

Buffy Williams MS
Chair – Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

3rd March 2026

Dear Chair

Re: Children, Young People and Education Committee Legacy Report

We're writing on behalf of the All-Wales Occupational Therapy Paediatrics Network, which is made up of OTs from across Wales working in the Welsh NHS, schools, local authorities and independent practice.

Through the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) we fed into your current inquiry on education and ALN reforms, with our focus being on the impact of these changes on children and how we can best support them.

We work very closely with school communities in enabling ALN students to receive the support they deserve. It was interesting to read how one ALN school leader said in your teacher recruitment and retention report that they are expected to be a range of professions, including occupational therapists.

As the work of the Committee comes to an end for the Sixth Senedd, we wanted to write to offer up some possible avenues of inquiry for the Seventh Senedd, if the Committee is re-established, that you could include in your legacy report.

The benefits of widening OT participation in nurseries and schools: OTs work with students on their physical, sensory, or cognitive difficulties to improve independence and participation in school activities. Currently, there is a scheme in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea council areas which sees OTs working with secondary schools, giving teachers the tools they need to identify students with difficulties and how best to support them or refer to specialist teams. This scheme is enabling teachers to focus on teaching and getting early intervention in place for the student.

OT training and CPD: there has been great progress in the number of training places for OT students across Wales over the last few years, especially with the development of the OT course at Swansea University. However, we are keen to widen accessibility even further through degree apprenticeships, enabling people from all communities to start a career in OT. There is, however, limited opportunities for CPD in Wales. A number of courses are only available in other parts of the UK and this impacts what Welsh NHS funding is available for Welsh workers to apply for these courses. We are also

concerned around the limited access to specific paediatric training as OTs are usually part of a generic adult team.

Access of independent practitioners into schools: the demand for students to have OT assessments is growing and a number of parents are utilising independent OT practices to carry these out, to ensure their children receive all the support they need. Unfortunately, there is inconsistency across schools and local authorities in enabling these assessments to be carried out in school with the OT monitoring the student in the classroom. This is having an impact not only on the family to receive timely advice but on the independent practices who are struggling to fully provide for their clients.

We would be delighted to meet with yourself and the Committee Clerk to explore the scope of these inquiries and how they would be beneficial to the wider education community.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Paula Curtis

Chair, All-Wales Occupational Therapy Paediatrics Network

Kelly Southway

Vice Chair, All-Wales Occupational Therapy Paediatrics Network