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SEND Casework and Support for Disabled Children and their Families:

I welcome the Disabled Children's Partnership's (DCP's) plans to create an 'MP toolkit' to support MPs and their staff in relation to SEND issues.

I share concerns that parents are having to fight at every stage of the process to get their child's needs met. Education, health and care plans (EHCPs) are being delayed for months, and children are stuck on waiting lists for services from occupation therapy to speech and language support.

Parents across the country have to battle for the support their children need, and the resourcing pressures on local authorities are causing councils to refuse to fund EHCPs and forcing parents to go to tribunal, where 96% of them win.

Much of the Government's SEND and alternative provision improvement plan will not come into effect until 2025, six years after the review was announced. During that time, 300,000 children with SEND will have left secondary school having spent the entirety of their school education under an increasingly failing system of SEND support. The Children's Commissioner likewise raised concerns that we risk seeing more children entering "a vicious cycle" of "poor outcomes" in the intervening period. I worry this plan will not be enough to put an end to the struggles families face.

The system of SEND support has become broken and adversarial and in need of reform. We need to join up records to reduce the exhausting battles parents face as they have to retell their child's story to every professional they meet.

I support the idea of using the funding from ending the tax breaks currently enjoyed by private schools to deliver evidence based early speech and language support for our youngest children and recruit 6,500 new teachers so every child has a specialist teacher that can help them thrive. Inclusion should be part of the report card for schools, replacing the single-word Ofsted judgment. We should introduce a teacher training entitlement—an annual entitlement to CPD that could be used to increase expertise in autism and SEND.

I want to see a cross-cutting commitment from the top of Government to deliver better for every child and I will continue to support calls on the Government to work with parents, carers and children with additional needs to get this right.

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