Key Themes from Parent Carer Q&A: Introduction to the SEND and AP Reforms

Wednesday 21st October 2026

Across both the morning and evening engagement sessions, parents and carers raised a consistent set of questions and concerns about the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and AP (Alternative Provision) reforms. The discussion focused on communication, access to support, workforce capacity, specialist provision, and the practical impact of the reforms on children, young people and families.

1. Clear communication and understanding the reforms

Parents highlighted the importance of clear, consistent communication. Concerns were raised about changes in SEND terminology, delayed responses from services, and the complexity of navigating information about support and reforms. Families emphasised the need for language that is easy to understand and for regular updates about changes that may affect them. Barnet acknowledged these concerns and confirmed that improving communication and accessibility of information is a key priority.

2. Navigating the SEND system and accessing support

A recurring theme was that the SEND system can feel complex and difficult to navigate. Parents asked for clearer pathways into support and more identifiable points of contact. Families also described challenges accessing existing support and wanted reassurance that reforms would make services easier to understand and access. Barnet explained that proposed cluster arrangements, SEND navigators and family hubs are intended to provide clearer routes into support and improve coordination between services.

3. Continued support for children and young people

Parents sought reassurance that children and young people would continue to receive appropriate support throughout the reform process. Questions focused on how reforms would improve current provision, particularly where families feel support is already limited or difficult to access. Barnet emphasised that the reforms aim to build on existing services, identify gaps through co-production, and ensure children receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

4. EHCPs, specialist provision and educational pathways

Families wanted greater clarity about the future of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), how any national changes may affect existing plans, and how specialist provision such as Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs), inclusion bases and satellite provision will fit within the reformed system. Barnet explained that no legislative changes have yet been made and that any future reforms would be implemented gradually. It was also emphasised that specialist provision will continue to play an important role within a wider continuum of support focused on meeting individual needs.

5. Workforce capacity and service availability

A common concern was whether the workforce and wider SEND system have sufficient capacity to deliver the ambitions of the reforms. Parents highlighted pressures on schools, SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) and specialist services and questioned how

Barnet would recruit and retain the necessary workforce. Barnet acknowledged these challenges and national shortages in some professions, while highlighting strong local recruitment in some areas and plans to strengthen expertise, professional development and collaboration across services.

6. Partnership working and coordinated support

Parents asked how education, health and social care services would work together to provide joined-up support. Questions focused on the role of family hubs, cluster teams and wider community services. Barnet outlined its intention to improve multi-agency working and create more coordinated pathways that help families access support more easily.

7. Parent and carer voice

Families welcomed opportunities to contribute to the development of the reforms and stressed the importance of lived experience shaping future services. Barnet reaffirmed its commitment to co-production and ongoing engagement with parents and carers through the Barnet Parent Carer Forum and other participation opportunities.

Overall Message

Across both sessions, parents and carers consistently expressed a desire for clearer communication, easier navigation of services, timely access to support, confidence in workforce capacity, and reassurance that reforms will lead to meaningful improvements for children and young people with SEND. Barnet emphasised that the reforms are intended to build on existing strengths, improve coordination and access to support, and continue to be shaped through ongoing engagement and co-production with families.