

Green Paper: Children And Young People With Special Educational Needs And Disabilities - Call For Views

Response Form

The closing date for this Call For Views is:
15 October 2010

Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).

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If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

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Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name Maurizia Quarta, Chairperson

Organisation (if applicable) Wiltshire Parent Carer Council

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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact Shane Samarasinghe Telephone: 020 7783 8602

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If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888

Fax: 01928 794 311

e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk

Please mark an X in the box below that best describes you as a respondent.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Child/Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/> National Voluntary Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Children's Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local voluntary Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> School/College
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	Headteacher/Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> SENCO
<input type="checkbox"/> Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

Please Specify:

Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) is a voluntary organisation, managed and run by parent carers for parent carers and became initially established with the introduction of and funding from the AHDC programme. We offer a specialist Consultation and Participation Service, which enables parent carers to have a 'voice' about services and support their children and families receive.

Our aim is to improve local provision by using the 'voice' of parent carers to influence the strategic work we undertake with the local authority and other agencies around services for Disabled Children and Young People under the age of 25 years.

www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk

Q1) Are the SEN and Disability statutory frameworks - including the SEN statementing process - helping children and young people to get what they need? If not, what changes could help?

No

The Issues

The **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** has been around for some time now and its use in Wiltshire is very low by national comparison although is gradually on the increase. . Many professionals do not have a clear understanding of what a CAF is, how to complete one or indeed its purpose. Many parents are also unaware of the purpose of the CAF and how this can help to identify need. Parents have reported that some schools are refusing to complete a CAF, as too are some other professionals. Seeking out a professional who is willing to carry out a CAF can be stressful in itself. Parents also report that in many instances, professionals invited to attend CAF meetings do not turn up.

Statement of Educational Needs Concerns remain around delivering services and monitoring the outcomes for children. Local political pressure to reduce the number of statements issued is contributing to pressure, stress and conflict. The system is overstretched and because of conflicting pressures, is putting barriers between professionals and parents.

All too often, key professionals do not turn up at Annual Review meetings due to 'other commitments'. Submitting a report on paper is not the same as being there in person to discuss a child's needs and putting forward recommendations, where the parent can feel fully included. Absence of professionals invited to attend, gives a parent the impression that their child's needs and ability to reach their full potential (from ensuring appropriate provision is put in place), is of little importance or consequence and this can also lead to a parent's distorted perception that other professionals working in other departments are likely to have an apparent 'don't care less' attitude. This can put parents off seeking advice and support from other services, when they need help.

In addition, parents of children with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome are often declined a statement. Parents have no other option than to initiate the appeals process in order to secure appropriate provision to meet the educational needs of their child. This experience is hugely stressful for parents and promotes mistrust with their contact with SEN caseworkers and education services.

'Ofsted's important report exposes a number of key failings within the SEN system and crucially recognises that children with complex needs, such as autism, are not getting the help they need in the classroom

Statements for children should be made more parent friendly, all needs should be recorded and provision should be specified and quantified, including for instance, provision of an Occupational Therapist, and reports from professionals should be worded in a way that parents understand. Less able/informed parents struggle to comprehend what is being included in statements and much less how they can go about addressing any unmet provision/need. Local Authorities should be made more accountable where statemented needs/provision are not being met. Also, the needs of a child should be met by jointly funded placements, e.g. NHS and Education.

Possible Solutions

In our experience, SEN issues are the biggest nemesis for families. Children and young people spend a great deal of time in education – that's a lot of years of anxiety for some parents where the system is failing them and their children.

Whilst the WPCC has worked well with professional colleagues across many agencies within our local authority, little progress has been made around SEN strategy. Historically and traditionally, our local Education Dept has worked well with the Parent Partnership Service under a specific contract. Although this has served well for both the LA and parents alike, the way in which colleagues within

Education work with parents needs to move forward and needs to adopt the same participation module which has been embraced by other agencies in Wiltshire.. The success and progress made in improving and transforming short break services and transition under the AHDC programme, has clearly made a significant difference to the way these services are now provided. We have surveyed our parent members who confirm this.

With the parent participation element of the AHDC Programme now fully embedded into work around Short Breaks and Transition in Wiltshire, we would now like to see Government put pressure on increasing expectations on LA's to better engage with parents around SEN.

