inclusion training for every member of staff.
- Simple and sufficient funding systems.
- A long-term focus on securing enough places for all children that need them.

Catherine McLeod, CEO of Dingley's Promise, said: "We strongly believe that unless there is inclusion training for all early years practitioners and simple, accessible and sufficient funding streams to support inclusion, the new entitlements risk excluding even more children with SEND. It is critical that decision makers consider the impact of the new entitlements on children with SEND and take action now to avoid creating even more exclusion of our most vulnerable children."

Neil Leitch, of the Early Years Alliance, applauds the charity's commitment to change: "We are proud to support the Dingley's Promise manifesto, and in particular, its call for better training for the workforce, simplified and sufficient funding for SEND support, and a long-term focus on building early years SEND sufficiency. If taken forward, these critical changes will not only reduce financial pressures on settings, but crucially, improve wellbeing of early educators – all while giving more children, regardless of their level of need, the chance to experience high-quality early years provision."

**Dingley's Promise is launching the charity's manifesto at The House of Lords on Tuesday, November 14th 2023.**

Download our full Manifesto for  
Early Years Inclusion here



*"The Early Years is the most critical stage in children's development where we know that high quality inclusive practice can have significant lifelong benefits - sadly, for too many children, they are not able to access the inclusive place they need and deserve because of structural and systemic barriers that are affecting the sector. This Manifesto for Early Years Inclusion by Dingley's Promise identifies those key issues and provides clear recommendations of how to resolve them. CREC wholeheartedly supports them and encourages policy makers to give serious consideration as to how these can be quickly and effectively implemented."*

**Sean Delaney**

**Assistant Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood**

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