

Ministerial SEND National Engagement Event – Report from Rowan Westwood, CEO of the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Earlier this month, I joined over 90 passionate parent carers from across the country at the Ministerial SEND National Engagement event, hosted by the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) and the Council for Disabled Children (CDC). We met with Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, and Catherine McKinnell, Minister for School Standards.

Thank you to everyone who shared your questions and feedback, I couldn't raise everything in the session, but your voices will be included in the report going to Ministers and the Department for Education.

While the format was rigid and didn't allow for open dialogue, I was able to speak directly with the Minister for School Standards in a small breakout group.

What stood out?

Parent carers from all corners of the UK are facing the same challenges. This isn't just local - it's national.

Key issues we raised:

- The postcode lottery in SEND provision
- Barriers to post-16 vocational pathways
- Developing an inclusive and flexible curriculum
- The need to review whole-school policies on behaviour, attendance, and uniform
- Resource challenges affecting professionals working directly with children with SEND
- The urgent need for clear national guidance on SEN Support without an EHCP

There are no clear answers yet - but we showed up, we spoke up, and we'll keep pushing for change.

Huge thanks to the NNPCF and CDC for making sure parent carers were heard.