Parental confidence in the SEN system and processes is low and in order to raise this, **parents need to be partners at a strategic level**. Evidence from our achievements in improving services and support around Short Breaks, Transitions and CDT's (to name a few) proves that working with parents gets better results; services are in place that are better meeting the needs of an increased number of disabled children, young people and families, and systems and processes are either in place or being gradually rolled out that have been designed and shaped with parents as partners.

'**Team Around the Child**' meetings where any professionals involved with a child/family across all settings, including the parents/carers, are one of the most advantageous forums for exchanging information and understanding the whole needs of a child. Actions and consistency of strategies can be implemented across all settings and everyone involved gains a more global understanding of a child's needs and circumstances and are more able collectively, to improve a child's outcomes so they are more likely to reach their full potential.

Streamline assessments and reviews – possibly adopting Person Centred Review model which, following a pilot in Wiltshire, has been extremely well received by both parents and professionals.

In our experience, SEN issues are the biggest nemesis for families. Happier parents means happier families and, in the long term, results in less pressure on other services.

Q2) How can we identify children's special educational needs earlier, and make sure that they get the support they need as quickly as possible?

Comments:

Portage forms the perfect link between families and professionals. Portage visitors work in the family home and look at the whole family as a single unit. They see the whole and a much truer picture. Portage come to you, they become 'part of your family'; they act as a resource to put you in contact with other professionals, services and information. Most importantly they empower the parents, giving them the confidence and tools to teach their child which in turn enables them to understand their child better than no one else. This makes it easier to identify their individual needs, which in turn may, further down the line, require input from other professionals, who can be identified and made contact with by the Portage home visitor.

Portage is essential in identifying needs early, and helping to overcome issues that may otherwise have been excepted and not addressed, making family life increasingly difficult. Without a Portage home visitor, some parents would still be struggling with many issues such as communication with their child. Portage introduces parents to Makaton and links to resources which enable Parents to contact a Makaton tutor. This helps ensure a child who can sign sentences, and communicates what they want and need. More importantly this gives a child the confidence to attempt to make vocalisations and better equips them when they start learning in a school environment. Language difficulties can present a barrier to learning and can lead onto behavioural problems through frustrations in not being able to communicate or to be understood in turn.

TISMS and DISMS allow everyone to talk together and hear each others progress and stumbling blocks. What is best for the child remains at the forefront and all the involved professionals get the bigger picture of a child's life and needs. This process enables a child to pass smoothly through the statementing process and into mainstream school with all the necessary preparations in place.

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Use of **Health Visitors** should be reinstated, their knowledge of early child development is paramount to ensure any child with SEN is identified as early as possible to enable early intervention. The health visitor also had a wealth of local knowledge to support families and was able to initiate referrals hence starting the support and intervention of a child with SEN that much sooner.

Opportunity groups have given parents essential understanding of their child's needs as they grow into and through toddler-hood. Staff are positive and encouraging and set a positive tone for a parents own attitude towards their disabled child.

Q3) How can we improve the processes for special educational needs and disability - in schools, in assessments, and across all services - so that professionals can spend more of their time with children and their families?

Issues:

1. Some children with SEN or disabilities can present challenging behaviour. Whilst some **schools** are happy to seek advice from parents and to discuss strategies that could be put in place, others will ask a parent to collect a child where a situation has escalated and staff are unable to cope. There is reluctance from some schools to seek advice from other professionals working with the child or via 'Out-Reach'. Parents are often told their parenting skills are to blame for their child's behaviour when in reality they often are often the experts in being able to manage their child's behaviour best of all, so their advice should be taken on board and given the consideration it deserves.

2. **Social workers** want to do the job they are paid to do – help families by enabling them to access services that meet their needs appropriately. Social workers go into a family's home to assess need, then have to write up a report, which then gets taken to panel. Social workers are not permitted to present their assessment in person. How can these 'faceless' panels get a true picture of the struggles families are facing when they have not met a single member of that family?

Morale amongst Social workers is low, caseloads are high, panels decide what is best for a family, then a social worker has to deliver 'bad news' when, for example, a request for direct payments is refused. Social workers are on the coal face and can clearly see how a family might be struggling and how they could be helped, and, after putting in their recommendations (after all that is what they are qualified to do) don't feel good about themselves or their job when the outcome is taken completely out of their hands and are left with the unsavoury task of having to go back to that family and say 'sorry but I can't help you'. This makes parents lose confidence in their Social Worker and the support system.

