

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:

Hybrid – Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 3 July 2025

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Naomi Stocks

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

09.15 – 09.30

Public meeting

09.30 – 10.30

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

09.30

2 Pre appointment hearing for the Chair of the Qualifications Wales Strategic Board

09.30 – 10.30

(Pages 1 – 65)

Dr Paul Bevan, Candidate for the Chair of the Qualifications Wales Strategic Board

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Welsh Government Briefing for Committee Members

Information Pack for Applicants

Preferred candidate's CV

Preferred candidate's response to questions

Pre-appointment hearing report



3 Papers to note

10.30

3.1 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 66 – 71)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
from Cerebra

Private Annex

3.2 P-06-1499 Stop the use of term 'Universal Provision' as a reason to deny ALN

(Pages 72 – 73)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
from the Chair of the Petitions Committee

3.3 Issues facing the Higher Education Sector

(Pages 74 – 78)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from Cardiff University following the meeting on 12
Juen 2025

4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

10.30

Private meeting

10.30 – 12.30

5 Pre appointment hearing for the Chair of the Qualifications Wales Strategic Board – consideration of the evidence

10.30 – 10.45

Break

10.45 – 11.00

6 Routes into post-16 education and training – consideration of the draft report

11.00 – 12.00

(Pages 79 – 175)

Attached Documents:

Draft Report

7 Forward work programme – consideration of the approach

12.00 – 12.30

(Pages 176 – 192)

Attached Documents:

Forward work programme paper

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Agenda Item 3.1



Buffy Williams M.S.
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
SeneddChildren@Senedd.Wales

23rd June 2025

Dear Buffy

Continence care support services for disabled children in Wales

Thank you for meeting with us on 22 May 2025. As requested, we are writing to highlight the issues raised at our meeting.

[Cerebra](#) is a Wales-based charity which operates throughout the UK nations and supports families of children with brain conditions. Our [Legal Rights Service](#) has received regular reports from families concerning difficulties in accessing fit-for-purpose continence care support services for their disabled children – and, in particular, in accessing appropriate continence containment products.

In 2023, we commissioned a research project to investigate families' concerns about continence provision, which was led by [Luke Clements](#), Cerebra Professor of Law and Social Justice at the School of Law, Leeds University and culminated in a [report](#) published in February 2025.

Summary of the report's findings

The report¹ highlights the barriers families face in trying to access continence provision, including rigid restrictions on the number and type of products, poor quality and ill-fitting products and a lack of proper assessment and support.

The report describes the devastating physical, psychological and social impact of inadequate and discriminatory 'one size fits all' continence provision. It concludes that the harm being caused to disabled children who live with bladder and bowel difficulties amounts to a violation of their fundamental human rights – in terms of their right to education, to dignity, to inclusion and to freedom from degrading treatment.

The research² highlights, in particular, the traumatic school experiences of disabled children with bowel and bladder conditions: children desperate to be included but acutely self-conscious because of the rudimentary design of their highly obvious (often oversized) and poor quality containment products and

¹ Clements L, Aiello A and Fullard, L Inaccessible, unacceptable and unaccountable: the provision of paediatric continence supplies in England, Wales and Scotland (Cerebra 2025).

² Ibid, paras 7.41 – 7.51.

having to manage the devastating shame they experience, in terms of leakages, of smelling, of being bullied – and of being robbed of fundamentally important and unrecoverable childhood experiences.

Disabled children and their families are one of the most disadvantaged groups in the UK. Many parents also referred to the severe financial hardship they experience in having to pay for sufficient and suitable containment products and for the costs incurred as a result of the poor quality (and/or quantity) of products – of constantly having to wash clothing, bedding, carpets, furniture – and indeed repeatedly having to throw away bedding, clothing and much else.³

The report explains how the guidance currently in force in Wales is unfortunately contributing to the situation by failing to uphold equalities and human rights legislation.

Problems with the guidance in force in Wales

The current [Welsh Government Circular WHC/2022/004](#), *Guidance for the care of children and young people with continence problems*⁴ confirms that the Welsh Government has [adopted guidance produced in 2021](#) by the charity Bladder and Bowel UK (BBUK) as the official guidance in Wales (which we refer to below as the ‘2021 Guidance’).

Unfortunately, the Welsh Circular cited above contains an assertion that is self-evidently wrong, and the 2021 Guidance demonstrates a profound misunderstanding of the Welsh Government’s obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, as explained below.

