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# TODAY: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

## On this day

### 57 YEARS AGO (1962)

We told how President Kennedy ordered a naval blockade of Cuba in response to communist leader Fidel Castro's build up of arms supplied by the Soviet Union.

### 36 YEARS AGO (1983)

During the civil war in Lebanon two truck bombs smashed into buildings housing peacekeeping forces in Beirut killing 241 US and 58 French troops.

### 18 YEARS AGO (2001)

The IRA began decommissioning weapons in accordance with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, a move welcomed by PM Tony Blair and Irish PM Bertie Ahern.



## Today's giggle

I keep trying to lose weight... but it keeps finding me again!

## Birthdays



Pele, 79



Ang, 65



Emilia, 33

Football legend **Pele** is 79. He scored 77 goals for Brazil. Deadpool star **Ryan Reynolds** is 43. He is married to Blake Lively. Brokeback Mountain director **Ang Lee** is 65. He is from Taiwan. Game of Thrones star **Emilia Clarke** is 33. She is also a multi-instrumentalist. And many happy returns to Mirror readers **Nigel Stockton**, of Wakefield, West Yorks, who is 60 and **Anthony Land**, from Pontefract, West Yorks, who turns 70 today.

■ If you'd like us to mention the birthday of a loved one, write to Birthdays, Daily Mirror, One Canada Square, London E14 5AP or yourvoice@mirror.co.uk

# DAMNING NEW

## EXCLUSIVE

BY SHARON HENDRY

**AT 10 years old, Danyal Saleem comes home from school distraught, begging his parents not to send him back, threatening to take his own life as he struggles with profound problems due to his autism.**

He is one of a million vulnerable children being failed by a system that does not support special educational needs, a scandal dubbed a "major social injustice" in a Government report out today.

It points to a postcode lottery of provision, a system bogged down by bureaucracy and providers who "pass the buck". After an 18-month study of Education, Health and Care Plans, introduced in 2014 to support children with special educational needs and disabilities, Education Select Committee chairman Robert Halfon said many youngsters were "being let down day after day".

He said: "Many parents face a titanic struggle just to try and ensure their child gets access to the right support.

"Families are often forced to wade through a treacle of bureaucracy, in a system which breeds conflict and despair as parents try to navigate a postcode lottery of provision.

"A lack of accountability plagues the system as local authorities, social care and health providers too frequently seek to pass the buck rather than take



**BATTLE** Lawyer Hayley Mason

## Bad, unlawful refusals that are driven by lack of funds

## COMMENT

BY HAYLEY MASON, OF SEN LEGAL

WE represent 200 clients a year at the SEND Tribunal and have a 97% success rate. That's not me saying, 'We're fantastic'. It's showing how bad and unlawful a lot of council decisions are.

Across the country, local authorities are obliterating the legal time scales, and schools and councils are giving parents wrong information. There is not enough money or training in the system.

In mainstream schools, Special Educational Needs Coordinators are trained by the council and local authorities are not going to tell staff to refer children for EHCPs because they cost money.

Even if children have EHCPs, due to poor training or a lack of funds, schools don't know what to do with them.

Councils routinely turn down requests, thinking if they refuse 10 and only three appeal, they are saving money on seven.

We are in a horrible system where if you've got the money for good legal representation you can get what you want. Legal aid is hardly ever available in this area.

The average cost of our services is £7,000 to £10,000 for a full tribunal appeal. Our clients are not flying private jets, they

are re-mortgaging houses, but they don't see any other way.

And there are more appeals in the system than ever. Hearings are adjourned at a moment's notice because the system is so overloaded. This is hugely emotional for parents and children, many of whom have to be home educated while they wait.



**REPORT** Robert Halfon MP

responsibility for providing support."

Almost 1.3 million children need additional support to help them through state education. But only a little over 250,000 of them have provision that is legally enforceable in the form of an Education, Health and Care Plan.

