
Family Testimonies: A Foreword

The following document contains a series of anonymised testimonies submitted by parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Surrey over the last 2 months.

The responses were collected in answer to the following question:

“Have you experienced unethical, dishonest, unlawful or harmful behaviour from Surrey County Council in relation to securing your child’s SEND provision?”

Each testimony reflects the lived experience of families navigating the SEND system in Surrey. The accounts shared highlight recurring patterns of conduct that many believe are systemic in nature, including unlawful decision-making, misrepresentation of professional evidence, denial of statutory support, and failure to comply with Tribunal orders.

Identifying details have been redacted. However, the testimonies are presented in full, in the family’s own words, and are numbered here for ease of reference.

These testimonies stand as case studies, representing the experiences of hundreds of other families who felt unable to share their stories publicly - whether due to fear, exhaustion, or concern for the impact on their child. While anonymised, they offer detailed, first-hand insight into the realities of engaging with Surrey County Council’s SEND services, so the scale of suffering and injustice can no longer be diminished or denied.

These testimonies, along with the accounts of those not yet able to speak out, demonstrate the scale and depth of failure in the collapse of special educational provision in Surrey. More importantly, they make abundantly clear that these issues cannot be dismissed as simply the result of overstretched services or insufficient funding.

What emerges is a consistent pattern in which statutory duties are not just unmet, but appear subverted, obstructed, and ignored, by those charged to fulfil them, with what can only be described as an astonishing level of ambivalence toward the rule of law. The result of this, and the ongoing failure of the Department for Education to intervene, has been immeasurable harm to the children, young people, and families caught in this web.

In that context , and on reading the evidence set out here, we are sure you will appreciate that it is simply beyond countenance for any Local Authority that demonstrates such disregard for its legal obligations, let alone its ethical and moral duties to protect the most vulnerable in their communities, to be entrusted with further responsibility or, worse, (as they lobby for), unchecked and unilateral decision-making power over the education, health, and future prospects of the most vulnerable children in its care.

We therefore call upon you, in your capacity as Secretary of State, to take immediate steps — as set out in our letter- to directly intervene and ensure that no further harm can be inflicted on the children and families subject to this failing and seemingly entirely unaccountable Local Authority.

The scale, severity, and ongoing nature of these failures can no longer be ignored.

Testimony 1

My child was a high masker, a gorgeous popular, bright child. They reached burn out early. Crying and begging me not to take them to school. One day they were hauled out of my boot by the head teacher. Something I deeply regret.

Their unmet special needs made attendance at school harmful and they entered a period severe burn out. The happy-go-lucky, exuberant child I had had before I sent them to school was gone.

I applied for an EHCP assessment this was refused, despite us meeting the legal threshold which is low. Whilst I was waiting for this to be overturned I arranged my own assessments for my child. A therapist assessed them and said that they were concerned by how high their anxiety was and recommended that they did not have any more assessments as they would be seriously detrimental to their health. I naively believed that Surrey CC would take this in good faith and respect the level of suffering that my vulnerable child was experiencing.

Spoiler alert - they did not, they hounded me and the GP surgery for the next 12 months to try and get 'access' to assess my child and to get any scrap of evidence to dispute what the experts had said.

They refused to issue an EHCP despite the fact that all of the EHCNA assessments (including ones conducted by their own professionals) indicated that my child needed provision that couldn't be met without an EHCP. They then continued to lie, gaslight and bully us in the run up to tribunal so that all our energy was taken away from helping our vulnerable child recover. We had asked for subject access request following refusal to issue an EHCP and we saw that whole sections had been redacted. Once we asked for the redactions to be removed we saw that the redacted sections included statements from the LA EP such as 'The weight of evidence in this case is hard to argue with.'

They asked for a Tribunal case management hearing in the run up to the tribunal which they then did not attend. The judge made the following comment regarding the LA 's conduct:

'There is a very real risk that the LA is acting unreasonably in its conduct of these proceedings, and may face a successful application for an order in respect of costs, because it is straying into areas where it might be said to be misleading the Tribunal.'

At the tribunal for 'Refusal to issue an EHCP' - the LA EP attended for the majority of the hearing as a witness for the LA. This was unbeknownst to anyone as they had not filled in the paperwork ahead of the tribunal. They claimed this to be due to 'handover from one tribunal officer to another' but there

was not evidence to substantiate this claim. Bearing in mind the Tribunal Hearing was because the LA were refusing to issue an EHCP, when the Judge asked the LA's own EP if she felt this child needed an EHCP and she immediately said 'yes'. So, to clarify, the council brought a witness to the hearing who ended up agreeing with us the appellants and rendering the entire LA position baseless. This is why I struggle to take seriously the 'lack of EPs' when they're quite happy to bring an EP to court for an entirely unnecessary tribunal.

In parallel to this my child was being marked as 'unauthorised absence' at school despite the fact that we had numerous GP and consultant letters stating that the state of his mental health made attendance impossible (which are not required in law, evidence should only be required if the veracity of the parents account of ill health is not believed)

So for over a year my child received NO education or support, and the LA kept unlawfully passing the buck back to the schools. I went to LGO for this failure. They were found at fault.

Fast forward to the next tribunal to get the provision that my child needed put into place. They refused my subject access request in the run up to the tribunal as they cited 'legal privilege' because we were in appeal.

Once the tribunal was over they gave me the contents of my subject access request and said that they had been incorrect. It soon became apparent why they had made this up - the Subject access request showed that they had consulted 15 mainstream schools pretty much begging them to take my child. When one glance at his EHCP would make it very clear that their needs couldn't be met in a mainstream school. I complained to the ICO about this and they agreed that the LA was at fault.

Following that tribunal, they failed to take any of the actions ordered by the court. In the end we had to instruct legal proceedings against them in just order to get them to comply with the Court's Order.

Throughout this entire 4 plus year process the faceless 'panel' have been making unlawful decisions which directly contradict professional advice. We are offered no minutes, and often don't even know they've been to panel. This shouldn't be political, this is a question of humanity. Stories of how families are being deliberately broken. Tim Oliver says that finances aren't an issue - so what is the issue?

As the MPs says these are NEEDS not WANTS. Every year we have to return to this at annual review to repeat this process. This takes place in full knowledge that they will conceal evidence, lie, bully and intimidate us and professionals in his care in order to protect their resources. The worry my amazing child will continue to suffer as a consequence of their behavior is what keeps me up most nights.

Testimony 2

I am a single-parent household with an autistic 16-year-old son.

His EHCP was finally issued 31 weeks late, following tribunal hearing. It was issued with a false date on it, claiming I must have just lost it.

Surrey lied about Occupational Therapy providers, claiming that they had behaved obstructively, causing delays in the implementation of my child's OT provision as per section F. Evidence later revealed this was demonstrably false and the LA had been dishonest about this. Surrey CC ignored Court Order from the Ministry of Justice, which meant I had to issue further legal proceedings (pre-action protocol judicial review), meaning child was not receiving the vital provision ordered by the Tribunal judge for over a year.

During the time that I was trying to get Court Order implemented and my young person's provision started, Surrey CC told me that they had a blanket policy of 'no longer issuing personal budgets.' When challenged on this via a pre-action protocol judicial review process, Surrey retracted this and said that the employee who had told me this was 'misinformed.' Due to Surrey CC's failures to uphold the law and negligent behaviour, LGO awarded me compensation which had to be paid for by Surrey CC, but it was still less than it would have cost them to implement my son's provision at the point that they had been ordered by the judge to do so.

The LGO officer stated that there were no service improvement recommendations for Surrey within my case only because so many similar recommendations have been made to this council, demonstrating it is a persistent issue. To quote the officer: 'There comes a time where there is little point in keeping on hitting them over the head with the same hammer and expecting anything to change.' The LGO also had to reassure me that if I didn't receive the remedy they had outlined, I should go back to the LGO officer, and they provided me with a direct email address for this. This was provided as Surrey CC has damaged my trust so much, I couldn't trust them to follow directions from the LGO.

As part of the SENDIST/tribunal proceedings, Surrey CC are ordered by the judge to produce a bundle. They failed to do this, so I had to spend my own money arranging this bundle. Surrey's failure to produce a bundle prompted the judge to order attendance at a pre-hearing meeting with the council and me. Surrey CC failed to turn up to this, despite the court ordering it and it being in relation to their failings.

The legal process for reviewing EHCPs is that this is done annually and any changes are evidence-based. However, Surrey CC informed me that in a year's time they will be removing whole sections of

my child's provision. There is no evidence for them to do this. They lie so much, that you have to adapt to living that way — adapt to the failures, prepare to lose your child's education and have to fight the unlawfulness all over again.

I just want to live in a world where the people who hold the power to my son receiving an education which meets his needs are not dirty great liars. Tribunal is needed because Surrey break the law. I am now receiving therapy to treat the trauma that I have experienced as a result of the constant lying and unlawful conduct within this council. One whole year without provision — well, more than that, actually. The last provision was started this term. EOTAS was awarded in May 2023. Apart from tutoring, which still hasn't started because their failures traumatised him so much, it's taken 3.5 years for him to heal enough to be open to having a tutor in our home to teach him.

Testimony 3

My son is adopted, they have breached my son's data by including some of his birth name in correspondence to me and to various schools *. It took over a week to reissue the letter, after, I, in a highly distressed state, told them about the breach.

His case worker seemed to have no idea what to do to correct the situation. They decided not to report it to the ICO, even though my child is highly vulnerable, and by the end of the process I was too exhausted to complain.

They told me a particular school 'couldn't meet need'. It turned out that they had no idea whether the school could or couldn't meet need, because they lost the paperwork! They shared misleading and actually incorrect information with schools. Despite my attempts to correct it. Their response to not allocating a school to my son when going into secondary by the statutory deadline was that they would send weekly texts. This was in 2024. They just seem incompetent. They cover their tracks, have poor systems and processes and don't understand their legal obligations.

Impact on child/young person: When my son didn't have a school place, he became dysregulated and anxious. He couldn't participate in extra curricular activities he previously enjoyed and his behaviour suffered at school.

Impact on family circumstances: The whole experience effected my mental health and ability to work. I know this is stupid, but I genuinely had faith that the people employed by SCC had families best interests at heart. I wasn't expecting the gaslighting and brick walls.

My son was born into circumstances where from his first day of life, Surrey was his legal parent. This carried on for a year and a half. I suppose I thought we would be on the same side, looking after my son's interests.

**Whilst systemic, serious data breaches feature frequently in the testimonies of families in Surrey, the use of a birth name post-adoption constitutes a particularly egregious breach of UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, as it involves special category and safeguarding-sensitive data. Furthermore, disclosure of this information to third parties, including an unknown number of schools, without lawful basis breaches multiple principles. Given the high-risk nature of the breach, the Council's decision not to report it to the ICO raises very serious concerns about legal compliance and safeguarding culture.*

Testimony 4

As a resident of Surrey and parent to three AuDHD children, all of whom have EHCPs, this letter speaks to our experience. I stand behind every word and what it calls for. Currently, I have one child for whom, in the January of Year 5, the LA have already told me they have decided on the outcome for her for phase transfer — 21 months prior to her transfer to KS3 and without asking for professional input or evidence. Another, for whom they completely ignored ALL the professional advice after AR and took a course of action for which they had no supporting evidence or professional opinion — both of these courses of action will likely push me into appeal when they are concluded.

I have been forced into tribunal 7 times already, have been left with no choice but to submit complaints — 3 have gone to the LGO, another is about to go. Sometimes I have to resort to submitting a stage 1 complaint simply to get my case officer to respond to me. Surrey have ignored me, lied to me, lied about me, failed to meet deadlines, denied my children an education — etc, etc. I have stood as a buffer between my children and their harmful behaviour. I am the articulate parent they complain about and point to as their key problem. Am I articulate? Yes I am. Do I have the money to pay for expensive lawyers? No- I do not. I have represented myself each time at tribunal and won each time. However at huge mental and physical toll. Yet I am lucky. I have the skills and time to educate myself in the law to enable me to fight for an education for my kids. I now volunteer my time through a charity to provide other parents with advice and support to enable them to try to defend their kids against this siege on their legal right to an education. I'm tired and I'm simply striving for the education my children have a legal right to. It has left me with long-term illnesses. It impacts my ability to work and therefore pay taxes, it sends me into the disability system.

I'm supporting two friends right now. Between them, they have three children who have not had any education for their children for between 7 months and 3 years. All Surrey Cases. No Alternative Provision, Caseworkers leave, lost files, data breaches, no action taken, tribunal orders ignored, failure to put in provision from section F of the EHCPs (yes those irksome legal documents they are so keen to bin). Delay, delay, delay. Pre action protocol letters submitted just to get them to put Court-ordered

provision into place. Literally enforcement action to make them comply with Court Orders. Can you comprehend that? From a Public Office? Complaints process constantly used. Evidence that they are constantly trying to redraw the lines of complaints, more delays. There will be three more complaints off to the LGO for failure to adhere to S19 EA1996 and s42 CFA2014. They know these breaches, the LGO has ruled on them so many times they no longer even comment about remedial action at Surrey County Council. This Council quite literally are making a mockery of every legal process, at the cost of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Its positively dystopian.

All my children have been unable to attend school at some point, due to its devastating impact on their mental health. For two of them, it's unlikely they will ever attend school again. Some of the latest shenanigans are that they have ignored all of the professional evidence from annual review and are trying to force a change in provision. Everyone involved, including Social Worker and Clinical Psychologist agreed that the safeguarding risk to his mental health and my family would be significant. Did that stop them? No. Did they know this decision is legally indefensible and would be overturned at tribunal? Of course they did. Did this allow them to delay making provision for my child? Yes. If I had been another parent would I have had the strength to fight them on this? That's the question that should haunt you.

Educate my children and they will contribute to society. Educate my children without me having to fight Surrey CC's appalling, harmful and baseless conduct so hard and I will work and contribute. Continue to fail to do so and we will be yet more numbers on hospital and mental health waiting lists, yet more numbers getting support from the DWP. All things you want to see reduced.

Is the system broken? Yes — but not in the way that the Leaders of SCC would have you believe. It's broken because they act unlawfully, because of maladministration, because they've eroded our trust in them. Our children are being failed. There are undoubtedly systemic issues, many of them due to the misuse and misapplication of funding (some examples of which are included right here). However, it is increasingly apparent that Surrey CC is lying to those who are elected to hold them to account. Lying about their absolute failings. Failings that are far more than the national failures, that appear to be unique to this council. Is its population uniquely articulate? This is an appalling narrative they have been allowed to peddle for years. It is deliberately seeking to shift the blame from their, at best, incompetent, at worse corrupt, shoulders.

Act in accordance with the law, act with integrity, earn back our trust, stop pushing us to appeal — and maybe, just maybe, things might not look so bad. Start by doing this. Start by investigating gross misconduct at SCC.

Testimony 5

Parent of three Autistic Young People. I consent.

It's hard to know where to begin so will start with the most recent example (details redacted).

Summary: AR completed December 2023 by school who followed all lawful requirements. Surrey invited to attend AR, did not respond & did not attend. Did not follow any of the lawful steps, took 10 months to issue finalised EHCP [a decision was due in 4 weeks] and when it was, it did not include ANY amendments from AR and did NOT name a placement nor type of placement, which rendered the EHCP completely unfit for purpose.

Vulnerable Young Person left with no education and only option to appeal via SENDIST.

Appeal lodged by parent and given ref EH***/25/00001 which denotes it as the first appeal lodged against Surrey in 2025 & date for Tribunal November 2025. Surrey required to respond to the Upper Tier Tribunal by noon 13/2/25 – No response received. SENDIST bar Surrey County Council (attached). SENDIST's valuable time wasted by this common tactic used by Surrey.

We have multiple examples of Surrey completely disregarding the law. We are a family who do not have funds to pay for private reports etc so cannot be accused of being privileged in any way – other than hanging on to our house by our fingernails. I have long since had to give up my job to deal with the constant demands of dealing with Surrey CFLT Directorate and I can honestly say that I have witnessed things becoming much worse than they were under the leadership of Dave Hill. I also believe that the LA has learned and industrialised how to 'game' the system – not only directly with parents, but also with SENDIST, OFSTED, DfE, CQC, elected councillors and the press. I have witnessed the conduct of Rachael Wardell and the small army of Senior Managers surrounding her and how they exude an air of disdain to anyone who dares challenge them. I have also been threatened with the full weight of legal resources at Surrey's disposal should I choose to pursue a complaint against the school's referral pathway for Neurodevelopmental Assessment being 'paused' in November 2023* – which has remained in place effectively other than a couple of minor details.

As there were no elections in May, we now must endure this maladministration for two more years, which is staggering, and possibly the straw which may break the camel's back in some cases.

Just within the last two weeks Surrey SEND called me to ask what provision my twins currently have (despite them both having EHCPs for a number of years which were both issued after Consent Orders) and then Surrey also chose to reveal personal details about my family's financial problems to one of the twins' current providers. I absolutely believe that I have developed PTSD – not from being the

parent of three amazing Neurodivergent Young People, or even because of the SEND system, but from the frankly abusive treatment from Surrey County Council's SEND Service.

Of course, the most distressing thing is the huge impact upon my young people and their prospects as young adults.

**In a response to pressure about excessive waiting times, Surrey were involved in the decision to “pause” (block) new referrals from schools for children requiring neurodevelopmental assessment — a move that has effectively prevented many children from accessing the diagnostic pathway. Despite this, staggeringly, Surrey has continued to celebrate a reduction in waiting lists, without acknowledging that this apparent progress has been achieved only by suppressing demand. Similar approaches have already been challenged through Judicial Review in other parts of the country, raising serious questions about the lawfulness of such blanket restrictions. Further details can be found in Council sessions, including Member and Public Questions addressed to the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Directorate. Surrey have chosen to persist with this nonetheless — seemingly content to threaten legal action against those raising the issue, and instead waiting for someone with sufficient resources to instigate a High Court intervention to force them to correct it.*

Testimony 6

I really don't know where to begin when it comes to sharing our experiences with SCC. The situation has been nothing short of shambolic, and the impact on our child and our family has been devastating.

Our son has been out of school and without adequate education for 20 months now. He currently only receives two hours of funded education per week. Yes, just two hours a week! The battle to secure any form of support has been exhausting. Despite his mainstream school stating over a year ago that they could not meet his needs, the LA still insists on naming that same school in his EHCP.

We have reports from occupational therapists, psychiatrists, paediatricians, and an Educational Psychologist, all clearly stating that our child is unable to attend a mainstream school due to his complex needs. Yet, Surrey County Council refuses to listen to us as parents, nor to the professionals, including the ones they employ themselves.

The number of failures by the LA in our case is overwhelming, but here's a brief summary:

1. The LA fails to meet its own deadlines.
2. They [knowingly retained] inaccurate information about our child in his finalised EHCP.
3. Emails are either ignored or answered selectively, with no regard for timeliness.
4. Inaccurate and incomplete information about our child has been presented to panels.
5. There is zero accountability - no one in this LA takes responsibility, even when formal complaints are made.

A year ago, we were hopeful our son could attend a specialist school. However, because the LA insisted on naming his mainstream school, we've been stuck in limbo. There has been no adequate education and no sense of urgency from the LA to find a suitable school. This has deeply affected our

son's mental health. He feels unwanted by any school. Earlier this year, he even expressed thoughts of not wanting to be here anymore, becoming depressed and withdrawn. Due to the severity of his condition, professionals have now recommended an EOTAS provision [Education other than at School]. We submitted this to the LA, who eventually took it to panel, only for us to hear this week that our request was refused.

Our family is resilient, stable, and capable. Yet, the system seems to place blame on parents, and that takes its toll. I've had to give up my job to care for my son full-time. We've spent all our savings on private support, and now we have nothing left. The financial burden has been overwhelming. Recently, someone described the LA as "narcissistic," and that really struck a chord with me. It perfectly captures the dynamic we've experienced.

There's so much more I could say, and sadly, our journey is far from over.

Testimony 7

When Councillors check that the EHCP timescales are met (for those that seem to be) do you actually check whether this is just a statistics they feed you or whether the EHCPs completed in 20 weeks are indeed correct and as a result those children are placed in the suitable setting? I guess not as in our case we had the EHCP "completed" in just under 20 weeks ?? but not only it is not worth the paper it is written on, we had to go straight to appeal (remember this is adding 1 year to the 20 weeks timescales) and we have no school to go to....

LA are saying "it's all a process unfortunately so you will have to wait" ... so what is even the point as in your eyes they have made improvement by issuing within the timescales. Then to top it up, the placement team got involved (case worker was not even aware) and TOLD one school they can meet need **. No they couldn't and due to school's mistake of forwarding an email and cc me in I now have the LA'S statement "we need to fill spaces for September " - is this how your metrics are being ticked off?????????

These are vulnerable children who need the most stability and yet for SCC they are just a tick box for statistics purposes.

I would very much like you to find me one family of a child with no SEN needs who had to fight months/years to secure a school place, that they had to pay solicitors and fight etc. This is mass disability discrimination!

**This testimony makes specific reference to Surrey County Council's ongoing claim of service improvement, based on EHCP timeliness, which has been widely disputed. Multiple families report serious errors and omissions in plans issued by the*

EHCP Recovery Team, including missing assessments and unlawful content. CPLL Select Committee evidence includes case officers stating they were told to prioritise new cases to meet deadlines and raised concerns about the harm caused by handing over cases to the Recovery Team. Data shows a concurrent rise in Tribunal appeals, creating significant and unnecessary injustice.

*** This testimony also makes reference to the use of 'Directed placements. Parents, teachers, and SENCOs have consistently reported the use of 'directed placements' in Surrey — where families are told a specific setting will be named despite the setting confirming they are unable to meet the needs of a child. Although Surrey County Council publicly denies this practice, and refers to it as exceptional, it is widely described as routine by those with direct experience of the system, including teachers and SENCOs.*

Testimony 8

This is difficult to write, and my apologies for this long response but I hope it helps.

I have felt I needed to hide my battles with Surrey for years, but I am inspired by the courage of everyone who has posted and encouraged by MPs who actually stand up for their constituents. That said, [Name of MP Redacted] did his best and I will always be grateful for his intervention but Surrey largely ignored him, and their recent refusal to meet with Surrey MPs supports my view they think they do not have to answer to anyone and they are above the law and the law makers.

I have been trying to work with Surrey, fearfully and patiently for many years, in the best interests of my children. For their sake I have put myself through engagements and meetings, where I have been patronised, invalidated, dismissed, belittled, ridiculed, ignored repeatedly. I have been gaslighted and threatened. I have been judged as a result of making complaints and told to decrease writing long emails to them.

