Sent via email - please respond to: peter.just@rcslt.org and aidan.smith@ndcs.org.uk

The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP

Department for Education Department for Health and Social Care

20 Great Smith Street 39 Victoria Street

London London

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02 November 2022

Dear Secretaries of State,

**Investing in the specialist workforce for children and young people**

We’re writing to you as a broad coalition of over 110 charities, royal colleges, professional bodies, professional associations, trade unions, parents and carers and others who want the very best for children and young people - including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Firstly, we’d like to congratulate you both on your new positions. We look forward to working with you and your ministers to ensure that all children and young people can achieve their potential, both at school and in life, including through ensuring that those with SEND can access the support they and their families depend on.

**Why the specialist workforce matters**

As we’re sure you agree, ensuring children, young people and their families can access the specialist support they need from expert professionals is essential at every stage of their lives – from the early years, throughout their school lives, and, for those over 16, in colleges. For mainstream educational settings to be truly inclusive, teachers must have access to a broad range of specialist education, health and care professionals to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people, including those with SEND. Specialist settings must also be able to recruit the expert staff they need to meet the needs of their pupils.

As detailed in the appendix to this letter, a wide range of professionals provide direct support to children and young people and families, in addition to helping teachers to develop their knowledge and skills. They also help identify needs early, giving children the best possible start to education and reducing the demand for more expensive support later in life, as well as facilitating more children to be supported in mainstream schools.

The specialist workforce also plays a vital role in keeping more children in school. Through developing the skills of teachers to meet the needs of more children, they can reduce the demand for additional support that has an impact on staff capacity and resources.

As such, the specialist workforce will play an important role in supporting your ambitions in a range of policy areas, particularly those in the SEND Review.

**Current challenges in accessing the specialist workforce**

Across our sectors, we are seeing a variety of concerning issues impacting the specialist workforce, including:

* an insufficient number of specialists being trained to meet demand;
* a falling number of specialists, including through them failing to be retained and supported to further develop their specialisms, with some leaving the public sector;
* an increased demand for support in general and in more complex cases in particular; and
* responding to the pressures of COVID-19 which has exacerbated pre-existing demands on the specialist workforce and increased waiting times to access them.

This is an urgent issue. Without access now to the specialist support they need, children and young people, including those with SEND, will be at increased risk of poorer educational outcomes. In addition, the children, young people and families we work with tell us about the negative impact of not being able to access support. They tell us it affects their education, mental health and wellbeing, home and social life, employment prospects and life chances.

**Implications for the SEND Review**

This has important implications for the SEND Review. The Government’s aim to ensure young people with SEND have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, is a welcome one. We share it.

However, we struggle to see how this ambition will be achieved without a clear workforce plan to ensure there are sufficient specialist professionals to help those working with children to identify needs and secure support both now and in the future.

**We are calling on the Government to clearly set out how the forthcoming SEND and AP Improvement Plan will address gaps in the specialist workforce.**

This will also require the implementation of various Government policies to be aligned, for example the Schools White Paper and the SEND Review.

Unless urgent action is taken now on workforce planning, we are also at risk of further challenges in accessing the specialist workforce. The long-term future of the specialist workforce must be secured through proper workforce planning so that children and young people now, and in the future, can access the support they need to thrive.

It’s also essential that children and young people with SEND from disadvantaged backgrounds, and are experiencing inequitable outcomes, are a major focus in the Government’s plans and receive targeted action.

