

Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

HSC PSS 60

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Anabledd Dysgu Cymru | Learning Disability Wales

Blaenoriaethau cychwynnol a nodwyd gan y Pwyllgor Initial priorities identified by the Committee

Mae'r Pwyllgor wedi nodi nifer o flaenoriaethau posibl ar gyfer ei waith yn ystod y Chweched Senedd, gan gynnwys: iechyd y cyhoedd a gwaith ataliol; y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol, gan gynnwys diwylliant sefydliadol a lles staff; mynediad at wasanaethau iechyd meddwl; arloesi ar sail tystiolaeth ym maes iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol; cymorth a gwasanaethau i ofalwyr di-dâl; mynediad at wasanaethau adsefydlu i'r rhai sydd wedi cael COVID ac i eraill; a mynediad at wasanaethau ar gyfer cyflyrau cronig tymor hir, gan gynnwys cyflyrau cyhyrsgerbydol.

The Committee has identified several potential priorities for work during the Sixth Senedd, including: public health and prevention; the health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing; access to mental health services; evidence-based innovation in health and social care; support and services for unpaid carers; access to COVID and non-COVID rehabilitation services; and access to services for long-term chronic conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions.

C1. Pa rai o'r materion uchod ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r Pwyllgor roi blaenoriaeth iddynt, a pham?

Q1. Which of the issues listed above do you think should be a priority, and why?

We believe that all the issues listed above are important. We would like to point out that all the different issues are interrelated and must be addressed together.



Blaenoriaethau allweddol ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd

Key priorities for the Sixth Senedd

C2. Yn eich barn chi, pa flaenoriaethau allweddol eraill y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd mewn perthynas â:

- a) gwasanaethau iechyd;**
- b) gofal cymdeithasol a gofalwyr;**
- c) adfer yn dilyn COVID?**

Q2. In your view, what other key priorities should the Committee consider during the Sixth Senedd in relation to:

- a) health services;**
 - b) social care and carers;**
 - c) COVID recovery?**
-

Gwasanaethau iechyd

Health services

Health inequalities

There are significant health inequalities in Wales that are especially pronounced for people with a learning disability. UK-wide data shows that women with a learning disability die on average 18 years earlier and men with a learning disability 14 years earlier than people without a learning disability (Mencap 2018). Covid-19 has exaggerated existing health inequalities and urgent action is needed in order to avoid further harm (Williams 2021). There are a variety of reasons why life expectancies are so much shorter for people with a learning disability and we urge the Committee to study them closely.

We would also like to draw the Committee's attention to Welsh NHS Confederation Paper Making the difference: Tackling health inequalities in Wales and the recommendations laid out within it.

Welsh Government has recently introduced the new Learning Disability Educational Framework for healthcare staff in Wales. We believe that the Committee could play an important role in monitoring the implementation and impact of the new framework on reducing health inequalities.

Annual Health Checks

We urge the Committee to scrutinise the delivery of annual health checks for people with learning disability in Wales. There are several important issues here including the need to make annual health checks accessible for all adults with a learning disability and the role of diagnostic overshadowing in making it harder for people with a learning disability to access health care. All adults with a learning disability should be able to have an annual health check from their GP. However, we know that even before the pandemic not everyone eligible for the annual health check was receiving it and that during the Covid-19 pandemic most people with a learning disability in Wales have not been able to have their health checks. In order to prevent long-term health problems for people with a learning disability in Wales we recommend re-introduction of

annual health checks as soon as possible and a long-term commitment to make them accessible to anyone who needs them, especially older people with a learning disability who may have more complex health needs. We worked with Public Health Wales over 2 years ago to develop an easy read resource pack for GPs to improve the accessibility and uptake of annual health checks. We would like the Committee to undertake an inquiry into the use of the easy read resource pack and the impact on the uptake and quality of annual health checks across Wales.

Mencap (2018): Information on Health Inequalities - <https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/research-and-statistics/health/health-inequalities>

Williams, Carwyn (2021): Wales needs a clear strategy for tackling wider health inequalities, Learning Disability Wales homepage - <https://www.ldw.org.uk/wales-needs-a-clear-strategy-for-tackling-wider-health-inequalities/>

Gofal Cymdeithasol a gofalwyr

Social care and carers

Person centred approaches

People with a learning disability often struggle not only with accessing services in but also with getting the right support when they do access services. In order to get the right support, it is important that services are delivered in a person centred way where the support needs and preferences of the person decide what support they receive, rather than people simply being offered the support that happens to be available and affordable. In order to tackle poverty and inequality, support must be made available to everyone who needs it, not just those who have the skills to advocate for themselves. Families with disabled children and people whose support needs prevent them from accessing support themselves should be offered person centred support through case coordinators who can help them navigate the system and access the support they need.

Digital inclusion

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. Digital exclusion continues to be an issue as restrictions are eased with many bars and restaurants requiring customers to order using apps and even some train stations only selling tickets via an app or website. 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. We suggest that the Committee undertakes an inquiry into how people with a learning disability can be more closely supported to develop their digital skills.

Loneliness and social isolation

Before the pandemic, many people with a learning disability were socially isolated and while for some lockdown has given them new opportunities to connect with people online, for others the pandemic has left them even more isolated than ever before.

There have been issues with some supported living and residential settings not allowing people to see their families, despite Welsh Government guidance to the contrary, as the interpretation of the guidance by individual providers or local authorities seemed to vary greatly. We urge the

Committee to closely monitor how people with a learning disability in supported living and residential settings are treated in the coming months and how their rights can be maintained.

