



Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

13 January 2023

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your letter of 13 December in relation to the Equality and Social Justice Committee spotlight inquiry into the experiences of young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the criminal justice system.

The ability to communicate is an essential life skill for all children and young people and early identification and intervention to support individuals with specific needs is essential. Prime responsibility for the provision of speech and language therapy services to children and young people rests with the health service. In education, local authorities and schools are responsible for providing suitable education provision for all children, including those with SLCN. Many local authorities in Wales have service level agreements with their health boards to provide speech and language therapy in schools.

The following table shows the numbers of learners with SLCN who have been permanently excluded from schools over the past 5 academic years (the only years with ALN Need data is available).

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of pupils permanently excluded with statements for SLCN	6	9	10	8	not published

The data for the number of SLCN pupils permanently excluded in 2020/21 is not published because there were fewer than 5 pupils in this category. This is done to protect the confidentiality of personal data and limit the possibility of disclosure.

We are currently undertaking an extensive amount of work to support all children to remain in mainstream education and avoid exclusion. This includes, the new ALN system, which is currently being implementing on a phased basis, aims to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision (ALP) and ensure it is focused on individual needs. It puts the views, wishes and feelings of learners and their parents at the heart of the process to identify individual needs and determine ALP to meet those needs. It also strengthens the

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

legal responsibility on local health boards to meet the clinical needs of the child. This is intended to help ensure the needs of children, such as those with SLCN, are identified early and effective interventions are put in place.

To help develop the skills of the education workforce to operate the new ALN system, we have developed a professional learning offer for all teachers to promote person-centred practice and differentiated learning to close learning gaps and respond to needs of learners. This includes professional learning for Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCOs) to provide strategic leadership and act a first point of call for teachers seeking professional advice and guidance. We have also been working with the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA) to develop online learning modules to help teachers and schools develop their understanding of different types of ALN, including SLCN, and how to effectively support learners. We intend to publish these on Hwb in the next few months.

The Welsh Government has invested £35m core funding to date in preparing the infrastructure for ALN reform and increasing ALN provision.

In addition, we will be commissioning research into exclusions in January 2022, with the aim of understanding the support schools, learners and their partners need to avoid excluding learners from school.

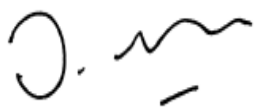
We also know that many children and young people within the criminal justice system have a higher incidence of poor emotional and mental wellbeing. In March 2021 we published statutory guidance for schools and local authorities intended to support the wellbeing needs of learners. The guidance recognises that some learners may need additional support at different times and more targeted early intervention to prevent negative experiences. School senior leadership teams should consider their learner and parent/carer population when developing their wellbeing strategies as part of the wider school improvement process, to make sure it accommodates the needs of any learners who are part of one or more vulnerable or historically marginalised groups. This includes children and young people who are engaged with the youth justice system.

The guidance goes on to state that when considering the needs of these learners, schools and service providers (such as youth offending teams, health services, specialist services and local authority children's services) need to develop positive working partnerships with the school to effectively support these vulnerable children and to build their resilience; take account of these learner's circumstances; and factor in flexibility and empathy to their response to their needs. This approach is further supported by the NEST/NYTH Framework, which complements our schools guidance. Developed by the NHS in Wales, NEST/NYTH is a planning tool for Regional Partnership Boards that aims to ensure a 'whole system' approach for developing mental health, well-being and support services for babies, children, young people, parents, carers and their wider families across Wales.

Supporting our wellbeing work with schools we have made available £12.2m in the current year with funding being used to extend and improve school and community-based counselling services; and establish CAMHS school in-reach provision (which sees dedicated mental health practitioners in schools providing consultation, liaison, advice and training) across all-Wales.

I trust that this information is helpful,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg

Minister for Education and Welsh Language