We look forward to hearing from you and continuing to engage with you, your ministers and officials on this topic constructively. We’d be happy to arrange a meeting between yourselves and representatives of our group to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely,

ACE Centre - Anna Reeves, CEO

Action Cerebral Palsy - Amanda Richardson MBE, Chief Executive

Action for Stammering Children - Ria Bernard, Chief Executive

ADHD Foundation - Dr. Tony Lloyd, CEO

Afasic - Linda Lascelles, Chief Executive

Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) - Amelia McLoughlan, Policy and Research Officer

Ambitious About Autism - Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive

Angelman UK - Emma Goodson, Trustee

ASLTIP - Ruth Crampton, Chair

Association of Colleges - David Holloway, Senior Policy Manager – SEND

Association of Educational Psychologists – Kate Fallon, General Secretary

Association of Mental Health Providers - Kathy Roberts, Chief Executive Officer

Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists - Alan Macdonald, Chair and Paediatric Physiotherapist

Association of School and College Leaders - Geoff Barton, General Secretary

Association of Youth Offending Team Managers - Jacqui Belfield-Smith and Diz Minnitt, Chair and SEND and Speech and Language Lead

Auditory Verbal UK - Anita Grover, Chief Executive

Autism Early Support - Laura Gomersall, Head of Children's Services

Autistica - Dr. James Cusack, CEO

Better Communication CIC - Marie Gascoigne, Director

British and Irish Orthoptic Society - Veronica Greenwood, Chair

British Association for Community Child Health (BACCH) – Dr Doug Simkiss, Chair

British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT) - Andrew Langford, Chief Executive

British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA) - Teresa Quail and Simon Blake, Chair and Secretary

British Association of Social Workers - Julia Ross, Chair

British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) - Martine Monksfield, Paul Simpson and Teresa Quail, President and Co-National Executive Officers

British Dietetic Association - Liz Stockley, Chief Executive

British Dyslexia Association - Chivonne Preston, Chief Executive Officer

British Paediatric Neurology Association (BPNA) – Dr. Dan Lumsden, Secretary

British Psychological Society - Sarb Bajwa, Chief Executive

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) - Dr. Artemi Sakellariadis, Director

Chailey Heritage Foundation - Gareth Germer, Chief Executive

ChatterPack - Claire Ryan, Founder

Children England - Kathy Evans, CEO

Cleft Lip and Palate Association (CLAPA) – Claire Cunniffe, CEO

Cochlear Implanted Children's Support Group - Tricia Kemp, Group Coordinator

Commtap CIC - Neil Thompson, Director

Communication Matters - Helen Whittle, Chair

Contact - Amanda Batten, CEO

Coram Family and Childcare - Megan Jarvie, Head of Coram Family and Childcare

Council for Disabled Children - Christina Welsh, Education Programme Manager

Cystic Fibrosis Trust – Ben Kind, Head of Policy and Public Affairs

Deaf Experience - Jill Jones, Chair

Deafblind UK - Stephen Conway, CEO

Dingley's Promise - Catherine McLeod MBE, Chief Executive

Disabled Children's Partnership - Stephen Kingdom, Campaign Manager

Down Syndrome Association - Carol Boys, Chief Executive

Elklan Training - Henrietta McLachlan, Director

Embracing Complexity Coalition - Dr. James Cusack, Chair

Empowering Deaf Society - Mangai Sutharsan, Director

English Speaking Board (International) Ltd - Tina Renshaw, CEO

English-Speaking Union - Jane Easton, Director-General

Ewing Foundation - Sarah Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer

Guide Dogs - Emma Foulds, Chief Marketing and Strategy Officer

Headlines - Karen Wilkinson-Bell, Director

Institute of Health Visiting - Alison Morton, Executive Director

KIDS - Katie Ghose, CEO

Max Appeal - Claire Hennessy, Development Officer

MENCAP - Edel Harris OBE, Chief Executive

Microtia UK - Tina Rycroft, Non-executive director of fundraising and communications

Muscular Dystrophy UK - Catherine Woodhead, CEO

NAHT - Paul Whiteman, General Secretary

NAPLIC - Stephen Parsons, Chair

NASS - Claire Dorer OBE, Chief Executive Officer

NASUWT - The Teachers' Union - Dr. Patrick Roach, General Secretary

National Acquired Brain Injury in Learning and Education Syndicate (NABLES) - Dr. Emily Bennett, Chair

National Association for Hospital Education – Cath Kitchen and Stephen Deadman, Chairperson and Director