Some parents are better able in seeking out information and the support they need. Some are better able to participate in meetings with their social worker and in expressing the difficulties they and their family might be facing and in identifying their own needs. Others are better able to find activity clubs and support groups than others. However, too many parents are still struggling on various levels; they don't understand the processes, systems, thresholds and criteria. We need to turn these situations around.

3. **Transition** is still desperately under-resourced. Families still feel they are about to fall off a cliff when they move from children to adult services. We want to see more joined up working between Children and Adult services to make the transition pathway as smooth as possible so that families and young people feel truly supported.

Possible Solutions:

1. Adequate **training** of staff by experts who have a broad understanding of the underlying issues with any given disability, or experts in specific conditions where needed, should be providing regular training and refresher training in schools. Professionals involved in a child's education need to be included in **Team Around the Child** meetings (for the reasons mentioned previously). This will help parents to have confidence that ALL professionals involved with their child are working towards a common purpose and that support is joined up.

2. **Key Worker.** Families (and services) would greatly benefit from a Key worker who could help them with all sorts of situations – accessing information on clubs, activities in their area, giving impartial advice, signposting, help prepare for meetings with professionals/social workers/schools, help with completing benefit forms. Families need someone to listen to them who is impartial, has the energy and know-how and who can offer assistance when the family needs it and in the way in which a family needs it.

Allow Social workers to represent their families in person at Direct Payment Panel meetings. Include parent representatives on panels so decisions can be reached based on a more balanced perspective.

3. **Person Centred Reviews and Parent Participation** Again, we would like to see these threaded through all departments and into Adult services. Person Centred Reviews have been piloted and are being rolled out across Wiltshire. Could this model be used for assessing need across the piece? Assessments should be carried out in an integrated way that are holistic and based on the needs of the **whole** family, placing the parents, children and young people at the heart of the assessment. Need is not simply about health or diagnosis – its' also about the pressures of our caring responsibilities and the effect this can have on the whole family, covering all aspects of family life, and the provision of services and support to enable a family to lead as 'normal' as life as possible.

4. **Information** The WPCC, in collaboration with our local authority, has held 2 very successful Information and Training Days. 1 on Short Breaks, 1 for Transition. These were very well attended by both parents and professionals – all of whom went away feeling better informed about services, provision, processes. In response to feedback we are going to be holding these events on a regular basis throughout the year and on a wider scale. We feel these events are best facilitated by parents and LA's working together. Professionals have the knowledge about their service and facilitate the workshops and parents know the best way these can be presented to other parents. Parent carer councils nationally can assist their local authority in more effective provision of information in this way.

Q4) How can we ensure all schools and colleges have high expectations for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including their future potential and contribution to society?

Comments:

Parents are realistic and would like their children to be equipped to enjoy life to the fullest extent of their abilities. Having the satisfaction of being able to choose where they live, and how they live. For others, having achieved independence, they would love to be able to interact with people everyday, and serve them. We all grow as individuals and gain self respect when we work, and we can give back to society rather than feel on the receiving end the whole time.

Parents ask for better educational outcomes and life chances for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities - from the early years through to the transition into adult life and employment. For some disabled children it may be appropriate for them to learn history, science and geography at school, according to their ability. Others may need a more 'hands on', practical approach to learning and therefore, it may be more important that their education focuses on 'Skills for Life', increasing their chances of integrating and contributing to society. All children have interests and talents, we need to help them nurture and develop these.

Mainstream schools/peers should do more joint projects with special schools/disabled children, and vice versa. Create more awareness of 'differences' in our society early on. Bridging Projects work really well in Wiltshire from 13-19yrs where young people with disabilities and special needs can socialize and engage in projects alongside their peers.

It is only common sense that more effective use of limited resources is required, particularly in a very tight Spending Review, whilst ensuring wise investment in children with SEN and disabilities. Some disabled children may not want to spend more time 'learning at College', they might instead prefer moving into their local area, finding part time work and living with support. They need the skills to live. We need to make differently shaped jobs for differently shaped people. We need part time, interesting, interactive work. Society needs to be more about people..

More parent to professional training needs to happen - parents are the experts on their own children. Staff should have a day release 2/3 times per year to spend time at a special school that can be a role model of good practice. SENCOS need more training - mainstream schools in particular. The WPC has delivered training to newly trained SENCO's, to raise awareness. Many teachers just put their hand up to take on this role but don't have a clue what it entails or what is involved. Parents could deliver training at colleges for those wishing to move into social services and other services who work with families of disabled children.