(i) Misunderstanding of the Equality Act 2010

The 2021 Guidance is underpinned by a straightforward misunderstanding of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It strongly, and repeatedly, suggests that unlawful discrimination occurs when a disabled child is treated more favourably than a child who is not disabled - for example, at page 13:

- to ‘offer products for night time wetting to CYP [Children and Young People] who have a special need or disability could be considered discriminatory, as CYP who do not have additional needs are not provided with containment products for bedwetting’;

and at page 17

- ‘to provide containment products for night time wetting in children who are toilet trained in the day could be considered to be discriminatory and in breach

³ Ibid paras 7.52 – 7.55.

⁴ Please see paragraphs 3 and 11.

of the Equality Act 2010, as containment products are not provided for night time wetting to CYP who do not have additional needs’.

This demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the Government’s equal treatment obligations. The Equality Act 2010 section 13(3) makes it absolutely clear that treating a disabled person more favourably than someone who is not disabled does not, in itself, constitute unlawful discrimination.

(ii) Blanket ban on provision of products to children under 5

The 2021 Guidance also states that no continence containment products can be provided to children under the age of five. In the absence of compelling reasons to justify this difference of treatment on grounds of age (and disability) such a policy constitutes discrimination contrary to Article 14 (in combination with Article 8) of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Disabled children are more likely to suffer from bladder and bowel difficulties than their non-disabled peers: many are incapable of achieving full continence and many will take considerably longer to achieve full continence than children who are not disabled. The research data suggests that from the age of 3 years onwards, the cohort of children who are bladder and bowel incontinent will contain an increasingly significant proportion of disabled children.

It follows that a rigid policy of restricting support to all children aged five and above is likely to have a disproportionate and adverse impact on disabled children.

Given the evidence of the profound (and persistent) harms experienced by disabled children who are bladder and/or bowel incontinent⁵ and the impact on their families⁶ it is difficult to (a) see how such a rigid policy can be justified and (b) understand why public bodies are unable to make reasonable adjustments to their policies by acknowledging the materially different challenges faced by disabled children.

(iii) Maximum limit of 4 pads per day

The 2021 Guidance imposes a maximum daily limit of four pads per person. It provides no research-based evidence that justifies this restriction. The survey responses set out in the report demonstrate the profound harm and indignities experienced by disabled children and their families due to the four pad per day limit. From a lay person’s perspective, it is difficult to believe that such a limitation will be appropriate for all young people: people of very different sizes, constitutions, disabilities and illnesses.

⁵ Ibid paras 2.03 – 2.06 and Appendices 3 and 4.

⁶ Ibid paras 7.52 - 7.60.

Indeed, Department of Health guidance issued in 2000 (in England) stated⁷ that '[p]ads should be provided in quantities appropriate' to the individual's continence needs and that arbitrary ceilings should not be imposed, stating that:

A few patients, such as those with copious diarrhoea, a bladder or bowel fistula and some people with learning difficulties have needs well above the average and will need large quantities of pads to provide adequate containment. It is not acceptable for people with faecal incontinence to be supplied with so few pads that they have to reuse the same pad after they have become soiled, as serious skin complications can develop.

And, in 2017, Welsh Government Circular [WHC/2017/044](#) *Guidance for the care of children and young people with continence problems*⁸ accepted that to impose a maximum of four pads per 24 hours was '*inconsistent with public law principles and a breach of children's' dignity*'; that it does '*not take into account the need for a full assessment*' and did not meet (among other things) its standard concerning '*dignified care*'.

Unfortunately the current Welsh Government Circular [WHC/2022/004](#) *Guidance for the care of children and young people with continence problems*, wrongly states in paragraph 7 that the 2021 guidance contains the statement '*The number of products issued per 24 hours would normally not exceed four, but provision should meet assessed need.*' Unfortunately, this is incorrect. In fact, the 2021 guidance (please see page 6) simply imposes a maximum of four products a day: and this assertion is repeated on page 15 (first paragraph) and page 16 (second bullet point).

Unfortunately, this misalignment between the Circular and the Guidance has resulted in the Welsh Government inadvertently moving away from the rights respecting position of the 2017 Circular.

What we believe needs to be done

In January 2025, just before the publication of our report, BBUK issued a new version of its guidance. Unfortunately, the issues referred to above have not been fully addressed and we believe that the guidance requires further revision in order to ensure compliance with equalities and human rights legislation. Fortunately, we have engaged in discussions with BBUK, who have been very receptive to our concerns and are aiming to produce a revised version of the Guidance by the end of the summer.