Despite this Surrey refuse to take any responsibility for their communication and actions. Surrey County Council have caused me and my family, old and young, consistent, unrelenting trauma for years. They have not understood or recognised autism in girls and young people, leading to damaging accusations of parents causing language and developmental delay. They have discriminated against people who have mental and physical health challenges. They have a fearful internal work culture, where employees are afraid to speak out at the risk of intimidation.

I was not listened to as a parent, so I trained in mental health, autism and recovery support and became a professional working for the NHS. I am still not listened to, still patronized [by the SEND Team at Surrey County Council in my dealings with them]. Still spoken to like I am the child I am trying to help and support. I have been labelled and Surrey employees have put in writing that I am intense and needy and trying too hard as a parent. I thought I was the only parent in Surrey to be harmed and traumatised by this uncaring institution, who by their inflexibility and refusal to listen to people with lived experience are causing themselves financial difficulties. Sadly, it appears I am wrong.

There are good people working in Surrey in advisor and support roles, who have restored my faith in humanity, but fundamentally there is a lack of care and a power dynamic that undermines parents, and it appears, anyone who challenges them. With a change of culture, attitude and mindset and commitment to supporting families with additional and complex needs, and learning from the recovery model and ethos of the NHS, they could be in a better financial position with more funding for SEND provision.

In my role, which is not always easy to perform due to the trauma Surrey has inflicted, I support adults to learn and make positive changes. Surrey needs to be open to learning and to change. Listening to professionals and parents could help Surrey better support the people for which they have a duty of care. Its frustrating when we can see what needs to change and they are not open to discussion.

It has been a lonely and exhausting fight. I hope we can all speak up now and come together. There is strength in numbers.

Testimony 9

Unethical Behaviour from Surrey County Council : My son had an autistic burnout transitioning to junior school in September 2023. At this point he did not have an EHCP in place: I recognise this was not the fault of the local authority.

He was put on a re-integration timetable of around three hours per week. He was seen by developmental paediatrics at the end of October 2023, who agreed **** was as an autistic child no longer coping in a mainstream setting. She wrote her report to the school, and it was agreed between all parties that the EHCP application process would begin: with a view to a managed move to a specialist setting.

Our relationship as a family with the mainstream school [School name redacted] was good at this point. They were honest they did not think they could meet **** needs. And it was a challenging situation for them, they had limited evidence as he had come from infants (Infants being a separate school) without an EHCP and, as he only managed two days, they had little evidence of his needs. I was asked in Early November 2023 by the Junior school to apply for the EHCP myself, due to lack of evidence on their part [note: requirement for evidence is broadly understood by schools across Surrey. This was recognized as a contributing factor in the preventable death of a child where a school failed to make intervention soon enough on the basis of incorrect/insufficient guidance being provided by Surrey County Council}. **** was already attending a reduced timetable.

Attempt to illegally off roll: Out of the blue, on 28th November 2023, I got a call from a Council officer A, [Name Redacted]. He said this was an “off the record” call to see what the situation was. He had

been given my details by the school. I explained that **** had an autism diagnosis, had increasingly struggled despite adjustments and finally was unable to cope. That the school had agreed they couldn't meet need and implemented a reduced timetable, that I had been asked to apply for the EHCP myself. I explained that I had no support and that **** father was housebound with [family medical information redacted]. That I was struggling to cope. I explained how I was sure he could not cope in X Junior school and we could no longer force him in.

I thought he would assist with some support or alternative provision but he gave me an ultimatum at that point. That unless I could get **** to attend X juniors full time [despite the school's agreement that they could not adequately support him], eventually I would be prosecuted for his non-attendance. He said that electively home educating **** would be a way to 'buy myself time' to avoid prosecution while the EHCP process was underway. He said that many parents in my position "chose" to electively home educate for this reason. He informed me he would be my elective home education liaison officer. He kept stressing he was "not allowed" to advise me to home educate "but many do", and it would be the way to "buy yourself some time" (before being prosecuted)'. I said I felt "stitched up" as I had been asking for more support for **** for years, involving the school in the diagnostic process. He had a diagnosis, and I had sought medical help, and the medical opinion was that trauma was resultant from an inappropriate educational setting.

He said words to the effect of "that's the way it is". I became distressed and ended the call. Council Officer A [name redacted] called me back the very next day at 10am and bluntly asked, as soon as I answered the phone, if I had "made a decision" on elective home education. I was surprised he called me as the previous day's call had not ended well, with me making clear I felt pressurised and threatened. I informed him I would be seeking legal advice and that he had not given me enough time to decide. Two days later, I phoned him back and informed him I had no intention of electively home educating, as it was my understanding of the law that it was the state's responsibility to provide an appropriate education: and that the professional opinion was that School X was not the appropriate setting, so I wished to go through the EHCP process to find a more appropriate school. I informed him I believed **** should have some alternative provision as he was too unwell to attend school beyond 2-3 hours per week [a position also supported by school and all involved professionals]. Council Officer A then flatly informed me ***** was "nothing to do with me" (exact words) unless I home educate, and "it's between you and the school". I could tell he was angry.

Inappropriate named setting: I submitted the EHCP application to Surrey County Council, and, despite X Junior school specifically responding that they cannot meet ****'s needs, SCC still named that setting [Directed Placement]. (May 2024). After it went back to panel they doubled down on this

decision. They informed me on email my only route was via appeal to tribunal. I appealed to tribunal and was given a hearing date of eleven months away (April 1st 2025).

Only after **** visited a specialist setting in September 2024, who also stated they couldn't meet need, and in recognition that **** had now been too harmed by his time out of education for them to re-settle him, did the LA concede **** needed a specialist setting [despite this being the professional and evidenced opinion for nearly 2 years]

Lack of alternative provision/ falsified records of inclusion support: **** received no alternative provision during this time, except an hour at a farm which was charity funded, until June 2024, when he got approved for 3 hours of education a week. We only secured up to 15 hours when I reported the scale of our own family crisis to C-SPA [Surrey County Council's Children's Social Care Crisis referral line], and triggered a children family assessment: the social worker subsequently adding pressure on Surrey SEND team to fund further provision for ****. Sadly this was not anyone trained / qualified in autistic / PDA burnout and the input largely dysregulated him further and had to be scaled back.

During the disclosure process for the tribunal, the LA's tribunal officer enquired what input our family had had with the inclusion team. The SENCO at X Junior School replied that we had had two meetings with the Council Inclusion Officer in April and May 2024. This email disclosed was sent to the Officer in question [name redacted] who did not respond to correct the content, and who would have known these meetings never happened. I challenged this with the school as these meetings never took place. I asked for their records. I received a written response that they were relying on information from Council Officer A: who I had not heard from since November 2023 when he told me ***** case was "nothing to do with me", I submitted a formal complaint to the school that they had provided false information to the tribunal, and they were forced to write a letter confirming there were no records of these meetings [on the basis of the false information provided to them by Surrey County Council's Officer]. There was also detailed in this email a 'targeted support' meeting in February 2024. This meeting also did not take place as far as I am aware.

All through this period of Autumn 2023 to Summer 2024, when these meetings were reported to have taken place, I was asking for support and being ignored [no replies or responses]. In March 2024 I submitted a formal request under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 for provision, to which the response was we were not entitled as the view of Surrey County Council was that X Junior School remained an appropriate setting. In the very same letter, they also said they were seeking other settings. I asked why, if they did believe School X was a suitable setting given that the SENCO and I

agreed, in writing, to stop the 3 hours per week prior contact as it was "we are not the right setting for ***** , and [continued] reintegration attempts are causing him harm"

In spring 2024 I was told by the school that in order to obtain any alternative provision, ***** case would have to be opened with inclusion, to petition the LA to fund it. That we were not open to inclusion. This was the same time period the tribunal were told by disclosed email that inclusion [Council Officer A] was actively engaging with us.

In October 2024 I filed a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, which is being investigated. The investigator wrote to Surrey with the key question: If they were confident that their rationale for not providing ***** with any educational provision for a year was that School X was a suitable setting: why had they not commenced legal proceedings against me for his non-attendance? The Ombudsman is, as of today still awaiting a response.

Unsurprisingly ***** was awarded Specialist Provision (to be delivered as Education Other than At School EOTAS) at Tribunal on 1st April 2025, with a view to eventually finding a specialist setting. This was subsequent to me providing the case manager with a spreadsheet of every possibly suitable school, in and out of county, geographically accessible. All schools could not meet need. He has been taken off roll at Junior School X and his EOTAS is being managed by Surrey.

We have been told that what was ordered at Tribunal has now got to go back to panel, next week – just two months after it was actually awarded. ***** now hasn't had any curriculum education for 20 months and his sister (two years younger), is now ahead of him. ***** is an intelligent child who taught himself to count and the alphabet at around three and was doing long division and subtraction at five. He seems depressed and hardly leaves the house. I can no longer promise him anything as I can't be sure it will come through.

He largely blames me.

**Surrey County Council has received multiple findings of fault from the LGSCO in relation to its failure to provide education under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, including cases where schools requested additional support or a change of placement due to clear evidence of harm, but were instead instructed to keep children on roll without adequate provision. In both 2023 and 2024, the LGSCO received approximately ten times more complaints about Surrey than the national average, with many investigations identifying sustained breaches of Section 19 and Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014, resulting in significant injustice and, in some cases, serious harm.*

Testimony 10

Following my son trying to take his own life due to school he could no longer attend. This was 2019 and he was 14. He was taken off-roll by his school and therefore had no place.

Nothing was done by Surrey and he was left to rot in his room. Surrey refused to assess him for an EHCP, which I applied for as a parent in June 2020. They conceded months later at mediation. They then refused to issue an EHCP, as they had not included my evidence when it went to panel. They then conceded [again] the day before tribunal.

It took them until December 2021 to actually finalise the EHCP. They refused to do the social care assessment or a mental health assessment, leaving those sections blank and declaring he had no needs. After my complaint being accepted and upheld by the Ombudsman we finally got the social care assessment and a Mental Health assessment. Despite needing therapy to access education they are still wrangling over this. Despite evidence from senior clinical psychologists the panel are still arguing. In fact it is going back to panel next week. It is a year since Ombudsman and we are still waiting. His reassessment of his EHCP is now 15 months overdue but I am scared to complain again because they may just rush through another unfit EHCP and make us wait another year for tribunal.

My son has waited 6 years now with no education and he is desperate for one. He has had an EHCP since 2021 and still they do nothing but delay. I am a single mum, with no funds for solicitors and must wait for Surrey to do the lawful thing. We are on our 13th caseworker. Be heard [Surrey County Council's Complaints team] have refused to take my complaint about delays, last month, telling me I should wait until the EHCP is finalised and then go to tribunal. One senior manager told me they had nothing to do with healthcare, another told me that therapy to access education is something that ordinary people would have to fund privately. Will my son be given back the lost years?

An ombudsman remedy cannot help. The legal aid lawyers are at capacity and not taking on judicial reviews. Surrey have destroyed my son's chances at life. They have neglected and damaged a vulnerable young person. Their inaction is in danger of rendering him a burden on the state for life, whereas he used to be in the gifted and talented register as a child.

Senior managers at Surrey told a caseworker to strike through the paragraph in section F regarding my son needing psychological support to access education and attempted to replace it by saying he should use the universal services from the GP. We have tried this route and been rejected by the local mental health teams who will not provide ongoing psychological support for accessing education. It is illegal to strike through Section F !! I pointed this out to senior management who then deleted all the changes we had made over 2 years and forced us to revert to the original EHCP, which was never fit for purpose. The autistic society told us this, as did SENDIASS. Surrey do not care. They sign and create legal documents which they know to be unlawful and inadequate. I do consent to our story being shared.

Testimony 11

Horrific. No education for my daughter in 4 years. Went to tribunal in October 2024. The Officer from the council arrived and said no one in their right mind would take this case to Tribunal*. He said they would issue EHCP, and still today (25th June 2025) no EHCP and no Education. No support. No communication.

Then my son 5yr old child has been out of school since Feb half-term with no support or alternative educational provision. Surrey will not help in any shape or form because my son attends a Croydon school [Child is a Surrey resident but attends a school in Croydon, Greater London]. Croydon tell me to off roll** to force Surrey to help. I could scream.

Impact on child/young person?

- This has affected my daughters mental health and she is now agoraphobic. Missed all GCSE. No support post 16.
- My husband has tried to take his life and his mental health is suffering
- My son has no support in any shape out of school since Feb half term. His mental health is suffering.
- My mental health is suffering and now I'm at risk of a heart attack and having to have medication to reduce my blood pressure. No one cares and we are just having to go day by day to survive

Impact on family circumstances: STRESS, MENTAL HEALTH. Family time limited because of the constant fight with professionals. Chasing, emails, letters, telephone calls.

**This statement, made by a Surrey County Council Officer during a Tribunal hearing, suggests that the Local Authority was aware their decision was legally indefensible, and that defending the case lacked merit. Under the SEND Code of Practice and the Children and Families Act 2014, Local Authorities have a duty to make lawful and evidence-based decisions about Education, Health and Care Plans. Pursuing or defending baseless Tribunal proceedings, in our view, should amount to an abuse of process and represents a misuse of public funds, particularly where it leads to prolonged denial of education and support for the child*

*** Several families report being advised - either explicitly or implicitly - that they should "off-roll" their child from a school (particularly when out-of-area or out-of-county) in order to trigger Surrey County Council's legal responsibilities to provide alternative education. This practice is highly concerning. Under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, Surrey, as the child's home Local Authority, has a legal duty to secure suitable full-time education for any child of compulsory school age who is unable to attend school due to illness, exclusion, or other reasons. This duty applies regardless of whether the child remains on roll at a school.*

Testimony 12

It's hard to know where to start with this.

What I would say is that it wasn't the lack of provision, or even the delays, that we found most difficult in our experience of Surrey SEND. It was the moment we realised we had fallen into a parallel universe

— one where you could no longer trust public bodies or public officers to do the right thing. Not for your child. Not for your family. That's the game-changer. When that penny finally drops. And in my view, it's that part that changes you.

As the parent of a disabled child - in our case, a child born with complex health conditions - you already start to reframe all the things you used to take for granted. But nothing hit quite like our experiences trying to secure support for our children's emerging special educational needs.

Our first involvement began when our daughter's headteacher (also the SENCO) contacted Surrey County Council for help. She had already repeated a year, and by the end of Year 2 - aged just 7 - it was clear she was heading for crisis. We naively expected help and support. Instead, we were systematically misled, misinformed, and lied to. We were gaslit. Ignored. Patronised. Dismissed. You don't emerge the same after that... especially not from services wrapped up in slogans like "No one left behind."

Some examples of the conduct we experienced in the last 18 months:

- Providing false information to try and obstruct and delay the school from applying for additional help.
- Refusing to incorporate essential NHS consultant advice — despite being fully aware of the immediate and serious risk this posed to our oxygen-dependent, disabled five-year-old.
- Ignoring three court orders, which eventually led to Surrey being barred from Tribunal proceedings.
- Withholding key emails from those proceedings and evidence bundles – including emails in which the Head Teacher of the school they were trying to force a placement at, repeatedly raised her concerns that the proposed placement was not only unsuitable but would further harm our child.
- Giving false statements in legal proceedings to misrepresent officers' involvement to try (unsuccessfully) prevent themselves from being Barred from proceedings.
- Submitting doctored, future-dated documents as evidence – which the Judge struck out. Only to see them re-entered into evidence again, re-doctored! With no consequences.
- Attempting to discredit a respected mainstream headteacher who honestly answered the Judge's questions during the Court Hearing — by claiming "he is not qualified to answer that.", simply because he dared to state, against their instruction, that our daughter's needs were not being met by the school and significantly more support was required to literally 'keep her safe'.
- In Tribunal, observing a Surrey Speech and Language Therapist admitting she had recommended all provision be withdrawn - not because it wasn't needed, (which is expressly what she is

required to do) but because she was told it was “out of scope of the service Surrey offers for autistic children.” The Judge’s anger was palpable.

- Failing to implement court-ordered provision for nine months, until forced to by Judicial Review. Even after the Judge ordered Surrey to set up her provision, it still took a Barrister and ‘Letter before Action’ to force them to do so. Worth pointing out that Surrey’s Executive Director for Children’s Services had full *personal* visibility of this — and did nothing. It took three emails, and pestering by both our MP and Councillor just to get her to even acknowledge us. For a serious, ongoing, legal breach by the team she is directly responsible for, and which had created serious and long term harm to our child? Following Court Proceedings they had been barred from? Outstanding leadership in action right there. I mean – this is either an extraordinary institutional ambivalence to the law, or they are breaking the law so often they can’t even keep up with the correspondence. Not sure which is worse TBH.

I could go on. But even listing them creates a trauma response in me now, and a sense of disconnection with reality. You actually stop talking to people about your experiences, because you are so concerned that it sounds so improbable (a Public Service behaving in such an abusive manner), that you fear appearing unhinged.

And yet - apparently - it’s parents that are the problem in Surrey.

We’ve been fortunate in some ways. Our daughter’s grandmother is a retired solicitor in children’s social care for a neighbouring authority. Her great aunt is a retired barrister specialising in child protection. Both have spent decades supporting Local Authorities in their endeavours to support vulnerable children. Both have said – unequivocally - that they’re appalled at the level of lawlessness in public services like they’ve witnessed here in our experience dealing with Surrey County Council SEND Services.

In March this year we finally began our first-ever Annual Review - despite the legal requirement that these happen every year?) My concern wasn’t about funding or delays. It was far more fundamental: Could we trust officers to act lawfully? To even attempt to follow the legal process? With integrity? In our daughter’s best interests? How could we safeguard her against the Service whose conduct and maladministration have previously caused real harm? (Go figure that you actually need to consider how to protect your child from the behaviour of a Public Body charged to support her?)

Our Case Officer - who, to her credit, appeared to be experienced and compassionate, although clearly massively overworked (as Surrey can’t seem to retain any case officers... and we wonder why

that would be...) - reassured us that this time would be different. And when I first wrote this testimony, I hoped she was right.

She wasn't. The review took place, a mere eleven months late (...and its an Annual Process?). All the professionals working with our daughter submitted clear, detailed, evidence-based reports, just as the law requires of them. They attended a 4 hour review where her needs, her progress and her ongoing provision requirements were discussed professionally, by a highly qualified multi-disciplinary team, with clear recommendations made. But subsequent to that, Surrey's infamous "panel meeting", held behind closed doors, with no minutes, no representation, and no attendee list, just chose to ignore it all. Instead, they proposed removing all of her current provision, with literally no evidence to support this, and simultaneously triggering a reassessment.

That might sound like a minor administrative step. But anyone familiar with the system knows what this is: a cynical, manipulative move. The reassessment mechanism largely exists to ensure parents can insist on updated advice when their children's needs have changed. But when abused, as it was here, it becomes a legal loophole for Surrey to exploit. When applied in this situation, it literally allows the Local Authority to discard the current EHCP, dismiss all of the existing professional evidence, and send us right back to the start of the process. In application in our situation, it actually feels both abusive and punitive – unsurprisingly all of the professionals involved have all questioned the intention here.

For any child, that's a level of uncertainty that is damaging. For our daughter, who already spent two full years without education or provision, it is devastating. Every professional involved has warned that her progress is fragile, and that removing support posed significant risk. They were unanimous. These weren't our opinions. These are the only experts engaged, and beyond irony, they are all commissioned by Surrey to provide her with support. And still, Surrey ignored them.

Senior Managers will know full well that this decision is legally indefensible. Tribunal will overturn it because tribunal is an evidence-based process and relies entirely on the testimony and integrity of highly qualified specialists. Thankfully not unqualified, Council Officers. But of course, that's the same Tribunal that this very Council is now lobbying the government to weaken, calling judicial oversight "interference" and insisting they should be left alone to make decisions like this, unchecked. Because of course they can be trusted to do the right thing.

And now? Since informing us of their intention, Surrey have also, deliberately failed to provide a formal written decision or a final plan. That means we can't appeal. We've asked – repeatedly - for them to confirm their decision in writing. They ignore us. Three months and counting. No reply. No update. So

for every Surrey Officer staring DfE officials in the eye and insisting these are “historic issues”. We can unequivocally assure you: they are not. This is the lived experience of parents and carers in Surrey. Every. Single. Day.

As things stand, we have no certainty that our child will receive any education at all come September. Almost certainly not at this point.

And One Final Thing... Perhaps I should be more cautious about sharing this. There’s always that inner voice asking whether speaking out could somehow be used against us. Or worse, lead to victimisation or discrimination against our child. The fact that this is even a question says everything about the climate of fear and mistrust that now surrounds this Council. As parents we’re now numb to the casual public and private discrimination. The raised eyebrows. The label of “that” parent, just for asking them to do their jobs properly. But in our case, none of this is secret. Senior Officers know all of it, indeed, the Executive Director, is very well aware.

To every Councillor or MP who believes our experience is the exception? Please spend 30 minutes reading the LGSCO’s decision notices against Surrey. Or ask CEO Terence Herbert how many Pre-Action Protocol letters have been served on this Council in recent months. Then decide for yourself.

Testimony 13

How many other parents have had to leave their jobs because they don't have an appropriate school for their child? I left a full time job in my daughter’s school because she wasn't attending, I've now had to leave a hybrid office/work from home role because she can’t cope with me working from home either. I have no idea what we are going to do financially going forward and I’m terrified of losing our private rented home.

Surely the government WANT people to work?

Testimony 14

NO education for about a year, medical evidence & recommendations ignored. 1 year of A2E [Access to Education – Surrey’s service supporting children who are unable to attend school], but just 4hrs a week - could not meet need. NO education for just under another year. Tribunal won. Majority of provision never implemented. PAP [Pre-Action Protocol Letter] resulted in Surrey Legal Provision list – ignored. It's now come to light there never were service delays - referrals were just never made. Case Worker and Complaints procedures ineffective. Delays. Lies. Failure to communicate efficiently. Inaccurate and misleading information. Failure to provide / withheld information. Refusal to assess / provide needed reports.

Impact on child/young person? Whole process has caused significant harm to child including: school refusal, anxiety, emotional distress, physical threat to parent, suicidal ideation, autism and diabetes burn-out, isolation, situational mutism, loss of education and social skills.

Impact on family circumstances: Loss of income, un-paid carer. The stress has now affected parents, both now on antidepressants for stress, depression & anxiety. Stress has also exasperated physical health issues. Strained relationship - divorce considered. Additional impact on family members especially sibling.