Staff should spend time in schools where units are working well, whether in County or not. This could mean visiting feeder schools or specialist units within other schools. Communication between teaching staff is vital so all staff are aware of a child's specific needs and consistency is applied at all times. Specialist advisors and educational advisors from national societies (like The National Autistic Society) should hold specific training sessions with all staff, not just those directly supervising the SEN child.

Q5) How can we improve the choices of schools and services available to parents and improve opportunities for them to be involved in decisions that affect their family?

Comments:

Parents have reported a real lack of choice in school options to meet the needs of their child. There should be greater choice for parents in the schools their children attend and the support and services they receive, whether in a mainstream or special school setting. It should be a real choice. Some children thrive in a mainstream setting with support, but others need a smaller, quieter school where they will not be bullied.

94% of Wiltshire parents surveyed in October 2009, felt more clarity is needed so families have a better understanding of what types of special needs are catered for at each of the special schools within Wiltshire, so they can make informed choices.

Some children would benefit from smaller, more vibrant learning environments and classroom dynamics are important too. Curriculums should be well adapted, fun and the children given more opportunities to regularly explore their environment both at school and on trips. This includes public swimming pools, farms, theatres, seaside, museums etc. The school should always welcome parents and carers and make great effort to know the child and what they like and don't like and how to make things work.

No school in Wiltshire caters specifically for young people with Aspergers Syndrome. Many seek provision in other local authorities. These young people need to be educated in suitably tailored environments in order for them to thrive. Ideally it should offer residential places and liaise with local colleges for transitions, university places etc.

Lack of transparency about procedures and information about options still a problem so more able parents have an unfair advantage over others who have less knowledge and understanding. Parents are not allowed to represent their child at some of the most important meetings about their child, eg discussions about individual care packages – this must change.

Q6) How can we improve the transition from school to adult life for young people with special educational needs and disabilities and the support provided for their families throughout?

Comments:

Parents have reported that having just gone through the process of transferring to secondary school from primary school, or from secondary school to college or further, have found the whole experience exhausting. Parents report feeling very alone and ill-equipped of dealing with the task ahead and a sense of having to battle all over again with a new world that is Adult Services.

A key worker could be of enormous benefit at this stage in a young person's life. Having someone to listen to you and support parents and young people through transition would help alleviate anxieties and stress.

Wiltshire has begun to operate a 'Person Centred Transition Review'. Emphasis is on the needs of the young person and what they need to enable them to lead a fulfilling life. It looks at the whole person; education, social care, leisure, housing, employment and involves all agencies and professionals known as working with the young person to ensure the correct support and services are in place to enable the young person reach their full potential.

Q7) Ideas and examples of what's working well

Person Centred Reviews

Wiltshire has initiated training for professionals to become facilitators in Person Centred Reviews. It has been a resounding success at one special school which has embraced it wholeheartedly; parents and young people are reporting the positive difference it has made to be central to the process and be part of a review that focuses holistically on what is important to them and plans for their future beyond education. Many other special schools in Wiltshire are now showing an interest in this model and further training will be taking place in November to facilitate this. In the near future, it is anticipated that a scaled down version of the training will be offered to parents to give them an understanding of the principles behind Person Centred Reviews.

A direct result of participation has been the commissioning of services that meet the needs of the user, in a cost effective package and with streamlined eligibility criteria assessments.

Where?	Wiltshire
What?	AHDC Short Breaks Transformation including <i>Wiltshire Local Offer</i>
Who?	Short Breaks Commissioning Group – parent led: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 professionals• 4 parent representatives
How and When?	Consultation and Participation
March 2009	Consultation with parents on strategic vision for short breaks

October 2010

Consultation with parents on specific needs/wants from a short break service. Parents contributed by various means. Through consultation we were able to design a package of short breaks that:

- Are accessible to all disabled children and young people (targeted services)
- Offers a specific level of targeted services, through the *Wiltshire Local Offer*.
- Are accessible without the need for assessment

The Local Offer increased the number of disabled children and young people who required a specific level of targeted services, from 100 to 1000.

Parents were fully involved in the whole Tender process for provision of short break activity clubs, including design of Tender Pack, service requirements, and were equal members of the Tender Evaluation Panel. Parents continue to be members of the Short Breaks Review team and work closely with the providers.

Full details can be found at <http://wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/LocalOffer.aspx>

Where?

Wiltshire

What?

Access to Information – Short Breaks Website

Who?

Parent led Short Breaks Commissioning Group:

- 3 professionals
- 4 parent representatives

How and When?

