

SEND for the bankers

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As [The Guardian](#) noted yesterday:

Rachel Reeves is under pressure to reassure MPs over the state of the UK's public finances, amid concerns that the rising cost of special educational needs and disabilities (Send) could leave a significant hole in the government's financial buffer.

Meg Hillier, the chair of the all-party House of Commons Treasury committee, said the chancellor should make clear her long-term plans for the £6bn-a-year Send bill as uncertainty grows over how it will be accounted for at the end of the decade.

Reeves, who is due to appear before the committee next month, said in a letter to MPs that she plans to delay a decision until next year.

Let me offer some advice, as an accountant. It's spending that has to be recorded as such. Anything else is technically wrong, deceitful at best, and playing games by pretending that this very real cost to society does not exist and can, somehow, be accounted for in a way to keep the City happy.

What has the City got to do with this? As the Guardian added:

City analysts said financial market investors would be concerned if some or all of the £6bn Send annual cost was deducted from the budget surplus, which the chancellor more than doubled in last November's budget to £22bn to cushion the UK against volatile government bond markets.

To contextualise this, what are being referred to here are some of the absurd terms that the City, the Treasury and our Chancellor use to constrain government action. They are:

- * Balanced budgets
- * The household analogy
- * Fiscal rules

- * Fiscal space or headroom
- * Austerity

There are glossary links that explain these (two of them written to support this post).

The point about all of these terms is that they refer to economic mythology.

There is no need for the UK government's budget to balance. In fact, for it to do so is almost invariably economically harmful to the well-being of people in this country. That is because our government is not like a household: it creates the money it uses, unlike households, which are necessarily dependent on the money they can earn.

The government can then use this power for social purposes, and denying this is a form of corruption and a conspiracy against those who are prejudiced as a result.

Fiscal rules are works of fiction designed to constrain government activity to appease neoliberal interests within the financial services sector, and are part of the politics of destruction deliberately engineered to create the economics of failure that we are now witnessing all around us.

Fiscal space, or headroom, to which the particular concern is addressed, is simply a nuance within the concept of balance budgets and fiscal rules, referring to the amount of spare capacity that a Chancellor of the Exchequer supposedly has before they reach the constraint of failing to meet their fiscal rules, when in fact, any fiscal rule can be rewritten at any moment by any Chancellor if they so wish, as evidence from the last 30 years, which is the only period over which they have been in operation, proves.

Austerity is, of course, the imposition of unnecessary cost upon an economy to meet a fiscal rule that is disguised as economic necessity but it is in fact nothing more than the deliberate imposition of constraint on an economy to harm the well-being of those who are punished as a result, who are almost invariably the most vulnerable in any society, including that in the UK.

Do people who have special educational needs and disabilities fit into that classification of those who might be amongst the most vulnerable people in the UK? Of course they do.

What we know is that perhaps 15% of the population fits into this category, and that for at least some of those in that group, their condition makes it extremely difficult for them to learn in the conventional way used for the majority of people in our society. That is simply because their brains are wired in different ways than the rest of us, meaning that they require a different form of explanation in the course of their education than most other people. If they do not get that they are effectively excluded from education. In that case, their chances of being able to participate in society

throughout their lives are seriously impaired to the point that they become a potential lifetime cost in terms of support. However, this is entirely unnecessary because a great many of them will have enormous potential to offer if only they are supplied with the support that they need to release the potential that they have for the benefit of themselves, their families, and society at large.

This, of course, is the reality of what we're talking about. All of the economic matters being referred to are fiction. The corruption being witnessed is the fiction that is being treated as the priority, when the reality is being treated as something over which there might be discretion.

The reality is that people with so-called special educational needs really do have those needs.

The reality is also that neoliberal education, most particularly of the type promoted by Michael Gove a decade or so ago, which requires rote learning of facts without explanation, and which is associated with the requirement that those facts be regurgitated in exams of structured form, taken within strict time limits, and which provide almost no indication of understanding, but only facts, delivers teaching which makes almost no sense at all to a person with what are described as special educational needs, but which are special only in the sense that they are required by a minority who have exceptional difficulty in structuring their thoughts in this way because, to them, context matters much more than data, and understanding will, in most situations, be the key to unlocking their ability, which facts are ignored within most education these days.

The gameplay between the government, MPs and the city does, therefore, appear to be entirely callous. People of ability who need a type of education that is different from the norm to unlock that ability have been, or are being, denied the chance to participate in our society by systems that demand that we must all be standard in our ability, when of course it is always exceptional ability that drives the necessary processes of change that ultimately matter most to any society if they are to progress. That is literally how perverse this situation is.

And why is this denial happening? It would seem as if it is only to keep the City of London happy. The people in the City, most of whom will be desperately normal in their thinking, their ability, and their comprehension of reality, are seeking to constrain those who are exceptional, who have the potential to deliver so much more than many of those who are willing to comply with the constraints of the City of London will ever be able to comprehend.

And yes, that makes me very angry, and I am entirely unapologetic about that.