

Katie Nellist:

Hi, I'm Katie. I am 16 yrs old and I have autism, anxiety, PTSD and an eating disorder. I struggled a lot in primary school and I have had barely any secondary school education. My PTSD is around education, mostly from year 6 SATS and mainstream school. I turned to the SEND service to try and get an education that suited me but the system I have been dealing with for the past 4 years is fundamentally broken. First I tried to go to a special needs school but no places were available. After trying other schools and being misled by the SEND service multiple times I realised that I could not go to any school at all due to my trauma. I thought an Education Other Than At School package would be best for me but my perspective was repeatedly ignored by the SEND service. At the time my PTSD was not diagnosed but I did undeniably have trauma which the SEND panel repeatedly brushed off as "school based anxiety" leaving me with no choice but to get diagnosed. The system is underfunded but many of the issues can be fixed without money. It does not cost anything to have clear communication within the system, or to be transparent with families about what's happening, or for them to listen to the young person who's future they are deciding. I want to be seen as a person not a case file. The process is emotionally draining and I have spent a lot of time crying over irrational decisions made by the SEND panel. It needs to be fixed now regardless of politics. There is no middle ground, you fix the system or you enable it to ruin more lives, this is your responsibility which is why I was shocked when the previous full council meeting did not discuss the specific failings in Oxfordshire given that the meeting before was about the SEND failings. The priority action plan has been rejected by the Department for Education, why are you not discussing this. Listen to us, I am one person but there are many, many others and we want to be heard. Our families and ourselves know us best, we are how change starts. Take some responsibility and listen to us. No more battles between SEND and families just work with us. If you don't want to listen then I can keep reminding you so that we won't be forgotten again. The failings of the system are a standing issue in our lives so they should be a standing issue at all full council meetings until Real improvements are made. Thank you.