In light of this, we would suggest that when it becomes available the Welsh Government should consider endorsing the forthcoming version of the BBUK guidance, providing of course that it is satisfied that it is compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. Alternatively,

⁷ Ibid para 4.02.

⁸ [WHC/2017/044](#)

if in due course the guidance remains unsatisfactory, we would welcome a commitment from the Welsh Government to develop its own fit-for-purpose guidance.

Our report contains compelling testimony from families describing the barriers they face in getting adequate continence provision. We have attached an account from a parent in Wales which we hope will help to convey the profound impact that inadequate and discriminatory provision is having on disabled children and their families (please see Appendix 1) as well as an audio recording of the transcript. As a children's rights respecting nation, we hope that the Welsh Government will seize this opportunity to resolve the shortcomings of the current guidance and set a clear example for the rest of the UK.

Yours sincerely

J. Camburn-Rahmani

Jess Camburn-Rahmani
CEO

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 3.2

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Buffy Williams MS,
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

24 June 2025

Dear Buffy,

Petition P-06-1499 Stop the use of term 'Universal Provision' as a reason to deny ALN

The Petitions Committee met on 16 June and considered the above petition, submitted by Victoria Lightbown.

The Committee expressed sympathy with the petitioner's campaign and recognised the importance of scrutinising the implementation of the ALN reforms to ensure the system functions effectively,

Members noted that the Cabinet Secretary for Education is addressing the petitioners' specific concerns, and is due to make a statement on ALN reforms to the Senedd in July. Members agreed to await the statement and, in the meantime, to refer the petition to your Committee given its ongoing monitoring and review of the ALN reforms. In doing so, Members noted the importance of avoiding duplication of work already being undertaken by another committee.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petition, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here: [P-06-1499 Stop the use of term 'Universal Provision' as a reason to deny ALN](#)

I would be grateful if you could send any response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair

Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
Deisebau@senedd.cymru
senedd.cymru/SeneddDeisebau
0300 200 6565

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
Petitions@senedd.wales
senedd.wales/SeneddPetitions
0300 200 6565

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 3.3

Additional information from Cardiff University following the evidence session on 12 June 2025

- Prof. Lerner referred to [our recent rise](#) in the Complete University Guide rankings 2026. Prof. Lerner also alluded to “one of the key international league tables” which was under embargo This was [the QS World Rankings](#), which has now been published.
- [Senate composition](#)
- Moodys Report: To be sent on shortly.
- List of meetings referred to by Wendy Lerner:

Fri 17 Jan 2025	Wendy Lerner and higher education officials within Welsh Government.
Wed 22 Jan 2025	Wendy Lerner and Steve Riley met with higher education and health officials within Welsh Government
Wed 22 Jan 2025	Wendy Lerner met with Medr.
Mon 27 Jan 2025	Steve Riley met with HEIW.
Mon 27 Jan 2025	Wendy Lerner met with Jeremy Miles MS, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.

- [Octopus Ventures report](#)
- [A press release sent on 18/06/25](#) announcing investment in Draig Therapeutics, a major spin-out from Cardiff University in life sciences.
- Follow-up news coverage relating to mental health. As a result, I also wanted to include an external audit of Occupational Health and Safety, ISO 45003

- The Chairs of Universities Wales letter sent to the then Cabinet Secretary

20 June 2025

External audit

Cardiff University invests in external certification to the following [ISO standards](#) as part of the commitment to safety, health, environmental and wellbeing management:

- ISO 14001 : 2015 - [Environmental management systems](#)
- ISO 45001 : 2018 - [Occupational health and safety management systems](#)
- ISO 45003 : 2021 - [Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work](#)

ISO 45003 is a relatively new ISO standard. Cardiff achieved recognition against this standard in 2022 and believes it is the first higher education institution in the UK to achieve compliance with the requirements of the then new international standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace, which was developed by the British Standards Institute (BSI) after consultation with the British Psychological Society.

During June 2025, following routine annual external audit against all three of these management standards, the external auditors confirmed that Cardiff would be recommended for continued certification. The audit also identified 5 minor non-conformances and a few opportunities for improvement which the institution welcomes in the spirit of continual improvement. The formal audit report is yet to be received as the external audit company need to complete their internal processes to assess the recommendation and confirm certification before the report can be issued.

Sickness absence, OH and EAP data

Sickness absence

Data based on the 12 months preceding 30th April 2025

The proportion of absence days caused by stress has decreased from 19.2% (7,972 out of 41,612) last year (twelve months preceding 30th April 2024) to 18.7% (7,753.5 out of 41,510 total days lost) this year.

