

**Welsh Government Response to the
Children, Young People and Education Committee Report:
Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and
childcare?**

The Welsh Government welcomes the Children, Young People and Education Committee's report on the important issue of whether disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare in Wales. We appreciate the Committee's in-depth examination of this matter and are grateful for the comprehensive recommendations provided.

Conclusion 1 rightly points out that too many children and young people's rights to education, as outlined in Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are being breached in Wales. While we have made progress in some areas, we acknowledge that more must be done to ensure that these rights are upheld consistently across Wales. We are determined to work with schools, local authorities, and other stakeholders to remove barriers to education and ensure that every child has access to the learning environment they need.

The new ALN system has been designed to increase the rights of children and families, as well as decreasing the fight for support that they often faced under the old SEN system. We are still in the early stages of implementing this and we will continue working with our delivery partners to get this process right across Wales.

In addition to more than £107 million investment to support ALN implementation since 2020, capital investment of more than £170 million has improved facilities for learners with additional learning needs over the past 5 years. The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is investing over £750 million over the next nine years to continue to improve and expand existing facilities and create new specialist provision.

The 2022-25 £70 million Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme supports, maintains and improves existing and new childcare settings. There are two distinct workstreams: small grants funding and major capital funding. The small grants element of the Programme can be used by childcare settings registered with Care Inspectorate Wales to purchase ALN/Sensory equipment to help overcome the barriers in offering accessible provision. As part of the assessment process of all proposals for major capital funding considerations are made for the accessibility of the building / provision for children with additional learning needs (ALN).

Conclusion 2 highlights the impact that gaps in educational access can have on the emotional and mental well-being of children, as well as their educational outcomes. We are keenly aware of this and through our programme of reform our focus is on creating a system where the rights of all children, including disabled children, are fully respected and upheld, and where their wellbeing is fully supported. Where these rights have been denied we recognise the impact this can have not just on their emotional, mental, and physical well-being, but also educational attainment and future potential.

We also recognise the toll this takes on families and carers and the need for a more robust support system for families of disabled children and young people.

We have taken action to improve education practitioners' understanding of how to support children and young people's rights in education by working with partners, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Disability Wales, to create an online [professional learning package](#) on the UNCRC and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Conclusion 3 draws attention to the toll these challenges place on families. We recognise the strain that families face in navigating a system that can, at times, be difficult to access. We fully appreciate the burden this creates. We are committed to easing these pressures by ensuring that support is more readily available and that families do not have to fight to secure the rights and services their children deserve. Increasing multi-agency collaboration across public services, particularly between health and education continues to be a priority.

We are also taking a range of actions to increase the consistency of delivery of ALN reform and ensure the legislative framework is clear and understood. In addition we are developing our professional learning offer on child development and neurodivergence.

Conclusion 4 raises the issue of inconsistent provision across Wales, including those accessing Welsh-medium provision, leading to disparities in access to inclusive childcare and education. We have already acknowledged this, and we are strengthening the school improvement framework to focus on creating an inclusive education. We have also recruited a National ALN Welsh language implementation lead who is taking a Wales-wide, strategic approach to improve delivery. We are also embedding the enabling learning guidance. This guidance supports practitioners to deliver an inclusive, broad, and balanced curriculum that reflects the needs of learners.

We acknowledge that while some areas have developed good inclusive practices, these can be the result of individual determination rather than a consistent, structural approach. The existence of a postcode lottery in access to inclusive education and childcare, particularly in Welsh-medium provision, is unacceptable. We are committed to tackling the barriers that lead to this inconsistency.

Conclusion 5 identifies the complex and interlinked barriers to delivering inclusive education and childcare that span broad societal attitudes towards disability and difference, as well as practical challenges. Systemic change takes time and is still being done in the shadow of COVID. We must not forget the backdrop of the COVID pandemic which caused significant pressures on public finances and huge impacts on the workforce, and particularly disabled children, across Wales.

We recognise that childcare and education providers often face challenges in delivering inclusive services, and we understand that this is not a reflection on the dedication of the staff involved, who often work tirelessly to support all children and young people in their care.

