



Focus Group Research to Review the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004

Hello!

We are a group of researchers from the School of Education at University College Dublin.

The Minister for Special Education and Inclusion, Ms Josepha Madigan has asked us to explore people's experiences of the EPSEN Act, 2004. This will be done using focus group research.

The EPSEN Act, 2004 was introduced to ensure that children with special educational needs are supported in schools.

We want to hear about your experiences of the EPSEN Act, 2004.

Focus Group Research

A focus group is when people come together and share their experiences and ideas about a topic. In this case the topic is the EPSEN Act, 2004.

There are two types of focus groups you can join:

Group 1: Adult Focus Groups (18 and older)

- There will be 5 adult focus groups, each with about 20-25 people.
- Participants may include parents, teachers, SNAs, adult past pupils, and other people who work with children who have special educational needs.
- These groups will meet in-person. However, there may be an option to attend online if you cannot join because of distance, caring duties, or other reasons that make meeting in-person difficult.

- Focus group activities will be recorded in different ways. For example audio recordings, note-taking, and worksheets.

Group 2: Child and Young Person Focus Groups (10 to 18 years)

- There will be 4 groups of 12-15 children and young people.
- 3 of these groups will meet in-person.
- 1 group will meet online.
- Focus group activities will be recorded in different ways. For example audio recordings, note-taking, and worksheets.
- Some children who do not want to be part of focus groups may be invited to complete an activity pack that will be posted to them.

What to Do Next?

If you want to take part, please email the UCD EPSEN Research Team at epsen@ucd.ie and let them know how you would like to take part:

- I would like to join the Adult Focus Group.
- I would like my child to join the Child and Young Person Focus Group.
- I would like to join the Adult Focus Group and for my child to join the Child and Young Person Focus Group.
- I would like more information about the different types of focus groups.

What happens if I email the UCD EPSEN Research team?

Adult Focus Group

- We will send you an Information and Consent leaflet.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- You will be asked to provide some more information about yourself so that we can choose participants for the focus groups.
- If you are a past pupil with special educational needs, we would like to have an online information and consent meeting with you.

Child and Young Person Focus Group

- We will send you a Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Information and Consent Leaflet, and a Child Information Leaflet.

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be asked to sign and return the consent form.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will provide some more information about their child so that we can choose participants for the focus groups and activity packs.
- We will have an online Information and Consent meeting with the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and their child.

There may be more people interested in taking part than we can include, so you may not be chosen to take part.

However, we will do our best to make sure focus groups represent as many different views and experiences as possible.

What will we do with the information we collect?

We will use it to:

- Choose participants.
- Design focus group activities.
- Review all of the information and write a report for the Minister of Special Education and Inclusion about your experiences of EPSSEN.

How will we protect your privacy?

- Only the UCD EPSSEN Research Team will have access to your identifiable information (for example, name, age or special educational needs)
- The Department of Education can only access information when all identifying information has been removed.
- No information that could identify you will be included in the final report.
- All information collected is confidential unless you share information that shows that you or someone you know is at risk. Any risks to children will be reported to TUSLA.

Benefits and Risks

- You may enjoy, or feel upset about some of the experiences you or other people share.
- You may need to travel some distance to attend and take time out of your normal day.
- You may meet someone that you know at the focus group.
- You will have the chance to talk about your experiences of EPSSEN, 2004.

What happens if I decide to take part and then change my mind?

- You have a right to do this at any time up to and during the day of the focus group.
- During the focus group, you can decide which activities you would like to take part in.
- If you have taken part in an activity, it may not be possible to remove your contribution.
- If it is possible to remove it, you can email the UCD EPSEN Research Team (epsen@ucd.ie) up to two working days after the focus group meeting.

Feedback about Research Findings

- After we have written the report for the Minister of Special Education and Inclusion, we will email you a summary of the key findings.
- Please note that it may be a number of months after your participation before we can do this.