If this service was human they could only be described as controlling, narcissistic and abusive.

Testimony 15

Absolutely horrendous, would never recommend adopting through Surrey County Council. Continuous battle with LA for Child's needs to be met.

Testimony 16

In 2023, Surrey issued my eldest's EHCP based on a report from their own EP "assessment". I use the "xx" because there was no assessment involved, the EP had a chat with me, my child and one with the educational establishment he wasn't even managing to attend at the time. LA's EP recommended a SEMH placement and at the time, that would have had the best chance of success as child was in burn out. Prior to them concluding their consultations, Surrey named a local mainstream school, [contra to their own professional advice] despite this mainstream saying, as it had for the last 7 months, "can't meet needs".

Later that same year, I sourced our own report from a clinical and educational psych. Chose her because child was still in burnout and thought we might get some advice on how to get support for the mental health side of his issues because to date, we still hadn't seen any of the provision enshrined within his EHCP, like "consult and communicate with psychiatric professionals to seek further guidance and intervention strategies for managing his mood problem" and nothing had been done by the LA or school to address the LA's EP's statement that, "Urgent psychiatric support is necessary to address his needs".

A few weeks into the mainstream school, it became clear that the placement had broken down [As anticipated by all professionals and disregarded by Surrey County Council] and I called an emergency annual review. Alternative Provision was planned for, but it never happened as Surrey passed the buck onto the school and the school passed it straight back to Surrey. I shared our psych report with Surrey

and they refused to make any of my changes to the EHCP based on it, or from SOS!SEN's legal review of the EHCP. Surrey then forwarded the same inaccurate and now dangerously outdated EHCP out to all kinds of potential placements (specialist and mainstream) in and out of county. I later did a SAR and could see they'd all responded saying, "can't meet needs".

Five months after sharing our clinical and ed psych report with Surrey, they inform me that the panel had decided to refuse to adopt it. Child attempts to sit GCSEs, despite having no education for years 10 and 11, no Alternative Provision, and no access arrangements because no one had bothered to apply for them.

I lodge an appeal for the incorporation of our psych report and EOTAS, a backup plan for if a college placement doesn't work out come September. Surrey send through the bundle in October 2024 and that was the last time we heard from them regarding the appeal. College placement is denied due to a). not being able to meet needs. b). high needs funding requested by college to Surrey and then c). one to one funding requested by college (despite it saying in the EHCP statutory review from the annual review, that the child does not want or feels he needs a T/A or LSA and definitely not a one to one!). You can imagine all the panels each of these had to go to for these decisions (delays). College then turned around and told Surrey (not us!) that it was now too late and to come back in September 2026 to do that GCSE pathway course we'd applied for months earlier.

Surrey hold a delayed annual review at the end of last year. Case Officer promises to child's face, either a college placement or a rich Alternative Provision package for the start of Jan 2025 which would enable him to study towards his GCSE resits, and also keep him socialised and physically active. Jan passes, Feb passes, and at the very end of March, he's given a tutor (online) for Maths and English. They'll now be off for the Easter holidays. We also have no confirmation that he's even enrolled to sit his GCSE exams in 6 weeks or that access arrangements have been made.

At the annual review, the case officer concludes that the EHCP is out of date and inaccurate and recommends a needs re-assessment. She takes that to the panel who decide against a needs re-assessment and instead propose ceasing the EHCP. I request again that the Clinical and Ed Psych report that we had done at the end of 2023 is adopted, so the EHCP can be updated. Panel decide to refuse, again, to adopt the only available professional evidence.

Surrey failed to respond to any of the tribunal orders and have not communicated with me regarding our appeal since sending through the bundle in Oct 2024. They were automatically barred from the hearing.

What is Surrey's motive in all of this? You can only conclude that it is purely to deny and fail a child for as long as seemingly possible with a complete disregard to the life and progress of that child or young person. It is sickening and they continue to get away with it, with no one being held accountable.

Testimony 17

Son is diagnosed with complex trauma from school and on antidepressants. School [and the Local Authority] insisted he was fine and didn't have any SEN needs.

I have written evidence from consultants, that the stress from fighting the Local Authority for 4 years gave me life threatening asthma attacks. LA are aware of this and continue to behave in the same manner.

Case officer ghosts me for months at a time regularly. I am still paying for my son's placement 9 months post tribunal [as the Local Authority has failed to make any of the arrangements ordered by Tribunal]. I have emails from the case officer, saying that they have sent the paperwork to finance. No longer trusting the LA one bit, I emailed finance to check they had received an email from case officer. They had not received anything.

So now deliberate lies?

Testimony 18

Final EHCP took 11 months to receive. In spring/summer 2024 Surrey failed to attend my son's interim review, school were explicit that they cannot meet his needs. Surrey said no [Directed placement]

They didn't acknowledge or attend mediation, now I am five months into the Tribunal to get my son an education. An education that he is entitled to.

I had to give up my career as I was receiving constant phone calls of incidents and early collections were/are required as my son is so dysregulated. I am terrified of the trauma he is experiencing and the lasting impact these two years have had on his mental health. My mental health is going downhill, but I'm clinging on.

To have MPs and Councillors who actually see our fight, offers a glimmer of hope and validation

Testimony 19

A brief history of our previous and ongoing experience with Surrey County Council in relation to securing SEND Support for our child.

- **2021** : Surrey named a mainstream on my son's EHCP (contrary to professional evidence) and without completing any of the adjustments school stated were needed in order to make said school accessible. My son couldn't access any school at the time and was left with no educational provision and no therapies (Surrey fault - upheld by LGO). Surrey lied during complaints investigation (that they had not received responses from me; I was able to produce proof), denied responsibility at Stage 1, admitted responsibility at Stage 2 and were found to be at fault by LGO. They also didn't follow complaints timeline (Surrey fault - upheld by LGO)
- **2022**: Surrey did not follow procedure around Annual Review, failed to issue intended changes, failed to provide a draft, made changes not discussed at the AR and failed to give us as parents 14 days to consider and issue our response. No consequences for Surrey - but for us we had no choice but to go down tribunal route again at great expense and mental burden.
- **2023**: Surrey failed to provide mental health provision, formal complaints submitted again. Surrey Social Services Children with Disabilities has an openly unlawful fixed policy around their eligibility criteria which remains unchallenged. Meaning Autistic children without additional conditions cannot access a Section 17 Assessment or their Parent's a Parent Carer Assessment. I had to make a formal complaint AND pursue this at tribunal AND issue a Judicial Review pre action protocol letter to get assessments and some social care support. Surrey Social worker then lied to Surrey legal team about me, claiming I had agreed to a meeting with her but when she arrived I was not home. She had no phone or email evidence of this supposed arranged meeting yet felt it was acceptable and would not be challenged by anyone to lie about a parent. Even to Surrey's own legal team.
- **2024**: Surrey again didn't follow procedure around Annual Review, failed to hold meeting within 12 months of last, failed to issue intended changes, failed to issue a final within timeframe and actually took 16 weeks and formal complaint to finally get an accurate, finalised EHCP issued. Surrey Panel' declined twice to provide funding for delivery of Section F Provision - both decisions unlawful. There is no resolution via Tribunal for this only Surrey's complaints procedure and then Judicial Review PAP letter. Surrey won't accept the complaint if the provision hasn't been removed yet - only when it actually has happened! [Effectively refusing to avert a course of action which will lead to an unlawful breach, until the breach has occurred]. So no recourse for parents unless you can afford yet another costly PAP letter.
- **2025**: Surrey Panel AGAIN decline to provide funding for delivery of Section F Provision - AGAIN unlawful. AGAIN my complaint rejected and AGAIN Judicial Review PAP letter only recourse.
Surrey AGAIN are not following procedure around Annual Review. I was misled and given false

information during the meeting by Senior Case Manager telling me my child's AR Reports issued by his Multi-Disciplinary Team [Comprising of Education and SEND Professionals commissioned by Surrey to provide educational support] were not eligible and did not automatically qualify to be used to inform his EHCP.

And all of this from an institution supposed to support disabled children. I am simply not able to describe the mental load the constant fight takes and the awful burden it is every single day forced to educate yourself around the law to protect your child, forced to reduce and ultimately leave your career because the support is so difficult to get and so difficult to keep if you do get it and leaves no room for a parental life. Being pulled down bit by bit over years and years, misinformed, misdirected and blocked by the very institution we are supposed to receive support from.

It is a scandal and our children pay the price.

Testimony 20

My Son was placed in a secondary who specified they couldn't accommodate need after consultation. This info wasn't offered up even after I said I was concerned with the provision offered, and so was his previous school.

I was told it was 'perfect for him' by Surrey and that 'they knew best'. He went there in the September, by March I pulled him out after major issues and genuine concern for his mental a physical well-being. He had no support offered throughout his time off whilst Alternative Provision was pushed for and, [he] suffered with secondary agoraphobia as a result. I only found out by chance at the meeting with Surrey Council Officers and School, when the Officers claimed the school had specified they can meet need, and the school whilst on video call turned around and confirmed that actually they said at consultation they couldn't.

Fuming

**This testimony also makes reference to the use of 'Directed placements. Parents, teachers, and SENCOs have consistently reported the use of 'directed placements' in Surrey — where families are told a specific setting will be named despite the setting confirming they are unable to meet the needs of a child. Although Surrey County Council publicly denies this practice, and refers to it as exceptional, it is widely described as routine by those with direct experience of the system, including teachers and SENCOs. As indicated in this example, the school makes an assessment during initial consultation as to whether the school is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs. Where they identify that it is unsuitable, an alternative, suitable placement should be sought. It typically happens when an LA asserts authority to name a school regardless of the evidence provided, relying on its legal power under Section 39 of the Children and Families Act 2014. As expected, it often results in a school placement quickly breaking down, and/or prolonged absence. A Members' Question*

revealed earlier this year that over 1800 children with Special Educational Needs in Surrey are currently listed on the roll of a school that they are not attending for more than 30% of the time.

Testimony 21

Sharing our story.

My son is on roll with a mainstream who have explained fully and clearly to the LA why they cannot meet his needs and allow him to attend full-time, and yet Surrey named them on his EHCP and have refused my repeated section 19 requests for AP for the vast majority of the school week when he has no provision. Complaint to LGO and application for tribunal submitted.

Testimony 22

I have 2 children going through the EHCP battle right now.

My daughter is 14, is autistic, has serious mental health difficulties, has attempted suicide 3 times in the past 18 months and frequently self harms. A big part of the problem is school. Despite this, Surrey finalised her EHCP naming the existing mainstream secondary who completely failed her and where she cannot attend.

My son is 12. Also autistic. Also has issues around depression and anxiety. Has not been in a single lesson in his mainstream secondary since November. Goes in for 2 hours a week to meet his youth project mentor to play football. Does not sleep, hurts himself at the thought of having to go to school. I requested SALT and OT assessments multiple times during the assessment process*. Was completely ignored. This EHCP was written by someone on the recovery team**. It is basically a copy and paste of the EP report and ignores all other evidence and reports. Final EHCP has been issued despite my concerns being raised and they have named his mainstream secondary that he cannot attend. Currently waiting for mediation and then will appeal. I'm using this wasted time (mediation!) to gather my evidence for appeal.

**Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a Local Authority has a legal duty to seek advice from relevant professionals as part of an EHC needs assessment (Regulation 6 of the SEND Regulations 2014). This includes advice from any person (cont.) reasonably requested by the child's parent or young person. Where a parent explicitly requests input from Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) or Occupational Therapy (OT), and there is evidence of potential need, failure to seek and consider this advice constitutes a breach of statutory duty.*

***The EHCP Recovery Team was established by Surrey County Council as part of its £15 million EHCP Recovery Plan. The failure of this team to properly complete the EHC needs assessment process is well documented in parental feedback and is further supported by the findings of the Additional Needs and Disabilities Parent and Carer Experience Task Group, which was commissioned by the Children's Services Select Committee in 2024. The Task Group's report raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of the approach taken and the impact this was having on the experience and the quality of the plans of those children being assessed. However, its detailed findings and recommendations were unilaterally dismissed by the Executive Director of Children's Services as unnecessary.*

Testimony 23

You honestly couldn't make this up. This nonsense is not only unlawful, frustrating and never-ending - but there is a little boy in the centre of this chaos who has a right to an education that meets his needs. He deserves better - as do we - and yet Surrey continue to flout the law, play games, and get away with it with no consequences - all funded out of the public purse (i.e. by us all). The stress and pressure on families is immense and their lack of lawful decision making has lasting effects on the mental health and wellbeing on children and the wider family unit. It's not good enough. Like us all here, we are not asking for anything over and above what is enshrined in legislation - and to continue to put families and children under so much pressure, is totally unacceptable and will have lasting consequences.

Testimony 24

I know that I am one of countless families failed by Surrey but each story adds a new dimension of failure, so I will share mine.

I have autistic (PDA), ADHD twins in Year 2. Both were diagnosed by the start of reception. My son's diagnosis was accepted by the school, albeit with hesitation due to his "looking fine, making eye contact, and saying hello". My high-masking daughter's diagnostic report was literally thrown across the room by the Headteacher who insisted I must have "bought" the diagnosis because my daughter has no needs. For both kids, I was refused all reasonable adjustments I requested at the start of reception. I knew, from the professional reports that they needed EHCPs.

When the 'needs assessments' were conducted, the school was supportive of my son's (largely because he was in nappies and none of the TAs wanted to change him), and opposed to my daughter's, because she has selective mutism and masks - so "a real pleasure to have in class".

My son, even though it took 2 years to get an education that met his needs, still has parts of his EHCP that are not sorted - eg direct payments for a Personal Assistant [as legally specified within his EHCP].

My daughter's situation, however, is a real nightmare! Soon after Year 1 started, my then 5-year old daughter went quiet, stopped eating and drinking water properly, and could not sleep during term time. Her ability to attend school had ceased and she could not even leave the house easily for several months. SCC knew all of this. They recognized that my daughter had needs that required an EHCP and refused her EHCP despite knowing she was missing from education.

Instead of supporting her, the LA kept asking for more evidence of her mental state and fitness to attend school (despite several professionals warning she was at risk of EBSNA already) so she had to

undergo repeated assessments to satisfy them. Then, with no basis and no evidence, they investigated me for FII. You cannot imagine the distress this causes to a single mom with 2 beloved and vulnerable children. And the distress this invasion by social "care" has caused my children.

6 months after she had stopped being able to attend school, SCC finally agreed to provide alternate provision. 6 MONTHS not the recommended 6 DAYS! And all they provide is 4 hours of Surrey online school a week [for a 6 year old autistic child] which is not only inappropriate for a child with her needs, but certainly not equivalent to a full time education.

When the refusal to issue an EHCP was appealed at tribunal, SCC's approach was to question the validity of the diagnostic and assessment reports. I think I do not need to explain how insane it is to question the assessors reports when all the assessments were conducted by eminent professionals - one of who was Dr Gloria Dura-Vila, who is literally the Medical Lead for the Autism pathway for Surrey and Borders NHS Trust. Moreover, the same assessors had assessed my son as well, and none of his reports were challenged. I can only gather that SCC knew that my daughter too needed an EHCP, but decided to delay as much as possible and harass me with entirely unfounded FII allegations to avoid providing AP for my daughter, hoping that it would break my spirit and render me unable to advocate for my daughter.

Not only do they constantly act in bad faith but they also break the law. And then they win OBEs

Testimony 25

My daughter experienced trauma in infant school at age 6. With no effective LA support being provided, we privately funded an Educational Psychologist (EP) for 18 months, who ultimately recommended an EHCP.

Her access to learning dropped in Year 2. By junior school, clear ASD traits were noted alongside a private ADHD diagnosis. She spent much of her time out of class, pulled out her hair and eyelashes, and expressed suicidal ideation.

We requested a specialist placement as her school could not meet her needs. This was declined. In Year 5, she was given a TA (with no relevant expertise) and was kept isolated in a room from December to July with no access to a teacher or learning. Her behaviour deteriorated significantly; she was barred from the playground, began running away, and was referred to the crisis team and made a 'Child in Need'.

We again requested specialist provision due to lack of education and social isolation, but were told there was no space. In Year 6, she is now at least two years behind, continues to have suicidal

thoughts, and suffers from low self-esteem and isolation. Our repeated request for a move was again declined. Her EHCP now names a specialist placement for Year 7. Only two schools have offered a place, but the Commissioning Officer refuses to give a timeline for review, despite the Case Officer's efforts.

This delay is now a breach of several legal obligations. Due to my own urgent medical condition (a pancreatic mass requiring surgery) and her continued mental health decline, we've asked for this to be escalated and finalised.

We've identified a suitable school that has limited places left. If this is not secured, it risks total breakdown of our home life and any chance of her recovery and long-term wellbeing.

In summary my child's welfare has come second for years. She has lost out on learning time and been emotionally and mentally abused by what she's been left to ensure in a mainstream environment. Now with a place, through my own hard work secured they are still failing her by not failing to approve the placement in a timely manner and giving her the opportunity she so needs.

Testimony 26

This is too painful and triggering to describe in detail. ASD, PDA ADHD with EBSNA, suicidal thoughts. Two parental EHCP requests, 4 tribunal appeals. Still no help.

Impact on child/young person: School refusal, feeling suicidal, loss of education, regression, mental health breakdown, social isolation, physical illness

Impact on family circumstances: Loss of income, risk of family breakdown. Traumatized sibling.

Seriously affected the mental health of sibling and both parents. Being unable to look after my own serious health issues due to stress, burnout and child not attending school.

Testimony 27

We recently received my son's final EHCP (from his annual review last October). Surrey have decided unilaterally to terminate my son's residential school placement (where he is very happy and continues to thrive).

They have left section I blank, and have copied and pasted sections from another young person's EHCP, including his their name. They have stated that no social care needs were identified. This is for a 22 year old severely autistic, severe learning disabilities, challenging behaviour, non toilet trained, non-verbal, lacks mental capacity (DOLS in place) young man.

Yesterday, his case officer sent details of HALO and asked if they could assess him. I asked the question to do what. As it stands, they have nowhere for him to live and no educational placement from September. Meanwhile, he is unaware and happy in his current [terminated] placement, who had already said they could have kept him for another 3 years! [EHCP Provision should remain in place where required until age 25 yrs]

Testimony 28

My daughter is 13 and has a diagnosis of ASC. She has been struggling to access education since year 6. She went into autistic burnout in 2024 and has not been able to access her mainstream secondary school since.

I requested an EHCP assessment in May 2023 and this was refused. We appealed and this decision was reversed. We then waited until February 2024 for the assessment. All evidence points to my daughter needing a provision other than mainstream. However EHCP still refused by Surrey County Council. Now we are forced to go to appeal, and appeal date isn't until September 2025. Tribunal officer for Surrey has told me we will win and he feels this is a waste of time [however they continue to defend the case despite the Tribunal Officer viewing their case to be indefensible].

My vulnerable daughter had no education or support at all for a year. She is now having 2 hours and 45 minutes 3 times a week in a local hub. No access to national curriculum and she continues to fall behind. My daughter is bright and academically able, but not in the right setting at present. All SCC have done is waste time and delay. I feel this is to save money. My daughter is suffering due to their appalling SEN provision.

Testimony 29

Annual Review in 2024 which wasn't added to transition EHCP in Feb 2025. Flagged 7 times to senior managers prior to AR in April 25.

Was told EHCP would be 'updated' following said AR April 25, but due to extra therapies requested by school, with reports to back it, it went to panel June 25. Incorrect EHCP was flagged a further 3 times prior to panel - total 10 flags of concern.

The Panel were given incorrect EHCP from Feb 25 to use as reference and they rejected all reports, and issued a 'no change' to child's EHCP. I flagged that the wrong EHCP was used and that they aren't allowed to ignore professional reports that were made by child's school due to review AND requested

Childs EHCP- I was told to just appeal it and that I wouldn't be getting an EHCP as the Feb 25 is the one I have.

I flagged it a further 3 times. In my 13th email requesting an EHCP, flagging Feb 25 was wrong and lots of things were incorrect on 'no change' paperwork including child's primary need, I've been met with silence. I have written a formal complaint, and still silence.

Impact on child/young person: Emotional distress, loss of therapies, detriment to mental health, huge amounts of stress for mother and sleepless nights

Impact on family circumstances: Stress, strained relationship, weight loss, mental health challenges for myself, sleepless nights,

**Serious concerns are being raised by multiple families about Surrey County Council's handling of the Statutory Annual Review process since work has commenced to 'transform' the process.. Evidence suggests repeated failures to comply with key legal duties, including timely decision-making, communication of outcomes, and the lawful issuing of amended EHCPs. Families report being forced to issue legal warnings (Letters Before Action) simply to obtain an updated plan, while EHCPs are left unfinalised for months, obstructing their right to appeal. Schools have also raised concerns that these delays are disrupting funding, staffing, and support arrangements. Like the EHCP Recovery Team, experience and data are suggesting that the so-called improvements are in fact creating worsening experience and outcomes for families through this process*

Testimony 30

There really is no hope for our children in Surrey let alone the parents and families.

Councillors ARE very aware of the appalling experiences but only a few of them are willing to speak up. CHILDREN ARE DYING! Surrey move the blame/ funding/ responsibility / focus another agency. MINDWORKS [Neurodevelopmental Pathway – see earlier footnotes in Testimony 5] are just as awful alongside Social Services.

EHCPs were brought in for ALL services to work together to support a child but just as the MPs have said in their letter, Surrey use blame culture to pass the buck. Surrey's percentages are skewed because the ONLY reason things look better [Surrey County Council persist with claiming things are improved because their timeliness of issuing EHCP has improved] ...is because it's worse for the child and families. Children are having provision agreed and then removed unlawfully. Provision has been taken off or not amended and parents are told here is your plan, go back to tribunal -we don't care, we got the plan out in time so our figures look good.

That is if you can even have a conversation with a case officer. THIS IS HOW YOU GOT THE IMPROVED DATA!

In 2017 I applied for my 1st daughter's EHCNA - it was complete in 20 weeks, [how the EHCP Statutory Framework was designed] and we only had a few bits to address at the very end with a tribunal. 2nd and 4th EHCP Application took 5 years ! 3rd child I'm not finished 2 years and counting. 10 tribunals!!

Surrey lost them all [Surrey County Council have lost all cases for this family that went to a tribunal hearing] and conceded more beforehand.

