

CYPE(6)-21-23 – Paper to note 1



Cynghrair Anghenion
Ychwanegol y Trydydd Sector
Third Sector Additional
Needs Alliance

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PLANT YNG NGHYMURU
CHILDREN IN WALES

Evidence from Mudiad Meithrin / TSANA

Contact: Menna Machreth, Lead Officer for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

In response to a question relating to options regarding Welsh-medium ALN provision for parents and carers, and specifically any childcare and education barriers faced by children with additional learning needs or disabilities:

1. With regard to the experiences of parents and carers of children with additional learning needs or disabilities, it is fair to say that provision remains inconsistent, depending on where the child is located. We support the [recent calls](#) made by the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner for Wales, who stated that the following actions are necessary:
 - *In accordance with Section 63 of the Additional Learning Needs Act 2018, developing the evidence base and contributing to the planning of the Welsh Ministers' 5-year review of ALN provision in Welsh.*
 - *Ensuring that all local authorities have fully reviewed their Welsh medium ALN provision this year.*
 - *Ensuring that the process of reviewing Welsh-medium ALN provision locally is used as a basis for shaping and directing plans for strengthening Welsh-medium ALN provision, whether it be through the WESPs or wider ALN strategic plans.*
 - *Developing proposals for formalising effective collaborative arrangements between local authorities on a regional basis.*
 - *Based on local and national reviews of Welsh-medium ALN provision, leading the process of developing national interventions in areas such as workforce planning, resources, and professional learning.*



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2. According to one parent from Powys, the process of accessing Welsh language treatment from a language therapist is a postcode lottery. 'We are being punished because of where we live,' the parent said. Very often, parents will have to make difficult decisions about where their autistic child will be educated, and it is often the case that the child must be placed in English provision. For one parent, having to make that decision was 'one of the most heartbreaking and stressful experiences of my life...my son had the right to be educated in Welsh and Welsh was his first language. At the same time, he needed more specialised education, and so he had to go to an English-medium secondary school with a special unit. I felt like I was fighting on two fronts at the same time.' In this case, the child was able to continue speaking Welsh with his family, even though the language medium of his education had changed. But that is not the case for many families, and this is a situation that causes additional suffering, by denying autistic children the right to develop Welsh language skills.
3. For a parent in Cardiff, it is necessary to go to Abercynon to get special provision: 'Dafydd* attends a specialist nursery in Abercynon two afternoons per week, but it is an English nursery. There is nothing similar available in Welsh.' The failure to access ALN education through the medium of Welsh often feels like an additional burden for parents with an autistic child, who may be facing a situation where the language used by the family has to change because the education is not available in Welsh.
4. The experience of parents is that there are much more obvious problems in terms of health provision through the medium of Welsh. Again, a great deal more research is needed to understand the situation on the ground. We know of children (between the ages of 7 and 12) who are assessed for an ADHD diagnosis on Zoom through the medium of English, even though they are in Welsh-medium education, they are in a local authority that has Welsh-medium ALN services, and their main language is Welsh. Again, we need to garner a better understanding of what is happening in Wales at the moment in order to understand why children and parents continue to have experiences like this.
5. We need to normalise and mainstream Welsh-medium services in the early years. We need to give specific consideration to ensuring that the percentage of Welsh language places within specific schemes, such as Flying Start settings, increase to levels that are at least comparable to the number of children that are in Welsh education in Year 2 in the primary school sector. Local authorities are required to consider the percentage and number of places available through the Flying Start programme in Welsh-medium settings.



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6. The ALN Code is clear about the fact that additional provision needs to be delivered in the language that is best for the child. As has been mentioned previously, this can cause problems for Welsh provision if the child's IDP states that the additional provision should be delivered through the medium of English. We are also concerned that there is a lack of planning regarding how children will receive clinical care or services when these are needed through the medium of Welsh. We continue to hear about children being assessed for various conditions through the medium of English.
7. One of the issues that is bound to affect ALN provision in childcare, play and early years settings is the current crisis in terms of workforce recruitment. Recently, we heard from one Cylch Meithrin that was concerned that it would not be able to appoint an ALN assistant after receiving 'extra hands' funding from the county to support a child with ALN. Again, this placed additional pressure on practitioners and was very likely to lead to further losses in the workforce due to the associated stress. Childcare settings are ready to accept and support all children and their families, but we must ensure that they receive the support to be able to provide appropriately for the child's needs.

Mudiad Meithrin
16.6.23