

Claire Brenner

I am speaking on behalf of Oxfordshire SEND Parent Action.

First, I'd like to pay tribute to Katie who presented her petition today. We wholeheartedly support her request that SEND should be on the agenda at every full council meeting.

When I spoke here 2 months ago, us parents thought things were about to improve...

We know senior managers have been busy behind the scenes. And we thank Cllr Gregory for meeting with us, but...

3 months post-Ofsted there has not been ANY improvement. If anything...things are getting WORSE. No sense of urgency, no steps to increase transparency, no sign the adversarial culture is changing, no plans for genuine coproduction with parents...as Katie said many of the solutions don't cost money but require you to start treating our children as individuals not case files.

What does it say that two councillors with lived experience of SEND have felt the need to resign from their parties over this issue?

I was contacted by a desperate parent this week who told me OCC plans to stop funding the alternative provision for her two autistic children, against professional advice. This is the only education they have accessed in the past for 2 years. The mum says:

"I'm just still so shocked they can do what the F they want with no reason when it's clearly so damaging. I haven't told the kids yet because I keep thinking I can do something to reverse the decision, but if I don't say something soon they will get no closure at their provision. If I do say something I risk them not being able to go because they will be too upset".

So yes, Cllr Reeves you rightly highlight the huge projected overspend in Children's services. But I hope you agree that SEND funding must be a priority. You cannot fix the overspend by just cutting funding for existing provision. We need big, bold, unified action to fix Oxfordshire's SEND crisis.

What we're getting just feels like politics as usual...