

Disabled children's vision for change

Dame Rachel de Souza | Children's Commissioner



Background to my study

My 2021 survey of over half a million children, The Big Ask, showed that children of all backgrounds and abilities want the same things. But some children face extra barriers to achieving their goals.

So this year, I spoke to disabled children across England, as well as their families and professionals who support them, to understand their lives, and what needs to change.

What I found

Children's needs are not being picked up early enough – with children often waiting too long to get the help they need

Schools do not always make children with additional needs **feel welcome**

Children do not always have **fun and accessible** things to do in their local area

Often children are **not receiving the loving, caring support they deserve**

Many children are **being bullied or treated badly** because they are disabled

Children and young people experience **big life changes** which are not always well-supported

Lots of children are **worried about their parents and families** because it is hard to get help.

What I think should happen next

I want to see big changes in how we think and talk about disabled children's experiences. Disabled children and young people are clear about what they want for happy, fulfilling lives:

- 1 To be understood, seen and heard
- 2 To benefit from a fantastic education
- 3 For all activities to be fun and accessible
- 4 To receive high-quality care locally and quickly
- 5 To be free from bullying and abuse
- 6 For big life changes to be smooth and prepare them for adulthood
- 7 For services to work with the whole family



‘[Disabled young people] all have dreams for this future, they shouldn't be silenced’

- Young man, 22.



Based on children's priorities, I have set out what needs to change. I want to see:

Children getting support early, so they are not left waiting a long time for help.



Better information on how many disabled children there are in England, so we can be sure we can support every child who needs it.

Someone to help and guide every child and their family, so they do not feel alone.



Fun activities for every child to do in the holidays, including good playgrounds.



Schools which make children feel welcome and safe, and give them the life skills they need for adulthood.



Loving care for children, and enough people to support children.



Local areas to give children everything they need for big life changes to go well.



Children and their families get help together, so that everyone feels supported.