My journey is long and harrowing, one no one can bare to hear. You talk about improvements... this is the reality it's getting worse. This photo shows you what your 'improvements' look like [The redacted image depicts the author's child in intensive care following a suicide attempt, linked to the withdrawal of agreed educational and therapeutic provision. The image has been removed to protect privacy but has been verified for the purpose of this submission]. WE were talking seconds or she would have been another Coroner Report. Outcome would be just the same as previous ones*. Yet despite this, Surrey for no reason decided to pull her education and support provision at Annual Review, ignore tribunal orders then after PAP letters agreed it BUT for whatever reason the day before she was due to return due again took away her provision**.

What is more unbelievable is that we had multi agency meetings with over 15 people attending promising things will change [ahead of this course of events], just give them one more chance (but don't ever forget you are too blame mum for her being in this state) and support will be ready. Because this time , her 12th suicide attempt because she feels there is no hope and she is not worth being helped because she's not a good enough person because all she wanted was to be educated, medicated, live a life.

Now it's all too late.

**This refers to three separate Coroner's Reports issued in the last three years, in which Surrey County Council's handling of special educational needs provision was identified as a contributing factor in the death of a child or young person. These Prevention of Future Death reports are public documents issued under Schedule 5, Paragraph 7 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009*

*** In this particular case, verified details confirm that the child had a named place at a therapeutic educational setting, which was withdrawn by Surrey County Council following an Annual Review — against professional recommendations. A Tribunal ruled this action unlawful and ordered the provision be reinstated. SCC then failed to comply with that order until served with a Letter Before Action. Despite agreeing to reinstate provision, the Council withdrew their agreement again the day before the child was due to return to the specified placement. The child later attempted suicide.*

Testimony 31

Where do I sign! And where do I start?!

They failed our family multiple and continue to fail us. My complaint never went anywhere and I never received a reply from the Ombudsman over 2 years ago. We nearly lost our boy many many times and my heart goes out so much to the families of the ones that didn't make it or are still battling that fight every day due to SURREY'S failings! So disgusting!

They failed to review, amend or update my son's EHCP for over 2 years, lost a separate 2 years of EHCP reviews, refused to implement legal duties, failed to meet needs multiple times, have cost us financially and emotionally and caused unnecessary hurt, pain, upset and trauma to our WHOLE family. The incompetence, the deceit, the failings, the utter lies! Shameful LA.

Testimony 32

Horrific experience.

By the time the process will be completed and that is if we win at tribunal it will have taken 3 years to get our child into a suitable setting. The impact it has had on us as a family financially has also been very difficult as well as emotionally.

Impact on child/young person: School refusal, high anxiety levels, very low self esteem, suicidal thoughts, self harm, academic regression, lack of education as he can't be in the class most of the time to access the learning. Fed up with constant assessments by different professionals.

Impact on family circumstances: Loss of income due to me not being able to work anymore. Husband losing job due to the pressure of battling for an EHCP. After the panel incident it caused me to need to seek medical assistance for high anxiety linked to the stress of the EHCP process. Massive impact on the other children in the household as we have had to financially struggle to pay for private reports and legal advice just to navigate the process. The children have not been able to do family trips or holidays as a result. Financial pressure on my husband to work longer hours to bring in extra money to pay for the expense of the tribunal. We have currently spent 16K on advice and reports and are currently saving for the tribunal costs. We live in uncertainty and have been for years now with no real end in sight.

Testimony 33

Had to nearly get to tribunal and appeal at every stage of assessment as was refused each step of the way. No professionals to complete assessments for EHCP. Ignored by the local authority for months and then they refused to respond to tribunal directions until they were threatened with being barred from proceedings.

Impact on child/young person: Regression in learning and emotional distress.

Impact on family circumstances: Stress for all family members and feelings of isolation and helplessness as the local authority are meant to provide support but it is clear their only priority is saving money so our children do not matter and they will do whatever they can to avoid providing support. Financial difficulties as have to pay for lawyers and court and then the local authorities back out last minute but you still have to pay your legal team regardless.

Testimony 34

My experience is utterly shocking not only has my child been left for a year with no education and to keep telling me schools are full is unlawful.

He then got approved for a tutor at home what a shock that was. I cancelled after the first visit I was disgusted and so angry this woman came she didn't bring anything with her .She tried getting my son to watch nursery rhymes on her mobile. Stressed him out . Kept forcing him to sit on her lap and holding his hands forcing him to draw and cut . He cant even hold a pen without a fist grip .

She then told me “sorry I didn't know he was intelligent”. So many wrong doings in that one session.

I complained to the company and to my son's case worker who basically told me to contact the tutor company - she didn't seem to care. Again my son is without anything. These case workers are destroying vulnerable children's lives. Every child matters and every child has a lawful right to an education.

Impact on child/young person: Serious emotional stress. He's unregulated, lashing out. He stopped eating some of his "safe " foods the ones I know he will always eat. Its had an impact on his sleep and even with hygiene he's always loved water and now he doesn't want to wash. He's on a downward spiral and he utterly bored no matter how much I try to keep him busy he's not stupid he knows what's he's missing. He even tried running off and into my daughters school and was distraught when I stopped him.

He' wants to be around other children, he's had his rights taken away from him ,he can't help having additional needs. Its cruel and unfair and it doesn't just impact the child it impacts everyone in the family.

Impact on family circumstances: It's had a massive impact on myself with stress, it's also had a big impact on my daughter who has additional needs as well but can attend a mainstream school. She's

struggling with his outbursts she spends most of her time at home in the bedroom so she doesn't have to listen to him when he's screaming and having meltdowns. She loves her brother to bits but she struggles to be around him when he's unregulated and its so sad to see .

Testimony 35

I have been in Surrey for only 7 months and in this time I have experienced failure at every step of the process with unreasonable behaviour from Case Officer and complete lack of communication and humanity.

I have sought assistance from my local councillor, been through the 2-stage complaint process, issued a Pre-Action letter and I have still not got a funded EHCP after 7 months. Each step of the way Surrey say, don't worry it's happening or it's done, but I continue to have to fund my child's EHCP in order not to fall further behind or be further disadvantaged, putting enormous financial strain on me. We are about to enter stage transfer and I deeply afraid it will all unravel.

Impact on family circumstances: The impact is everywhere:

- single parent household with reduced capacity to work due to the amount of time it takes to navigate, administer and advocate in the hopes of obtaining support to which my child is legally entitled
- financial distress - on top of reduced capacity to work I am having to fund in the absence of the LA meeting its statutory obligations - there appears to be no recourse to funds, despite PAP and proceedings which will commence as/when legal aid solicitor is available - and no recourse to reimbursement - the LGSCO may award, but it is by no means certain - leaves a blackhole and uncertainty...and I am lucky enough to be able to plug the hole - many will not be able to do so
- Loss of normal family life - my child invariably witnesses the stress and effort involved in navigating and advocating, which impacts them hugely - feeling guilt and shame and ultimately increases their own needs as their mental health is damaged by this system - this leads to a change in the parent/child relationship whose natural course should be laughter and happiness and instead is shared cynicism and despair, with a dollop of distrust for governance, education and health.
- Loss of basic entitlement - loss of learning, friendship, community - failures across the system and lack of resources has damaged my child's future and diminished their world and the world of their family - it has change our lives for the worse and impacts the whole family, friends and our place in community

Testimony 36

Upheld Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman rulings of over £1800 for one*. [This refers to complaint settlements which have been upheld by the LGSCO against Surrey County Council, where

damages have been awarded in compensation for disadvantage and financial costs that have been incurred as a result of the Council's maladministration.]

Impact on child/young person: I feel I have PTSD and at times I have resented my child for having to deal with Surrey [as a consequence of their Special Educational Needs]. At times, I wished I'd never had them, as I was so low.

Impact on family circumstances: I had to give up my corporate job and lost my 16 year career.

**See associated information about complaints in the covering letter. Surrey County Council has had more complaints upheld against it than any other Local Authority for the last 3 years, and exponentially higher than both the national average and those of its near comparator County Councils. More concerning — many of these complaints relate to the same findings and the same repeated statutory breaches, indicating either catastrophic maladministration in failing to sufficiently correct these areas, or, worse, a wilful failure to take corrective action to prevent breaches from recurring. The scale of injustice being found against this Local Authority is unprecedented*

Testimony 37

The Governance Board are the principle problem in Surrey.

Our daughter is in a Specialist Centre based within a mainstream primary school. Current school plus support [all engaged professionals] all say that she needs to go to a specialist secondary school. Mainstream secondary schools that case officer has suggested have also all said that she should go to Specialist School. Yet the Governance Board who know nothing of our daughter or what services are provided by different schools refuse to listen to the experts on the ground who actually know our daughter and insist that she must go to a mainstream.

Impact on child/young person: We are trying to shield her as much as possible but will be impossible once she is in year 6 in September. Her peers will all be given places in secondary school while she must wait until the tribunal process is finished.

Impact on family circumstances: Significant financial strain on due to legal and other support costs. Huge levels of stress on my wife and I.

Testimony 38

A School and Surrey organised a fake trial day for my son at a section 41 school. This was arranged for the sake of a tribunal.

They also failed to consult with the same school at Key Stage Transfer, at the time it was parental preference

Testimony 39

I have evidence that Surreys OT deliberately misled a panel to produce an outcome in their favour. The same team then provided falsified "evidence" to the complaints service leading the complaints service to initially not uphold my complaint.

The same team failed to follow legal duty and provide parents with reports ahead of annual review and when questioned stated "we just didn't want to worry you". They instead attempted to blindside parents into accepting a reduction in provision with no basis. The same team failed to provide the reports intentionally with written evidence stating "we will not be providing them ahead of the AR"

- I have evidence of reports being produced on observations AFTER provision is removed to support their rationale after parents complained
- I have evidence of Surrey failing to fund a child's EHCP provision for 22 weeks for no reason at all.
- I have evidence that Surrey are currently withholding a placement from a child who has been offered a space at not only parental preference but also nearest appropriate placement because Surrey won't fund it however they are now ghosting parents and ignoring direct requests for explanations
- I have evidence of case officers still relying on "panels" and "commissioning" to make decisions despite CC insisting panel aren't decision makers.
- I have evidence Surreys health services are providing incorrect reports on child's needs to reflect Surreys commissioning support framework as opposed to reporting the child's actual needs.
- I have evidence that as a result of Surreys inability to provide required provision across education and social care my child became significantly unwell, under the crisis team and we had to consider residential care due to a lack of support.
- I have evidence Surrey produce deliberately misleading statements around KSTs namely stating in 2024 they completed all EHCPs - when in fact they were deliberately issuing them with just type of placement meaning parents had to go to tribunal / appeal.

I could go on but sadly I think everyone here knows that this is not even the tip of the iceberg and if a full truly independent audit of SCC actions were taken it would only highlight what us parents already know - Surrey will continue to fail our children, cost them their childhood, their education, their mental health and sadly in increasing numbers their lives.

It's a sad day when they can't even admit their failings and apologise without trying to equivocate.

Testimony 40

My son has been without a school since Xmas. His annual review was meant to be in January but got pushed back again and again until a month ago. 4 weeks later and the LA still claim not to have

received the document sent to them from the school. He's now been without education for 4 and a half months with ZERO support.

It's torn the Family unit apart. The relationship with my son's mother broke down and now I'm raising him by myself. It's been hell.

Testimony 41

I am writing to raise grave concerns regarding the long-term and ongoing failures of Surrey County Council (SCC) in discharging its statutory responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Education Act 1996, the Personal Budget Regulations 2014, and the SEND Code of Practice. These repeated failures have caused profound and lasting harm to my daughter's health, development, and well-being over nearly a decade.

1. Initial Statutory Assessment and Diagnostic Overshadowing (from 2016 onwards): Almost ten years ago, my daughter underwent a statutory assessment for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. Despite serious medical symptoms, Surrey County Council and its health partners failed to ensure the assessment was accurate or informed by appropriate clinical input. As a result, a life-impacting medical condition — an appendiceal abscess caused by an undiagnosed immune deficiency — was entirely missed. This situation only narrowly avoided a fatal outcome. Her prolonged time spent in the bathroom due to this undiagnosed medical condition was misinterpreted as a behavioural symptom of a social communication disorder. She was subsequently pulled off the toilet and locked in a sensory bag, an experience that caused her to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For two to three years, she lived in a state of sub-acute confusion and untreated infection, which has left a lasting impact on her cognitive and physical development.

2. Denial of Physiotherapy Provision and SEND Tribunal (2020): In 2020, we were forced to initiate a SEND Tribunal after Surrey failed to implement the physiotherapy provision listed under Section G of her EHC Plan for a diagnosis of Bethlem myopathy. The Local Authority offered no valid defence for this delay, which should have been addressed in Section F rather than Section G. This failure placed my daughter at risk of needing further surgical intervention to release contractures, compounding the trauma of two previous bowel surgeries. Her ongoing symptoms of post-surgical adhesions were again written off as psychosomatic, until specialists at St George's Hospital intervened and removed extensive fibrotic adhesions — nearly two years after they first arose.

3. Judicial Review and Breach of Section 42 (2024): Despite the SEND Tribunal's findings, Surrey County Council still failed to implement the provision in Section F of the EHC Plan, resulting in a

successful judicial review in 2024 based on a clear breach of Section 42 of the Children and Families Act. This breach — a statutory duty with no defence — was nonetheless defended by Surrey at public expense to delay provision, costing taxpayers over £50,000. During this period, Surrey ignored advice from both psychiatric and psychological professionals, leading directly to self-harm and emotional deterioration in my daughter. This was both a legal and safeguarding failure.

4. Ongoing Failures in the Annual Review Process (2024–2025): The 2024–2025 annual review process was also fundamentally flawed. Surrey County Council failed to issue a final EHC Plan within the statutory timeframe, requiring us to serve pre-action protocol papers to compel compliance. We are now facing a likely repeat Section 42 breach, as the authority again fails to specify and secure provision — despite medical evidence from our GP, consultant psychiatrist, and psychologist all warning that any change in provision will cause serious psychological harm. These warnings continue to be ignored.

5. Unlawful Personal Budget Policy and Breach of 2014 Regulations: Surrey County Council operates a blanket personal budget policy that does not comply with the Personal Budget Regulations 2014. It fails to allow reasonable adjustments, prevents families from co-producing provision, and imposes rigid spending rules that contradict statutory requirements. This unlawful policy has been formally identified as incompatible with the law by King’s Counsel, yet Surrey continues to apply it without amendment — undermining family autonomy and lawful co-production.

6. Escalation to the Department for Education: We have now written to the Secretary of State for Education under the Education Act 1996, requesting formal intervention on the grounds that Surrey is consistently failing to discharge its legal duties. The evidence shows systemic non-compliance, disregard for professional advice, and contempt for legal process, including tribunal findings and judicial review outcomes.

7. Prior Engagement with the Care Quality Commission (CQC): In 2020, before the SEND Tribunal proceedings, I was invited to present the systemic issues in this case to the Board of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This invitation came from Nigel Thompson, then Deputy Director to Chris Day, and included attendance by senior leadership, including Lee Pickerel, then Head of Children’s Services. At that meeting, it was acknowledged that the issues raised were serious and warranted attention. However, it was made clear that due to the removal of certain CQC powers, the Commission was not able to intervene at the time. Since then, I have taken up a position as Senior Analyst in the D&I team at the CQC, where I work on national data related to the regulation of the Mental Health Act. As a result, this matter continues to impact me professionally, including the need

to update my conflict-of-interest and disclosure arrangements due to the continued involvement of Surrey County Council in my personal and professional affairs.

This is a Kafkaesque situation in which my family has been trapped in a cycle of neglect, legal action, and emotional trauma — all caused by a public authority that persistently fails to meet its statutory and moral responsibilities. My daughter has suffered lasting medical harm, educational delay, and emotional distress, not because of her condition, but because of institutional negligence. These are not isolated errors. They are repeated breaches of law and trust over many years, with other families across Surrey likely enduring similar experiences.

The time for delay, denial, and obfuscation is over. Surrey County Council must be held accountable — not only by the courts, but by central government and the public it serves

Testimony 42

My child has been out of school for two years. He is on roll still with his state specialist school and accesses Alternative Learning Provisions very successfully.

Following his Annual Review in November 2024 I received his EHCP draft in January 2025, I asked for an extension for changes to be made as there were no up to date reports from SALT, OT or EP. We were also awaiting a decision from Panel regarding a request to change provision to EOTAS.

As soon as we received the result from panel, denying the request to change provision or provide a personal budget, his caseworker sent me his finalised EHCP with no changes made. After chasing them repeatedly as to why my extension was not granted they said that as I would be appealing the setting in Section I, that I could appeal the content at the same time*

For various reasons his EHCP hasn't been updated since 2022 but is being sent out to schools who say they cannot meet his needs. This is unsurprising as some text relates to when he was 5 or 6 he is now 13. He had no key stage transfer review as he was out of school.

He does not currently access any formal learning in core curriculum subjects, funding for this has been denied by the LA panel. I have requested a Personal Budget to cover this amongst other things that he is missing out on, such as OT and other subjects of interest such as music. This has been denied.

The school applied for a change of setting to EOTAS at his EHCP review in November. This was refused as one school had offered him a place and said they could meet his needs. We trialed this school on three occasions and the outcomes got worse and worse leading me to refuse the place on the basis

that my child's mental health would breakdown again and that the resulting violence and destruction at home would result in a family breakdown.

My child is a bright boy and he deserves better. He deserves a chance to reach his potential.

**This practice is increasingly evident in feedback about Surrey County Council's approach. The Local Authority is issuing EHCPs that it knows to be incomplete (as described above) and therefore also inappropriate - while directing families toward Tribunal as their only route to challenge. This is tantamount to an abuse of the legal process, which exists to adjudicate genuine disputes as a last resort. Instead, Surrey appears to be exploiting the delays within the SEND Tribunal system (which are in large part caused by the systemic failure of LAs to comply with their legal duties), using the Tribunal process itself to complete incomplete assessments and amend plans after the statutory deadlines have passed. This allows Surrey to claim apparent improvements in EHCP 'timeliness', when in reality the underlying process remains knowingly non-compliant and the child is left without appropriate support for months, if not years.*

Testimony 43

How many EHCP requests that have gone to mediation or tribunal have been found successful at that stage?

- Refusal to Assess resulted in an agreement to assess following mediation (1 Jun 2023 - 31 May 2024) = 221
- Refusal to Assess appeals concluded to date = 187
- Number that went to hearing = 72
- The remainder were resolved prior to hearing = 115

NB: All 187 cases resulted in the decision not to assess being overturned

Testimony 44

Since Year 1, my child was placed in an inappropriate setting without the necessary support for diagnosed autism, sensory processing difficulties, and speech and language needs. Despite having an EHCP, no therapy was delivered for years. The LA claimed provision was "integrated" but offered no evidence. When I challenged this, the school leadership stated the targets were not for their type of school. It took years of escalating complaints and gathering independent assessments before I could take the matter to Tribunal.

- Persistent delays in EHCP reviews and therapy provision implementation, despite Tribunal orders.
- Withholding and misrepresentation of critical facts, e.g., claiming therapies were integrated without evidence of delivery.
- Complete withdrawal of Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) funding by Surrey LA without informing parents, despite EHCP provision remaining unchanged.

The tribunal process lasted over a year, during which I had to bear the full cost of private assessments as a single parent. The LA repeatedly failed to provide evidence or comply with tribunal directions. Even after securing provision in the amended EHCP, it was never implemented- therapies existed only on paper. From 2022 - 2025, there was no delivery of 1:1 SaLT, and only after persistent requests did the school admit the funding was withdrawn by the LA.

Despite this breach, I had to submit formal complaints again in 2025. Still, the LA denied wrongdoing, referencing vague updates that failed to meet EHCP Section F requirements. The ongoing failures have affected my child's development, mental health, and the entire family's well-being .

Impact on child/young person:

- My child has missed critical early development windows for speech and language due to lack of 1:1 SALT delivery over several years.
- He experienced emotional dysregulation and distress from overstimulation due to unaddressed sensory needs.
- The lack of structured support led to increasing behavioural challenges and school avoidance.
- School placement was not changed until much later, and even then, provision was inconsistently or not delivered.
- Missed opportunity to build independence and self-regulation-skills now needing catch-up support.
- The system has caused long-term regression and hindered his ability to participate meaningfully in learning and therapy.

Impact on family circumstances:

- As a single parent, I had to stop working fully to manage the escalating needs caused by the system's failure.
- I experience chronic fatigue and health issues due to stress, disrupted sleep, and caregiving
- I spent thousands in private assessments and therapy evidence just to secure legal entitlements.
- The pressure of managing appeals, legal processes, and a neglected EHCP placed significant emotional strain on the family.
- My daughter has also been affected, feeling neglected due to the overwhelming attention needed for her brother

- This has led to feelings of burnout, isolation, and deep emotional trauma across our household.

Testimony 45

There are no academic, special colleges in Surrey that are state-maintained for pupils with EHCPs who wish to do A Levels.

But there are non-maintained s.41 schools that cost more.

Surrey did everything they could to avoid naming the one suitable 6th form, including suggesting a school in Sutton (London) that had a unit that she couldn't attend due to her age, suggesting a special school in Kent (3 hours drive per day) for students with behaviour problems (which she didn't have), suggesting schools that were full, suggesting schools that dealt with GCSE resits for those that had failed their GCSE's (there was no evidence at that time that she would fail her GCSE's), suggesting special schools that were the wrong type of special schools.

They had reports disclosed to them that they withheld from all the schools they consulted with. The schools found out about this and withdrew offers/ refused to make offers.

In 14 years, only 2 annual reviews were attended by the case officer at the time. When I made complaints, they were ignored; if I emailed, I was ignored; if I rang them, I was ignored. They breached the time guidelines by months.

They refused to update her EHCP, refused access to professionals to get access to updated reports (such as EP/OT etc). But that came back to bite them as when I started tribunal proceedings, all the paperwork was 10 years out of date and the tribunal officer had to order them all, and they had to be completed in 10 days before she left that school for good.

Surrey had no school place to offer her by the summer holidays, and still took another 4 weeks or so to concede before the tribunal date.

After she left the school that was the subject of the tribunal, they wrote to me some months later and said that they couldn't find her in any of their schools, and did I have any idea where she was now? I replied and said If you actually read her last review, you would realise where she is now (University). They didn't reply to that email.

This is not the first disagreement I have had with them - one time was when they refused to update her EHCP with her diagnosis until I made them do it. The other time, they said she wasn't allowed to have

speech therapy as it was expensive, but if I served them with tribunal paperwork, they would allow it (served them 2 hours after that conversation, and they back-tracked by 9 am the next day).

She is now doing very well (despite the LA's attempts to stop her from going to the one school that could help her). She has a BSc, is doing an MSc, and is about to apply to do a PhD this week.

