SEN Reform NI

Equity in education

Just Fair Rights Resourcing: SEN Reform NI

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N. Ireland | N. Ireland Politics | Local News

SEN: Department appeals to principals to set up classes for children

1 minute ago

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Our journey with SEN education:

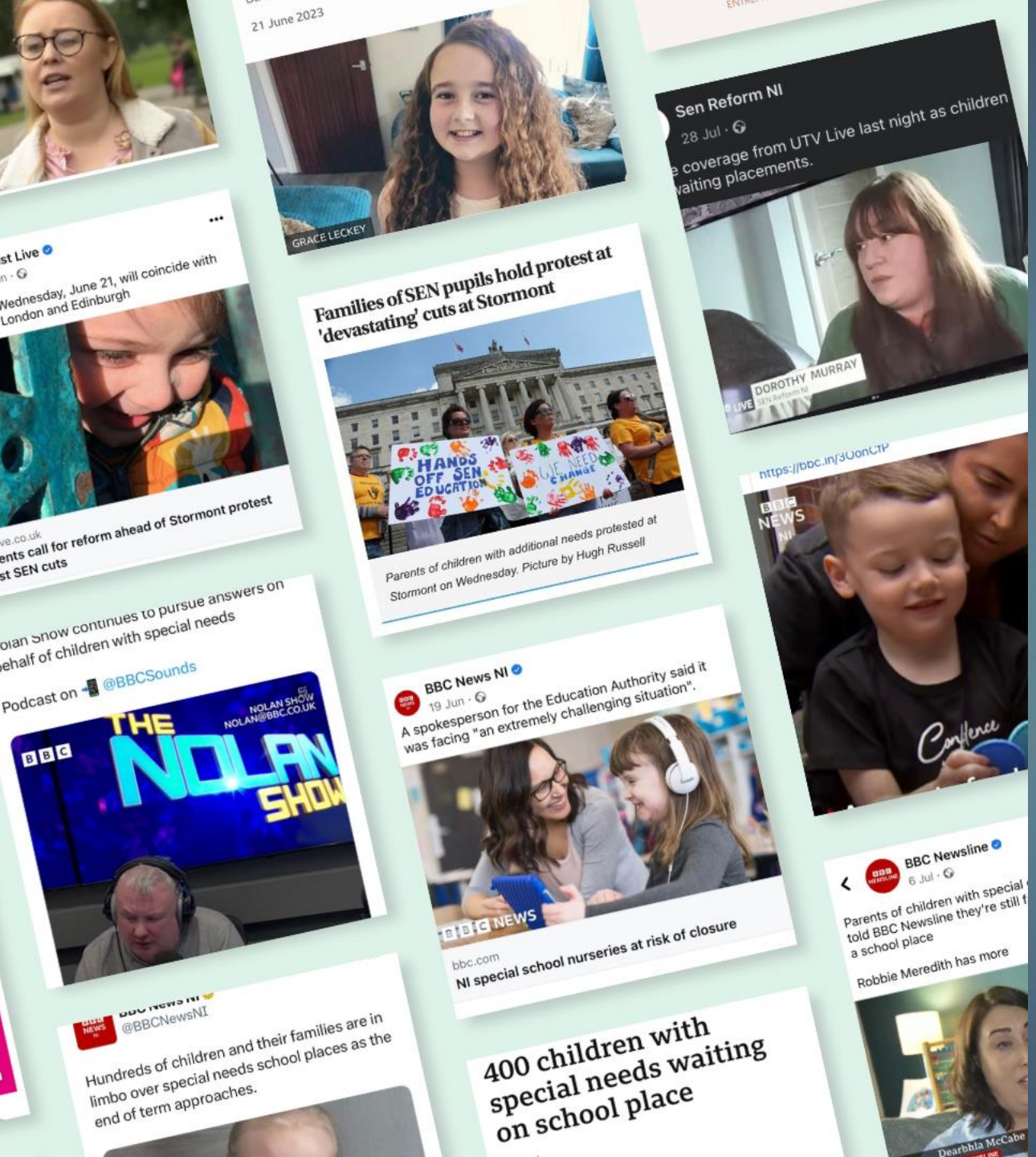
- Refused attendance at local mainstream school due to level of support required.
- Due to lack of SEN placements attended private SEN nursery.
- To attain Statement of Educational Need has to go through two legal Tribunals.
- For P1 significant barriers in the SEN education system.
- Social context of having no functioning Executive in NI.

SEN Reform NI

- Began in June 2023 as protest at Stormont Parliament buildings in NI.
- Several hundred parents coming together in response to our children with SEN not being given a school placement, with wide scale impact on legal and human rights to education.
- In a year the group has grown to almost 1.5k supporters online, with a petition of 16k signatures calling for reform to SEN provisions in NI.

Our aims:

- Influencing change to improve the education system for children with disabilities and additional needs in Northern Ireland with promotion of awareness on common issues facing children with disabilities and additional needs in the education system.
- By working with stakeholders in the education system such as civil servants, politicians, professionals and the community sector to represent lived experiences to help improve the system.
- Providing support for parents to represent their lived experiences of the special needs education system in Northern Ireland to advocate and influence change.



SEN Reform in 2023-2024: grassroots campaign

- Keep SEN issues on agenda: widespread media coverage with a focus on equity of access to education.
- Lobby Westminster: invited to give evidence to NIAC.
- Lobby MLAs: informal evidence to the Stormont Education Committee.
- Meetings and relations developed with the Minister for Education, Department for Education and Education Authority.
- Currently applying for charity status.

What needs to change?

- Planning for placements of children with disabilities and additional needs.
- Early intervention to enable children to achieve their potential.
- Systematic reform to reflect the changing profile of SEN in NI and reduce the need for legal intervention.
- Work towards building a truly inclusive education system.
- Realistic funding to meet the needs of the system.

Inclusion isn't just *inviting* someone to sit at your table.

@miacarellawriter

It's *believing* they belong there.

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