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**Statement with regards to articles around potential changes to Education, Health and Care Plans.**

You may have seen in the press over the last few days articles that refer to comments made by Dame Christine Lenehan. In these articles it is reported that Dame Lenehan has said that there are discussions about whether EHCP’s should only apply to special school pupils, that the structure around EHCP’s is not fit for purpose, and that “most education, health and care plans are actually about getting the children the education they deserve.”

Dame Christine Lenehan is currently a strategic government adviser on SEND. It is not clear if these are purely Dame Lenehan’s opinion’s or if they are the views of the Department for Education as well.

We do know that Bridget Phillipson Secretary of State for Education has said “Now is the time for bold reform. And let me be clear: the direction of that reform is inclusive mainstream.” (Nov 24) The DfE have also confirmed that improving inclusion in mainstream schools will be ‘at the heart’ of the Department for Education’s work.

As parent carers we know that comments like this are deeply alarming and have left parent carers feeling frightened about losing the support that their children and young people need.

We know that currently many families across the country are forced to fight for an EHCP to be able to access the additional support and provision that their children and young people need in order to access education.

We wholeheartedly agree that more can and should be done to increase inclusion in mainstream schools. However, there absolutely must be enough specialist placements for all of our children and young people that need a specialist place, and there must be mechanisms in place

Schools also must be adequately supported to provide the support and provision that children and young people need- this means they need to be funded appropriately, and provided with access to the right training, and the right external professional support.

At Solihull Parent Carer Voice CIC, we believe that the Children and Families Act 2014, bringing in Education, Health and Care plans had the right ideas- education, health and social care working together enabling joined up, holistic picture’s of children and young people’s needs and the provision that children and young people need to meet those needs can only be beneficial for our children and young people. Not all children and young people will have health or social care needs, but having a system where all can be bought together can only help.

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We know that EHCP’s, providing schools with access to more resources have enabled many children and young people to stay in mainstream education.

We all know that there are many challenges in the SEND system currently, however we don’t feel the challenges are with the law- but with the lack of funding and the lack of accountability.

Schools and local authorities across the country simply do not have the funding and resources required to support children and young people.

There are not enough special school places for children and young people that need them, and there are not enough of the right type of special school places.

The accountability built into the SEND system simply isn’t good enough.

Until the government release papers detailing their plans, as parent carers we are all in the dark.

We want to reassure all of our parent carers in Solihull, that when any information does come out, we will share this with you, and we will respond to any consultations that the government do on this.