

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL



MANIFESTO

2024



OUR DEMANDS

ALLFIE's manifesto seeks to promote the realisation of the equity, equality and the right to inclusive education for ALL Disabled people, through the provision of necessary supports and adjustments in mainstream settings. This manifesto sets out six demands for creating an inclusive education system:



1. Adopt an Inclusive Education legislation in the UK



2. End all forms of segregated education



3. Redirect government SEND funding towards supporting and improving mainstream services



4. End all forms of Curriculum and Assessment systemic injustice



5. Make Inclusive Education Training mandatory nationwide



6. Combat Social Injustice in Education

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ABOUT ALLFIE

We are a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), led by and for Disabled people, campaigning to abolish all systemic barriers to our participation in mainstream education. For over 30 years, ALLFIE has demanded equality and equity in education for Disabled people, and their families. We know inclusion works. We believe that an inclusive education system that meets the needs of all Disabled people from childhood, and supports life-long learning, is the foundation to an inclusive society.

We campaign for the realisation of Disabled people's right to inclusive education, in line with Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This article states that Disabled people have the right to inclusive education and to participate in mainstream education with appropriate support.

Our work is underpinned by the Social Model of Disability, which states that we are "disabled" not by our impairments (such as blindness or autism) but by society's failure to take our different needs into account. Within education, this includes systems, structures and practices that lead to our marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream educational settings and society at large. We believe that this is oppressive and a social injustice.

WHAT WE DO

Our work is centred on the lived experiences of Disabled people as a process to understand and initiate ideas for our campaigns. We aim to redress power imbalances and promote Disabled people's full and effective participation in decision-making, to bring about radical change in law and policy relating to inclusive education.

Our practice takes account of intersectionality to respond to the diverse experiences of Disabled people including other protected characteristics such as gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation as well as different socioeconomic backgrounds.

The UNCRPD and the Right to Inclusive Education

Our manifesto demands are framed within the provisions of the UNCRPD, in particular Article 24, which states:

“States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive, education system at all levels, and life-long learning.” (UNCRPD 2006)

In 2017, its committee concluded that the UK Government is making insufficient progress in realising inclusive education, and that its present education and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) frameworks are inadequate and discriminatory. It recommended that the UK Government should:

“Develop a comprehensive and coordinated legislative and policy framework for inclusive education and a timeframe to ensure that mainstream schools foster real inclusion of children with disabilities in the school environment and that teachers and all other professionals and persons in contact with children

understand the concept of inclusion and are able to enhance inclusive education.” (UNCRPD Committee 2017).

UK law and policy on inclusive education should be guided by this recommendation so that there is confidence that inclusive education settings will welcome everyone. A parent of a Disabled pupil said:

“We need to be speaking about a system that is for all, regardless of ability. In an inclusive world there wouldn’t be mainstream – there would just be education that included all.” (ALLFIE 2019)

What is inclusive education, and do you know why it is a social justice issue?

“Inclusive education isn’t just about dreaming about the future. We don’t just want you to plan for the next generation. We want justice and liberation for those currently in segregated education” (ALLFIE’s Our Voice Young Disabled people, 2024)

Inclusive educational settings are those where non-disabled and Disabled people (including pupils/students labelled with “special educational needs”) learn together in mainstream nurseries, schools, colleges, universities and adult learning in the same classrooms, attending the same classes, lectures and seminars. This means the education system must adapt to include

Disabled people and should not require Disabled people to adapt to the education system. Thus, inclusive education involves the removal of the structural and systemic barriers Disabled people encounter in mainstream education settings. It also involves addressing the systemic oppression of Disabled people in mainstream education settings. As articulated by the UNCRPD Committee:

“Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.” (UNCRPD General Comment no. 4 on Article 24).

Inclusive education is a social justice issue because it is about confronting the underlying systemic barriers that perpetuate the marginalisation and discrimination of Disabled people within the education system and wider society. This includes tackling issues such as inadequate funding for inclusive education (especially in under-resourced neighbourhoods), discriminatory policies and practices, disproportionate disciplinary actions, and barriers to higher education for Disabled people. It also includes tackling the barriers that hinder Disabled children and Young people labelled with “complex needs” from accessing mainstream schooling, both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. In the words of Gray Group International (2024):

“Social justice aims to counter these challenges by ensuring equitable resource distribution, dismantling systemic obstacles, and fostering environments where all individuals can thrive.”

