

13th February 2019

Dear Councillor Nesil

Thank you so much for attending our Parents' conference on the 6th February.

It was helpful to understand the budget situation Enfield faces and the reasons for this.

It's equally re-assuring that you are keen not to see the already vulnerable and disadvantaged, being disadvantaged further by continuing to cut services. That said, even if spending on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities remains constant, the increase in need, with for example, more children surviving longer with more complex needs, means that services continue to struggle to meet our children's needs. As you know there have already been very significant cuts to SEND funding in recent years, meaning that services are already significantly over-stretched

We are all aware of the long-term benefits of Early Intervention and providing support at the right time. Equally, when vulnerable children do not get the support they need in a timely manner, the long-term impact is significant, as well as the cost to individuals, families and our society as a whole.

As our parents and the professionals within the borough told us during the conference, despite the best of intentions, it is often a struggle to get services to meet our children's needs, whether this is getting sufficient therapeutic support within our borough or across boroughs, or the apparently complex pathway required to obtain a statutory needs assessment to obtain an Education, Health and Care Plan.

In purely economic terms, it is a false economy to cut funding to SEND services because doing so makes it impossible for over-stretched services to meet needs in a timely manner, so that relatively small problems can easily escalate to crisis point, costing significantly more in the longer term. Similarly, failing to invest in support for children within mainstream schools means some children with additional needs are pushed into special schools, including those outside the borough, costing significantly more. We have heard devastating stories where families go into crises and their children demonstrate challenging behaviour as a result of unmet needs and can end up:

- being excluded from school
- in a residential institutions away from their home and community, or
- worse, end up in the criminal justice system which costs the borough and the family dearly

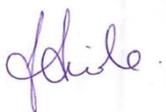
Furthermore, delays in the provision of services such as speech and language have a long-term impact on our children's ability to communicate and this time is lost. It cannot be "made up".

We therefore welcome the decision not to cut services further and, in fact, would welcome further funding to support them, to invest in our futures, saving money in the longer term.

We know there are tough budget decisions to be made and do not want cuts to any services. But it is vital that services to children with special educational needs and disabilities (and in fact, services to those who are elderly and frail) are protected.

We do hope that the Council protect those most vulnerable and do the "right thing".

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Fazilla Amide'.

Fazilla Amide
Chair, Our Voice

www.ourvoiceenfield.org.uk