

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to increase funding for people with a learning disability to access mainstream post-16 education.

This petition serves to follow up to the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning's statement of the 23rd November 2010, in which he pledged to increase funding that would enable SEN pupils to access mainstream, post-16 education.

The petitioners would wish to know what progress has been made in achieving this aim. The commitment to substantially increase the funding for access to mainstream education is to be strongly welcomed.

Mencap Cymru has been made aware however of at least two examples, from different areas of Wales, where young people with a learning disability have been told that they will not be able to access mainstream post-16 education due to a lack of funding. In these examples, both would be accessing said education this coming academic year (September 2011) and the decision has been made by the Local Education Authority.

Mencap Cymru also supports the principle behind the removal of statements of SEN in favour of individual development plans for people up to the age of 25.

This represents a move towards more person centred service delivery in education policy.

Worthy of mention however is that stringent monitoring of this new system needs to be in place at the time of implementation. This will ensure that the policy shift is not seen as a mechanism to exclude large numbers of people who are currently in receipt of a vital service.

Mencap Cymru believes that with the right interventions and support, the majority of people with a learning disability can access mainstream education. This is a distinctly different principle to integration whereby young people with a learning disability are granted access to slightly modified education services. Full inclusion is where all barriers to access have been removed in line with the social model of disability.

Much research and work has been done by *the Alliance for Inclusive Education* on the benefits of inclusivity. The benefits extend beyond pupils with a learning disability having person centred education. They also serve to introduce the notion of diversity into the classroom, ingratiating disabled pupils to their non-disabled peers. Further implementation of the policy of inclusion at a school stage will serve to promote inclusion in wider society in adult life.