Consultation and Participation

October 2010

Consultation with parents on specific needs/wants from a website dedicated to information on short break activity clubs.

Through this we were able to design a website that::

- Gave one point of access to information on clubs available specifically to disabled children and young people in Wiltshire

- Was designed to reflect the way parents might carry out a search (ie. age/ability appropriate, location, interests etc)
- Would be parent user-friendly – tested by volunteer parents whose computer skills were not extensive
- Included links to other sites/information parents regularly visited
- Could be developed to include information on other short break services in Wiltshire
- Included details about clubs in neighbouring counties, useful for those families close to borders

To view site: <http://www.onestopwiltshire.co.uk>

Where?	Wiltshire
What?	Revision of Eligibility Criteria Children’s Disability Teams
Who?	Eligibility Working Group, comprising WPCC parent reps, CDT Head of Service and Managers, Social Workers
How and When?	Consultation and Participation
January 2010	Consultation with parents on specific issues around accessing a service from the CDT’s.
February 2010	Parent-led consultation with Social workers so their views could contribute to us understanding the issues from their perspective.
April 2010	CDT Manager and Social Worker facilitated a workshop for parents at a WPCC Information and Training Event (Short Breaks Fair), to explain their roles and what services they offer to support families with assessed need. Existing eligibility criteria was explained.
May – Aug 2010	Following on from above, eligibility criteria and thresholds were still not clear for families and it became apparent that some families who were clearly in need of support from specialist services were unable to access through the CDT’s because of they did not meet the existing eligibility criteria.
	A team of parents and professionals worked together to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the criteria and changed it to make sure the whole needs of the family were taken into consideration during an assessment

- Produce information on eligibility criteria that was transparent and parent-friendly.

August 2010 Revised criteria published and we are aware of WPCPC wider parent members who are now accessing a service from the CDT's who had previously been denied.

Where? Wiltshire

What? Animation Clubs

Who? Bridging Projects and Short Break Commissioning Team (parents and professionals) Wiltshire College

How and When? Consultation and Participation

February 2010 Through funding secured from the AHDC Short Breaks Programme, an Animation Club was piloted, specifically for young people with high-functioning Autism.

April 2010 Following success of pilot, discussions took place on how to make this sustainable – result, through the Bridging Projects and to use some existing funding from that source. Youth Support Workers and other staff/peer mentors underwent training workshops in Animation.

Summer 2010 Bridging Projects started engaging young people in animation projects.

Q8) Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make.

Comments:

Wiltshire is a rural County and so many children are transported to their place of education and this can mean a journey of up to 45mins one way for many children. Parents accept these journey times; there are very few schools to choose from, so our children have to travel.

However, what could be improved is the quality of the service. We question the training and experience of SEN Transport staff and escorts. They receive the minimal amount of training which is statutorily required and the majority cannot communicate effectively with the children, which can often leave them feeling frustrated and cause them to present challenging behaviour. Parents have reported instances where wheelchairs have not been secured correctly whilst transporting children also.

We would like to see SEN transport working with providers and parents to improve their service. Some providers are exemplary in their attitude towards and knowledge of our children and could offer training to raise confidence and skills with fellow providers. More consistency of service would also be welcomed as providers are constantly changing to fit in with budgets, rather than the needs of disabled children, young people and their families.

I appear to have lost the box where you want to know about me!

My name is Maurizia Quarta, I am a single parent of 2 boys of ages 13 and 11. My youngest has Down Syndrome. I am a co founder of the Wiltshire Parent Carer Council and have been Chair since it's inception in March 2009.

Q9) Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, was it easy to find, understand, complete etc.)

Comments:

We would have liked more time to have responded to this. We would have liked to have been able to hold a proper consultation with our parent members to fully inform our response.

We would have liked the questions to have been written in a more parent friendly format, so that we could have simply copy and pasted them into an email-survey for our members to answer and could have contributed our survey results.

The text boxes were very slow to type as all members of our committee had a hand in putting this response together. When using tracking tools for editing, it was painfully slow.

We'd like to thank the National Network of Parent Carer Forums and the Aiming High Team at Wiltshire Council for bringing this consultation to our attention so promptly.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply **X (CAN'T GET IT IN THE BOX!)**

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 794304 / email: donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 15 October 2010

Send by post to:

SEN and Disability Frameworks Team
Special Educational Needs and Disability Division
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: send.callforviews@education.gsi.gov.uk