

## **Disabled Children's Partnership statement on the Spending Review 2021**

**27 October 2021**

It is encouraging to see some signs that the government is recognising the need to invest in support for disabled children and their families. But without dedicated new funding for disabled children's health and social care, the spending review falls short from providing the world class public services promised by the Chancellor for disabled children, young people and their families.

The Disabled Children's Partnership has been campaigning for more funding for short breaks and respite services for families with disabled children, and the support their children need to make up for progress lost during the pandemic. We are sad that this has not been achieved this today, and want to thank all the parents, families, organisations, MPs and civil servants who campaigned and championed disabled children in the lead up to the Spending Review. Our shared passion and determination for a better deal for disabled children and their families will take us forward to fight another day. There is funding for education recovery and local authorities, so we now all need to continue to campaign to ensure this funding reaches disabled children.

With so many children with SEND struggling to get the right school placement, the additional capital funding for specialist places is welcome. But this capital investment needs to be matched with the revenue funding for the teachers, therapists and other specialists to staff new places. And, of course, most children with SEND are educated in mainstream schools, so will not benefit from this funding.

We are also pleased to see the additional funding for Family Hubs, provided that they are set up in a way that ensures they have the capacity and capability to meet the specific needs of families with disabled children.

And we welcome increased funding for local councils; for school budgets; and for education recovery.

However, there will be many calls on these new resources and, without ring-fencing, it is far from clear how they will address either the longstanding under-funding of health and social care for disabled children; or provide the specific support disabled children and families need to recover from the impact of the pandemic – such as catch-up on missed therapies, health services and respite care.

*The gap widens*, our latest economic analysis released with Scope, revealed that there is a funding gap of £573 million in disabled children's social care services. At the same time, we know that nearly three quarters of disabled children have seen their progress managing their conditions regress during the pandemic, as already stretched health and care services were further restricted.

It is difficult to see from today's spending review how the government expects to meet rising needs, and a backlog of assessments, and ensure that families get the health and care support to which they are entitled - despite the promise of 'world class public services'.

Moving forward, the Departments for Education; Health and Social Care; and Levelling Up must set out how they will use the funding they've received to help disabled children and families recover lost progress, catch-up on the health and care services they've missed in the pandemic, and address the long-term shortfalls in support. The long-awaited SEND review must also ensure that every family with a disabled child can access the support they deserve to live a healthy, happy life.

**Amanda Batten, Chair of the Disabled Children's Partnership and CEO of Contact**