

PA47 Individual

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Absenoldeb Disgyblion

Ymateb gan Unigolyn

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Pupil absence

Evidence from Individual

Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference, which have been grouped into 5 themes.

1. Reasons

I am responding as a parent of a learner who the authorities classed as a 'persistent absentee' but who was in fact suffering from a long-term illness, involving repeated emergency hospital admissions and five different surgical procedures, which meant she was absent from school for an academic year. Calling her a 'persistent absentee' set the tone for the utterly inadequate response by her school and local authority.

2. Risks and consequences

My daughter and her family felt abandoned by her school which made no effort to understand her illness and assumed from the outset took the view that non-attendance was a choice. All contact with them was initiated by us not them. No arrangements were made for her education in her absence, which as she was in year 10 was a major gap. We had to fight for home tuition which was initially refused. When it was offered it wasn't at a suitable level and basically comprised 'art' i.e. colouring in. When she was well-enough to return to school, we had a battle to arrange a gradual return to ease her re-engagement. We felt her school was inflexible, for example insisting she attended RE lessons and PE rather than focus on getting 5 GCSEs. Arrangements for catch up were woeful, comprising her copying from another student's books. The long-term effect was my daughter - having previously enjoyed school - came to hate it and could not leave fast enough. We were fortunate to be able to pay for private tuition and she eventually achieved 7 GCSES at A or A* but we should not have had to do this.

3. Impact

The impact of mishandled absence on my daughter was huge, and made the effects of missed learning much worse. She felt alienated from school, and had it not been for private tuition would be have been denied A level and university study.

4. Effectiveness of policies

Zero. The school and local authority took a punitive approach and we received no support as parents .

5. Other

We are articulate parents who were able to advocate for our daughter and use our knowledge of the system (and our income) to try to achieve a good outcome for her. I was shocked to experience the negative and punitive approach of her school and local authority, and the absence of adequate support for her learning and eventual return to school. I dread to think what the experience of less well resourced parents and learners is, whatever the cause of their absence.