Impact on child/young person: At the time, it caused a great deal of stress due to the uncertainty regarding which school they would attend

Impact on family circumstances: loss of income, stress for me, and impact on my physical health

Testimony 46

Refusing to assess for EHCP despite it being obvious that an assessment was warranted, forcing us to file for tribunal.

Impact on child/young person: This delay meant that he didn't access support when needed and couldn't move to specialist school (which was needed) until later. Caused emotional distress, feeling like failure, anxiety. All these things resulted in school refusal which we are still trying to recover from.

Impact on family circumstances: Stress, loss of income, impact on siblings when they were trying to support him into mainstream when actually he needed specialist.

Testimony 47

Annual review currently in progress. Meeting has been held and professional reports supplied by existing providers, plus my young person's views and wishes clearly stated in writing. No changes in needs identified, no outcomes met (but progress towards all) and minimal changes to provision identified by professionals. No additional provision requested.

Amended draft following AR meeting is now overdue.

However - case worker has emailed today with the results of taking the initial draft and funding requests to "panel" where they are only agreeing to certain aspects of provision and have made significant changes to others that they are prepared to fund/commission. Huge reductions in provision which was previously set out clearly in the EHCP (following tribunal) and which professionals have all said needs to stay.

Case worker has stated the EHCP will now be amended to reflect what 'Panel has agreed to fund/commission', which she appreciates my young person probably won't 'agree with' but we need to move forward 'so appeal rights are activated'.

This bears no resemblance to the legal process for annual review and permitted amendments and is completely illegal!!! Surrey know this full well, but our only recourse is appeal which will take years given current backlog and basically no education in the meantime (for a 21 year old who still has no formal qualifications because Surrey have delayed and delayed on everything for 4 years)

Testimony 48

My daughter is 11, currently in year 6 at a non maintained specialist independent school. Her EHCP was finalised last May 2024 whilst at a mainstream school, where her placement was changed to specialist and her current school named. We had a Transition review in July 2024 just before she left her mainstream to join her new school for year 6 in the September. The Transition review paperwork was completed and sent to Surrey within 2 days- I was CC'd in.

Fast forward to Feb of this year, I was sent my daughters EHCP (as it's transition year- going in to year 7) naming my kids current school - great- but all the info was outdated. Nothing was from July 2024 when we had our last review! I flagged it was incorrect and have done so 5 times since Feb. I've asked for the updated EHCP, queried where her info had gone etc. I kept being fobbed off with no answers as to where the info has gone! I was then informed that as my kid was due to Annual Review in April, they would update after that.

We had the Annual Review; her wonderful school had conducted new reports with OT and SALT, i provided reports from other professionals as there was a request for increase in therapies. At panel the increase in therapies were declined, a 'no change' was issued with a comment that the reports 'don't represent' my daughter (?!). I've argued many points (and the school are doing there thing to) about the decision and have said I'll appeal- but I need a current and correct EHCP to go on! The reply: 'there are no changes to the EHCP'- this means the EHCP literally the same which negates all the info from Transition Review paperwork from July 2024?!

Also the personal updated info from April 2025?! Declining therapies is red tape, I can argue that and do what is required, but having missing paperwork and not updating my daughter personal views and mine?..???

Not quite sure where to go from here, so can anyone advise? I'm really concerned that they have lost her paperwork from July 2024, that the panel used info from 20 months ago, which means they have been misled and I'm now being refused a copy of her EHCP! I made a formal complaint to Surrey, I also sent it to My MP [name redacted] and emailed the appeals team as I have no physical EHCP that I can appeal!

So how can I do it?! Waiting on a reply from them all. So so fed up. Surrey are utterly shameful. Help

Testimony 49

I complained this week that Surrey had breached their statutory duties as I hadn't received my son's Final EHCP following a Consent Order > 5 weeks ago. I've sent reminders but they don't get you anywhere.

Earlier this year I had Surrey concede just 3 days before tribunal after a year long wait. They had already been barred having failed to respond to the appeal, produce the bundle or engage with the working document/appeal at all until the very end.

My son started a new school on Monday but had the offer from a specialist school at the end of June. All evidence supported the need for specialist but Surrey dragged it out with no counter evidence. Case Officer also sent consults to schools telling them they were parental preference when they weren't, and we had clearly named an alternative parental preference to SENDIST.

No apology for wilful lying! Apparently a 'standardised letter' can't be amended to reflect the truth!

I'm on my 8th SENDIST appeal now as my youngest has also had mainstream named despite 2 parental preference ASD specialist schools saying they couldn't meet needs and I don't even think they consulted with his current mainstream (they haven't shared the consult as requested anyway). I have seen no rationale behind their decision to name mainstream.

School/myself requested Alternate Provision for this child but school have apparently been told Surrey will only consider this after an emergency/annual review (which is puzzling as that wasn't mentioned when we put in the request!). I've asked my case officer for feedback re the AP request but not received any. However I have heard that my Case Officer is unable to attend his annual review in March.

Surrey previously cherry-picked professional recommendations for this child's EHCP so I needed to appeal to SENDIST to get the EPs recommendations included - obviously Surrey had no evidence to support their position so they conceded but only after wasting months. Surrey are still not providing school with the finances necessary to adequately fund the provision in the EHCP. I have spent more time in appeal for this child than not!

Plenty more examples of poor practice over the last few years but too much to write here! Just dug out a list of LA experiences I made last year:

- Failure to agree to a needs assessment despite me sending clear evidence the legal threshold has been met.
- Failure to issue an EHCP (despite plenty of evidence and school providing a provision map showing the child was already getting 25hrs 1:1).
- Repeated failure to stick to statutory timescales.
- Forcing an appeal for a specialist school despite plenty of professional evidence of need and the support of the mainstream school.
- Failure to update details in the EHCP after an annual review -Cherry picking professional recommendations to save money- for example they included all the educational psychologists recommendations except the recommendation for full time 1:1 (forcing an appeal). Or in another included several recommendations from professionals but excluded the ones which indicated a specialist provision would be required.
- Failure to provide OT - child was supposed to be getting 1 hour a week as stipulated in his EHCP but got 0 hours over a year.
- Poor communication - I've been repeatedly ignored by caseworkers and tribunal officers. For example, it took 9 weeks to get a response from a tribunal officer (and only after escalating it via 'be.heard'). The response then didn't resolve anything - it took approximately 18 weeks for the actual issue I was emailing about to be addressed.
- LA re-classifying clear complaints as 'enquiry's' and not addressing complaints correctly.
- The LA were late issuing a Final EHCP after a consent order from the Ministry of Justice. Then emailed the Final with errors in it. Then didn't amend the errors when they were pointed out. (Currently late issuing another Final after a consent order).
- Lack of/late engagement with the tribunal process- for example agreeing the final outstanding issues on the morning of tribunal ahead of it starting when they could have been resolved months before. Or agreeing the working document in July when nothing had changed since the appeal was registered in October and agreement could have been reached without the need for appeal at all if the LA was motivated to do so. (Latest conceded 3 days before the hearing).
-It took 6 months and a lot of chasing to be reimbursed £925 I was owed by Surrey for an Educational Psychologist report I sourced for a EHCNA (they agreed to pay as they couldn't book an EP but a change to their internal financial processes meant they didn't pay up for 6 months).
- Forced my child continue to attend a school that isn't able to meet his needs when a suitable one is available and willing to take him.

The issues are not a one off, it's repeated, persistent and wilful failure to help children with SEND. Then they gave the leadership of this complete and utter failure an OBE!

Testimony 50

Here is my appeal for my 17 year old son with a EHCP who is just finishing his first year of A Levels.

He is at Specialist School X, the nearest suitable school. funded by his EHCP since year 5. At no point of his 8 years at School X (which was secured via appeal) have Surrey ever tried to move him.

[Because of his Special Educational Needs, and the distance he was required to travel to a suitable school] he had a taxi to school provided from year 5 until year 12. We had to appeal his transport the first year of A-levels but we won that at stage one [The first stage of the School Home to Transport Appeals process]

Now Surrey's School Transport Team are saying that because they offer his A levels at a mainstream College X, and that is technically closer, they will use this as rationale to withdraw his transport to his current specialist school*. Surrey SEND never disputed naming current School X for sixth form either when the Key Stage Transfer was completed [acknowledging that this is the closest suitable educational provision]. Eton does his A-levels but its all a bit moot when Eton don't want you.....

But College X has already said they can't take him.*

1) They do not take people half way through sixth form so he would need to start again but...2) They are also full so he can't start in September 25, in theory he could start from scratch in September 2026 missing a year and actually taking his first year again but....3) He can't take the same A levels which is a PITA if you want to be a Educational psychologist history teacher but you can not study history or Psychology 4) He has an EHCP so it has to go via the SEN admission team 5) I can't just ask the college to re start A Levels from scratch in different subjects in September 26..... but what subjects would he sit? These were his GCSE study area so he has limited options anyway

But hey! Never let reality stand in your way. I am sure lots of Universities will accept him without these A-levels.

I will remove his personal info. Excuse my writing, I'm dyslexic and I get worse under stress

**This is a practice increasingly reported by parents in Surrey. Under the statutory SEND framework, including the Children and Families Act 2014 and accompanying Regulations, the suitability of a placement is determined through formal assessment and consultation processes. The SEND team determines the named placement in Section I of an EHCP - not the Transport Team. However, Surrey's School Transport Team appears to be leveraging the threat of naming inappropriate or unavailable placements (such as an unsuitable college, or a school which has no available places) to remove or avoid their legal duty to provide home-to-school transport. This is particularly concerning given that many children are placed at distant schools due*

to the chronic shortage of suitable specialist provision — a situation of the Local Authority's own making, following years of underinvestment in its specialist school capital programme. These place shortages (Surrey County Council now has the highest financial dependency on Non-Maintained Independent Specialist Placements in the UK), and the resulting long travel times (often 60+ minutes each way), are well-documented in both Surrey's own forecasts and Local Area SEND inspections.

Testimony 51

Surrey refused to issue an EHCP when my daughter was unable to return to school post-Covid for her GCSEs and needed Surrey Online School / A2E. Thankfully the school's Principal heeded the recommendations of professionals (made in an EHCNA) after our official complaint to Governors about a lack of schooling for four months and funded her GCSEs to be taught online.

I did a SAR later on and SCC's own lawyers said the package my daughter needed, as proved by the EHCNA reports, was well over a £6k budget and therefore to issue an EHCP. We were forced to pay for an advocate who got one issued after four months on the Tribunal pathway before a hearing took place. Surrey CC then took *47 weeks* to issue a final EHCP which was identical to a draft they had sent 6 months previously ignoring all our legal amendments.

They ignored vital SaLT and OT interventions, as recommended in expert reports, which we had to fund privately for years. We therefore had to appeal the EHCP contents and were forced by Surrey CC to go to Tribunal. This took a further 8 months to reach. The Judge ruled in favour of all the recommended interventions, a named provision and mentorship provision (which had previously been approved, then declined, on the eve of it starting, by Surrey CC.)

We started the EHCP process in Year 9 and she received her final EHCP at the end of Year 11. Surrey then did not put the recommendations of the Judge into action for another 3 months. (We discovered that the caseworker had failed to cut and paste the Judge's Final Draft correctly, omitting a whole section which was linked to the Sensory / Physical side and outlining the required interventions.) It was only after the half term of Year 12 that she started receiving the provisions she had always needed.

SCC refused to engage with the Tribunal process at all- they did not respond to any emails or contact and their legal department told our Advocate to leave them alone; they were eventually barred from attending the hearing.

We had complained officially several times and were always told that she did not need the interventions and that she had received an education for those four months - she did not. We were given a 'fiduciary' payment of a few hundred pounds for the 47-week delay to issue by an 'external' assessor who was linked to Surrey which we were told to accept since it would not prejudice a further complaint to the Ombudsman. (However, our complaints to the LGSCO regarding the 47-week delay

issue and missed therapies, were declined on the grounds that Surrey had 'apologised' and that they don't cover appeals about provision that are dealt with by Tribunals.)

Alongside this, when my daughter was in Year 11, which is officially a Key Transition Year, to Post-16, our case worker refused to hold a Key Phase Transition meeting for her. I organised a meeting with the school in the autumn term when it is meant to be held, but the statutory guidelines were not followed - neither mandatory time scales for the sharing of information, nor inviting key MDT members.

I organised for everybody to attend and I issued an information pack myself, but when the meeting minutes were produced, the Case worker refused to name it as such and said it could only be called an Annual Review due to the EHCP having been issued so recently (due to their deliberate delays.)

We were punished not once, but several times over, with the deliberate withholding of provisions. But not just that, they eroded a fundamental trust in the institutions that we fund, via our taxes, to support our children in their hour of need. The only truly helpful advice or support we received was from other parents going through the same thing and from charities like Action for Carers/ Appeer/ the NAS Education Rights Line.

We have had five different caseworkers in four years - in every case there has been no warning about the change and often there has been no handover so the support has been left suspended until we've noticed and tried contacting them.

We now have a good outcome thanks to our determination and having the required resources to fight, but the pervading ethos we encountered over those years, was to obstruct and delay. It is a sad day when you realise as a parent that it is not simply incompetence that leads to these serious breaches of statutory responsibility but it is by design.

Happy and give consent to be quoted since there is no other way to hold them accountable for the trauma they caused.

Testimony 52

My eldest has tried to end her life twice, self harms this is a result, partly, of being in a coma on life support in wales in 2021 and not being allowed to have me or her dad with her.

Yes they woke our autistic child who can't show pain (has broken an ankle at school and not told her teachers) from a coma alone due to covid restrictions. She got pneumonia and sepsis from an ear infection and became ill while we were on holiday in Cornwall. We were told we would be arrested if we travelled to Wales, a different country to be with her, all whilst politicians broke rules. When she

came home there was no mental health provision to be put in place to help her deal with the trauma she had been through.

Her sister has also tried to not be alive twice, she self-harms. To actually get CAHMs to help her, her sister's therapist had to refer her to herself. Apparently two suicide attempts, a mental breakdown, anxiety, near anorexia and self harm, wasn't "bad enough" to get through CAMHS triage. I did cry and ask would a valid death certificate be enough to get help?

Tim Oliver and Rachel Wardell need to have an audience with some ACTUAL parents, like us, who have been dealt the wrong end of the stick.

Testimony 53

As a parent who has spent the last few years battling Surrey's SEND and social care system, I can say with absolute certainty: this letter reflects our experience completely and painfully.

My son X has endured years of inappropriate placements, neglect, and emotional trauma. He was placed in unsafe environments where safeguarding was clearly compromised. And when I raised concerns backed by evidence I was ignored, dismissed, or blamed. X was physically attacked. He was placed on reduced timetables, isolated, and failed repeatedly. The suffering he's endured is not something any child should go through let alone under the supervision of a local authority.

And even now, we are still experiencing delays, broken promises, and vague responses while my son remains without the full provision he's legally entitled to.

What makes this worse is the role social services have played. Despite having no understanding of EHCPs or legal duties around education, they ignore safeguarding concerns in school placements, yet are quick to scrutinise and bully families at home creating fear instead of offering support. They do not protect children; they protect systems. And vulnerable children like X pay the price.

We are not talking about an overwhelmed system. We are talking about a calculated culture of delay, denial, and intimidation all while leaders at the top claim "reform." The reality is: there is no reform when those responsible for the damage are the ones being empowered to lead change.

Thank you for standing with families. For exposing the truth. For refusing to let this be buried under spin.

This is the reality. We've lived it. We are still living it. And we won't be silent anymore.

Testimony 54

Too many unethical behaviours to list them all but here are a few!

Our son's special school (School X) recently off rolled him despite no change in need and excellent attendance. Throughout this process the school made promises in meetings with the LA and then not kept these. The LA have done nothing to hold them to account.

The school did not deliver his EHCP and despite us raising a formal complaint with the LA and speaking to the commissioning team the school was not held to account. The commissioning team at one point said that they could 'claw back' money they had paid the school which then was not spent on my son. However they said this is something we would have to do!

Me, my husband and a group of concerned parents tried to reach out to LADO, Ofsted, DofE about the school including overuse of inappropriate restraint and nothing was actioned.

The LA have paid £6,209,036 to [Academy Group name redacted] since September 2022. [Academy Group name redacted] is the parent company of School X, and is itself owned by the [Name Redacted] sovereign wealth fund. They make a 27% profit every year. Any money paid to a school in excess of what it spend directly on children should be reinvested into the school rather than those funds going outside the UK. We have raised this with the LA and they are unperturbed by these facts.

Am happy for the content of my comment to be shared.

Testimony 55

I consent: My Son struggled to attend his mainstream school for two years prior to stopping completely in June 2023.

His EHCP was finalised in September 2023 with his Mainstream school named despite the fact the school had notified Surrey that they could not meet need. Appeal date was set for November 2024. In January 2024 he finally had some alternative provision put in place but this was only 1 hour of tutoring a week and was taken from the EHCP funding provided to school.

Repeated requests for additional funding for AP were turned down at panel. Provision type was finally changed to Specialist where all schools consulted came back saying they could not meet need.

Despite this, the LA, continued to argue the case that specialist was appropriate, in fact they wanted to leave him in mainstream until the end of the academic year before then consulting with specialists again.

Within 5 minutes of our tribunal hearing starting the judge had clearly stated that EOTAS was the only option for our child and confirmed that the LA's arguments against this had no background in law. We

had waited 17 months to hear these words. Here we are 14 weeks post receiving tribunal outcome and not one part of his outlined EOTAS package is in place.

He continues to be on role at his mainstream school (which he has not attended since June 2023!) despite the fact he now has a finalised EHCP with section I blank. I wonder if this is in fact lawful or just done so that it looks like he is still receiving an education whilst they delay his EOTAS provision.

Following warning of Judicial Review they are finally communicating again but still with no provision confirmed. Who knows how long the wait will be.

Meanwhile my son has lost all perception of what education should look like for him, he has lost faith in a system that has repeatedly failed him. It won't be long now until he has been out of school for 2 years with only 1 hour of tutoring a week! How can Surrey argue that this is providing him with the equivalent of a full time education, its disgraceful.

Testimony 56

I was assured that things were going to get better, millions of pounds were going to be spent on send in Surrey, that was after my eldest daughter was unplaced until I sent her paperwork myself as Surrey had failed to consult more than my 1st preference (who said yes but she wasn't placed) and another unsuitable school who couldn't challenge her academically.

But I was asked to sign a waiver by a desperate [Name Redacted: Senior Council Officer] nonetheless acknowledging it was the wrong place but at least it was somewhere - I declined.

I called round schools and did the LA's job for them, she then got placed at our 2nd choice. "This won't happen again" "improvements are being made ". She's just going into yr 11 now.

My son was kept at an unsuitable mainstream "to teach the other parents tolerance " when he was eventually placed in high coin, where he should have been from day 1. Instead of year 3 work they had to start back with the basics, pre reception level. His entire infant school education was wasted because the LA didn't have his best interests at heart. He is in year 6 still trying to catch up and learn basic skills. I'm dreading the ways in which this will be messed up.

My middle child has been failed the worst. Lingered on the waiting list for several years for ASD and ADHD diagnosis. Her mainstream secondary school doesn't believe in SEND, punishes it, she went from excelling to anxious, masking to unable. She hasn't been to school since the 1st day of term last year - year 8.

I applied for a EHCP myself as the school state that schools don't apply. Her CAMHS therapist helped, I submitted all the evidence but Surrey refused to assess. Refused to mediate. I took them to tribunal, at the same time continuing to beg for work for my daughter but being refused, Surrey refused [to provide support] too. Diagnosis was made privately due to still not reaching the never-ending top of the list (despite being told by your predecessor that there are millions going to CAMHS) . Tribunal bundle finally arrived and I discovered that the SENCO had told Surrey no professionals were involved- CAMHS, social worker, school nurse, police, crisis team? A complete lie that the team would have seen if they had simply read my evidence, but they didn't, they didn't read my response either.

I won the tribunal, the judge could see no one read my evidence- he was scathing. I'm happy to provide you with this. I'm livid that my children keep being failed. I'm livid that a SENCO , a professional can lie on a legal document and still be in her job.

Testimony 57

My daughter 'L' who is just 13 hasn't been physically seen or her voice heard by any professional person since August 2024.

During mediation a few weeks ago with Surrey I said "you are taking my word for it she is alive and well, she could be dead under my patio and you wouldn't know". No welfare checks from school, no inclusion officer, no checks from social services, no AP, assessments from OT, SALT and social services refused during the EHCNA.

Surrey funded EP stated EOTAS and an extremely gradual approach to any sort of intervention due to extreme trauma. EHCP refused as 'ordinarily available measures' are adequate to support within her current mainstream school (my daughter has been completely out of school since April and spent the grand total of 21 days in school over the last 2 years). Social services carer's assessment and needs assessment refused as 'she isn't a wheelchair user' but due to 'system miscommunication' a safeguarding concern was [incorrectly] raised against me and my other children's schools were contacted for investigation but no safeguarding check done at home and I was not informed until I contacted them.

A pathetic apology later and it was all dropped apparently and I was told as I am 'meeting my children's needs' we are not entitled to any support. CAMHS have refused to escalate her on the waitlist for assessment despite being in a catastrophic burnout and having selective mutism.

I requested a referral to a department of GOSH as she met criteria and was refused. When L was referred 3 years ago she was given one counselling session but shut down and couldn't engage

(despite the counsellor apparently being experienced with selective mutism) and was told there was nothing more they could do until she was assessed.

From the very start of her troubles I reached out for support - For her and us as a family as I have other neurodiverse children and was refused. We have no professional support. My physical and mental health has rapidly declined and still we are refused support despite me being L's full time carer. Tribunal is not until February next year. Surrey still refuse to do any kind of assessments to confirm her complex needs. GP recognises autism, PDA, ADHD and selective mutism and has also reached out on L's and my behalf.

Testimony 58

The main law-breaking moment came with the refusal to carry out an EHCNA, when the case blatantly warranted it.

SCC subsequently agreed [but only] after we went to tribunal. This process meant over a year went by before anything was done for our son.

The lack of action and intervention has a serious impact on our other son who we have now had to de-register from school. Oh, and the EHCP missed the deadline and even after they said they met the target date there was no named provision.

Oh, yes, we had a message from another parent who had got in touch via a mediator to tell us they'd been sent our son's personal information. Surrey will say that the latter case just goes to show it's a broken system that they're succeeding in fixing: it's not true.

