

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd
PR58
Ymateb gan Anabledd Dysgu Cymru / Evidence from Learning Disability Wales

[Learning Disability Wales](#) is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. Learning Disability Wales works with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector to create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability.

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We are grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the forthcoming priorities of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee. We would like to suggest the following priorities for the committee:

1. Fighting Climate Change with Fairness

We agree that protecting the environment and fighting climate change is of vital importance. After all, climate change [disproportionally affects disabled people](#). However, eco-ableism occurs when changes to protect the environment or fight climate change are put into place without taking accessibility issues into account and disabled people are thus disproportionately disadvantaged. For example, while it is good to encourage walking and cycling, we would have liked to see an acknowledgement that changes made to accommodate the more eco-friendly forms of travel should never disadvantage disabled people in their transport needs. Avoiding eco-ableism is important both in terms of not unreasonably impacting the lives of disabled people in practical terms (such as reducing the availability of accessible parking and routes for the creation of bicycle paths) as well as avoiding shame and stigma for using less environmentally friendly transport measures when necessary.

2. Strategic Investments in Wales

Some areas of Wales struggle with poverty and have done for a long time. We recommend that the committee scrutinises the Welsh Government's commitment to the Socio Economic Duty for Wales and ensures that all commissioning and investment decisions are taken with the Duty in mind. We furthermore urge the committee to expect accessibility to be built into projects funded by Welsh Government. Too often accessibility concerns are merely an afterthought meaning that the onus is on the disabled person to

ask for reasonable adjustments. Instead, Welsh Government should be held accountable to make sure adjustments are built into projects from the start. For people with a learning disability this means having information provided in accessible formats such as Easy Read and to make sure that support is easily available.

3. Improving public transport

We urge the committee to engage with the Transport for Wales strategy and scrutinise its commitment to improving access to public transport in rural areas. In our consultation response to the strategy (link below) we have outlined some of our concerns and priorities. Consideration needs to be given not only to making public transport physically accessible, but also for booking and purchasing tickets to be easy to understand and use by people with a learning disability. There also needs to be strategic and substantive investments in services and resources that will support people with learning disabilities specifically to travel, for example through travel training. The plans to extend public transport and to make it safer, more reliable and affordable will greatly benefit disabled people in general and people with a learning disability in particular. People in North Wales in particular will benefit greatly from more reliable and accessible public transport.

The Transport for Wales strategy has a strong focus on improving opportunities for environmentally friendly modes of travel like cycling and walking. We urge the committee to take into account the needs of disabled people in this who should have the same access to these modes of transport as everyone else.

4. Inclusive Covid recovery

Much of Welsh Government work will be concerned with controlling and recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. We ask the committee to use its powers to ensure that disabled people are not left behind and that policies intended to improve the lives of Welsh citizens do not have a negative impact on disabled people. We urge the committee to closely study the report "[Locked Out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19](#)" published by the Disability Equality Forum earlier this year to understand more on what that would entail.

5. Digital Inclusion

In your own priorities you mention the need to establish high speed internet throughout Wales to help people stay connected and improve digital infrastructure. We would like the committee to take into account that for many people with a learning disability it will take more than just high speed internet to stay connected.

While the pandemic has led to many people with learning disabilities gaining important new digital skills, the pandemic has also highlighted the harsh

realities of digital exclusion for many people with a learning disability. Many simply did not have the technology and/or skills to engage with others online during lockdown and were therefore left in total isolation. Not only were they not able to keep in touch with friends and family but with so many services switching to online they found everyday living extremely difficult eg online shopping, virtual appointments with support staff, ordering prescriptions etc. More work needs to be done to ensure people with a learning disability have the technology and skills to navigate their daily lives and stay connected while at the same time making sure that those who do not have digital skills can still access life.

Further resources:

Learning Disability Wales, 2019: Why climate change is a disability issue. Available online: <https://www.ldw.org.uk/why-climate-change-is-a-disability-issue/>

Engage to Change, 2021: *Consultation Response: Llwybr Newydd—a new Wales transport strategy*. Available online: www.engagetochange.org.uk/article/consultation-response-llwybr-newydd-a-new-wales-transport-strategy/index.html_gzip

Disability Equality Forum, 2021: *Locked out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19*. Available online: <https://gov.wales/locked-out-liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19-html>

All Wales People First Manifesto 2021 – Available online: <https://allwalespeople1st.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Manifesto-2021-Website.pdf>