

ACHIEVING AN *INCLUSIVE* *EDUCATION* ACT



SUMMARY

This document summarises the recent work of The Coalition for Inclusive Education to assert how an *Inclusive Education Act* might be achieved in the UK.

The Coalition asserts that an Inclusive Education Act is a priority in its mission to achieve inclusion, justice and a right to education for all Disabled students.

The Coalition set out nine issues that they believe an Inclusive Education Act should both include and seek to achieve.

These include; an immediate withdrawal from reservations to *Article 24* of the UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ending all forms of segregated education and the setting up of an appropriate system of monitoring for inclusion.

The document concludes with next steps to help make the *Inclusive Education Act* a reality.

THE COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In 2024, ALLFIE brought together a group of Disabled people and allies from a range of backgrounds and settings with an interest in Inclusive Education, a commitment to ending segregation and achieving the right for all Disabled pupils and students to access mainstream settings.

Since 2024 the Coalition has held several workshops and discussions to explore and map out how this might be achieved. This included presentations and provocations from educationalists, campaigners and researchers.

These covered learning from international experiences, disability history, Disabled teachers and teaching unions and research into the experience of Disabled university students.

The Coalition debated and scrutinised issues relating to Inclusive Education, what an act would need to include and how this could be made to happen.

The following summarises this work to date and sets out a plan for how the group could work to make an '*Inclusive Education Act*' a reality in the UK.

AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACT

Since 1990 ALLFIE has championed and campaigned for Inclusive Education. ALLFIE's work has shown both the benefits of inclusive education as well as a range of challenges within the current education system.

This includes:

- ['How was school?'](#) that documented Disabled people's experiences of education over the last century.
- ['Lived Experience of Black/Global Majority Disabled Pupils and their Families in Mainstream Education'](#).
- Other work that identified significant gaps in the current [delivery of Accessibility Plans in English education settings.](#)

Grounded in the lived experiences of Disabled people who have survived segregated education provision, ALLFIE believes that Inclusive Education is the basis of lifelong equality.

ALLFIE's work highlights the importance and benefits of Inclusive Education, for all Disabled pupils and students as

well as the injustice and discrimination they experience as a result of segregated and exclusionary provision.

Essentially, an Inclusive Education system that meets the needs of all Disabled people from childhood, and supports life-long learning, is the foundation of an inclusive and just society.

Inclusive Education is defined as education that includes everyone, with non-disabled and Disabled people learning together in schools, colleges, universities and other lifelong learning settings. Inclusive Education is achieved by ensuring Disabled pupils and students are able to participate in all learning activities.

The UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) provides an internationally recognised standard for Disabled people's human rights. The UNCRPD includes Article 24: A Right to Inclusive Education. This guarantees all Disabled pupils and students a right to participate in all forms of education with appropriate support.

The UK government signed the UNCRPD in 2009, but then immediately undermined Article 24 on education. ALLFIE had been involved in shaping and submitting evidence to support the signing. However, the UK government redefined "general education" to include segregation and kept the

power to send Disabled children and young people to faraway special schools.

The UK is one of only two nations with such restrictions. Through General Comment No. 4, the UNCRPD Committee provided a clear roadmap for inclusion in 2016, but the UK refuses to realise this.

As a result Disabled students are excluded, discriminated against and denied their human rights. This is the case, not just in education but across many aspects of their lives. ALLFIE opposes this reservation and campaigns for this to be changed.

The Coalition for *Inclusive Education* believes that an Inclusive Education Act is needed now so as to achieve inclusion, justice and a right to education for all Disabled pupils and students.

At the time of writing (August 25) we are waiting for the publication of the 2025 Schools White Paper. This proposed policy document has significant implications for the future of schools in England.

The paper asserts two key issues relating to inclusion;

- A focus on improving standards, increasing accountability, and promoting inclusion.

- The Department for Education (DfE) are exploring how Disabled pupils' support should be met in the new system.

The white paper builds on the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan 2023. In this the Government proposed major changes to the SEND system.

This included scrapping of EHCPs, expanding segregated settings and introducing a 3-tier support system for schools; i) Universal - for all pupils, ii) Targeted intervention – ‘for pupils not making expected progress’ and iii) Specialist support ‘for pupils with persistent barriers to learning’.

The white paper consultation is expected in autumn 2025, with statutory changes being made in 2026.

ALLFIE has numerous problems with the white paper proposals.

Firstly, it does not improve education for Disabled children & Young people. This goes against UNCRPD Articles 24, 7 & 19, to ensure full enjoyment of learning, decision-making and participation in school life.

Secondly, the proposals reflect a Government agenda to cut spending on support for Disabled people. This would control how Disabled pupils/students are managed within the education system, which goes against the UNCRPD Article 28.

Thirdly, the proposed changes risk treating Inclusive Education as a choice and not a guaranteed right. This relates to the UNCRPD Article 24 and is a key concern. Inclusion should be a right for all Disabled pupils/students within the education system.

The following section details nine specific issues about what an *Inclusive Education Act* should both include and seek to achieve.

This includes adopting a law that recognises Inclusive Education in mainstream settings as a right for all in line with the UNCRPD Article 24, phasing out all special and segregated education provision in the UK and ensuring that teacher training includes an increase in learning about Inclusive Education.