National Autistic Society - Jake Runacres, Policy and Parliamentary Officer

National Day Nurseries Association - Purnima Tanuku OBE, Chief Executive

National Deaf Children's Society - Mike Hobday, Executive Director of Policy and Campaigns

National Development Team for Inclusion - Paul Marshall, CEO

National Education Union - Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretaries

National SEND Forum - David Bateson OBE, Chair

National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) - Lindsey Rousseau, Facilitator

Natspec - Clare Howard, Chief Executive

NCFE - Janet King, Sector Manager for Education and Childcare

NNPCF - Mrunal Sisodia and Tina Emery, Co-Chairs

Pace - Ian Sansbury, Chief Executive

pdnet - Diane Caesar, National Project Lead

Prospect ECS Group - Tony Bell, Secretary

PRUsAP - Angela Ransby, Executive Committee Member

Rett UK - Robert Adamek, CEO

Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD) - Amanda Casson Webb, Joint Chief Executive

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health - Dr. Mike McKean, Vice-President for Policy

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists - Kamini Gadhok MBE, Chief Executive

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) - Caireen Sutherland, Head of Education

SAPHNA - Sharon White OBE, CEO

Sen.se - Julie Walker, Executive Officer

SENSE - Richard Kramer, CEO

Signalong - Tracy Goode, CEO

SMIRA - Dr. Shirley Landrock-White, Chair

Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE) - Grace Lockrobin, Director of Philosophy for Children, Colleges and Communities

Speaking Citizens - Dr. Tom Wright, Reader in Rhetoric and Principal Investigator

Special Needs Jungle - Tania Tirraoro and Renata Blower, Co-directors

Speech and Language UK (formerly I CAN) - Jane Harris, CEO

Speech Bubbles - Elizabeth Kennedy, Administrator

SPTS – Julie Walker, Lead

STAMMA - Catherine Woolley, Children and Families Programme Lead

Stroke Association - Charlotte Nicholls, Head of Policy and Influencing

Symbol - Julie Wagge, Director, Speech and Language Therapy

The British Association of Dramatherapists - Karen Eastwood, Education Committee Convener

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy - Professor Karen Middleton CBE FCSP MA, Chief Executive

The Children's Trust - Dalton Leong, Chief Executive

The Elizabeth Foundation for Preschool Deaf Children - Julie Hughes, CEO

The Makaton Charity - Stephen Hall, Chief Executive

The Migraine Trust - Steph Weatherley, Information and support team advisor

The National Organisation for FASD - Sandra Butcher, Chief Executive

The Neurological Alliance – Georgina Car, Chief Executive

UKABIF - Chloe Hayward, Executive Director

Unique - Sarah Wynn, PhD, CEO

UNISON - Christina McAnea, General Secretary

Up The Adult Cerebral Palsy Movement - Emma Livingstone, Founder and CEO

VIEW - Caireen Sutherland, Vice Chair

Voice 21 - Rebecca Earnshaw, Chief Executive

Young Minds - Tom Madders, Director of Communications and Campaigns

**APPENDIX**

**Examples of the specialist workforce to which access is required**

This is an illustrative, not exhaustive, list of the specialist workforce to which early years settings, schools and post-16 settings, require access to ensure the best level of support for their pupils, including those with SEND.

* Qualified Teachers of the Deaf
* Speech and language therapists
* Advisory teachers
* Educational psychologists
* Qualified Teachers of Visual Impairment
* Qualified Teachers of Multi-sensory Impairment
* Specialist teachers for SLCN
* Occupational Therapists
* Physiotherapists
* Teachers of sign-supported communication
* Music therapists
* Habilitation Specialists
* Health visitors
* Drama therapists
* Art therapists
* Filial / DDP qualified therapists
* Clinical psychologists
* Family workers
* Play therapists
* Parenting coaches
* Post-natal support
* Social workers
* Psychiatrists
* Specialist teachers for physical disability
* Conductive education practitioners
* Attachment disorder specialists
* Educational Audiologists
* Orthoptists
* Specialist Teachers for Dyslexia Support and Intervention
* Dietitians
* Early Years SENCo
* School nurses