**For homepage:**

**Title:** The cost of SEND as a bolt-on

**Text:** CSIE responds to the Public Account Committee’s inquiry.

13 November 2024

**For inside news page:**

**Title:** The cost of SEND as a bolt-on

The Public Accounts Committee invited CSIE to submit evidence to the inquiry into support for children and young people with special educational needs. In its response(with link to CSIE submission please) CSIE drew attention to the following issues:

1. Since the introduction of the Children and Families Act the education system has become less inclusive. Increasing numbers of children and young people are identified as having SEN or as being disabled, are not in mainstream schools, and are achieving poor outcomes. Parents are frustrated at the lack of provision to meet their children’s needs. And there is growing concern that the financial impact of this system is becoming unsustainable.
2. The lack of national commitment to inclusive education has left inclusion as a moral choice for school leaders. The consequence is that too many children and young people are not accessing the education that they need, do not feel welcome in school, and outcomes for them are poor.
3. The capacity of schools to respond to children with a range of SEN and disabilities continues to be significantly affected by the availability of specialist local education, health and care services. In recent years, there has been significant erosion of local specialist services such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, autism outreach, teachers of the deaf and other sensory specialist teachers.
4. This review by the Public Accounts Committee represents an opportunity to review the architecture of our education system as a whole, rather than revisit the detail of the SEN system. In order to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, as Sustainable Goal no. 4 invites every country to do, planning for SEND issues needs to be built in, not bolted on. This is a welcome opportunity to build capacity in schools and strengthen inclusion, with careful consideration of key issues such as curriculum & assessment, teacher education, workforce planning, the disability duties in the Equality Act 2010, and funding (and in particular considering recent research suggesting that countries which implement a financing model based on funding services provided, have greater success compared to countries where funding is based on some aspect of individual need, e.g. types or categories of need).
5. Finally, in its response CSIE expressed concern that many of the approaches put forward to date focus on driving down demand, rather than managing the drivers of that demand. In effect, they are designed to address high costs, and not the poor outcomes and parental dissatisfaction that are driving the high costs. There are no quick fixes, only long-term solutions. The clear articulation of a core set of values should frame the range of reforms that are required. Without clarity on values, any developments to address the long-standing problems of the system are likely to exacerbate, rather gradually resolve, these problems.