

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 55

Ymateb gan: Fforwm Rhieni Ofalwyr Abertawe

Response from: Swansea Parent Carer Forum

On behalf of **Swansea Parent Carer Forum** Please find below responses from parent carer members of Swansea Parent Carer Forum

1. The extent to which children and learners are currently able to access all parts of childcare and education provision, including the way in which the curriculum is taught and extra-curricular activities.

- Education is designed for the non-disabled. It's one size fits all system. The buildings are often inaccessible. Disabled people will never be equal unless society is built based on the social model of disability. At the moment it's the medical model of disability that is used. Therefore it is a disabled person that has to adapt to the current nondisabled system. So it will never be equal. We need equity not equality.
- All through my son's education, he was told that he needed to be the same as everyone else. He wasn't. Yet it is easier for a non-disabled person to adapt than for a disabled person to do so. There were very few reasonable adjustments made for him. The psychological messages that he kept on being given was that he didn't fit and belong because he wasn't like everybody else. Had he been given the opportunity to learn in the way that fitted him, he would've thrived.
- No, there's no such thing as childcare for severely disabled children - or indeed any childcare beyond age 11, even if the disabled child in question is cognitively 18 months old.
- A lot of weight is given to a child's actual age, as opposed to their cognitive age and I believe this should be a consideration for severely disabled young adults and disabled older children.
- Private childcare isn't possible because if your child requires 1:1 or even 2:1 for manual handling, then a private childminder would obviously require the kind of payment that would make it worth them missing out on minding 8 children in their place.
- "Most units/special schools don't offer breakfast club and after school club which is essential for working parents. It's also provides social development and peer friendship opportunities. Parents have to choose mainstream for this which can compromise a child's education as there is a lack of specialist training relating for ALN for mainstream teaching staff
- Having said that the school has been brilliant, but there is not enough ALN training for teachers and TA's and no consideration for working parents within specialist education"

- my son had been in his primary school since year 1 but the school hadn't planned for him to go on his year 6 residential.
- it wasn't imagined that my son would go to mainstream comp - the SENCO from the mainstream comp wrote a report to say how unsuitable it would be for him after meeting him a couple of times. All the professionals wanted him in special school but he wanted to go to mainstream with his friends from primary. He has now finished comp and did very well
- friends with violins I asked the school if my son could learn. I was told that all the instruments had been given out. I said that I would buy one. They said he would need to do an audition. His support for the audition was his TA. She had never played a musical instrument. I was told in the car park that he wasn't good enough to join. No reasonable adjustments made for him. My son loves music. At secondary school we had a similar convo about joining the orchestra. A misunderstanding that I had accused them of being discriminatory (I really hadn't) led to the head of music saying he could join percussion - everyone had the best experience because this was allowed - everyone!"
- Eventually, but it takes a lot of fighting to get there
- Sadly, absolutely not in our experience

2. The extent to which children and young people have been excluded from aspects of education or childcare due to their disability or neurodivergence.

- We've had good access to education but it did require us to go to tribunal and sort it out ourselves. We found our local mainstream ill equipped to support him when we first started - no experience and little motivation and we were encouraged to look elsewhere. With a new HT that school is transformed so I know I wouldn't have that experience again. However at the time the approach from the LA was to have him well supported in nursery but did not place the equivalent support as he entered full time school - he had to fail first. We were caught in the middle of a bun fight between the school who felt the couldn't resource his needs and the LA who insisted that they should from their delegated budget. We withdrew him and after tribunal sourced our own education at home whilst keeping a close daily relationship with the school. It was hard hard work and stopped me from returning to work. School were generally supportive but we were a little bit 'out of sight, out of mind' as we only attended school for about an hour a day. We accessed all school trips if I sent support from his home programme. I've had to work hard to maintain relationships with the school and LA. It's been exhausting. We are now in the secondary phase of his education and the home programme was no longer sustainable and we opted for a specialist out of count setting, finally agreeing this with the LA after many many months. The current system is not resourced for children with complex ALN and ultimately we are displaced from our communities in order to get an accessible education.
- Breakfast clubs are not possible if your child has shared transport to school - because what if they share with children who do not need to attend breakfast

club? Likewise with after school clubs - if your child has a statement and goes to a school outside of your catchment area and it's not easy to get back and forth to, then you're in a difficult position again.

3. The extent to which families and children feel that they have been affected by direct, indirect or discrimination arising from disability.

- This is why so many parents have to give up work. Less breakfast, after school clubs and little or any childcare during school hols
- No, I had a IDP meeting just before my daughter went full time September 2023 , everyone said she would need a reduced timetable- before having the opportunity to see if full time was appropriate. My daughter has had her first full day at school today- she has settled well in a nurture class at a mainstream school with STF within the grounds. Despite her attending the school for the last 18 months it is up to the LA to decide if she can attend the STF at the school or to be moved. Also I am starting university where I am having to fund a private nursery after school club , the process to get 1:1 support at the nursery was difficult, with the LA still not wanting to support the full hours required, they want to see how she's goes !

4. The impact of any lack of or limited access on a child or young person's mental health and well-being and educational outcomes.

- There were very few reasonable, adjustments made for him. The psychological messages that he kept on being given was that he didn't fit and belong because he wasn't like everybody else. [REDACTED] Had he been given the opportunity to learn in the way that fitted him, he would've thrived.

5. The barriers for schools and childcare providers in offering accessible provision

- The buildings are often inaccessible. Disabled people will never be equal [REDACTED] unless society is built based on the social model of disability.
- I shall follow on from previous lady. Physical education is important to reset mentally. It can relieve stress. A child with a mental disability is largely excluded from this. The law for physical education in schools applies to non disabled kids.. Therefore young people with mental health issues, who often have accompanying anxiety issues are more likely to be offered medication and exclusion.

6. How well disabled and neurodivergent children and their families are consulted or informed of the choices in education or childcare available to them.

7. Whether parents of disabled and neurodivergent children and the children themselves receive effective information and support from local authorities and schools

- Two of my four children have ALN. Honestly, both of them have had extremely positive experiences. One was mainstream and the other is in a special school. I genuinely cannot fault either establishment and the support they provided to both children. I don't know whether we've been lucky, or whether a small

few have been unlucky. We've had excellent relationships with staff and very positive collaboration

- My son's primary and secondary school have been excellent. Really supportive, good communication, pushing him to achieve xx

8. Whether disabled and neurodivergent children and parents of disabled and neurodivergent children have the same level of choice as other children and parents and what issues affect choice or school or childcare.

- My child is now 12. He still needs childcare. At the same age I was able to leave his sister for short periods of time. He cannot access holiday schemes, childminders as he would need 1:1 care and the cost makes this inaccessible and he is too old for private nurseries. Breakfast clubs and after school clubs are not an option because the school cannot afford to cover 1:1 and still run these. I can't work as a result.
- it wasn't imagined that my son would go to mainstream comp - the SENCO from the mainstream comp wrote a report to say how unsuitable it would be for him after meeting him a couple of times. All the professionals wanted him in special school but he wanted to go to mainstream with his friends from primary. He has now finished comp and did very well

9. The extent to which there is adequate provision for children with different types of disabilities.

- don't even get me started on the massive issues that are caused if your disabled child also happens to be Type 1 diabetic... the stories I could tell you for that would leave you agog!
- The system decided to reduce speech and language provision due to my son being learning disabled