The introduction of coding distinguishing personal and work-related stress at the beginning of last year reveals that during the last 12 months 58.9% stress cases are personal (265 cases) and 41.1% are work-related (185 cases).

Occupational Health

Data from January to April 2025 has been reviewed and compared to the same period in 2024.

The data shows mental health appointments have remained consistent (169 MH appointments in 2024 vs 163 MH appointments in 2025).

Further breakdown of the data shows work-related stress also remains consistent (47 appointments in 2024 vs 48 appointments in 2025) as has work-related depression (2024 = 4 vs

2025 = 6), whereas Stress (non-work-related) (34 appointments in 2024 vs 26 appointments in 2025) and Work-Related Anxiety (13 appointments in 2024 vs 7 appointments in 2025) have all slightly decreased.

Employee Assistance Programme

Data based on figures from January 1st to March 31st

The average wait time, year-to-date, from first contact to first counselling session – when people’s needs are explored in more depth – was 5.33 days. For context, the average wait for a first session of a talking therapy in the NHS is currently around eight weeks.

The average time from the first to the second counselling session was 11.52 days.

Overall, clinical outcomes continue to be very positive. Collectively, they show a distinct decline in the severity of presentation by end of service which suggests most people feel a lot better after using the service than they did before.

The vast majority of CU clients contact Vivup whilst still in work. The level is higher than the Vivup average seen across all of its clients.

More of our staff access the clinically validated self-care materials than is the norm across Vivup’s entire client base.

Overall service demand is fairly consistent – with an average of around 100 contacts per month YTD. There was an increase in demand in March in comparison with February, as there was with Vivup’s other clients. Any assessment of demand includes *all* support options – e.g., for clinically validated self-care materials, for the Your Care wellbeing self-monitoring system, or for one of the many counselling options Vivup provides. We promote Vivup frequently in order to increase usage of the service.

The most significant presenting issues YTD are as follows: Anxiety (32%), Stress (28%), Work Related Stress (10%) and Depression/Low Mood (8%).



25 April, 2023

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your invitation to our first meeting in person at Ty Hywel at 10 am on 3 May which we look forward to very much. We trust it will be a very constructive and open sharing of views and issues for the HE sector from everyone's perspective.

As both Chairs and Trustees of substantial charitable enterprises, with wide ranging backgrounds (brief biogs are attached for your information), we fully recognise the fiduciary duties and obligations which attach to our roles and the need to discharge them as best we can to ensure the security and long term sustainability of the institutions which we proudly serve. And it is the long term with which we are primarily concerned, not forgetting the short or medium term challenges which need to be viewed in the context of the key underlying issues which go right to the beating heart and wellbeing of the future of higher education in our country.

To that end, we welcome the opportunity to meet with you at a critical moment for the HE sector in Wales and the UK generally - noting that in England discussions are already well advanced on the challenges faced and how they might best be addressed. We are at a 'tipping point' where, if we do not, as Chairs and Trustees, discharge our responsibilities and address certain issues in a timely and responsible manner, then very serious and difficult choices may need to be made. Working closely with yourself and your colleagues in Welsh Government, it is our fervent hope and wish that, together, we can engage and work towards a meaningful and enduring platform upon which to build a more secure future recognising the central role Universities play in our economic recovery.

To facilitate and focus our discussion on 3 May, it might be helpful therefore to highlight what appear to us to be some of these critical issues.

- the likely continuation of current-fee levels for the foreseeable future, against the rising cost base of our institutions;
- heavy dependence on international students in our funding models, and the use of such volatile revenues to cross-subsidise other core activities, notably research;
- the increasingly competitive university environment, both within the UK and globally;
- research and innovation funding, which is lagging well behind other jurisdictions and impacts on our competitiveness and our ability to support the WG innovation agenda;
- staff workload and pressures - not only as a function of the cost of living increases but of the impact on staff/student ratios as student numbers grow to mitigate the decrease in real terms of tuition fees
- the impact of cost pressures on the overall student experience/satisfaction as reflected in continuation and completion rates and their health and mental wellbeing;
- our ability to extend our universities' roles in respect of social inclusion, widening access, the journey towards net zero, the promotion of 'place' and our wider contribution to the Future Generation of Wales Act.

There will doubtless be other areas which we can usefully discuss. Your insight and guidance on how we might best approach such matters will be most welcome. We look forward very much to meeting you on 3 May.

With our very good wishes,

Chairs of Universities Wales.

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Agenda Item 7

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