

By email to: [scrutiny@parliament.uk](mailto:scrutiny@parliament.uk)

11 February 2025

## ADCS written evidence

The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd. (ADCS) is the national leadership organisation in England for directors of children's services (DCSs). Under the provisions of the *Children Act (2004)*, the DCS acts as a single point of leadership and accountability for services for children and young people in a local area, including children's social care and education.

ADCS is committed to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion which are fundamental to all areas of our work. We are committed to highlighting issues of disproportionality, discrimination and systemic barriers that limit opportunity where they exist, recognising that not all children, young people and families are impacted equally. ADCS is pleased to submit written evidence to the bill committee. ADCS President, Andy Smith, welcomed the recent opportunity to provide oral evidence on many aspects of this Bill and the Association wanted to follow up in writing with a particular emphasis on the school focused elements of the Bill.

The education system in England is increasingly fragmented and lacks coherence, locally, regionally and at the national level. Since 2010 the role of local authorities (LAs) in education has been partly eroded by design due to a shift from an LA led and coordinated system to one that is less rooted in place. Schools and trusts now operate in a more autonomous environment that has incentivised greater competition between individual schools, coming at the expense of inclusion. Reforms introduced under the previous government have not centred on the needs of all children and young people, instead having the opposite effect of marginalising learners who are not well suited to the current high stakes system that prizes academic attainment and inspection outcomes above all else.

While the current education system may work for some children, it does not work for all, particularly our most vulnerable and those with SEND. For those children with SEND, outcomes are now worse despite record levels of spend. There is inequity in the current SEND system with those parents who have the means to fund private assessments and legal representation compared to parents living in more disadvantaged areas. There is a consensus across the sector that the SEND system is broken, and reform is urgently needed.

ADCS members believe that a new vision for the education system is needed and must be rooted in place, with inclusion at its heart. In November 2023, ADCS published a paper, [A future vision for the education system](#), setting out a vision for a new vision for a more inclusive education system, outlining the vital role of place-based school partnerships that could help improve the system.

ADCS members are confident that measures in the Bill such as, the power to direct an academy school to admit a child and the duties to co-operate around place planning, will not only support LAs to meet their duties and ensure all children can access education in a timely way, they will also help to lay the foundations for more fundamental reform in the SEND space and create a more inclusive education system. ADCS supports ending the legal presumption that new schools should be academies, allowing proposals from local authorities and others to open new schools. Local authorities know their communities and

have the place planning duty; therefore, it makes sense to allow them to develop proposals to effectively meet need. ADCS strongly supports the enhanced role for the LA outlined in the bill although given the significant hollowing out of LAs funding since 2010 it will be necessary for a comprehensive new burdens assessment and investment in LAs capacity to deliver the changes.

To achieve a coherent and inclusive education system, all mainstream state-funded schools, regardless of their governance arrangements, should be expected to teach the national curriculum. This ensures that all children have access to a broad and balanced education which meets the needs of a range of learners and prepares them for adulthood. ADCS supports the view that schools should be expected to deliver against a national framework which describes the skills and knowledge young people need to thrive, and that this is delivered by qualified teachers.

ADCS is aware that that government has commissioned a Curriculum and Assessment Review and has responded to the call for evidence, the ADSC submission can be found [here](#). It will be important that the findings of this review help inform any changes to the curriculum and assessment methods going forward to ensure that the education system reflects the needs of all learners, not just those who are academically able.

To discuss any of the issues raised in this submission further, please contact ADCS Policy Officer, Madeline Jackson, [Madeline.Jackson@adcs.org.uk](mailto:Madeline.Jackson@adcs.org.uk).