Reducing Restrictive Practices

We [recently wrote to Ministers](#) calling on Welsh Government to take 6 specific actions to ensure that people with a learning disability and/or autism in (or from) Wales are not subjected to abuse in residential care settings (LDW 2021). We believe that people should not need to be sent to expensive out-of-area placements, far away from their families and communities, simply because there is a lack of good quality specialist services in their local area.

The recent allegations of abuse at Ty Coryton highlight yet again that abuse is not always identified by inspectorates and we believe that employing people with a learning disability and family carers to take part in inspection reviews would provide a better opportunity to identify early warning signs of poor practice. We would like to suggest that the Committee conducts an inquiry into how people with a learning disability and family carers can be involved in undertaking inspections so that their lived experiences can inform the process.

We welcome the publication of the [Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework](#) and we are keen to promote this as widely as possible to ensure social care staff understand the importance of using the least restrictive ways of working with the people they support. We believe the Committee could play a significant role in monitoring the implementation of the new framework by conducting an inquiry into how it is being implemented across Wales and the impact it has on people's lives.

Learning Disability Wales (2021): Is there a 'Winterbourne in Wales'? <https://www.ldw.org.uk/is-there-a-winterbourne-in-wales/>

c) COVID recovery Inclusive Covid

Inclusive Covid recovery

Much of the Senedd's 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.

The report lays out how during the pandemic the rights of disabled people have suffered and how as a result of the pandemic the principles of "Voice, Choice and Control" for disabled people have been severely eroded. The "Locked Out" report argues that this highlights the fact that disabled people's rights were never fully enshrined in policy in the first place. Going forward we think it is important to ensure that the work of the Senedd is informed by the social model of disability and the principles of person-centred planning, and that the Committee engages with and listens to people with a learning disability directly to seek their opinions. The All Wales People First Manifesto 2021, for example, sets out some of the key issues that people with a learning disability in Wales would like to see addressed. The Committee has an important role in scrutinising Welsh Government's plans for Covid recovery and ensuring that disabled people are included at all levels.

Covid research study

We are part of a research project looking at the impact of coronavirus on people with a learning disability in Wales (as part of a wider UK study). The study notes that people with a learning disability already needed improved access to quality healthcare and effective support before March 2020. Opportunities to access both diminished during the pandemic and this had a significant impact on the lives of people with learning disability. Many have come closer to coronavirus than other people because of the nature of the support they receive. The anxieties people with a learning disability have faced are significant. Reduced access to support services and higher levels of loneliness and isolation have compounded this. We will be sharing the findings of the research as it progresses and highlighting to policy makers and service providers what needs to be done to ensure that people with a learning disability are not left behind in the post-pandemic recovery process. We would welcome the opportunity to share the findings of the study with the Committee when available.

Returning to face-to-face support

We have heard from many people with a learning disability and their families that day services in some local authority areas are either very slow to restart or are simply no longer being offered. Others are very anxious about face-to-face services re-starting and need reassurance that measures are in place to reduce the risks from Covid-19. A balance clearly needs to be struck between the need for risk management and the need for services to return to normal as quickly as possible. With restrictions continuing to ease, people with a learning disability with care and support needs should be able to access services to meet those needs so that they too can start returning to normal life and not be left behind.

The pandemic has shown us that there are new and innovative ways of doing things and many people with a learning disability have gained new skills in using technology that were previously never considered possible. It is important that these skills and opportunities are not lost as we return to 'normality' and a blended approach should be considered by services where possible. We suggest that the Committee carries out an inquiry into the return of face-to-face services across Wales and the whether this is being carried out in an inclusive and fair way.

Further resources:

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>

Unrhyw faterion eraill

Any other issues

C3. A oes unrhyw faterion eraill yr hoffech dynnu sylw'r Pwyllgor atynt?

Q3. Are there any other issues you wish to draw to the Committee's attention?

Support for parents with learning disabilities

Welsh Government has commissioned an important piece of work to develop guidance for professionals on supporting parents with a learning disability with the aim of reducing the number of children taken into care. We recommend that the Committee conducts an inquiry into the implementation and impact of the guidance when it is published to ensure that social workers are offering the right support to parents with a learning disability and that parents are being treated fairly and equally in order to keep more families together.

Health and Social Care Workforce

Workforce, in relation to recruitment and retention, is widely regarded as the most significant challenge facing the Welsh health and care system now and in the future and we encourage the Committee to urgently look into how staff in both the social and the health care sector can be better supported. There needs to be an urgent focus on parity of esteem between the health and social care workforces in relation to pay, terms and conditions and career progression as well as an improvement of these working conditions overall. We need an investment in the workforce now in order to make sure that people with a learning disability will receive the care and support they need.

Any inquiry into the health and social care workforce should also consider the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on health and care staff wellbeing. Staff wellbeing across all parts of the health and care sector continues to be a key priority for NHS, social care and third sector organisations.

Health and social care integration

The new Programme for Government includes plans to reform primary care and bring public services together as well as investing in integrated health and social care centres across Wales. We believe that health and social care need to work together to ensure that people with a learning disability get the right support at the right time. We would particularly like to see social care professionals ensuring that the people they work with have good access to healthcare and that they work with people with a learning disability and their families to increase the take up of annual health checks. We encourage the Committee to pay attention to how services are linked up and how a more seamless transition between services can be facilitated.