

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad: [A oes gan blant a phobl ifanc anabl fynediad cyfartal at addysg a gofal plant?](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for the inquiry: [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

AEC 09

Ymateb gan: Anabledd Cymru

Response from: Disability Wales

Key Findings:

- Office of National Statistics Data shows that disabled people aged 16-24 have lower educational attainment than non-disabled people. This is reflected in the individual experiences related to Disability Wales.
- Built environment and school buildings is a key barrier, not all are accessible.
- Some disabled people have limited options for schools and childcare options due to their area.
- Limited support options for children.
- Disabled children have limited role models and often don't see disabled people in day-to-day life.

This short report is based off findings from a 2021 survey, which asked if disabled children have full access to their human rights in Wales and if disabled people generally had full access to education in Wales. These findings are supplemented with observations from time in schools. This report primarily focuses on education as that consisted of most of our data.

It is well established that educational outcomes for disabled people differs to non-disabled people. In Wales, from June 2020-2021, 37.9% of non-disabled people's highest qualification was a degree or equivalent, compared to 21.5% of disabled people. In the most even statistics, 21.6% of non-disabled people's highest qualification was a A-level or equivalent, compared to 20.7% of disabled people. 18.8% of non-disabled people's highest qualification was GCSE grade C or above or equivalent, compared to 24% of disabled people. 9.4% of non-disabled people's highest qualification was another form of higher education, compared to 7.3% of disabled people. 5.9% of non-disabled people had no qualifications, compared to the significantly higher 16.4% of disabled people¹.

¹ Table 6: Highest level of qualification of people aged 21 to 64 by disability status and country, Disability and education, UK, 2021, National Office of Statistics, 10th February 2022.

From our membership, we see a few key reasons why some disabled people have experienced barriers to education. The built environment and the accessibility of school buildings was reported as a problem by multiple respondents, one respondent injured their neck looking up as the only space for their wheelchair was immediately in the front. Support for deaf students and a lack of accessible signage was also noted as a barrier. One disabled person with a learning impairment told us that they were only to take certain courses due to being a disabled person.

Our research shows an issue with listening to the needs of disabled children and parents. One respondent told us that they felt that disabled children are rarely listened to. Another respondent told us that they felt that those with a voice were normally “those with educated articulate, usually white, parents.”² There are consequences to this, one respondent told us that their grandchildren’s school would not follow appropriate SEN procedures, bypassing the needs of the disabled children and not properly informing their disabled mother. One respondent was concerned with the number of autistic children going through ABA therapy. This is a highly controversial form of therapy often described by autistic people and autistic-lead organisations as harmful to autistic children. The respondent suggested that the Welsh Government should go to leaders in the autistic community to develop more appropriate services.

Survey responses were clear about concerns with other services. Long CAMHS waiting lists were highlighted and concerns about the number of disabled children in poverty. Research has shown that 34% of children in Wales live in poverty³ and that households in Wales with children were twice as likely to be in debt due to the cost-of-living crisis⁴. There is significant research that shows that poverty has a significant effect on children’s education, and this is a major cause for concern⁵.

Disability Wales’ work in schools has shown us that there is a significant lack of role models for disabled children. For some of the children who visited, our spokesperson was the first wheelchair user they had seen. They often had little positive representation of disabled people, despite being enthusiastic about learning about other people and their experiences.

² Individual respondent, Disability Wales survey, 2021

³ Juliet Stone, “Local indicator of child poverty after housing costs 2020/21”, Centre for Research in Social Policy Loughborough University, July 2022, https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Local-child-poverty-indicators-report-2022_FINAL.pdf

⁴ Bevan Foundation, “A snapshot of poverty in Winter 2023”, February 2023, <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Snapshot-of-poverty-in-winter-2023.pdf>

⁵ National Education Union, “Child poverty- the facts”, 3rd May 2021, <https://neu.org.uk/child-poverty-facts>

In summary, there are many key issues that affect disabled children's education and childcare access. Education outcomes, accessibility of schools, access to services, child poverty and a lack of role models are some of the key issues highlighted to us.