

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 74

Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

Response from: Individual

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This provides a summary of a discussion between the Committee Clerk and a parent of a child with learning disabilities. They also have expertise as an allied healthcare professional.

The key issues discussed were:

- **Initial teaching training.** It does not cover child development or developmental milestones. This can make it more difficult for teachers when they teach children with additional needs, as they can't place these needs within the wider context of development milestones. While there is some work being done by teacher training providers to widen the curriculum to include ALN, it is a big piece of work, and there isn't the AHP resources to support this broadening of teaching training.
- **Challenges for those learners with additional learning needs who are in mainstream provision.** For children with developmental delays, there can be more challenges as they progress through primary school. This can be particularly an issue as they go into Y3, where classrooms get smaller in size and learning becomes less play based. For their own child, they are considering the options for more specialised education, but that is not ideal, because their child is a social learner and would be in a setting with children with complex behaviours, which they may then pick up. Their child is also a twin to a neurotypical sibling so this would mean separating twins into different schools.
- **Mainstream provision also gives children wider socialisation and social learning opportunities and access to pre and after school clubs.**
- **There are still old fashioned attitudes to parents / carers of children with additional needs working. Most parent carers now work and do not stay home to look after their children.** Many parents / carers have to do the lowest paid jobs as they will provide flexibility around school hours. Breakfast and after school clubs are often not available in specialised settings. Accessing

these has benefits for both children and parents / carers. They cited the impact on their own child, who as a result of being in breakfast clubs has learnt positive behaviours from their peers.

Parents also have a right to work, and they highlighted how their work had a broader positive social impact. They also cited being told by a social worker, when their child was younger, that they should not be working.

- **School trips are not always accessible to children with additional needs.** Barriers included a lack of accessible changing places, and broader accessibility of venues, and for overnight stays.
- **There is a need for assessment centres with therapeutic services available in-house.** For many conditions, the extent of need will be quite broad, yet parents are having to make decisions when their child is young, and the level of need may not be clear. However, having assessment centres with therapeutic services embedded would help. It would also help children and young people who may need additional support but don't have a diagnosed condition, who could receive support that will help them thrive in mainstream provision.
- **Early intervention is key.**
- **Choice is very limited for children with additional needs, and there is no equality of choice.** This choice becomes even more limited in rural areas. Language preferences need to be taken into account, both in terms of Welsh medium provision, but also in some places ensuring that English speaking children with additional needs have the option to attend English medium schools.
- **Teaching Assistants play a critical role.** However, there can be issues if teaching assistants with specific skills or experience are off long term. There is a need to upskill teaching assistants as they are working so closely with children with additional needs.
- **Some schools do excellent work.** They cited the example of their child's school embedding use of Makaton throughout all classes and all aspects of school life.
- **The ALN reforms can help support professionals to grow opportunities.** However, there are challenges as more children and young people remain in mainstream settings.
- **Funding for ALN support from the Welsh Assembly Government primarily goes to from education budgets.** The DECLO role is the only funding that goes directly to health budgets. Priorities for healthcare funding are focused on A&E. In terms of paediatric budgets, the funding focus is on

CAMHS. There is no focus on community paediatrics, yet they play an important role, especially in supporting families before a diagnosis is made.

- **There is a need for better coordination across health and education.** Improved coordination between professionals such as Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Psychologists within the school setting would improve education access.
- **There should be more focus on the impacts of trauma.** Some children who may be presenting with additional learning needs, are actually living with the impacts of trauma. This needs to be addressed as trauma rather than as an additional learning need.
- **It can often be quite small things which will improve access.** As a parent with professional expertise, they have been able to advise the school accordingly, however, this isn't the case for all parents.
- **Lockdown had a huge impact on all children but particularly those with additional learning needs.** It was difficult to explain to children and young people with additional learning needs about the lockdown, and why things changed so significantly. For some children they regressed, for example in terms of potty training and communication. Their family is only just starting to recover from the impact of lockdown.

Some of the increased need for support since the pandemic is resulting from children and young people not having access to usual services and experiences during the lockdown. Some of this can be developed with the right support.

- **There is a gap between between mainstream and specialised provision.** For some children, they need enhanced provision within a mainstream setting. Such provision would also make transitions between mainstream and specialised provision easier. It would also help children to stay in mainstream provision which helps for social learning.
- **There is a need for specialised provision for children and young people with ASD.** Need can differ significantly between children and young people with different types of needs and conditions, and there is a need for specialist provision for ASD.
- **Securing funding for equipment provision in early years is challenging.** Some of the financial support that is available for families and settings to access is not well known.
- **Early years providers need to be more aware of additional learning needs.** There is not enough knowledge within the sector.
- **Funding is an issue across the board.** However, there are opportunities to improve services and coordination.