

Lamb Inquiry

Special educational needs and parental confidence

**Special Educational Consortium, RNID, 19-23 Featherstone Street,
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Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

December 16 2009

Dear Secretary of State,

In March 2008 you asked me to look at how parental confidence in the special educational needs system could be improved. Because of emerging issues during the period of the Inquiry you also asked me to look at: SEN and disability information; the quality and clarity of statements; inspection and accountability; and what impact the changes in the Tribunal system were having on parental confidence.

I have produced three Interim Reports and have written to you on a number of occasions. I am pleased at the progress that has already been made in addressing some of the issues that I raised in my interim reports. I am now able to give you my final report. This also incorporates my previous recommendations and updates them where relevant.

Through the Inquiry we have been privileged to hear from thousands of parents, children and young people as we went around the country. They shared with us their experiences, their insights into how the system currently works and their aspirations for the future. I am grateful for the time everyone gave us and the enthusiasm with which they supported our enterprise.

I have been fortunate in being supported by an Expert Advisers Group and a Reference Group who have all brought their vast experience of different parts of the system to the issues we consider in the report. We have also benefited from a number of research projects and eight local authorities have successfully piloted a number of new approaches for us. We have also had the benefit of visiting some of the best schools and local authorities who are already doing much of what I recommend here.

We have heard a clear message: parents need to be listened to more and the system needs to be more ambitious for their children. These two essential insights run through the whole report and we need to respond urgently if parental confidence is going to be increased and children's life chances improved. We need a radical overhaul of the system which ruthlessly refocuses its efforts on securing better outcomes for children and delivers the support they need in order to achieve. This will involve enhanced rights and a cultural shift in the way in which schools, local authorities and other professionals work with parents and children.

These recommendations, taken in their entirety, would achieve the goals that I intend. I hope the Government will be able to act on them.

With best wishes,



Brian Lamb OBE