We recognise that it will take time to move from the current education system to one that is inclusive, and it will require radical changes in thinking, policy and practice. As part of a transition process, separate special education settings can be repurposed and used as community resource centres that offer outreach services to support Disabled people in inclusive mainstream education settings and provide community access to resources and equipment.

HOW DISABLED PEOPLE ARE BEING FAILED BY THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

Throughout history successive Governments have carried out various reforms to the education of Disabled people and its provisions. Current provisions are based on the Children and Families Act 2014, which sets out a presumption that children should be in mainstream education. Despite this, Disabled Children and Young people, especially those of us who are labelled with "complex needs", encounter barriers to accessing mainstream education. Barriers are experienced both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities.

In March 2023, the Government launched the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time. This plan reiterates the Government's commitment to invest **£2.6 billion** for local authorities to open 133 new free special schools between 2022 and 2025. This goes against the intention of Children and Families Act (2014) 'presumption of mainstream education' and of achieving inclusive education for ALL Disabled people in mainstream settings.

Meanwhile, schools and local authorities are not adequately resourced to support, or make adjustments, for Disabled children and young people in

mainstream settings. Some local authorities are failing to give pupils the support that is recommended in their EHC plans. This is driving Disabled children and young people into special schools or substandard alternative provisions such as PRU (pupil referral unit) and EOTAS (education otherwise than at school) and is denying them the opportunity to access and experience mainstream schooling.

Most local authorities have financial deficits in their overall education budgets – known as Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – because the budget for SEND provisions has not increased since 2015 when the government extended the age range of young people who qualify for SEND Support. The Department for Education (DfE) has provided additional funding and support for local authorities with the largest DSG deficits through the Safety Valve and the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programmes.

However, parents have expressed concerns that children and young people are at risk of being denied the SEND Support that they are entitled to by local authorities on the Safety Valve programme since they make a commitment to contain spending on SEND provisions in exchange for this financial assistance. There have also been press reports suggesting that local authorities participating in the DBV programme may face targets to reduce the number of EHC plans. The Government's response to the latter concerns has not reassured the disability community, parents and other stakeholders that this will not be the case.

The Government plans to replace A levels and T levels with a Baccalaureate-style qualification called the Advanced British Standard in England in the next 10 years. This qualification will combine A levels and T levels into a single qualification, including compulsory study of English and Maths to age 18. Students will also be required to study five subjects instead of the usual three and have more teaching hours in the classroom.

High absenteeism in schools has been a major challenge during the post-pandemic period, with Disabled pupils registering higher absenteeism rates compared to non-disabled pupils. The Government response is to introduce a plan for new 'attendance hubs' run by schools with low absenteeism records. The Government also plans to introduce legislation that requires schools to share their daily school registers. We fear that these measures will make schools less welcoming to Disabled children. Current schools that welcome Disabled children, will become more reluctant to continue doing so, as it will be another factor that will impact their school ratings.

Disabled people are overrepresented among those who are in segregated education, not in employment or not in training. Too many Young Disabled people are labelled as NEET. Young Disabled people are also disadvantaged in transition from school to employment workplace training opportunities, with the Supported Internship being exploitative. This is a cause and consequence of marginalisation.

OUR DEMANDS – Justice In Action

The following is list of ALLFIE’s demands in relation to what needs to be done to achieve the vision of an inclusive education system.