They routinely break the law in order to delay what our children are entitled to, they do it deliberately, and they do it to save money, and award themselves Honours celebrating how good they are that their job. They should be in jail.

Impact on child/young person: We now have two sons not in school because of how this has been handled. We have had to pay for therapeutic support for our eldest who is not SEN because of what he has been through with Surrey's failings towards our SEN boy. Our youngest is now living virtually as a hermit because Surrey refused to intervene to help him when he hit autistic burnout.

Impact on family circumstances: We are now seeking support from Charities to keep us from losing our home because us parents can't both work with a disabled son and now a Home Ed son at home too. Our mental health is rock bottom. I feel it is only a matter of time before there is a tragedy. I have

made sure the council knows my views and experiences on this so when the inquest happens they can all have a slice of what's coming to them.

Testimony 59

2 eldest daughters left School X in July 2023 after they could no longer meet need.

Since then they have received no education, no provisions whatsoever including OT and SLT which is in their EHCPs.

Stage 2 complaint in December for both of them admitted failings, offered a financial remedy and ensuring everything would be in place for January. We are now in April and they have still received nothing whatsoever.

They have finally been given access to 15 hours each of 'mentoring' from April the 22nd but nothing else in Section F is being fulfilled and still no OT or SLT has been found as we approach 2 years.

Youngest daughter - It's just taken a year to secure her first ehcp and it's not fit for purpose. Despite quoting the law and providing evidence, OT and SLT assessments were both refused and the EP had a quick chat with me on the phone, not undertaking any assessments with my daughter at all. I have just appealed and am awaiting tribunal next March.

Testimony 60

No place offered at year 7 transition.

Appeal lodged. No response from tribunal officer for 4 weeks in response to requesting information. LA conceded 1 week before the hearing.

4 months of stress. Received 2 calls from 'liaison team' with an update - although I knew more than them! Stressful. Infuriating. Powerless.

Impact on child/young person: It cost £4,000 for an advocate to follow up with the LA and lodge the appeal. It was 100% worth it as the impact on my own MH having to email every week. Call every 3 days and be ignored was huge.

This was following having to get a solicitor to send a letter threatening a JR the previous year after it took 5 months to update his Y5 paperwork (year 4 never got updated!) It would have meant his y3 paperwork would have been sent for consultation!

Impact on family circumstances: Well, it's just infuriating isn't it! Outrageous in fact. In any other job if you didn't respond to emails or do your job you'd be sacked.

I know on Feb 3rd our second choice school called our current school. We've STILL not had any response from that call. No follow up with us, not chased by the caseworker! Nothing. This was when he had no school named! Unbelievable. Zero accountability.

I am studying, and had to let them know I may have to stop due to having to possibly home school my child [as no placement has been secured]. I have another child doing his GCSE's, the stress levels have been off the charts!

We have this week been able to tell my son where he is going.. 4 months after everyone else! He's not been to visit or prepare!

Testimony 61

I posted last week about our situation:

My oldest son was permanently excluded from school (year 6) in January. We have not heard anything from Surrey since - I only received a generic email from the inclusion officer (they type sent to all families in our situation) one week after his permanent exclusion.

They have not reached out to us to ask how my son could best be supported to access education. His school told Surrey that they were funding an Alternative Provision package that should be continued as my son was accessing it and it was in his best interest.

Surrey have not listened and refused to fund it. Surrey is now trying to force my son into a PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) even though his previous school and his psychiatrist agree that's not in his best interest and that instead it would be better to fund online learning classes for him (at the very minimum).

In addition my son still has no EHCP - it was refused by Surrey in August and yet he'd already been suspended by his mainstream school for 16 days in year 5 (and school had spent about £17000 on him that year without any support from Surrey!). Somehow panel still felt his needs could be provided under OAP by his (now previous) school.

Since my son was excluded Surrey have refused to concede. We were given a last minute tribunal date in February but Surrey said they could not make it. We were instructed by court to find a date in April that would work for Surrey and us - we emailed Surrey and they haven't replied to our emails. We submitted our dates to the court by the deadline and have not yet heard from Surrey. Surrey have no evidence to back their refusal to issue but they will not concede until we get to tribunal as they just

want to waste time and not spend money. In the meantime my son has no education. And he's in a transition year. But Surrey doesn't care.

For my daughter (year 3), Surrey have agreed to issue an EHCP but case worker rejected nearly all the changes we requested- changes that were all taken from OT and SLT reports but as these were privately commissioned the case worker refused. That's despite the law stating that the LA should use all relevant professional information/reports for the EHCP but we were met with constant 'no'. The case worker even refused to include some information from the EP report written by the Surrey EP that we wanted included - information that showed my daughter needs a nurturing school with small class sizes.

The SLT commissioned by Surrey assessed my daughter and identified she had emotional and social interaction needs but said my daughter didn't need any direct SLT input as these needs are 'not covered by their services'. So the SLT agreed my daughter has these needs and that these needs would normally be met by direct SLT input but as they don't provide these services she cannot include them in the report. Is that not unethical???* So right now my daughter's EHCP does not reflect her needs so we are appealing its content and setting (as Surrey named mainstream even though everyone else who's assessed my daughter agrees she needs specialist).

**It is a breach of statutory guidance for a Local Authority or commissioned professional to omit provision from an EHCP simply because a particular service does not offer it. Under section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014, provision must be based on identified need — not local service availability. The approach described here raises serious ethical concerns and raises questions about the validity of advice subsequently documented in an EHCP.*

Furthermore, this practice appears to place Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), Occupational Therapists (OTs), and Educational Psychologists (EPs) in direct conflict with their professional codes of conduct - including those set out by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) — and in contravention of professional guidance issued by bodies such as the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT).

This is not an isolated incident. Families across Surrey report being told by SLTs, OTs, and EPs that their recommendations are being "limited" or restricted by Surrey County Council officers following assessment, and even ahead of assessment — leading to the omission of appropriate support from EHCPs, even where there is clear evidence of need. This systemic interference undermines professional integrity and raises serious questions about the role of Professionals within the assessment process.

Testimony 62

My young person is now 20 and we have been involved in the EHCP process since she had an accident, was hospitalised for almost 8 months and left severely physically disabled as well as very ill. I can't even begin to list the amount of dishonesty and harmful behaviour we have encountered from Surrey SEND. My daughter has stated many many times in correspondence with them that they have caused her very significant physical and mental harm with their actions.

The fact that, as she has got older, there has been an expectation that she interacts more directly with them, has been extremely difficult for her. The level of trauma they have caused leaves her literally shaking every time someone from the SEND team sends an email. She would be happy to share more information but not online.

Testimony 63

We spent thousands paying for private people for evidence 4 years ago for our first tribunal.

SCC came up with none it was absolutely shambolic regarding SCC @ tribunal. We won as absolutely practically all the parents do. However now once again their incompetence, lack of following the law the lack / timelines / AR. It's just a delay tactic to save SCC cash.

They absolutely don't care about any disabled child. Plus all the stress / trauma for the families. Any week or every month or SCC incompetence equals SCC cash pot. It's absolutely horrendous. He has an amazing EHCP - SCC are not following the law. He has had nothing now for over 1.5 yrs with PAP [a response to a Letter before Action] admitting fault and still no education / no therapies being provided as listed in EHCP.

Plus had a 1 to 1 all school time - now dumped with me – This destroys families and still putting up Surrey rubbish. Clocking up to 2 yrs since tribunal in Oct and still nothing . And transition child into yr 7 in Sept theoretically?

Testimony 64

I consent, Daughter had no school place for over 18 months.

2019-2021: Original School and especially Head teacher denied any SEND issue describing my daughter as " Happy, Talkative young girl". Head teacher also made a malicious referral to Social Services in response to me trying to secure my daughter suitable provisions in school.

8 pages of false allegations against me personally. (I had had children attending this school over a period of 13 years with no issues of this kind raised by them previously).

Had to remove daughter from this school as even the most basic provisions were being denied and we were being Gaslighted by the Head Teacher, daughter was "producing no work in school".

Surrey Case workers do NOT reply to emails, they give no information or guidance on the EHCP process. Many questions as parents go unanswered, requests made directly to Surrey are denied at

every stage of the EHCP process, we had to get a solicitor involved just to get an EHCPNA as Surrey kept refusing.

Surrey also don't keep to legal timeframes within the EHCP process. While out of school (waiting for tribunal) Surrey offered only 1 hour a week education through A2E which was provided by another mum whom had her own children running around in the background (online learning) and not an actual professional/teacher.

Eventually Surrey carried out a very basic EHCPNA, with the reports generated not fit for purpose, none of which were S.M.A.R.T. We even had one "professional physiotherapist" state they could not make any recommendations without speaking to Surrey first!!.

To obtain an EHCP that was worth the paper it was written on we had to go down the legal route, hiring a Solicitor and getting private reports for y daughters needs done, the contents of which was then also denied by Surrey and we ended up having to wait for Tribunal (which of course we won). In the bundle supplied to our solicitor was a page of A4 with the words " very difficult parent to work with" typed on it. and nothing else. (the process should be about the Childs needs but this is an example of how Surrey treats and portrays parents having to fight for their children's needs to be met in education)

My daughter is now happily placed in a specialist Speech and language school, with formal diagnosis of Severe Speech and language disorders an after waiting 4 years for CAMHS assessment also a Moderate/severe Learning Disability. All of which she has had since Birth and will have her whole life.

My daughter will need support her whole life. However yearly we must continue our fight with Surrey in the AR process, which to date has been produced late every year. Last year Surrey missed the legal deadline again claiming to not have received the yearly paperwork from current school (false).

I could go on and add more details but i feel this is long and shocking enough.

Testimony 65

My son should have been going back to school today. He hasn't been in school since 31st March 2024 when Surrey named a school that I had said absolutely no way to.

My only option was to appeal - and refuse to send him to a setting that would ultimately traumatize him.

Here we are with still no school - supposed to be going into Key Stage 3 in September. Surrey's constant delays in actioning our requests to consult and then feeding back has drawn this process out and made it so much longer than it needed to be. We had to adjourn our hearing back in March

because they consulted with our preference 3 weeks before the hearing who then said no. Our case was 'stayed' until 4th June - this coming Wednesday. We have now had to apply for an extension to the stay.

So to all those parents out there who are struggling with a broken backwards system, whose children have been let down and aren't receiving the education they have a right to, who don't get the 6 hours of time everyday to do what they need to do, you aren't alone.

We may not be in exactly the same boat but we are struggling in the same ocean.

Testimony 66

My son has Autism, ADHD and Type 1 Diabetes.

Less than 40% of year 7 mainstream accessed, the majority in First Aid then a hub, never a classroom. School refused to apply for EHCP. Tried everything, Social Services Youth Worker involved, stopped attending once Suicidal ideation recognised.

Year 8. School gas-lit, lied and refused to work with Alternative Provision privately funded to gain evidence. 1st EHCP parental application refused as school did not respond. 2nd EHCP parental application agreed as Alternative Provision provided information instead of mainstream school. £2000 a month, could only pay for 1 year.

All assessments and reports also privately funded. School eventually agreed to provide Alternative Education of 2.5hrs & 2hrs mentoring a week. Failed. After 3 terms (early year 9) Alternative Education and School stated they could not meet need.

Nothing. Waited for Tribunal. Every school LA contacted, including Specialist stated they could not meet need.

Start of Year 10, won everything at Tribunal including EOTIS. Waited 2 weeks for court processing, 5 weeks for LA - nothing. Eventually given an unsuitable tutor who provided less than 50% of hours for 3 weeks including 1 week half term and some sick days - then stated couldn't meet need, I totally agree! PAP letter sent, deadline day the LA ask for extension. Still waiting.

Son should be half way through year 10 and still not received an education. Massive negative impact on him, my husband and myself with both mental and physical health issues exasperated by stress. No money left, now swallowing my pride and applying for benefits as we're cold and hungry. No job, limited contact with family and friends.

Worst experience of my life which feels like it will never end as what hope does he have?!?

Testimony 67

Following my son trying to take his own life due to school he could no longer attend. This was 2019 and he was 14. He was taken off-roll by his school and therefore had no place.

Nothing was done by Surrey and he was left to rot in his room. Surrey refused to assess him for an EHCP, which I applied for as a parent in June 2020. They conceded months later at mediation. They then refused to issue an EHCP, as they had not included my evidence when it went to panel. They then conceded [again] the day before tribunal.

It took them until December 2021 to actually finalise the EHCP. They refused to do the social care assessment or a mental health assessment, leaving those sections blank and declaring he had no needs. After my complaint being accepted and upheld by the Ombudsman we finally got the social care assessment and an Mental Health assessment. Despite needing therapy to access education they are still wrangling over this. Despite evidence from senior clinical psychologists the panel are still arguing. In fact it is going back to panel next week. It is a year since Ombudman and we are still waiting.

His reassessment of his EHCP is now 15 months overdue but I am scared to complain again because they may just rush through another unfit EHCP and make us wait another year for tribunal.

My son has waited 6 years now with no education and he is desperate for one. He has had an EHCP since 2021 and still they do nothing but delay. I am a single mum, with no funds for solicitors and must wait for Surrey to do the lawful thing. We are on our 13th caseworker. Be heard [Surrey's Complaints Team] have refused to take my complaint about delays, last months, telling me I should wait until the EHCP is finalised and then go to tribunal. One senior manager told me they had nothing to do with healthcare, another told me that therapy to access education is something that ordinary people would have to fund privately. Will my son be given back the lost years?

An Ombudsman remedy cannot help. The legal aid lawyers are at capacity and not taking on judicial reviews. Surrey have destroyed my son's chances at life. They have neglected and damaged a vulnerable young person. Their inaction is in danger of rendering him a burden on the state for life, whereas he used to be in the gifted and talented register as a child.

Senior managers at Surrey told a caseworker to strike through the paragraph in section F regarding my son needing psychological support to access education and attempted to replace it by saying he should use the universal services from the GP. We have tried this route and been rejected by the local mental health teams who will not provide ongoing psychological support for accessing education. It is

illegal to strike through Section F !! I pointed this out to senior management who then deleted all the changes we had made over 2 years and forced us to revert to the original EHCP, which was never fit for purpose. The autistic society told us this, as did SENDIASS. Surrey do not care. They sign and create legal documents which they know to be unlawful and inadequate. I do consent to our story being shared.

Testimony 68

My son is 20 and out of education, due to SCC going against professionals advice.

SCC wanted EOTAS whilst we had an offer of a 52 residential provision. Since September 2024, my son has had 3 hours of OT with NO other provision that is stated in his EHCP. No wonder they wanted EOTAS - they don't provide anything and it saves them money. Despite professionals explaining it would happen, my sons mental health has deteriorated with talk of suicide and self harm.

The family is now in crisis with social care ignoring calls for help. SCC have conceded a 36 week placement at our choice of college but left it so late that the college now have no space for this year. Failing in their legal duty but as a family we feel not only that no one cares but that no one can stop SCC continuing to break the law. Far too many lives have been lost and many years of education which will only cost SCC more in the long run.

Testimony 69

Delays in naming school for Reception. Still do not have a school named and have now been asked for the child to stay in mainstream even though Specialist has been named as they (Surrey) have a large number of children to find placements for!!

Refusal to use private reports for SLT and OT obtained by parent but also refused to get council commissioned service to assess even though child is non-verbal.

Impact on child/young person: Part time timetable at school, no inclusion and exclude from all activities including sports day, pantomime etc. Has been isolated and not included in day to day education.

Impact on family circumstances: Unable to work as child has been on part time timetable for 9 months. High levels of stress and financial hardship for the family. Not able to claim any benefits as husband works nor can I work to alleviate financial hardship. Added to this no school placement for September

Testimony 70

Delays in receiving updated EHCP, failure to reassess needs. Failure to comply within a deadline.

Unanswered emails. Extremely stressful

Impact on child/young person: Anxiety, school refusal, as needs were not being met

Impact on family circumstances: Physical health due to stress

Testimony 71

As a family we have spent considerable time energy and finances battling with the LA to secure appropriate provisions for both our daughters. We have constantly requested support when they were not able to access school we have described the type of provision that would work for them. Instead of working with us they constantly pushed against us resulting in lengthy emotionally and physically draining tribunal cases, not to mention the costs involved. This has had a significant impact on our entire family.

Impact on child/young person: Both of my children have experienced downward spiraling mental health having to be referred to CAMHS for support. One is also now taking anxiety meds, although this may still have happened j believe it was earlier than it would have been had provisions been in once sooner. In addition both have experienced significant impacts on their educational progress which can never be made up.

Impact on family circumstances: As a family we have experienced significant stress and strain on our relationships. Juggling two full time jobs with two children unable to access school-based education has also added to financial stresses as our house hold bills have increased. Our eldest daughter, who is also going through her GCSE exams has experienced anxiety and self harm as a result of feeling like all our attention has been on the other two children.

I have never felt so stressed and overwhelmed as I have throughout this journey. Managing two children's SEN needs is hard enough without the additional significant stressors caused by an LA who don't respond aren't clear don't work with families and quite frankly are not interested in executing their legal duties in the best interest of children.

Testimony 72

No school place for almost 12 months now a very expensive independent that isn't providing an education or what's in the EHCP absolute waste of hundreds of thousands of pounds .

Impact on child/young person: Young person has made very little progress will leave school with no qualifications, not able to be independent has had to live with grandparents as a safeguarding risk to younger sibling, no support offered, her mental health in tatters. Broken family.

Impact on family circumstances: All of the above

Testimony 73

I'm so tired I'm not sure I can do this justice.

In short, 3 children with SEND, all with EHCPs. 7 tribunals, 3 LGO complaints, about it submit a fourth, so many complaints I cannot count. Feeling like instead of working with the very bodies that are supposed to work with me, they are actively working against us and to the very real detriment and harm of my children. Delays - multiple, year after year

- Misleading information being given
 - Failure to engage in tribunal proceedings - multiple times
 - Misrepresentation - of the facts, the evidence
 - Failure to respond to communication - frequently have to raise a formal complaint just to get a response to an email
-
- Impact on child/young person: School avoidance, lost of education, significant regression in learning, physical and mental health, emotional distress - and this is for multiple children.
 - Impact on family circumstances: Mother has had to give up paid employment. Significant impact on my physical and mental well being, I now claim PIP due to the level of impact it has had on my health. The level of stress is exponential - I don't think I will ever recover from the impact this has had.

Testimony 74

Delays, no attendance at meetings, failure to communicate changes, incorrect paperwork sent, other child's information. EHCP out of date and does not contain correct information. Emails sent with other children's information, constant changes in caseworker, requests for meetings ignored, haven't seen a caseworker for 6 and a half years

Impact on child/young person: We protect the YP from the issues to protect them from the anxiety and worry

Impact on family circumstances: Constant battle and fight for the rights of the child is draining, its one barrier after another

Testimony 75

Delays, lies, unlawful outcomes, not engaging, not paying providers, not providing therapies in the EHCP, not meeting deadlines, not providing education or transport, ignoring emails for months on end. It has been hell for the last 5 years working with Surrey. I lost my job and car and my son tried to seriously harm himself on 4 occasions.

Impact on child/young person: School refusal, now no school, regression, anger, anxiety, mental health issues, suicidal ideation, distress, challenging behaviours

Impact on family circumstances: Loss of income, mental health issues, sibling with anxiety and potentially having PTSD

Testimony 76

Children's rights are repeatedly denied and the practice is to make it as hard as possible for children to get what they are entitled to - by making it so difficult (near impossible) it discourages parents as well as schools and acts as a way for the LA to save money & avoid responsibility

Having to seek professional assistance in order to secure my children's entitlements as policy wording is twisted so badly from the spirit of the law it is based on, that it no longer resembles the purpose it is supposed to serve (e.g. the transport policy)

Impact on child/young person: Their education has suffered significantly. They should be able to keep up with their peers if they receive the intervention and support they are supposed to, but what the LA provides is laughable at best (and criminal at worst). Misconduct in public office could apply to a very large majority of these employees if you apply the standard that was used against [Police Case Details Redacted]

Impact on family circumstances: Significant mental health impact on family overall, loss of income, breakdown of relationships, physical health deteriorating because of the stress.

Testimony 77

Ignored school consultation that said they could not meet needs, named the setting anyway and left child without school.

Examples of harmful, dishonest or unethical behaviour include: Refusal to respond to request for AP for child unable to access school. Did not engage effectively with mediation process, only pointed us to tribunal. Staff behaving in ways that would be gross misconduct in private organisations (lying, discrimination, unethical rationalisations, removing services based on cost reasons and not children's needs being met, etc.)

Lowering the bar of the services (SALT, OT, mind works, etc.) so much that it discourages parents or families from engaging as it's so poor that it's an utter waste of time

Impact on child/young person: Loss of education, isolation, emotional distress

Impact on family circumstances: I've had to leave my teaching job at huge negative impact to my mental health and putting the family under financial strain due to loss of income

Testimony 78

I am very upset and angry at times about how our Case has been kicked down the road for 7 years.

I find what we have been through hard to understand as the LA keep getting away with not supporting my child properly as well as so many others. My MP [MP name redacted] has contacted the LA.

We could finally afford Professional Reports, and we are headed towards a Tribunal for ks3 where we have a school offer and where the Council has named 'No school'. The school offer was made last year, the LA has had the Reports relating to this since last year.

I note, the school that has the relevant cued articulation SLT support and so much more, they had already told me they are writing to the LA to inform them of the Offer for my child. But the LA claimed initially that our School had not offered a place.

Our Case heavily involves the absolute lack of understanding a speech and language disorder thus not the support to make a difference to my son's progress. The LA have fobbed off my MP.

I lost my rag with this yesterday and sent the Executive Director for Children's Services this email in response:

To [Executive Director]

I would simply like to understand how you find the response to my MP acceptable?

I would like to know how you think it is acceptable that my son has only had 3 months of meaningful education out of 7 years? When I describe meaningful, I describe 3 months of Alternative Provision that took 9 months to set up and will end this July 2025.

Yes we can go ahead with the Tribunal. SCC has no alternative educational provision named. My Advocate and I have written the EHCP Working Document that includes all Professional Reports. My son's current EHCP had not worked for 7 years.

This could be agreed very quickly with diligence and more care to our child. 7 years!!!!

I want more of explanation than referring to my Caseworker, Family Voice or otherwise, those who have no remit to add anything.

I would like a reply from you [Executive Director] and no one else!!

Testimony 79

I have been dealing with Surrey SEND since 2019, my eldest 17, who has a chronic health condition along with ASD, and now my youngest 10, who hasn't been able to attend school for two years due to difficulties in relation to her ASD diagnosis.

