

Council for Disabled Children

January 2026

Opening

A consultation was carried out with 75 young people with SEND aged 8–25 years to explore their experiences of support and understanding from staff in educational settings.

This work followed findings from the Collective Get Together 2025, where 297 young people identified improved SEND training for teachers and SENDCOs as one of their top three priorities for change within the SEND system.

The findings were further explored during a Power Hour session on 15 September 2025 involving 9 young people from 6 regions across England.

Opportunity

Young people highlighted that many education staff did not have sufficient SEND knowledge or training to understand their needs and provide appropriate support. Eighty-five per cent of respondents did not believe staff had enough SEND training to help them learn effectively and communicate in ways that worked for them.

Young people reported that a lack of staff understanding had negatively affected:

- Understanding schoolwork (74.3%)
- Mental health (73%)
- Worry and anxiety (73%)
- Completing work (68.9%)
- Making friends (48.7%)
- Attendance (47.3%)
- Feeling lonely (44.6%)

Young people also felt that receiving support earlier could have improved:

- Mental health (78.4%)
- Learning and attention (71.6%)
- Grades and achievements (71.6%)
- Communication (64.9%)
- Friendships and relationships (54.1%)
- Attendance (44.6%)

Outcome

The survey was designed to gather robust evidence about young people's experiences and to strengthen the case for improved SEND awareness and training within education settings. The consultation findings have been used to demonstrate the impact that insufficient SEND knowledge has on attendance, learning, mental health and inclusion.

297 young people with SEND took part in a consultation where they identified their top priorities for change in the SEND System; Better SEND training for teachers and SENDCO's was in the top 3!

Obligation