WHAT AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACT WOULD DO

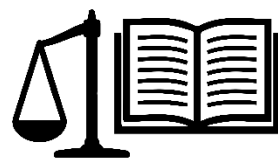
An *Inclusive education Act* would confront the underlying systemic barriers that perpetuate the marginalisation and discrimination of Disabled people within the education system and wider society.

It would support students who may face currently experience barriers to successfully participate and achieve. This would be facilitated by enabling educators to innovate and develop learning environments and systems that are effective, accessible and diverse.

The following, based on the discussions of The Coalition for Inclusive Education details some specific aspects of what an Inclusive Education Act should both include and seek to achieve:

I. A RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Adopt a law that recognises Inclusive Education in mainstream settings as a right for all Disabled people and reflects all aspects of the UNCRPD. Specifically, the Act would withdraw all reservations to



Article 24 and enshrine in law a right for every Disabled and Deaf student to get appropriate support to attend and remain in a fully inclusive education setting.

2. PHASE OUT SEGREGATED EDUCATION

Phase out all special and segregated education provision in the UK and commit to achieving inclusive education and practice across all education settings. Move funding away from segregated provision and invest in an inclusive provision for all.



3. ENABLE ACCESSIBILITY

Develop a system to sufficiently resource and deliver universal design, accessibility and the provision of enabling adjustments for Disabled people in all educational settings.



4. A CURRICULUM FOR ALL

Develop a 'curriculum for all', overhauling the current system to ensure accessibility and flexibility as standard for all Disabled pupils and students. End all forms of systemic injustice within assessment. Specially, do away with the current system of Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP) and adopt a more anticipatory and progressive approach to education and learning.



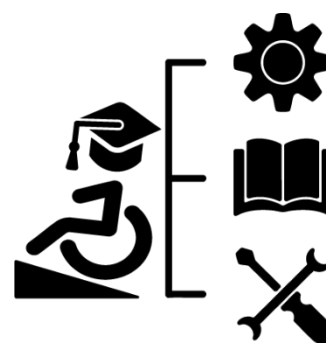
5. MONITOR AND PROMOTE INCLUSION

Set up an appropriate and single system of monitoring, regulation and appeal for Inclusive Education that enables and ensures a right to Inclusive Education is central to the focus and work of any educational setting. This would ensure that educational settings are inclusive and that they provide support as standard, as opposed to learners and their families having to apply and/or argue for provision.



6. MORE DISABLED PEOPLE AS TEACHERS

Increase the numbers of Disabled people as educators working in related roles in learning environments. Ensure appropriate and progressive workplace support to encourage Disabled people into educational workplaces.



7. SKILLS FOR INCLUSION

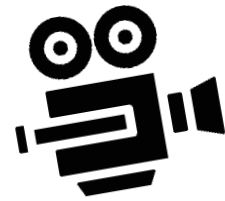
Create a skills and learning programme about Inclusive Education to prepare and provide ongoing support for teachers and the whole of the education workforce. Ensure teaching and other related qualifications include learning components specifically relating to Inclusive Education.



8. REPRESENTING DISABLED PEOPLE

Increase the visibility and representation of disability across the curriculum and learning context.

Promote a positive culture of Disabled people to include their histories, realities and diversity.



9. A PROACTIVE APPROACH

Ensure a proactive and action oriented approach to resolving issues of discrimination and exclusion within education settings, including those relating to intersectional experiences.



HOW WE MAKE AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACT A REALITY

While there is significant support for such an Act, the will is not yet completely realised. There are many competing stories and narratives about how to best support Disabled students that muddle the vision.

However, there is common ground in many areas domestically and internationally that support and can influence steps for the goal of an *Inclusive Education Act* becoming a reality in the UK.

Below we set out some campaign steps to help make an *Inclusive Education Act* a reality. This includes some suggested actions and project work needed to achieve this.

Plan – Research and map out the current segregated education and special school landscape, plus areas of discrimination in other parts of education for Disabled pupils and students. This will help us understand the resistance to our work and to build common ground and consensus regarding inclusion issues specific to the UK.

Action – Create a concise briefing to articulate the case for *Inclusive Education*, with specific messages developed with/for Disabled people, their parents/families and other education stakeholders.

Network – Develop the Coalition membership, form new alliances and connect with allies elsewhere. Work with organisations of Disabled people and the national organisation representing Deaf people, to create educational policy that would fully implement the right to education. Build support and engage influential stakeholders; such as politicians, celebrities, parents, unions, teachers, students, the SEND workforce, DPOs and others.

Action – Increase Coalition membership, facilitate learning and leadership opportunities for stakeholders.

Highlight – Develop a campaign, with key messages that increase support for the Act. Host an ‘Inclusive Education’ conference and summit that has a focus on learning from international issues to improve the situation for Disabled pupils and students in the UK.

Action – Plan a summit that will make the case for Inclusive Education for a wide range of stakeholders.

Profile – lead a highly visible media campaign, perhaps with a series of Inclusive Education films/podcasts led by Disabled influencers to raise the profile of Inclusive Education in new and untypical spaces.

Action – Work to create a series of films that demonstrate the case for Inclusive Education and help build public approval for this.

Act - Form a partnership with a sitting MP who agrees to draft and introduce a bill to Parliament. Work to influence the education minister and associated government departments to ensure that any changes to education policy and practice ensure an Inclusive Education approach throughout.

Action - Undertake work to create what a 'curriculum for all' would look like, and how Inclusive Education could become a reality and present a practical strategy to implement this.

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