My eldest has never had a suitable Ehcp, our first was issued in 2021 after a truly long fight from 2019 when she was diagnosed with ME/CFS. Her secondary school, School X had control of the plan, and she was never able to attend due to her Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and the follow-on diagnosis of ASD and ADHD.

Over her whole secondary school time, she only had one hour of education per week. I've no idea what happened to all the funding, but we only ever received that one hour of a home tutor even though I put in constant requests about extending her learning.

Due to the insignificant education and mental health input, was 'M' was unable to participate to her full potential due to unmet needs. Now at college Y, her plan needs adjustments for her to continue into her second year (she obtained Distinction last year for her level 1 Art & Design) and again no one is here to help her. College don't seem to be able to understand her disability and needs, this consists of me sending constant correspondence and still, no reasonable adjustments have been officially obtained due to her disabilities.

My youngest has been out of school since January 2023 and has only received one hour of education per week, which went from January-July 2024. I obtained an EHCP for her last year and up until December, had been extremely mislead and gaslit during the whole process via different "professionals" involved.

Now she has had no education this academic year, as School Z have continually dragged their heels on funding for her even though she was officially diagnosed with ASD in March 2024 and placed on the SEN register.

Over the last two years, school have attempted to present reasonable adjustments, but unfortunately 'B' couldn't manage the situation. The initial delay of input from the LA, the constant request of "proof of illness" even though we were past the 15 days of absence, hindered our reintegration in my opinion and B was not provided with any Alternative Provision. It was only once we had obtained a private consultation with Dr [NHS Consultant name redacted] in May of 2024, who proceeded to diagnose B with Autism, that we were responded to, not always positively, but it meant we were on a path for an EHCP which I successfully applied for.

In this lingered process, B has since lost all her friends.

I have also lost my friend group and have had to become a full time carer for B, which continue alongside my care duties for M

We pay for a private therapist for B as CAMHS only offer 6 sessions and to be perfectly honest, never helped my eldest (she used to self-harm) and never have any constructive help or assistance, the staff aren't qualified enough in my opinion to establish a connection, nor do they hold enough sessions. Our current Therapist conceded it takes at least 12 sessions to build a relationship. The professionals I encountered, on occasion have even become accusatory against myself regarding my daughter's conditions and actions, which on reflection has caused me to feel a trauma I would not want to put on any caring, involved parent.

I have put in a complaint regarding B's lack of full-time education over the last two years but they are still working on their level 1 response which is currently at almost 12 weeks. We have requested compensation for her in the hope if we receive it, we can use that money for her rehabilitation moving forward.

My worry is for B's well-being, I worry about her realisation in the situation, along with how the lack of support and isolation is now affecting her Mental health. Surrey, particularly School Z and close surrounding areas don't seem to have any units of support or education for a "high functioning Autistic" child or young person. I also have a disability and along with my care responsibilities for M, find driving difficult and most of these units for support are at a distance.

We work so hard as a family to inhibit both of our girls deterioration with their Mental health, I just hope yourself and other councillors can fix this broken "service" which we as parents thought we could

trust. Over the last 6 years I have had to do most of the research into what is available, what information given to me is correct and unfortunately what is wrong.

Assistance should be offered organically, but I find most of the help available is Gatekept and hidden.

Testimony 80

I consent. My son is at home and receiving no education at all after his mainstream secondary placement broke down very quickly. It has been 7 months.

The school say it is up to the LA, the LA say it's up to the school to provide. [See previous information relating to a Section 19 breach].

I have tried to lodge two complaints with be heard only to be told I couldn't complain. The school and my caseworker are trying to arrange a meeting to discuss ap and so far the date suggested is a months away. Another month of inaction, lost childhood and lost education. I applied for parental EHCP in October and it was issued in Feb. It said class sizes of no more than 12, enhanced adult ratios and more.

LA named the same mainstream he has been unable to attend due to complete sensory overwhelm despite them saying they cannot meet need. I have appealed and the tribunal date is set for Feb 2026.

Another year of lost childhood and education. Apparently it went back to panel last week after I wrote to [MP Name Redacted]. I have not heard the result and my caseworker is now out of office until the middle of next week. Easter holidays are looming and one term rolls into another of inaction, nonsensical decision making and immeasurable damage to me family.

I am a single mum of three and unable to work and forced to claim universal credit. This is by far the hardest thing I've ever had to fight as there appears to be no real accountability.

Couple this with the Department of Education's rhetoric about how much every single school day costs the student and it feels dystopian.

How many bright, capable but autistic children are allowed to miss out on so much due to not being able to cope in the enormous mainstream settings that appear to be the only option? It is criminal.

To even consider that the LA should have more control over children than their parents when they have clearly displayed over and over that the only consideration they take into account about a child's well being is financial, is equal parts absurd and terrifying.

Testimony 81

Where do I start? Repeated failures, repeated complaints, GDPR breaches, no school yet won't provide education, child won't get GCSEs because of this.

Maybe i should write a piece absolutely happy to be quoted but don't want face on camera!

Testimony 82

Last year no school place... fine it happens. Got my son an independent [he's in] year 7 now

This year daughter's Year 6. Begged case worker to not let this happen again but it did .. worse they consulted one school in October who was full, then didn't bother again. Worst, they have then lied in court letter saying many schools have been consulted- got my SARs but it's made me sick what they have done.

Testimony 83

My experience as a parent of 2 severely disabled children living in Surrey is of ongoing abusive behaviour, that has been continuous over the last 19 years.

It has left me traumatised and depressed and anxious.

Surrey has no regard for the effect this behaviour, over decades, has on the lives of families who are totally reliant on the LA for the needs of their vulnerable children.

Impact on child/young person: 2 of my children is too disabled to understand this, luckily.

Impact on family circumstances: The way I am able to parent my 4 children has been deeply impacted over the years. I haven't been able to be "a mum" to all my children as so busy being a carer, nurse and advocate for my disabled children. So much of my time, energy and emotion has been spent dealing with Surrey County Council, it has massively affected our family.

Also, not having care and education needs met (as was the LA's duty) dictated the quality of our lives on a day to day basis and in the long term (throughout my children's childhood) and now into adulthood.

The personal financial cost of Tribunals was over £60,000 (10 years ago) and have had 3 further Tribunals since then.

My marriage broke down as a result of the strain on the family and the difficulties coping.

My older children have been deeply affected by being unsupported young carers throughout their childhood.

My mental health has suffered enormously as a direct result of the continued battles and legal challenges I have been forced to face to get the LA to acknowledge it's duty to my disabled children and my family as a whole.

The cumulative effect of this has broken me and I have lost all respect and trust for Surrey County Council, as it never improves; just keeps causing more difficulties and upset for my family. I see no end to this abusive relationship and no way out, because of our reliance on the LA.

Testimony 84

My son is one of the 1800+ out of school (almost a year now!), and being denied AP from Surrey.

This is not due to lack of available provision - we as parents secured a place over 3 months ago and handed it to Surrey on a plate. The delay is Surrey's "approval" process which has not moved forward (at all) despite frequently chasing.

Also we are one of the families currently in the process of appealing an EHCP which is quite frankly not worth the paper it's written on. I literally have not seen a single thing during this whole process that Surrey have done properly, timely, and lawfully. We are one of those "articulate" families who are fortunate enough to have been able to instruct legal representation - but really why should it have to be like this?

I know this is the story for thousands of families in Surrey, it's a disgrace.

Testimony 85

Trying to secure some post 19 provision to support young adult with development. YP is 21 this current academic year and aside from 4 hours Alternative Provision and a one day course - we've had nothing.

Parents both work full time. It has been an absolute nightmare.

Impact on child/young person: Complete loss of independence, will be starting from scratch again friendship groups impacted, anxiety is sky high and mental health is poor. YP sees the struggle and feels they are too blame. It's utterly tragic.

Impact on family circumstances: I get panicky every time I see an email from the Case Officer. I feel nauseous having to communicate with them. My mental health has been severely impacted. My job

has been affected and earnings reduced. My partner has had to reduce working hours. Stress is increased significantly.

Testimony 86

Detrimental to my health and my sons. Financially stopped me getting him to and from placement Surrey chose. No SALT OR OT provision] which was written up from tribunal. We WON!

Impact on child/young person: Mental health and now on antidepressants.. Was hospitalised due to mental break down. Surely should be FINED MASSIVE AMOUNTS for harming my child. And myself.

Impact on family circumstances: Having to pay for education and salt it myself. Life skills and taking on a full time role of supporting them as a carer.

Testimony 87

Daughter who is 13 out of education for 17 months, awaiting EHCP.

The process has been delayed and delayed and delayed. Reports ignored, deadlines ignored , changing their mind before tribunal. Now stating mainstream in the EHCP despite mainstream saying they cannot meet need.

Impact on child/young person: Years of lost education, severe anxiety and PTSD around attending school. Low self-esteem and totally isolated from peers.

Impact on family circumstances: Stress, family relationships ruined and financially crippling

Testimony 88

This isn't just a Surrey County council problem. There are also schools that can be accused of the same patterns of behaviour.

My experience of both has been awful. My child was without any alternative provision for 10 months when he stopped attending school due to extreme anxiety. There's such a culture of blaming the parents, questioning the validity of reports of mental illness. Both schools and the LA put attendance figures above the needs of children. As a parent you're constantly questioned, asked to provide proof, fobbed off. They use thinly veiled threats and underhand tactics to get you to "comply" with whatever they want, including involving children's services unnecessarily.

I and around 20 other parents (that are willing to go on record) have all had horrendous experiences when dealing with one school in particular, and this Local Authority. In reality there are possibly tens if not hundreds more.

Testimony 89

The entire experience dealing with Surrey from the EHCP process through to the Appeal, was horrible. It was so stressful.

Surrey made it as difficult and drawn out as possible. They used delaying tactics... from ignoring emails to ignoring legal requests from my solicitor. They lied. They also stated in an email that they were proposing a specific school because it was less expensive. My son who is Autistic still didn't know where he was going to secondary school until 2 weeks before Sept. Therefore there was no transition for him.

Impact on child/young person: My son, who is Autistic, didn't know where he was going to secondary school until 2 weeks before September. Therefore, there was no transition for him. This caused huge anxiety and emotional distress for the final term at primary school, and I believe made his transition so much harder.

Impact on family circumstances: This has affected our entire family. I started having severe panic attacks from the stress of the appeal. My mental health will never be the same again. Our whole family suffered, my child with severe anxiety, and his siblings suffered. We also ended up paying over £30,000 in legal fees/expert witnesses. We are now in debt. This has caused stress and strain for everyone.

Testimony 90

We followed the correct process to request a change of provision from mainstream to specialist. It took over 2 years and an appeal to tribunal to get a result.

1 Caseworker left and we were not informed, the following case worker has been on long sick leave without our case being picked up by another Caseworker. We made two complaints which were partly upheld.

Meanwhile our child kept struggling in a school that can't meet his needs. Our child ended up being excluded from mainstream and one parent had to give up work to allow a reduced timetable to be put in place so our child could reintegrate in a school.

We have had to fight for the basic right of education that every child is entitled. Words cannot describe the frustration and stress we have experienced as a family.

Impact on child/young person: Child has been excluded twice from school.

Impact on family circumstances: Loss of income, stress and deterioration of mental health.

Testimony 91

I had to appeal the request for assessment. I had to appeal the request to issue. I had to appeal the content of the EHCP.

Finally, my son got the highest level of support provided by the Council for a personal plan for schooling independently provided in a one-to-one setting. But it took years till I could achieve that, and my son was devastatingly left behind as a school refuser with mental health issues to continue to this day.

Then my second child needed an EHCP and I had to appeal the request issue and I had to appeal the content of the EHCP and he has only just now received the support he requires.

Impact on child/young person: School refusal, anxiety, emotional distress, failed years of school needing to be repeated, and regressions of mental health

Impact on family circumstances: Stress, loss of income as I tried to provide the support that Surrey should have.

Testimony 92

My son has been failed. We are spending a lot of money we previously did not have to sort this out.

Impact on child/young person: He hasn't had adequate speech and language therapy for motor speech disorder- he is still learning to pronounce words and have a voice. He has been discriminated against at an inappropriate setting. He has been gritting his teeth, trying his best but set up to fail.

He finally went into crisis. He is in a much better place atm, we are still trying to sort out his education.

Impact on family circumstances: I am having to cut back my working hours in the SEN job I love. It has been many years of stress.

A Section 19 breach: my son had 9 months with no education at all, agreements u-turned. We had threats. We were on edge, wondering what was going to happen next. Financially burdened. Finally

could afford Professional Reports. Paid for legal support due to the threats. There had not been enough time in the day for us to hold all to account.

Exhausted!! Unjust!!

Testimony 93

We have two children with SEN and it has been an unbelievably hard journey for the whole family.

Fighting the systematic errors , gas lighters and legal failures of SEND services in Surrey. It has been a daily struggle for two years now. The impact on my family has been profound. Both my husband and I have become unwell, with long term life altering conditions, the children have mental health conditions that have gone in treated for more than 6 months and can now be classed as long term.

We are all feeling the impact of the mental and emotional load this brings.

Impact on child/young person: Both young people have been left without provision in unsuitable environments, where educators failures to support them has led to a slow and damaging loss of self esteem, and worth. Leaving them targets for bullies and open to unkind thoughts and deeds from the adults meant to help educate them.

They have been stigmatised, laughed and called out publicly. They result is a dynamic deterioration in their mental health, spiralling to the point of suicidal ideation and actual attempts. We also have been repeatedly failed by Children's mental health services, who repeatedly left us on a waiting list but crucially without any direct support at times when they were at most need.

Both are struggling to understand their trauma and the huge guilt which goes with thinking of ending your life.

Neither child is in school currently, and neither have any suitable school or education package in place for September 2025

Impact on family circumstances: I never thought I would witness and have to stand down a child from making an attempt on their life, never mind two children and on more than one occasion. I count myself very lucky to still have two children, this picture could have been very different and to be honest still could.

To be asked when they might be ready to return to school less than a week after reporting an incident is unfathomable. When the trauma is school based and as a direct result of being in mainstream setting that could not understand or support their SEN?

Mainstream educators are ill equipped to cope with complex SEN. They need educating. BOTH PARENT HEALTH HAS DETERIORATED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE DAILY FIGHT FOR OUR Children's lives and their and education.

We say it's a journey - it's not it's a battleground and I put my armour on and go to war daily. I have a lifelong degenerative condition brought on by the stress and trauma I've experienced , with no time for self care, little time for anything but the fight.

Two complex open appeals, two complaints and two interim reviews to be completed before the end of this academic year.

Testimony 94

Horrendous

Impact on child/young person: Emotional distress, school refusal, anxiety, loss of education

Impact on family circumstances: Loss of income, stress, deterioration in my mental health

Testimony 95

List of the types of issues we have experienced:

- Failure to deliver provision
- Failure identify needs (asd & anxiety)
- Failure to assess
- Resistance to receive training for CPD
- Discrimination- due to medical conditions and diagnosis

Impact on our child/young person:

- Self esteem
- Anxiety
- Trust in adults
- Unsuitable school placement
- Lack of learning
- Lack of friendships and appropriate peer group

Impact on family circumstances:

- Loss of income

- Reduction in working hours
- Inability to meet parental needs and self care
- Additional stress

Testimony 96

The experiences are ongoing since 2017, and too many to tell without identifiable information, but trust me, the nightmare that is Surrey is ongoing.

Impact on child/young person: EBSA, financial distress, Anxiety, self harm,

Impact on family circumstances: Extreme stress that lead to physical health issues aka heart palpitations and high cortisol levels (aka high diabetes level) and financial duress for parent. Stressful situations for all of the family.

Testimony 97

It's worth highlighting how the LA and NHS operate together to put systemic barriers in place - whether restricting referrals to mind works, having ways of working that exclude families from communication or information gathering, pushing narratives that parents are resistant to cooperating or taking on board information; etc.

I attended a group meeting with SCC and mind works staff a while ago... their view wasn't that an ableist system is leading to widespread failures, but that a major problem was due to their messages to parents not "landing" right

Testimony 98

It has been a case of being completely ignored. No response to emails, no acknowledgement of the way this is impacting our whole family. I am frustrated, depressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

Impact on child/young person? My child attends school for 2 hours a week. He wants to go to school and wants to learn but cannot cope in mainstream. He has repeatedly said he wants to be in a specialist school. I have said this from the outset. According to panel, neither he nor I had expressed our views and wishes despite having expressed them in emails, in response to the draft EHCP, in a meeting and in mediation.

I am on unpaid leave from work and need him in a school he is able to attend. I am supposed to return in September. I stupidly thought that 10 months would be enough time to get things in place for him.

My son's self esteem and mental health are being decimated and his anxiety is through the roof. He feels unsupported, unwanted and misunderstood. He has missed 7 months of education.

Testimony 99

Currently in the middle of yet another complaint. Regarding Annual Review that I had in Dec 24.

Caseworker left and found out accidentally via other parents. No legal timescales met and now should have the final EHCP. In the Stage 1 response they promised a date for update on AR progress, a meeting to discuss and draft EHCP. No contact made from SEND team. This is my 8th complaint, all upheld by LA and 7 that went to LGO all upheld by them.

You should see the excuses given for lack of communication and not replacing caseworker!!

Testimony 100

Two hands [Symbolizing two hands up in the air for each child] for two children with SEND, one now an adult.

Both have EHCPs and both have been failed by Surrey CC.

Over 7 years I have appealed to SEND Tribunal 5 times, 4 concluded, 1 current (Surrey CC have consistently not complied with directions and missed deadlines). Like the majority of parents I haven't had legal representation, we can't afford it and don't qualify for Legal Aid.

Numerous formal complaints, 3 relating to SEND escalated to LGSCO all upheld, 1 of these resulted in a public report. The apologies we've received are meaningless; it's the same faults. Loss of education and/or failure to secure provision and not following their own complaints policy (or the statutory process for social care).

There is much more I could say but you will read more recent and more appalling accounts. There was a time when other families found our story shocking. But now we are one of many.

Thank you Measure what Matters, MPs and Councillors for all you are doing to highlight these issues. I hope this scrutiny will bring about the long-promised transformation of Surrey County Council Children's Services.

Testimony 101

Impact on family circumstances: Lost my job, financially under strain and mental health effected

Testimony 102

Description of Experience: Shocking

Impact on child/young person: My child was sent age 3 to be sedated / sectioned at hospital

Impact on family circumstances: Lost jobs, Loss of earnings, Family breakdown, Mental health and physical health issues to parents, Sibling health compromised.

Testimony 103

Awful.

EP report online for a child in infant school. Incorrect information submitted on report. Having to provide reports again as they're "missing" and not provided to LA's own professionals. i.e Surrey OT did not have a copy of my child's EHCP and tried to tell me there was no OT provision (but there is, it was written without OT seeing my child by Surrey using other reports).

They then admitted it was there, but they had not been given a copy of the EHCP by Surrey SEND. Provision is not specific etc. Incorrect funding was awarded and therefore school cannot provide the support as per the EHCP. It's exhausting.

Impact on child/young person: My child has not had access to the support as the funding is "T1" yet the EHCP says they need TA support more than 70% of the time. How can the school fund this? It's just delaying support and increasing need.

Impact on family circumstances: Time. It's also stressful having to second guess everything. Money, we had to pay for OT report as Surrey initially didn't provide assessment, then later agreed need. I'd love a refund!

Testimony 104

My daughter was out off school for 5 months with just 3 lessons a week online in the final 4 weeks. Her EHCP application severely went over government guidelines.

- No contact was made with any updates.
- Her caseworker NEVER responded to messages and couldn't be contacted.
- The caseworker left and I wasn't informed.
- A new one was appointed and I still wasn't informed.

Ed Psych appointment was severely delayed as they didn't have one. When they finally sorted it she was already out of school. Finding a school for my child was left up to me. No consultation was made on her behalf.

Impact on child/young person: My daughter still hasn't recovered from her time out of school. It took nearly a year to get her EHCP assessed and written. Her anxiety around school is massive and still she struggles.

Impact on family circumstances: I have had to reduce my working hours to support my daughter as I couldn't hold down a full time job and manage all the paperwork and stress that comes with having a child with additional needs. This comes at a financial loss.

My youngest daughter also has additional needs and she struggles to cope with the experience her sister had. She worries about attending school and is now having therapy herself. We have had to put in place therapy to enable her to cope with her experiences of school.

My own mental health has suffered due to the constant battling with Surrey. We are currently trying to sort her transport to enable her to attend sixth form.

Testimony 105

Finalised EHCP issued before the 15 days deadline without the parent draft EHCP amendments and they failed to complete all the assessments.

Impact on child/young person: Child out of school for over one year

Impact on family circumstances: Impacted parents mental health, affected childcare arrangements, huge impact on sibling.

Testimony 106

My son was not in the right school and I asked for the process to look for new one and they said it was not possible to do it! Later when he got EOTAS I was struggling to find tutors and they didn't provide suppliers names on time, they knew the rate per hour was very low.

Impact on child/young person: Emotional distress to keep him in school longer than necessary, loss of education and therapies during the first year out of school, isolation.

Impact on family circumstances: I have to stop working, stress during tribunal process, strained relationship my husband since tribunal is in anti-depression pills. Deterioration of our physical and mental health and the negative impact on our older son.

Testimony 107

My son was sexually abused at a Surrey SEN school for two years by another student. No staff noticed despite me telling them over 50 times that something was wrong.

I have written to every MP including but not excluding Bridget Phillipaon, Jess Phillips, Janet Dabey. They all say that they can't help me because I am not one of their constituents.

I have written to every person I can at Surrey and no one answers

I have written to Department of Education and OFSTED who say that they cannot comment on safeguarding matters.

This is has destroyed my family. My son is a shell. Whom we have to watch closely because of the fear he will hurt himself.

The child that did this to my son remains at the school. Surrey are an absolute disgrace. The CEO has not one acknowledged one email.

Testimony 108

My son is now 12, he ended up in burnout a few years back from the endless failings of Surrey.

Of course the mainstream school he went to didn't help but they were guided and led by Surrey. My son went from a happy very funny boy to one that didn't leave the house and didn't even smile. He was having endless meltdowns and self-harming at 10, with 4 serious attempts. Camhs told me that all ND children did this and dismissed us over and over for 6 years.

Surrey tried to fight us at every point of the EHCP process but always conceded after they gaslight and made us wait and wait. They had absolutely no evidence, even from their own professionals to suggest that an EHCP wasn't required.

