

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymchwiliad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i weithredu diwygiadau addysg](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into Implementation of education reforms](#)

IER 77

Ymateb gan: Anabledd Dysgu Cymru

Response from: Learning Disability Wales

We believe that a truly inclusive education system can and should provide the best opportunity for all learners to thrive, whatever their needs or abilities. While ALN reform in Wales may be based on this belief, in practice the system is failing too many learners. This causes significant concerns for families of children and young people with ALN and can lead to an increase in demand for “specialist” education provision outside the mainstream system. While this may be totally understandable for those families who feel their child is being set up to fail in mainstream education, it undermines the basic principle that education should be fully inclusive for all and can make it harder for young people during transition and when integrating into their communities. We are concerned that some local authorities are increasing special school provision rather than addressing the issues within mainstream schools, often due to pressure from parents. This pressure may take the form of demand by parents of ALN learners who feel their children’s needs are not being met but also parents of neurotypical learners who feel that their children’s education is at risk due to staff spending more time dealing with ALN learners than the rest of the class. Again, these views may be understandable but the issues should be addressed by making the school environment more inclusive and fit to meet the needs of all learners rather than by removing and segregating ALN learners.

We are concerned about stories from families around the application of the definition of ALN and the reluctance of some schools to assess a child’s needs or provide an IDP due to staff capacity and cost implications. We fear that is leading



to too many children with ALN falling through the cracks and not receiving the support they need.

We also want to raise the issue of restrictive practice in schools and the higher incidence of children and young people with ALN who are subjected to isolation, seclusion, physical restraint and exclusions. The EHRC called on the Welsh Government several years ago to introduce mandatory recording of incidents of restrictive practice in education but this has still not been implemented. It is shocking to think that adult services have a legal duty to record and monitor incidents of restraint yet schools do not have any such duty. Families have told us that they have been horrified to find out that their children with ALN have been subjected to restraint without their knowledge and that there is no duty for the school to inform them.

At the National Summit on behaviour in schools and colleges held on 22nd May 2025, Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Education Lynne Neagle stated the Welsh Government's intention to update a suite of guidance including the *Safe and effective intervention – use of reasonable force and searching for weapons guidance*, as part of her '5 immediate actions to take to tackle behaviour'. However, we are not aware of any progress in this area and have not yet seen any consultation on updating the guidance. Given the fact that learners with ALN are more likely to be subject to restraint, we consider this to be an urgent issue.

We share Natspec's concerns about the impact of ALN reforms on post-16 education. Learners whose ALP may be a specialist FE college have to navigate a complicated and compromised system before their FE programme can be agreed.

Ambiguity in the ALN Code on post-school further education is resulting in different interpretations for learners with complex ALN. The Third Sector Additional Learning Alliance (TSANA) published a position statement outlining concerns that ALN reform will result in some learners not being able to access the further education colleges they need because their ALN requires that their additional learning provision (ALP) is a specialist FE college. This uncertainty on entitlement to post-school education and training risks learners across Wales experiencing postcode lotteries of access to FE.

Entitlement to education and training is limited to 2 years in Wales but it is not clear if this is a post-school or a post-16 entitlement and this ambiguity has meant



that some LAs are planning to move some special school leavers straight in day services provision if they are unable to attend their 'local' FEI.

Travel is also an issue for many ALN learners, especially those in further education, with many unable to access their placement due to a lack of suitable transport.

The impact of the pandemic on ALN learners has been significant and has highlighted issues around school refusal and poor attendance due to unmet needs and unsuitable school environments. These issues need to be addressed sensitively and without demonising the learners or their families. Many children with ALN find school hugely challenging, not just academically but environmentally and emotionally. Focusing purely on attendance without addressing the issues within the school environment that are contributing to the child's anxiety or unwillingness to attend will ultimately lead to increased anxiety and possibly exclusion due to trauma and distress behaviours.

We would like to conclude with a quote from Gerraint Jones-Griffiths, a member of our team with lived experience:

"During my time in secondary education from 2007 to 2012, I received exceptional support from my SENCO lead. She provided consistent one-to-one assistance across all my lessons, ensuring that I had the resources and guidance necessary to succeed. For my GCSE examinations, she arranged for 25% additional time, which significantly reduced my stress and allowed me to perform to the best of my ability.

My concern now, in light of the recent reforms to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) education, is whether the level of SEN support will remain as effective and comprehensive as it was during my own experience."

