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*All-Party Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Permanence*

**Government announces new SEND Improvement Plan with a focus on a national system underpinned by national standards**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Permanence welcomes the Government's commitment to improving support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), set out in the SEND Improvement Plan published 2 March 2023. The aim of the reforms are to ensure that children, parents and carers receive *'high-quality help no matter where they live'*, with a new set of national standards underpinning a national 'system'.

It is disappointing that the Government's Improvement Plan does not directly speak to the needs of care-experienced children, despite care experienced children, including those who are adopted or living in other forms of permanence arrangement, being more likely to have SEND than their peers. It is also disappointing that most of the proposed improvements will not begin for several years, leaving many families of care-experienced children facing lengthy struggles to access the necessary support for their child.

Where support for care-experienced children is referenced in the plan, it is broadly in relation to reforms laid out in the recently published Children's Social Care Implementation Strategy and the acknowledgment that there is *'important overlap between these groups of children and young people and the services and systems designed to support them'*.

Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Permanence, Rachael Maskell MP said: "Many care experienced people and their families responded to the government's SEND consultation and will today feel as though their frustrations have not been heard. Whilst national standards are welcome in theory, in practice they will mean little unless there is underpinning legislation to make them enforceable, and to hold local authorities to account where they are ignored. It is also deeply unfair that vital overhauls to the system, including new special free schools and standardised, digital EHCPs won't happen until at least 2025.

Ms Maskell continued: "Despite these reservations, the Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care are to be commended for their transparency in acknowledging some of the problems in the system, as well as their commitment to work together and ensure join up between children's social care and SEND reforms. Ultimately, though, as the APPG has heard many times

throughout its evidence sessions, improving the timely provision and availability of support services in school for care-experienced children with SEND is vital in ensuring they are given an equal chance to thrive. Anything less shouldn't be acceptable”.

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