I. Adopt an Inclusive Education Legislation in the UK

We demand the recognition of inclusive education as an inherent right for ALL people, and for the voices of Disabled people to be heard and respected on matters of inclusive education.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Adopt legislation that domesticates the UNCRPD and recognises inclusive education in mainstream settings as a right for ALL Disabled people in line with Article 24 of the UNCRPD. This legislation should:

- Secure Disabled people's right to equal access to education and learning in mainstream settings at all levels of education and promote life-long education for Disabled people.
- Prohibit all forms of discrimination and systemic injustices against Disabled people in education provision.
- Have measures to address the systemic exclusionary barriers that result in Disabled people being denied equal access to education and learning in mainstream settings.
- Aim to end all forms of segregated education and dual registered provisions in recognition that inclusive education is the foundation to an inclusive society.
- Withdraw all reservations to Article 24 of the UNCRPD and follow the EHRC position with the recognition of a just and equitable inclusive education system for everyone.
- Engage Disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) as equal partners from the formulation through to the implementation and evaluation of all legislation on inclusive education. This should be done in line with the principles of co-production and collective work, embedding

the slogan of the Disabled People's Movement: ***Nothing about us
without us.***



2. End all forms of Segregated Education

We demand clear goals to systematically phase out special nurseries/schools/ colleges/units and other segregated educational settings, prioritising inclusive learning environments for everyone.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Learn from the good practice and success of other countries (such as Australia) in systematically phasing out segregated schools/colleges/ units, as tools to move forward on making inclusive education a human rights matter for everyone.
- Stop all initiatives to build new special schools and redirect resources towards achieving inclusive education for all Disabled people in mainstream settings.
- End all segregated post-16 programmes such as Supported Internships because these are exploitative.
- Develop a plan to systematically phase out special nurseries/schools/ colleges/units and other segregated educational settings while at the

same time ensuring that all Disabled people achieve their right to inclusive education in mainstream settings with appropriate support and resourcing. This will be a move towards the progressive realisation and implementation of the right to inclusive education, in line with the UNCRPD.

- Provide sufficient resources to ensure the accessibility and provision of adjustments for Disabled people at all mainstream educational settings. Ensure that all mainstream educational settings are equipped and resourced to address the support needs of all Disabled people.
- Adopt a unified and better coordinated approach to addressing Disabled people's educational, health and care needs.
- Support Disabled people in building relationships with peers in mainstream settings. At the same time, ensure that Disabled people are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, torture, bullying, humiliation, and degrading treatment in education settings.

Inclusive education should be achieved within and across the entire education system. All segregated educational institutions, classrooms and programmes should be systematically phased out including at institutions of higher education. Disabled people should be given meaningful and equitable

opportunities to participate in apprenticeships, internships and other work-based learning programmes. This should be realised by providing the support that Disabled people require to do so.



3. Redirect government SEND funding towards supporting and improving mainstream services

We demand that inequalities in SEN provisions and disability services are immediately addressed, aiming to dismantle barriers to mainstream education for ALL Disabled people and ensuring provision of consistent and accessible services.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Establish robust and efficient systems and procedures for delivery of SEN support and disability services that enable Disabled people to enrol and remain in mainstream settings, with the aim of phasing out all segregated schools and units.
- Establish and implement policies and guidelines that are guided by inclusive education principles to ensure consistency and equality within and across the education system.

- Appropriately fund and resource educational settings to ensure Disabled people are not denied admission, excluded or placed at a disadvantage compared to other students.
- Remove all targets that would place Disabled people at a disadvantage within the education system such as Safety Valve and the Delivering Better Value programmes.
- Develop and implement accountability systems for assessing and determining good practices of inclusive education within mainstream settings.



4. End all forms of Curriculum and Assessment systematic injustice

We demand action to address systematic injustice by changing both the curriculum design and the administration of assessment systems, ensuring just and equitable outcomes for all students.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Develop more dynamic curriculum and assessment systems that do not disadvantage Disabled people on account of their impairments and the lack of appropriate support.
- Re-evaluate the objectives of education and learning to ensure that they are not discriminatory to Disabled people.
- Adopt inclusive teaching practices and stop teaching practices that are discriminatory to Disabled people.

- Address intersectional biases within the curriculum design and teaching practices.
- Adopt flexible assessment and examination practices that do not disadvantage Disabled people.
- Provide adequate resources and support for Disabled people in examinations and assessments.
- End parallel programmes and curriculums designed for Disabled people only.
- Engage Disabled people with the relevant skills and experience on how to make the curriculum and assessment system inclusive.
- Ensure that the introduction of the British Advanced Standard does not disadvantage Disabled people, reducing their chances of progressing to further-, higher-education and employment.



