

SEN GREEN PAPER, 2011

One of the key chapters of the Paper is entitled "Giving Parents Control". This is a clear indication of the government commitment to an increased role for parents of pupils with SEN.

Executive Summary, Pg 5

"To give parents confidence by giving them more control over the support their family receives, we will introduce more transparency in the provision of services for children and young people who are disabled or who have SEN. Parents will have real choice over their child's education and the opportunity for direct control over support for their family. We propose:

***local authorities and other services will set out a local offer of all services available** to support children who are disabled or who have SEN and their families. This easy-to-understand information for parents will set out what is normally available in schools to help children with lower-level SEN, as well as the options available to support families who need additional help to care for their child; and*

***the option of a personal budget by 2014** for all families with children with a statement of SEN or a new 'Education, Health and Care Plan', many of whom will have complex support needs. Key workers will be trained to advise families and help them navigate the range of help available across health, education and social care."*

Giving Parents Control, Ch. 2, Pg 41

Chapter summary

2.1 Early intervention from all the services on which families rely is essential, but the effectiveness of this support is undermined if it doesn't reflect each family's unique circumstances. Parents know their child best. As well as giving their own love and care, parents rely on health services, early years settings, schools and other people to help look after their child and help him or her have a happy childhood and fulfil his or her potential. Disabled children and children with SEN may require a different approach in these health and education settings to their peers, or extra support from social care or specialist services. It is crucial to families that these services work well together and that parents are empowered to make decisions about their child. Unfortunately, this is not what many families experience.

2.2 Children, young people and their parents have a variety of different circumstances, but many families share a concern that the system can feel impenetrable, bureaucratic and inefficient, and does not sufficiently reflect their family life. Parents may feel that their choices are limited and their options don't always meet the basic needs of their child. This is particularly the case where a child relies on specialist services or equipment – such as incontinence pads,

computer software and wheelchairs – to support their physical and communication needs to help improve the quality of their life. These problems may also be compounded by disadvantage, and some parents might have poor health, live in poverty, or have difficult family circumstances on top of juggling a range of support for their child.

2.3 Our aim is to give parents more control over support for their child and family. This will mean ending the frustration, complexity and confrontation inherent in today's system, which in itself can undermine family life. The proposals in this chapter are intended to extend parents' influence, build their confidence in the system and minimise its adversarial nature, and would mean that:

- local authorities and other local services communicate a clear local offer for families to clarify what support is available and from whom;*
- parents have the option of personalised funding by 2014 to give them greater control over their child's support, with trained key workers helping them to navigate different services;*
- parents have access to transparent information about the funding which supports their child's needs;*
- parents of disabled children continue to have access to a short break from caring while their child enjoys activities with their peers;*
- parents have a clear choice of school; and*
- if local authorities and parents disagree, they always try mediation first, to resolve problems in a less adversarial way than having to take their case to the Tribunal.*

2.4 As first steps towards this aim:

- local authorities and health services will explore how to extend the scope of personalised funding; and*
- we will give parents the right to express a preference for any state-funded school, including Academies and Free Schools.*

2.5 This chapter sets out our proposals to give parents better support and more control. Parents should feel well supported through the system with clear information on how it works and who does what, and what the funding is. Parents know their children best and should receive support that works flexibly with their family circumstances. They should have more influence over support for their child through personalised funding, be able to participate in local decisions, have a clear choice of school and access to short breaks from caring. When parents and professionals disagree on the right approach for a child, they should use mediation to resolve disagreements over their support.”