

Build for the Day of Action

For Disability Equality in Education

Wednesday 21st November 2018

There are over 2 million disabled students attending nursery, school, colleges and universities in England and at least 150,000 Disabled Education Staff (15%).

The promise of the Equality Act to promote Disability Equality and Protect from Disability Discrimination, provide Reasonable Adjustments and Access are increasingly being ignored throughout the Education System. Disabled staff and students are put at a substantial disadvantage by a climate of fear, league tables, ignorance and cutbacks forced by Government policies and underfunding of the sector. The UK Government has been heavily criticised by the United Nations for 'grave and systematic violations' of disabled people's rights including in education.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/31/un-panel-criticises-uk-failure-to-uphold-disabled-peoples-rights>

Budget cuts of around 9% in real terms are forcing schools to make difficult choices cutting support staff especially teaching assistants and mentors and leading to larger classes. This makes meeting the needs of students with SEND more difficult. Higher needs funding has not kept up with demand. Rigid policies in behaviour, admissions, exclusions and bullying are discriminating against disabled students. Tighter budgets and the breaking up of the maintained school sector are making it difficult for disabled staff to receive reasonable adjustments, especially staff acquiring impairments from high levels of workload stress and harassment. This leads to wasteful and discriminatory dismissal. A similar situation is occurring in both Further and Higher Education.

Staff, students and parents should plan their contribution on 21st November. These will include:

- Organising a school/college union/staff meeting or a lunchtime get together to discuss issues
- Protesting for adjustments and accessible buildings
- Showing a film on disabled people's activism
- Sending all members info on the Equality Act provisions
- Lively lobbies...
- Assemblies of staff and students to raise issues
- Contacting parents to leaflet all parents/students after school
- Using social media, including a Thunderclap e-message at 1.00 to Damien Hinds, Sec. of State
- Putting pressure on Government/politicians to amend legislation and improve funding
- Creating photo opportunities (such as holding placards/banners) for local press
- Sending a Rep. to **Parliamentary meeting at 5.30** that evening (ticket only from supporting organisations)

Called for by disabled educationists, students and parents of disabled children at the Disability Summit (November 2017). Promoted by the University and College Union and supported by National Education Union, Alliance for Inclusive Education, Disability History Month, Disabled People Against the Cuts, National Union of Students and the TUC Disabled Workers Conference.