5. Make Inclusive Education Training mandatory nationwide

We demand comprehensive inclusive education training for all teachers and administrators.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Make training and professional development on inclusive education compulsory in teacher training and have systems for measuring performance.
- Develop and implement in-service training, professional development and capacity building programmes for teachers and administrators to ensure that they are aware of Disabled people's right to inclusive education and address attitudinal barriers (including stereotypes and misconceptions).
- Ensure shared accountability of addressing and supporting the delivery of SEND provisions and disability services within and across educational settings.
- Provide the required resources and support to effectively teach and support Disabled people in achieving inclusive education.



6. Combat Social Injustice in Education

We demand action to address all forms of social injustice in education, including intersecting disadvantages.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Adopt educational policies and practices that address all forms of social injustice in education, recognising the diversity of Disabled people's lived experience and the intersectional disadvantages that some Disabled people experience due to their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. For example, a Black Disabled girl might face discrimination due to a combination of the two or more of her separate protected characteristics (race, disability and gender) as well as other intersecting experiences.
- Give due recognition to the intersection of segregated education provisions, poverty, poor housing, and social capital and put in place appropriate policies and measures to achieve more equitable outcomes in the education system.
- Ensure that the education system responds to the needs of Disabled people from different cultural backgrounds and fosters respect for this diversity.

- Increase representation of Disabled people from different backgrounds in teaching staff and administration.

Glossary

Accessible – a product, service or building that is designed, or has been modified, in a way that allows Disabled people to use it or access it without encountering accessibility barriers. Accessibility is about ensuring that everyone can access information, products, services, and environments in a way that is inclusive and equal.

Advanced British Standard – a new educational framework that will combine A-levels and T-levels into a single qualification for 16- to 19-year-olds in England. Under this qualification students will be able to take a mix of technical and academic subjects.

A-Levels – subject-based qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. You normally study three or more A levels over two years.

Alternative Provision (AP) – education outside of mainstream settings, arranged by local authorities or schools.

Attendance hubs – government initiative aimed at reducing school absences. These will not address the wider issues of school non-attendance.

Dedicated School Grant – a ring-fenced specific grant that supports local authorities' Schools budgets.

Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme – a Department for Education (DfE) initiative focused on local authorities reducing spend on EHC plans.

Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) – an organisation run and controlled by Disabled people.

Education other than at school (EOTAS) – the education or special educational provision of children or young people outside of a formal educational setting.

Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) – a legal document describing the special educational needs of a child or young person's aged up to 25 as well as the support they need, and the outcomes they would like to achieve.

Intersectionality – people’s different experiences based on protected characteristics such as age, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation and socioeconomic background.

Marginalisation – Marginalisation means to treat a person or social group as though they are of less value than others. This can happen when individuals are treated differently from the majority and experience exclusion and segregation.

NEET – Young people (aged 16 to 24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Oppression – being treated cruelly or prevented from having the same opportunities, freedom, and benefits as others.

Safety Valve programme – a Department for Education (DfE) initiative focused on local authorities reducing spend on SEND provisions.

Segregation – Disabled people are placed away from ordinary experiences with others. For example, Disabled children placed in special schools are given an inferior education to non-disabled people, such as EOTAS.

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Social Model - The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world that was developed by Disabled people. The model says that people are Disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference.

Socioeconomic background – A person’s socioeconomic background is measured through specific factors such as income, education, class and occupation. It refers to the background you are from, including the class and education status of your parents.

Systemic barriers – established policies, procedures or practices that discriminate against people and prevent them from participating fully in education, employment and other areas of life.

Teacher – anyone who performs a teaching role in a nursery, school, college, university or adult learning setting.

T-Levels – a two-year qualification for 16 to 19-year-olds designed in collaboration with employers. Each T Level is equivalent to 3 A Levels, with the aim to support the young person to develop their skills, knowledge and to thrive in the workplace.

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