By the time the EHCP was in place it was too late. Most schools couldn't meet his needs until he was placed in a NMI school, which was such a shame as this placement was only partly successful for 6 weeks before burnout. Our case officer at the time tried to push the school to keep him even though he couldn't make it in and they were begging the LA to help.

Once out of there our case officer continued to lie and what one school said "playing a dangerous game" with my sons life by sending out of date documents and incorrect information to potential schools and accidentally told me on a call that once he's somewhere even if in Kent her job is done.

Once schools had the correct reports and EHCP over 80 (all of the schools) said no to being able to meet his needs and EOTAS was suggested. This meant I lost my job and car and my livelihood, but we wanted our boy back.

Although the LA said EOTAS, it would be months and months of me fighting to get it in place, although no other choice. We had our AR on the 10th May and I only received the EHCP 2 days ago and I think it's the incorrect one. Two complaints have been upheld by the LGO and another is with them now. I had to raise a 4th but be heard have ignored it. If it wasn't for me learning the law and advocating every single day 24/7 I believe we could have lost our boy. He's still not on full provision with eotas and I'm being pushed to put him in a setting (that doesn't exist) and after not hearing from the LA in 8 months.

I could go on and on about the failings but it's too triggering and upsetting for me at this point.

Testimony 109

I believe Surrey were unethical, dishonest and frankly incompetent when they named our preferred place on my son's final EHCP in Feb 2021, confirmed he had a place verbally when I called them, and then failed to tell us that they had in fact allocated 5 places when only 4 were available.

They did not advise us of any issue and it was only when I contacted the school to ask about transition arrangements that they told me my son did not in fact have a place and was 'at the top of the waiting list'.

Two months of unbearable stress ensued which left me traumatized and ill. However the school moved heaven and earth to sort it, not Surrey.

Testimony 110

I've been involved with Surrey in a Sen capacity as a parent since 2018. It has, in my opinion, only gotten worse at the council. Even so in 2018 they were still pretty poor but now it is dire.

I have two children with Sen. We have lodged 6 appeals with SENDIST since 2018 for both children. Surrey conceded in 4 of these and 2 went all the way to tribunal. We won these two tribunals.

During these years both children were out of school for 8 months each as we fought placement and EHCP content in court. Despite Surrey's claims there were no educational psychologist - one EP had 'time' to show up for a full days hearing as a witness called by Surrey (even though she'd never met by child- only signed off his report by a trainee EP she was supervising). In both cases the tribunal officer

clearly put so much pressure on the school SENCO at their current (unsuitable) placement, that she attended as witness for Surrey , twice!

The stress and expense getting our children's emotional and educational needs met has been extremely trying and each sibling was affected significantly when the other couldn't attend school. The whole experience was very distressing as a family and the effect of the disbelief and gas lighting from Surrey, Surrey professionals and mainstream school will never go away. One son can't attend a placement anymore and is alternative provision which has been an added stress with very little communication and departments not talking to each other.

In the last 2 years since my son stopped attending a placement I've lodged 4 complaints with be heard. Only 2 were resolved. Currently my son is still waiting for Annual Review. As of today, his last AR WAS DEC 2022.

His Caseworker doesn't pick up the phone/ answer emails. Her manager doesn't pick up phone/ answer emails. The system is broken

Testimony 111

I have direct evidence that Surrey County Council have been dishonest and illegal in their actions towards my son 'J' For our case, they are in breach of the children and families act 2014 and SEND code of practice.

J's needs have not changed since 2021. He has always needed a specialist placement and has been neglected by the system. Surrey County Council have decided I don't deserve to be told they have no places for my son. I don't deserve any response to my emails.

J was first assigned a mainstream place while he was in nursery. I refused to sign the panel decision and delayed his reception start for a year. I found a nursery who was able to support J and get him a better placement in a high coin unit.

J is now in year one and has been there since reception. The school have done everything they can but fundamentally they can't change the class size.

In December all parties agreed J needed a specialist placement and the panel subsequently agreed without protest. But since then the council has done nothing. None of the schools I requested have heard of J. No school in the county has heard of J. But J's case officer is happy to leave him in a school that has already said they can't help him.

He cries everyday and says he can't do this anymore. Why does a 7 year old have to say they can't do this anymore?

Testimony 112

My son's whole school life has been ruined by SCC failures to fulfill the legal papers of an EHCP!

My son could fall off the face of the earth and they wouldn't have a clue

Testimony 113

I have written to my MP with details and she has written to CC. I have also written to the DfE to highlight Surrey's illegal approach in our son's case and am awaiting a response from Bridget Philipson.

We have 5 separate unlawful behaviours from Surrey so far in our EHCP process (we have had this confirmed by the head of education law at a big law firm)

Two of them are harmful as they place our son at risk and fail to safeguard him in line with the council's duty of care duties.

This is a copy of the information provided to the Lead Member for Children's Services at SCC, and our MP [name redacted];

1) Surrey CC refused to assess X for an EHCNA despite:

- needs present,
- previous LA had instructed OT and EP assessments (we moved before these took place)
- evidence and diagnosis of ASD and ADHD.

Having to go through mediation added a month onto the process, meaning that X's EHCP missed the 15th Feb KST deadline. The refusal to assess was a Surrey delay tactic to push cases like X's out of KST statistics. This is unethical. Refusal to assess when needs are evident and documented is also unlawful.

2) No Occupational therapy (OT) or Speech and language (SaLT) assessments were conducted as part of EHCNA despite evidence of

- Needs present,
- parents' formal request for OT assessment

- the LA EP flagging in her statutory report that:

'X can experience sensory worries at home and in school, this will need to be explored ... Assessment in [Previous assessment conducted in other County] suggested referral to an OT. This may be an unmet need currently .. staff at school to follow advice of OT if they become involved'.

Not procuring the required assessments to establish a child's needs is unlawful.

- 3) Surrey justified the lack of OT assessment because X wasn't known to the service. This is despite a letter from the Surrey paediatric services (obtained under SAR) which highlights that recently moving to the area means X was actually eligible and meets the criteria for assessment despite not being known to the service. It is important to note that under SEN legislation being known to the service is not a valid reason for exclusion, so by using this excuse Surrey are acting unlawfully. By not confirming with the paedics team that X had recently moved (despite being asked), our caseworker denied X an OT assessment. This was unlawful.
- 4) Despite a private OT report being provided by parents (when it became apparent Surrey would not procure their own) this was excluded by panel. Legally the LA must consider private reports and must give reasons for their decisions not to include these in the EHCP. To this date no justification for excluding the private report has been offered. This is unlawful and Surrey has been instructed many times by the LGO to give reasons for their decisions. They continue to not do so, hiding behind unjustifiable decisions which cannot be committed to paper.
- 5) Despite all the needs from the private OT report are recognised and included in section B of the EHCP the LA has refused to include support for these needs under F. To describe a child in Section B as having:

"many sensory processing difficulties which cause the body and brain to be constantly on high alert",

and then not provide a child with Occupational Therapy, is entirely unacceptable. This is unethical and does not meet the child's needs which is ultimately what an EHCP is legally obliged to do.

- 6) Panel instructed a LA OT assessment on the 5th of March (to review the findings of the private OT report) and this was communicated to us in early April at the co production meeting. To date no assessment has taken place. Councillor [Name Redacted] has managed to establish that OTs work for HCRG – the private contractor for Children's Health Services – and the principal commissioner of this service is NHS Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System. It's a complicated partnership relationship in which SCC has limited input and influence. Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System have confirmed to us parents that they've received X's

request for assessment from the LSPA team. They have also confirmed that their head of service [Name Redacted] has left and that they have a shortage of OTs in the SE team. They have confirmed they are therefore unable to give details on their waitlist as they are working with a skeleton crew and relying on ad hoc input from other teams. They do not know when X will be seen and suggested sending his case back to our caseworker so she can take it to panel again to see what they'd like to do instead. Our case worker refuses to do so because she says it's been to panel already. During all this infighting and buck passing X continues to be without OT help and support. This is unethical.

- 7) X's EHCP was finalised at 23 weeks. We had to send [Executive Director] a JR threat to get it issued. Despite taking 23 weeks the EHCP was only at stage 3 (i.e. no consultations with schools had yet taken place) despite the panel having met over a month earlier on the 5th of March. We were told Surrey would finalise the EHCP so we could appeal the lack of OT provision. All Surrey paperwork points to the date of the 8th April stating the EHCP was finalised, yet this doesn't take account of this being a fudge and that the process was not in fact complete: stage 4 and the school consultations had not yet taken place. This is unethical and a way of falsifying EHCP timeliness statistics which give an untrue representation to the council tasked with scrutinising performance.
- 8) Following the release of the SAR and panel documentation it has become apparent that the GB panel on the 5th of March was not issued a significant number of documents pertaining to X's mental health, self harm history and flight risks. Moreover the summary of assessment documentation that went to panel was incomplete, listing just one of his diagnosis (ASD) rather than highlighting he also had ADHD. It is renowned that the presence of both ADHD and ASD manifests itself very differently compared to a singular diagnosis of just ASD. All the above meant that panel did not have a full understanding of our child or his needs (we'd remind you that panel only has 8 minutes per case so it is important that the information that is shared and submitted to panel is accurate and comprehensive). This is despite our case worker having confirmed in writing that all documentation had been added to the panel pack as per our list issued on the 19th of Feb. Withholding evidence from panel is unethical as they are unable to get a clear picture of a child's needs.
- 9) Surrey did not consult with School Y (our child's current primary school) till mid May despite naming them in the EHCP in early April. No reason has been given for this delay. Naming a

school without consulting them is unlawful. Because they didn't consult with School Y, Surrey CC were not able to set the levels for the secondary consultations in line with School Y provision maps. The consultations therefore went out with the lowest level T1 banding, showing panel, our caseworker and the send admissions team had a very poor understanding of our child's needs (bands go T1, T2, E1, E2, Bespoke).

10) Surrey only consulted with one mainstream secondary school and this consultation was sent on the 14th of April. They are required to consult with at least two. Despite the mainstream (School Z) stating in their consultation response on the 28th of April that they could not meet needs they have been directed by the LA to take our child (this was impulsively done by the SEND admission team once councillor [Name Redacted] flagged the fact that our son didn't have a named school or type for September following the stage 3 issue debacle.). Directing a school that can't meet needs doesn't help the child, or the teachers, or the school, or the other pupils whose learning will be disrupted as a result of the SEND child's needs not being met. This is unethical and counterproductive as it disrupts the teaching of multiple children as well as failing the child with SEND.

11) We can prove this was a rushed process as a consultation was also sent to our closest school (our daughters' school) School 'V' soon after [Councillor: Name Redacted] first raised the question on the 22nd of May. Surrey county council however shut the School V consultation down on the 5th June when they decided to direct School Z. Despite this consultation response not being returned to the council (as the council told School V it was no longer required) the school agreed to send it to us for our records. They have also confirmed they can't meet needs. Not following the proper consultation process is unethical.

12) The directed school (School Z) have confirmed that even with the increase in funding to E1 that has now been provided by panel they cannot meet needs. They have also said that they are unable to conduct a supplementary consultation once Surrey have directed that a setting is appropriate and named on the EHCP. School Z have however confirmed that, with the E1 funding they cannot meet the 1:1 at unstructured times (i.e. the movement between classes and break/lunch). X therefore won't have this in September so he will be unable to have support interacting with children outside (his only option will be to be inside in the library or the Sen room giving him a lesser experience than that of his peers). Measures in an EHCP (in this case the unstructured times 1:1 to aid social communication and emotional regulation) must be met. At the moment the LA is not giving sufficient funding to School Z to meet this need. This is unlawful.

13) The E1 funding is set from School X's primary's provision maps (children don't move classes in primary and have one teacher and TA rather than multiple teachers) . Panel recognised on the 10th of June (when School X's provision maps were finally sent to them) that E2 funding will be required for transitions. This has enabled X to have a 1:1 for transition days at School Z. However our caseworker has confirmed that this funding will drop back to E1 for September thereby removing X's 1:1 at unstructured times. We have asked for her to explain to panel that the E1 funding does not enable a secondary school to deliver the same provision as School X can within the same banding due to the differences in setup and size between a primary and a secondary school. She is however refusing to do so stating that School Z will have to provide two terms worth of provision maps to demonstrate this. School Z simply don't have the funds to be able to do this out of their own budget. The funding band should enable the EHCP measures to be met. Restricting the provision to a predesignated funding band is unlawful.

Testimony 114

Another day, another strange decision from Surrey.

My daughter has not been able attended school since Y3 she is now in Y5 due to trauma (strangled with a rope by an older child aged 4 at school) and undiagnosed ND. We've been on the courses. Done 3 rounds of graduated exposure with no success but lots of stress for us and trauma for her.

We cannot get her to go to that mainstream school. We have tried. No alternative provision. No education. None. Nothing.

Now she has missed 3 years. We suggested an intervention plan using EOTIS to get her back to the same level as her peers and to gain confidence before reintegrating her into a group setting. I feel this is common sense and reasonable.

Surrey, have instead decided to name her old mainstream school... Yes, the one she won't set foot in as they feel they can meet need. Well, that hasn't happened in the last two years and nothing has changed. The school is the same and my daughter has had no input to resolve her fears despite being on the waiting list for assessment. Mainstream is not the right environment and it is harmful to her.

Why would Surrey want to further harm my child?

I'm aware that this is just game playing but when it actually happens to you and they come back to you with something that clearly won't work it is very irritating.

As a parent I have done everything I can. I'm holding up my side of the bargain. I fixed my child after school broke her and they are asking me send her back to the very same environment that caused her harm.

You cannot heal yourself in the same environment that caused you harm.

Testimony 115

How can Surrey be trusted with MORE power under the proposed devolution when they are failing so catastrophically

Testimony 116

I don't have the battery life right now to comment and I don't think my "most seriously affected" child would want me to publicly share details of the impacts. But I will share, from an early age, they were acutely aware of the lack of accountability at SCC that amounted to years of harmful neglect that, in any other situation, would no doubt trigger criminal proceedings, or at least public uproar.

I absolutely believe a "post office scandal" type response is warranted and I would be interested in driving change and working with professionals willing to help drive such a response.

Testimony 117

Our experience with Surrey's SEND service has involved repeated delays, legal failings, and a pattern of disregarding professional evidence.

We were initially refused an EHCP assessment, despite clear evidence that the legal test was met. We paid for private reports confirming complex needs and the need for a specialist placement. Surrey issued an unlawful EHCP that omitted key advice, refused to consult with specialist schools, and insisted—without evidence—that mainstream could meet need.

We were ignored until we issued a Pre-Action Protocol letter and involved our MP. Even then, the Panel maintained a mainstream placement, with no rationale, and we had to commission repeat assessments at further cost. An appeal was lodged, but progress was delayed until SENDIST issued directions.

Surrey only conceded shortly before the hearing. Most recently, statutory timescales for responding to the EHCP annual review have again been ignored. This is particularly serious, as professional advice confirms that Occupational Therapy support is urgently required, and these delays mean delays in

critical provision. This process has required extraordinary persistence, legal escalation, and personal sacrifice—just to secure what our child was legally entitled to from the outset.

- Failure listed include:
- Failure to follow statutory timescales, including unlawful delays in issuing the EHCP after assessment and following the annual review.
- Failure to respond to the EHCP annual review within the four-week legal deadline, leaving the process stalled for months.
- Refusal to assess our child for an EHCP despite clear evidence that the legal test was met. Issuing an unlawful EHCP, omitting professional advice and failing to specify support in a detailed or enforceable way. Illegally disregarding professional recommendations, including NHS and private reports, with no explanation or justification.
- Refusal to consult with appropriate specialist schools, despite documented requests and internal agreement that mainstream settings were unsuitable.
- Failure to respond to communication, including multiple unanswered emails, requiring escalation to our MP and the threat of judicial review to prompt any action.
- Failure to explain decisions, including multiple Panel outcomes that contradicted every professional view, with no rationale provided. Use of vague and misleading standard phrases, such as “the EHCP meets need,” in place of evidence-based reasoning.
- Failure to engage appropriately with the Tribunal process, requiring SENDIST to issue case management directions to force progress.
- Withholding or omitting evidence, including delays in submitting updated reports or panel outcomes.
- Deliberate delay in issuing revised EHCPs, including the caseworker advising they were “too busy” to act.
- Requiring us to repeat private assessments unnecessarily, at significant cost, to re-establish previously evidenced needs.
- Failure to document the agreed setting in the EHCP, despite it being approved and submitted to Panel.

There has been clear emotional distress from being in an unsuitable setting for too long. Anxiety increased, emotional regulation became more difficult, and ongoing uncertainty affected confidence and academic progress.

Despite being capable, they began falling behind in key areas due to a lack of appropriate support. Delays in issuing the EHCP and acting on professional advice meant that essential interventions—particularly Occupational Therapy—were not put in place when they were most needed. This has had a lasting impact on wellbeing and development.

Although the local authority eventually conceded and named a specialist school, this only happened shortly before the Tribunal hearing. The evidence had not changed. It is hard to see this drawn-out process as anything other than deliberate delay, which came at the direct expense of the child's education and mental health.

The toll on family life has been immense. We've spent a huge number of hours on paperwork, legal processes, and chasing responses. We've had to fund multiple private reports. This has diverted time, energy, and financial resources away from both our children and from work, rest, and family time. The stress has been ongoing and significant—emotionally, practically, and financially. Without access to the EHCP appeal process, our child would have been catastrophically failed—placed in an unsuitable school, without the support they need to learn, thrive or stay well.

Testimony 118

Statutory deadlines missed for EHCP despite independent specialist reports (brain injury specific) submitted with EHCPNA -parent request. Child Missing education for 13 weeks.

Case currently under assessment by Barrister as independent school removed pupil without notice

Was told that the LA needed to undertake own assessments for Ed Psyc, OT and SALT. If we didn't agree they would stop the assessment and we would need to appeal which would take at least a year. Despite all the trauma daughter experienced, she works well with all the LA assessors. This is NOT in her best interests but given the threat of having the assessments halted, this was our only option.

Daughter commences Yr 11 in Sept 25. LA Ed Psyc raises concerns about clinically elevated levels of anxiety and depression following her removal from school and cannot return to any school placement prior to GCSE'S. She highlights the impact of cognitive fatigue and the effects.

LA OT report quite frankly is a total waste of time , resources and cost. Libby can do buttons, roll play doh into a sausage and cut it up. Her independent OT reports advises on the environmental factors, sensory and emotional aspects of brain injury.

LA SLT suggests some practical group sessions. The Independent SLT reports describes the subtle blue complex presentation of the higher-level language demand across the curriculum and social groups and that this must be supported explicitly with a Neuro-specialist SLT.

Panel refuses to issue an EHCP as needs can be met in a mainstream school with no additional support. All LA Professionals direct the reader to the independent reports for completeness if understanding my daughter's profile / presentation. This child is also a young carer under a CiN Plan.....!

I requested a copy of info sent to Panel.

The Recovery Case Worker did respond to my request for a meeting prior to panel. I was optimistic that the case officer had listened to the context / circumstances / complex but subtle needs etc. She reassured me that info presented to panel was based on professional reports.

Instead, what I read was a misleading "front sheet". This was based on information taken from the schools send support arrangements- which is in dispute and will be challenged via the ICO / GDPR route. Furthermore, the panel receive a "draft" EHCP which is shockingly poorly drafted missing significant swathes of critical information. If panel rely on this over professional reports it is negligent of their duty of care to undertake the assessment process in my view. I am wondering if this can be challenged by Whistleblowing?

Impact on the Family and Child? Emotional distress, loss of education, isolation, anxiety and depression, decline in mental health, reinforcement if guilt and feelings of not being good enough.

Massive and detrimental impact as having to deal with overwhelming level of responsibility in raising our children without a support network. I have never experienced such total overwhelm. I gave up my career, stress is constantly affecting sleep, social groups, isolation, marriage is under great strain.

I cannot support my elderly mother and rarely see her as I just don't have the capacity. My relationship with my children is hugely compromised as I spend my entire life battling the system. My son's tribunal was last July.

We won all points, bar one. The LA took 2.6 years to resolve it.

Testimony 119

We would list the failures as follows:

- Failure to respond to emails
- Case officers leaving and not being told.
- New case officers failing to engage
- Long absences by case officer so nothing got done
- No knowledge of our case by case officer, only case manager could deal and she was too busy
- Mediation officer was horrified it had got to that point.

Daughter took overdose at which point we were offered hospital school - had been refusal to assess that point. Then moved to assess but dragged heels. Ended up with EOTAS.

We have to confirm placement every term and they pay the suppliers late.

This causes anxiety for my daughter who worries she won't have a spot. No referral to transition team. I had to push for it when she turned 18. Social care assessment as part of tribunal useless. Had to be redone. Then was closed without my knowledge.

Tiring, frustrating, and like having another job on top of my caring responsibilities and my employment. What should be a child centered approach is being dictated by strategic dictator with little regard for individuals.

Impact on Child? Daughter left school in y10. No GCSEs. Autistic, anxiety, depression, PTSD. Now 18 and unable to attend a formal education setting, slowly rebuilding her life. APPEER and therapy (private as CAHMS couldn't support her the way she needed). These therapies have saved her life.

Impact on the Family? Stress, antidepressants, physical health issues. Given up work. Massive impact on sibling who now has anxiety.

Testimony 120

Refusal to assess for a EHCP when the legal test is clearly met resulting in the need for tribunal for my sons needs to just be assessed in the hope we can get it right first time in education and getting the support from an early age.

Unlawful behaviour, delay tactics. If what they suggested had been taken forward by us as parents it would have resulted in emotional distress, anxiety and regression.

Impact on Family? Stress, even more strain on relationships, impact on mental and physical health of parents.

Testimony 121

I submitted along with paediatrics, the struggles my daughter faces and was told my daughter can get herself to college. She walks a mile to the bus and suffers from ADHD, autism and a back problem and walks on a road to the bus as the path runs out on a bend.

My daughter's anxiety is absolutely of the scale and they couldn't care less. Paediatrics wrote a letter demanding my child needs help and her medical conditions but I'm not even sure this was given to the EHCP panel. It took 13yrs to get my child diagnosed which was hard in itself as she is a self-harmer and Surrey couldn't care less, she was in a mainstream school and was continually bullied- Surrey schools shrugged it off.

I'm still fighting for what my child is entitled to but getting nowhere.

Impact on Child and Family? Anxiety to the point I had to pull her out of school, self-harming, school refusal, child saying she was just thick. I had to go part time to get her to school because Surrey refused her transport.

I have suffered mentally thinking it was all in my head and I was going mad.

END