

Since 2003/04 the numbers of children with autistic spectrum disorders in Wales has risen from 1,478 to 5,327. Our members tell us the likelihood is these numbers do not reflect all children and young people affected by the condition, as some will remain undiagnosed.

With rising numbers of children and young people affected by autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), it is critical that the support is available to support them to fulfil their educational potential. The Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal (Wales) Bill contains a presumption that children with additional learning needs (ALN) will be taught in mainstream settings. The ALNET Bill also puts responsibilities onto schools, FEIs and their governing bodies to provide for children with ALN.

In order for this to work well for children and young people, teachers, lecturers and support staff need access to training and support about ASD. Alongside that, children and young people will need access to specialist support, including through the medium of Welsh – from diagnosis to specific interventions. Without this support, education professionals will find it more difficult to help children and young people fulfil their potential.

Therefore, we welcome the aims of the Autism (Wales) Bill in principle, and believe it is critical the plans compliment the provisions set out in the ALNET Bill. We look forward to working with you to help ensure that children and young people have access to the education system.

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