The individualised plans are designed to help children with conditions such as autism access classroom support. But campaigners say cash-strapped local authorities avoid issuing the plans, and families are often forced to find lawyers to fight their case for an EHCP.

Without it, many young people are left unable to cope with the curriculum and struggling with anxiety.

Three years ago Danyal's anxiety was so bad he threatened to take his own life.

Mum Nazma, 36, said: "He would come home and tell us he wanted to die. He would beg us, 'Please don't force me to go to school'. It was heart-breaking then and it is still very difficult for us now. He is only a small child, but I worry every day that my son might take his own life."

Danyal attends Avenue Primary School, in Newham, East London, and struggles to cope in a large, busy class-

**“Every day is a difficult day at school for Danyal as his needs cannot be met**

NAZMA YAQOUB MOTHER OF AUTISTIC SCHOOLBOY DANYAL

room. Nazma said: "Every day is a difficult day at school for Danyal.

"His needs cannot be met and there is sensory overload in a big classroom with no specialised understanding of his condition." Nazma, and delivery driver

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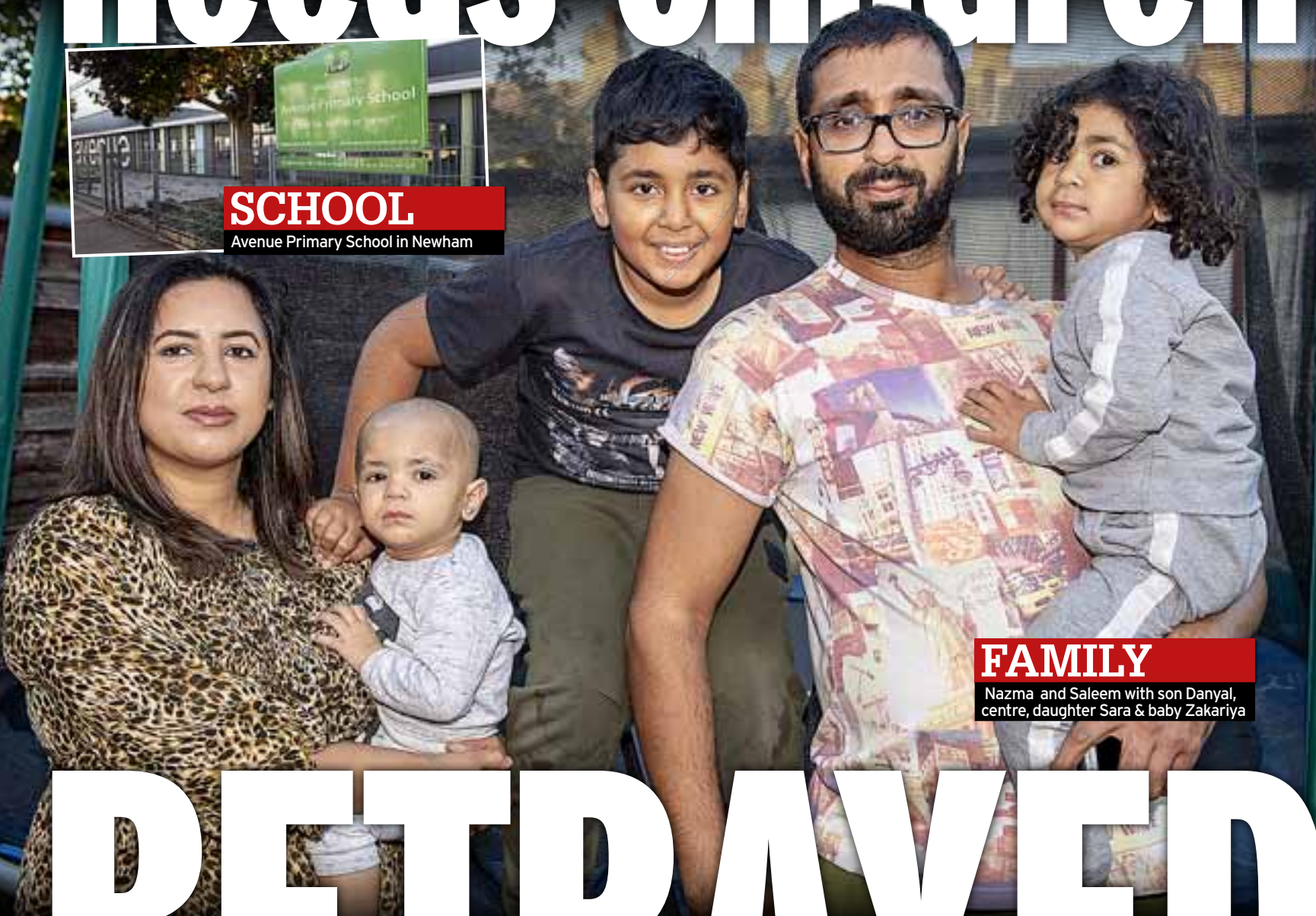
# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS UK CRISIS

