



General election toolkit for AEP members

The General Election on Thursday 4th July 2024 presents an opportunity for AEP members to influence change and ensure the new government prioritise children and young people and recognise the key role of Educational Psychologists (EPs).

This is a crucial moment to promote the AEPs key issues with Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs). Meeting or engaging with candidates during the campaigning period is a key opportunity to educate and inform them about the role of EPs, at a time when the workforce is under increasing pressure.

Early engagement also encourages these new politicians to become future advocates for the AEP in Parliament, and further raise the profile of EPs and the rights of children and young people if elected.

What you can do in the run-up to the General Election:

Contact your local candidates and ask them to support the AEP's calls for action - help to spread the message and educate the new intake of Members of Parliament.

We've created this toolkit to support you to engage with PPCs, which provides:

- Guidance on identifying and contacting your local candidates;
- A template email to edit and send;
- Advice on setting up a meeting with local candidates;
- A template press release and letter to the editor to publicise your meeting in the local press.

By backing our calls for action, candidates are committing to advocate and support the following policies in the next Parliament:

- A clear plan to **facilitate early intervention for children and young people** who have or may have SEND including:
 - A restatement of the principle that *"all teachers are teachers of children with SEND"*.
 - A funded workforce strategy and implementation plan to ensure that there is a **well-trained specialist workforce** with sufficient capacity for all settings and schools to have access to a "team around a setting/school" facilitating early intervention.
- A clear **definition of inclusion** which references the social model of disability, including a mandatory outline of what must be available for all children and young people in mainstream schools/settings.
- Improving pay and conditions and **increasing the number of training places** for Educational Psychologists.
- **Greater inclusion** of Educational Psychologists as part of the framework for delivering preventative and early intervention support for mental health difficulties.

Please make sure to [let us know](#) about any engagement you may have with local candidates, so that we can follow up after the election and build relationships with advocates.



FIND OUT WHO YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES ARE

We encourage you to:

- **Write to /email ALL your PPCs** to tell them about the AEP;
- If elected, **seek a meeting with your new MPs** to talk to them about the AEP.
- **PPCs can be found on the following website:** [Who Can I Vote For?](#). You can also try the website of your local council as they will list candidates.
- **Email addresses for candidates can usually be found on the above website**, or on the candidate's own campaign website and social media pages. Please note that it is not possible to find contact details for every candidate, as some choose not to share this information publicly.
- If there are no direct contact details available, you can try to contact them through **social media**. You can also contact candidates through their **party's local branch**. You can find these by ringing the main telephone line for the political party and asking for further details.

HUSTINGS

What is a hustings?

- **Hustings are meetings which take place in the run up to elections.** They provide a forum for members of the public to hear from candidates and parties about their plans and policies.
- At a hustings, **election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions** from the audience, giving voters the chance to raise the issues that are important to them. There will usually be a chairperson who will invite audience members to ask questions.
- They are usually held by organisations such as community groups or non-party campaigners. They may focus on one issue, or on the campaign more generally.
- **Hustings are a great opportunity to ask your local election candidates for their views, and to ask them to support the campaign.** If you register to attend a hustings, you may be asked to submit your questions ahead of time.

Where can I find out about hustings in my area?

Hustings can be advertised locally, so you should keep an eye out for information on posters, flyers, or on social media. You can also **search for hustings by constituency** [here](#).

Tips for asking questions:

- Keep questions as **short and precise** as possible, using **simple language** and clear figures.
- Questions with a **'human' element**, rather than questions that are too technical, are often better. You can use the opportunity to tell your personal story, or one of a member of your group.
- **Example question:** *"There are around 1.6 million school pupils in England with identified SEN (17% of all pupils). EPs play a vital role in getting the right support for pupils with SEND. Yet EPs are locked in a cycle with soaring demand for EHCPs which prevents early intervention. This is negatively impacting our schools and children. Will you commit to working in Parliament to prioritise and adequately resource early intervention for children with special educational needs?"*



TEMPLATE LETTER TO YOUR LOCAL PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE

Write to your local candidates asking: **Will you support AEP's key asks for the next Parliament?**

[Follow this link to download a template letter or email.](#) The template text has been designed to send in a letter or email to all candidates in your constituency.

Note: The sections highlighted in yellow should be changed depending on constituency.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The below are suggested wording for social media posts to publicise your and support for the AEP campaign and priorities.

We would strongly encourage that you adapt these templates to sound like your own 'voice'.

Suggested X/Twitter Posts:

- I am calling upon candidates to be [Constituency Name]'s next MP to commit to @AEPsychologists' manifesto for change.
- Children with SEND thrive when they are included and supported in schools. Let's give every child the chance to succeed.

Suggested LinkedIn Posts:

- As a member of the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) I am calling upon parliamentary candidates in my constituency of [insert constituency] to raise the bar for the inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEND) in our schools.
- As it stands, children with SEND are often excluded from the classroom while the resources intended at supporting their learning are misdirected and inadequately funded.
- The AEP has a manifesto to change this. We are asking candidates up and down the country to pledge their support to our programme to improve inclusion in our schools.
- With the right level of specialist support all children can be enabled to thrive and learn, and members of the next Parliament will be critical to making that a reality.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about AEP's work can be [found here](#).

If you have any further questions, please contact Connect, the AEP's Westminster-based team, on aep@connectpa.co.uk.