

# Action Cerebral Palsy

## Parliamentary & Political Monitoring

### Week Commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018

Parliament returned from recess this week to the first Prime Minister's Questions since July. Buoyant from his left-wing slate, nicknamed the 'JC9', being elected in full to the Labour Party's ruling body, Jeremy Corbyn used the opportunity to chide Theresa May for the perceived lack of progress on a Brexit deal, referring to the National Farmers' Union describing a 'No Deal' Brexit as an 'Armageddon Scenario' and TUC describing it as 'devastating'. The Prime Minister [responded](#) citing Mr. Corbyn's lack of clarity on his Brexit position, stating that he 'can't even agree with himself' and that, unlike Corbyn, she would not be willing to enter into a deal 'at any price whatsoever'.

The Labour Party has also faced further criticism this week for comments and actions of a number of members which were seen as antisemitic, culminating in former Prime Minister, Tony Blair [stating](#) that he is 'not sure it is possible' for moderates to take the party back from the left. There have also been [reports](#) that Dr. Vince Cable is planning to stand down from the Liberal Democrat leadership in 2019 and has been holding talks with MPs from both the Conservative and Labour parties who are dissatisfied with their party's current stances to form a new 'centrist alliance'.

The Prime Minister's 'Chequers Deal' appears to be in some trouble, with reports that EU Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, described the plan as 'dead in the water' and murmurings that sixty Conservative MPs who are members of the influential European Research Group, led by Jacob Rees-Mogg, were seeking to 'chuck Chequers' and will publish their own proposals next week to counter a 'soft Brexit'.

#### Overview

- [Heads warn of 'bleak' picture on SEND funding](#)
- [School support staff 'buckling', union warns](#)
- [Learning disability care could return to 'Victorian era'](#)

## Heads warn of 'bleak' picture on SEND funding

A report in [TES](#) estimates that 94 per cent of head teachers believe that it is 'getting harder' to support students with special educational needs and disabilities. The survey, undertaken by the National Association of Head Teachers cites that 73% of heads blame cuts to mainstream funding, with 83% saying they have not received any funding from health and social care budgets to support the needs of children with SEND.

NAHT General Secretary, Paul Whiteman, said:

"The picture facing schools supporting children with special educational needs is bleak...without sufficient funding and a more coherent approach, the SEND code of practice is nothing more than an empty promise from Government to parents and children".

The report, [Empty Promises: The Crisis in Supporting Children with SEND](#), uses the example of a child with cerebral palsy, who arrived at the start of term in a wheelchair. The respondent says: "we have to provide 1:1 support and 2:1 for toileting – we have not received a penny...[we] applied for top-up funding – still waiting eight months later.

Nadhim Zahawi MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children & Families, responded saying: "we have undertaken the biggest special educational needs reforms in a generation, including the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans, so that support is tailored to the needs of individuals and families are put at the heart of the process.

***Whitehouse will continue to monitor for examples to use in meetings with stakeholders on the impact of reductions upon services and how provision may be improved for children with cerebral palsy.***

## School support staff 'buckling', union warns

Three in four school support staff are being forced to take on tasks which used to be performed by a more senior colleague, according to a [survey](#) committed by one of the UK's largest trade unions. Unison, who carried out the UK-wide survey of over 12,000 staff found that over 70 per cent said they were increasingly taking on tasks which were outside of their remit, with over half of these given no additional or sufficient training.

The findings come less than a week after the Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, said that schools needed to use their budgets "as effectively as possible". We have previously reported that many schools are facing a shortage of specialist teachers, meaning support staff are being drafted in to

support ever greater numbers of pupils. In response to the findings, Jon Richards, Head of Education at Unison, said that support staff were “buckling under intolerable workloads and mounting stress levels.”

The results of the survey come just months after a leading education union [warned](#) that support staff were carrying out tasks that would be considered out of their remit. The National Education Union’s joint General Secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, said that as school budgets were increasingly under pressure, more was being asked of teaching support staff, highlighting that it is “children’s education that suffers”. Many of the staff interviewed as part of that survey highlighted that it wasn’t uncommon for many to work through their breaks or provide overtime.

This news will be of interest to Action Cerebral Palsy, given that the intention of support staff is to ensure that those students who require additional time and resources are able to receive it. With the news that support staff are being overstretched, or in some cases taking on the role that a more qualified teaching professional should be doing, ACP will be concerned that the most vulnerable students will miss out on the additional educational support and extra time they deserve and are entitled to.

***Whitehouse has reached out to the Department for Education on the matter of the number of qualified teachers in the classroom and the impact on pupils with SEND, and will follow up with the Minister to urge him to meet with ACP.***

## Learning disability care could return to ‘Victorian era’ because of nurse training cuts.

The Royal College of Nursing has [warned](#) that the NHS faces a return to the ‘Victorian era’ when it comes to learning disability care because of a critical shortage of specialist nurses. The College has warned that, since May 2010, there has been a 40 per cent drop in the numbers of learning disability nurses in England, which could mean that patients in need of extra support will not be able to be treated at specialist centres. Alternatively, many may have to travel away from home for specialist support, away from friends and family.

Hopes of reversing this downward change have been dashed by the decision to scrap bursaries to student nursing, leading to a particularly severe drop in the numbers of mature students looking to specialise in learning disabilities. Currently, a significant number of mature students specialise in learning disabilities, making that sector of the health service especially vulnerable to staff changes.

Dame Donna Kinnair, Director of Nursing at the RCN, said called for “urgent investment to attract more applicants into learning disability and nursing, and an effective workforce plan to ensure every member of our society receives safe and effective care.” This news comes after a survey by the Council of Deans for Health conducted in May found that half of universities in England have discussed discontinuing learning disability nursing programmes in September.

This news will interest Action Cerebral Palsy, given that nurses specialising in learning disability care have a wide and broad remit, which can include care for some children with cerebral palsy. Specialist nurses also work in a variety of acute and community settings, and thus their future will be of interest to the charity.

***Whitehouse will continue to monitor nursing funding, as well as Government announcements on bursaries.***