# 1million special needs children



**SCHOOL**

Avenue Primary School in Newham



**FAMILY**

Nazma and Saleem with son Danyal, centre, daughter Sara & baby Zakariya

Pictures: PHIL HARRIS

# BETRAYED

husband Saleem, 38, who is also autistic, have battled to get their son's profound needs met. Nazma noticed Danyal's challenges within weeks of giving birth. She said: "I took him to the GP when he was three and mentioned autism, but was told, 'You don't want your child labelled'."

When she took Danyal to a pre-school, it was disastrous. "He had scratches on his face when I picked him up, and the teachers told me, 'He doesn't get on well with other children.'"

The transition to primary school in 2013 was also stressful, but teachers saw Danyal struggling and he was diagnosed

with autism in 2016. The school helped Nazma apply to Newham Council for an EHCP assessment in 2017, which was turned down on the basis Danyal was supported well enough without one.

Daily meltdowns and school refusals suggested otherwise and Nazma fought on until Danyal was assessed. But when he was refused an EHCP, Nazma had to go to a tribunal. She lost and is now preparing another appeal.

The EHCP replaced a system from the 1980s that assessed Special Educational Needs and Disability children.

The parents of many children who

have switched to EHCPs complain they have been left with lower levels of intervention because of inadequate plans.

Some SEND children have lost statutory protection entirely and a rushed 2018 transition deadline left an estimated 21,000 children without EHCPs.

The Education Select Committee report has now called for "radical change" to "ensure the 2014 Act delivers".

The Department for Education said it "recently announced a £780million increase to local authorities' high needs funding". Newham Council's Cllr Julianne Marriott, cabinet member for education,

said it had spent an extra £1.3million this year supporting SEND children.

She said the select committee's report was "absolutely right to highlight that the Department for Education has failed to provide funding where it has been desperately needed."

Nazma, who also has a daughter Sara, two, and year-old son Zakariya, said: "Local authorities put all their efforts into fighting parents while our children suffer badly in the crossfire. There can be no future for my son until they see this."



## HONOUR Thomas and gong Geraint gets parental tips from Wills as well as OBE

BY RUSSELL MYERS  
Royal Editor

CYCLIST Geraint Thomas shared parenting tales with Prince William as he collected his OBE.

The 2018 Tour de France winner was recognised for his services to cycling at a royal investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

Geraint received his honour from the Duke of Cambridge yesterday.

The double Olympic champion, 33, said William asked him about his baby boy, who was born three weeks ago.

"He asked how the sleepless nights were going," Geraint said. "He said their first one took a while for his sleep to kick in."

"You don't really know what to expect, but to chat to him about the rugby and my baby was surreal."

The Welshman added that it was "humbling" to be given the gong.

Others being honoured included Terence O'Neill, who has captured figures from Winston Churchill to Nelson Mandela.

After being presented with a CBE for services to photography, he described Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, as "very good" behind the camera.

PROMOTED CONTENT

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