



My name is Nicola Hughes. I am a counsellor, writer, and SEN parent, and for the past several years I have been documenting, researching, and speaking openly about **Parent Carer Trauma** — the systemic harm experienced by families who are forced to fight for their children’s basic rights.

My forthcoming book, ***SENT: The emails I sent, the silence that followed, and the trauma of the SEN system***, explores this reality through lived experience and professional insight. It shines a light on what so many families endure behind closed doors. You can read more about the book and access free resources here: www.nicolahughes.co.uk/book

I am preparing these letter templates because what is happening right now — the public minimising of SEN parents’ concerns, the casual framing of us as “snobs” or “kill joys”, the refusal to hear what we are actually saying — is not just frustrating. It is harmful. It reinforces the very culture of parent blame that so many of us have been fighting against for years.

Use these templates in whatever way feels right for you. Adapt them, soften them, strengthen them. What matters is that your voice is heard, and that those in power are reminded that SEN families are watching, organising, and refusing to be blamed for the failures of a system we did not create.

Before you go, you might like to read my latest blog: [The Cost of Being an SEN Parent](#). We’ve all got enough to do without sending letters to the higher powers and this blog identifies that cost!

Good luck and keep fighting!

Nicola x

Template One: MP

To find out who your MP is click here: <https://www.parliament.uk/find-your-MP>

You can email or send a letter but don't forget to include your address.

Dear (MP NAME)

I am writing to you as my Member of Parliament and as an SEN parent to express my profound disappointment and disgust at the Department for Education's latest campaign featuring Gemma Collins.

As someone raising neurodivergent children within a system already stretched to breaking point, I cannot overstate how deeply inappropriate and insulting this campaign feels. It trivialises the lived reality of families navigating SEND provision and reduces a complex, urgent national crisis to a piece of celebrity-led marketing.

For many of us, this is not merely tone-deaf — it is harmful. There are plenty of celebrities wisely campaigning for SEN families because they too are SEN parents. Why weren't they used? Instead, they produced campaigns that looked like a spoof sitcom. It communicates, intentionally or not, that the Department does not understand or respect the gravity of what families like mine are living through.

cc I spent two years fighting for the right education for my child and it was brutal. I became painfully familiar with parent carer trauma which I suffered due to failures in the system and immoral professionals. I was gaslit, my child's needs were minimised, professionals lied at tribunal about my child's needs. I am one of the lucky ones though. My child is now at a school that meets his needs and is doing well, but at huge emotional and financial cost to myself.

As my MP, I am asking you to take this matter seriously and to advocate for the following:

1. **An explanation of how this campaign was conceived, approved, and justified**, given the current state of SEND provision.
2. **A commitment that future communications involving SEND will be co-produced with disabled people, parent carers, and SEND professionals**, rather than celebrities with no relevant expertise.

Families like mine are not an afterthought. We are not a marketing opportunity. We are citizens whose children deserve safety, education, and respect.

I urge you to use your position to ensure that SEND children and their families are treated with the dignity, seriousness, and investment they deserve.

Yours sincerely,

Template TWO: Bridget Phillipson

bridget.phillipson@education.gov.uk

Dear Bridget Phillipson,

I am writing in response to your recent PR campaign with Gemma Collins, and in particular to your comment:

“Some of the discussion around this has veered between outright snobbery and just downright unpleasant attitude really and a bit of kill joy attitude. There's enough doom and gloom in the world. There's enough bad things happening. A bit of joy and a bit of fun I think could do us all a good favour.”

For many SEN parents, this comment has been deeply painful to read. We are not being “snobs”, nor are we “kill joys”. We are trying to tell you — clearly and repeatedly — that this campaign is offensive, dismissive, and profoundly out of touch with the reality of our lives. The fact that this message still has not landed is part of the problem.

You are right that there is a great deal of doom and gloom in the world. For SEN families, that is magnified daily by the lack of suitable educational provision and the relentless battles we face simply to secure our children’s basic rights. You may have been referring to global conflicts, but for many of us the conflict is on our doorstep every single day.

Adapt this to suit your own personal situation or keep as generic: *Over the years, countless SEN parents have fought harder than we ever imagined possible to secure an education, safety, and dignity for our children. Many of us have been dismissed, blamed, or mistreated by professionals who should have known better. Many of us live with the impact of systems-generated trauma — not because we are difficult, but because the system has been difficult to survive.*

One of the most harmful patterns we encounter is the “problem parent” narrative: the idea that we are overreacting, obstructive, dramatic, or simply in the way. Your comment above feeds directly into that narrative. It suggests that we are spoiling your fun, that we need to lighten up, that our concerns are an inconvenience rather than a warning sign of a system in crisis.

If you saw the reality of our lives — the exhaustion, the fear, the trauma, the years of fighting — you would understand how undermining and gaslighting your message has been. We are not asking for joyless lives. We are asking for our children to be safe, supported, and educated. We are asking to be treated with respect rather than suspicion or contempt.

I am asking you, sincerely and directly: please do better. Please listen to SEN parents. Please take the time to understand the harm that is being caused — not by a lack of humour, but by a lack of provision, a lack of safety, and a lack of respect.

Yours sincerely,