

Explanation of why Just Say are introducing culture subgroups.

This groups will not replace our welcoming open meetings. We continue to encourage parents and carers to come together.

Members may have concerns that these groups will divide parents and carers.

That will never be Just Say's intentions. We are stronger together!!

Just Say's aim is to give some parents a safe space and build

confidence, talking about sensitive subjects and activity encourages to contributing to our open meetings.

There will be trail of workshops for different cultures who live in Barking and Dagenham, Starting with our Asian community.

“We know families have different experiences depending on culture, language, and community. These smaller groups give people space to talk openly and get the right support

— while still being part of one wider SEND community.”

The steering group have noted some key example of why it's important.

*** Disproportionality in Identification:** There is disproportionality in the identification of SEND among children from ethnic minority backgrounds, with some groups over-represented in certain categories and under-represented in others compared

to White British pupils. For example, Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean pupils are twice as likely to be identified with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, while Asian pupils are half as likely to be identified with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Professionals may also misinterpret SEND as challenging behavior in minority ethnic children due to a lack of understanding of cultural differences in presentation.ì

- **Communication and**

Information

Barriers: Linguistic barriers are a major issue for migrant and ethnic minority families. Schools and local authorities often fail to provide professional interpreters, relying on unqualified individuals. Information about the SEND system, parental rights, and documents like Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are frequently not translated, leaving families uninformed.

- **Lack of Cultural Competence**

and

Discrimination: Professionals may not consider families' cultural values and circumstances, which is a particular concern for Black and minority ethnic families. Some families report experiencing discrimination and negative attitudes, including Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils. There is also a lack of training on the intersection of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and SEND,

leading to potential misdiagnosis or delayed identification.

- **Parental Mistrust and Power Differentials:** Perceived power imbalances contribute to a lack of trust in the system among some parents. This is compounded by a lack of culturally appropriate support and a feeling that families are ignored or blamed.
- **Inflexible System and Environment:** The mainstream education system's standardised expectations

can be challenging for neurodivergent children or those with different cultural needs, potentially contributing to high rates of absenteeism and exclusion.

Barking & Dagenham's deep diversity presents both challenges (integration, cultural barriers in services) and strengths (strong local bonds, community initiatives), requiring targeted, culturally sensitive strategies.

Cultural & Familial Barriers:

- **Stigma & Denial:** Some within the Black community view SEND as a source of shame or something to be hidden, delaying help-seeking.
- **Lack of Understanding:** There's often a misunderstanding of specific needs (like autism/ADHD) and a general lack of knowledge about the SEND system.
- **Mistrust:** Historical negative experiences with services create mistrust in educational

and medical systems,
hindering engagement.

Systemic & Institutional Issues:

- **Overrepresentation & Misdiagnosis:** Black children are disproportionately placed in behavioral (EBD) SEND categories, often due to racial bias and misinterpretation of neurodivergent traits as defiance, rather than actual need, say reports from the UK Parliament and Black Child SEND.
- **Lack of Culturally Competent Staff:** Insufficient cultural

awareness among teachers and caseworkers leads to mislabeling and poor support.

- **Resource Disparity:** Families, especially from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, struggle to navigate complex systems due to lack of time, advocacy, and financial resources, notes blackeducation.com.

Consequences for Children:

- **Delays in Support:** Late or no support can be "catastrophic" for a child's development, leading to poor

communication and emotional regulation.

- **Harsher Discipline:** Black children with SEND face increased risks of detentions, suspensions, and permanent exclusions.
- **Feeling Unheard:** Children report racism and a lack of understanding from staff, with their needs often overlooked

Problems Faced by Polish Families with SEND

- **Language Barriers and Communication Gaps**

- **Lack of interpreters:**
Professional interpreters are rarely provided for critical meetings, such as Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) annual reviews, forcing families to rely on unqualified staff or their own children to translate.
- **Over-reliance on verbal communication:** Schools and local authorities often use phone calls or verbal instructions, which is difficult for parents with limited English proficiency.

- **Untranslated documents:** Critical documents, including draft EHCPs, are often not available in community languages, preventing parents from understanding their rights and advocating effectively.
- **Navigating the SEND System**
- **System complexity:** The UK's SEND system is complex and differs significantly from the Polish system, leaving many families confused about processes, timelines, and their entitlements.

- **Difficulty accessing information:** Parents struggle to access easy-to-understand information and resources in Polish about the SEND process.
- **Bureaucratic hurdles:** Families often find it hard to contact council SEND teams and struggle with digital platforms used for submitting documents and tracking progress.
- **Assessment and Diagnosis Issues**
- **Conflation of English as an**

Additional Language (EAL) and SEND: Professionals often lack training to distinguish between EAL-related learning delays and actual SEND, leading to delayed or incorrect diagnoses and inadequate support plans.

- **Rejection of overseas evidence:** Local authorities frequently dismiss medical and educational reports from Poland, forcing families to restart the entire diagnostic process in the UK.

- **Long waiting times:** Families face prolonged waits for diagnoses and support, during which time children may not receive appropriate intervention.
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Stigma**
- **Cultural perceptions of disability:** Different cultural attitudes towards disability and special needs can lead to initial reluctance to accept diagnoses or interventions due to stigma within the community.

If you have any concerns
regarding the workshops, please
call, email or text the forum.