

Your back to school experiences - NNPCF Steering Group brief Minister Vicky Ford

22 September 2020

The NNPCF steering group met with Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford to share the feedback from parent carer forums about the return to school for children with SEND.

Ahead of the meeting, parent carer forums continued their outstanding work in listening to the experiences of local families. We heard of concerns around a wide variety of topics including Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP), over-zealous schools send children with colds home, local and school lockdowns and access to testing.

We attach a briefing document that summarises the issues that was shared with the Minister ahead of our meeting. [\[Insert link\]](#)

We had a wide-ranging discussion with the Minister and explored many of the themes in the document. Some of the things we discussed included:

- Concerns around **AGP** – the Minister reported that she had met with Directors of Children’s Services and urged them to work with local Public Health England to ensure children requiring AGPs can attend school
- Issues around **testing** – The Minister recognised the experiences of SEND families in accessing testing – she promised to look at some further prioritisation for testing for people with disabilities. She also reported that a new process has recently been created to enable schools to order more tests every few weeks and that teachers have been added to the priority list for testing.
- We discussed the concerns of parents about **mandatory attendance** at schools in a local lockdown and urged her to continue to share the messages about coproducing with families to find the right answer for their circumstances.
- The DfE had also noted the increase in requests for **home schooling** – we discussed the risks that families should not be pushed into “elective” home schooling against their wishes and the need for Ofsted to remain vigilant about off-rolling through the back door.
- We discussed some of the challenges around the **restoration of health** services and the importance of schools allowing therapists in to deliver the support children require.

- We also noted that some of our earlier concerns around behaviour related **exclusions and mental health** problems had not yet been widely reported. However, we all noted that it was still early days and that the full impact of Covid 19 has not yet been understood or felt in this regard.

We also touched on the ongoing SEND review and agreed to meet with the Minister and the SEND review team in the coming weeks to discuss progress and plans.