However, we are determined to tackle these issues at every level, working with all relevant stakeholders to dismantle the barriers that prevent children from accessing the support they need. This includes a commitment to improving staff training and creating more inclusive environments within both childcare settings and schools.

Below, we have outlined our responses to the Committee's recommendations, including the actions we are taking and those we plan to take in response to the issues raised. We are eager to continue working collaboratively with the Committee, local authorities, and stakeholders to ensure that no child in Wales is denied access to the education and childcare they deserve, along with the opportunities they bring.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government sets out its views in relation to our key conclusions, and in responding to the recommendations set out the specific steps it will take to address the wide-reaching issues we've identified in the conclusions.

In responding to the Committee's conclusions, we acknowledge the seriousness of the findings in this report and the challenges faced by disabled children, young people, and their families across Wales. It is evident there are pressing issues that require prompt attention, and we are committed to addressing them in a meaningful and sustained manner.

We have outlined below our responses to the Committee's recommendations, detailing the actions we are taking and planning to address these issues. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Committee, local authorities, and all stakeholders as we work together to ensure that no child in Wales is denied their right to education or childcare and the opportunities that come with it.

Financial implications – N/A, this is an overarching recommendation

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government should ensure there is more research and data available on the gaps in childcare provision, which can help inform development of inclusive provision. As part of this, the Welsh Government should ensure that local authorities are collecting data when children and young people leave or move between childcare and education provisions and the reasons for this. This data should then be used to inform future reviews, training and assessments for childcare and education providers.

Response: Accept in principle

We are already working to improve the evidence base to understand more about and support children in the early years accessing childcare. Within the planned Welsh Government research and evaluations, the methodology can include primary research with specific groups of parents of disabled children who have accessed Welsh Government funded childcare to gather evidence about their experiences.

Welsh Government has recently published a review of the most recent Child Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) and research into the Additional Support Grant for the Childcare Offer for Wales, which provide evidence about access to provision for disabled children.

Registered childcare services complete an annual Self-Assessment Service Statement (Care Inspectorate Wales) which includes data on the number of children with ALN accessing the provision, and the type of ALN supported. The Welsh Government monitor the number of children being supported in registered settings that have ALN to monitor the trend over time.

We can explore the feasibility of undertaking further research to address any remaining gaps in data but there would be financial and staff resource implications of this because of the complexities of the work.

Financial implications - If additional research work was commissioned there would be a financial implication, consideration of allocating sufficient staff resource, and opportunity cost of de-prioritising other projects. The amount would depend on the scope and complexity of the research and prioritisation would depend on whether it aligns with the current evidence plan supporting Cabinet priorities. This would be subject to further advice.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Government should share its response to the recommendations in the Research into Childcare Sufficiency Assessment with us. In providing this, the Welsh Government should detail how it is ensuring recommendations are being implemented and how implementation is being monitored.

Response: Accept

We are considering the recommendations made by Arad Research, who were commissioned to undertake a review of the CSAs, which was published in March 2024 (Research into Childcare Sufficiency Assessments).

We will collaborate with our stakeholders to explore how we can improve CSA arrangements and ensure they remain fit for purpose in future, building on the recommendations within the review. We will:

- explore ways to improve the childcare sufficiency assessment process;
- review current regulatory requirements including statutory guidance;
- explore ways to reduce administrative burden on local authorities;
- review the format of the CSA assessment report to ensure it is more streamlined and impactful; and
- consider tools to assist local authorities in assessing and planning for childcare arrangements and ensuring data is accessible and fit for purpose.

We will provide a response on any changes required as a result of the review, including any regulatory changes or changes to the statutory guidance, which will be in place to support the development of the next round of CSAs in June 2027. We will provide written updates at key stages as we progress the work and will ensure our stakeholders are kept fully informed of developments.

Financial Implications – None, as will be funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should set out how gaps in childcare provision for inclusive and accessible childcare identified in CSAs should be met. This should include setting out how the Welsh Government and local authorities can work and support each other in ensuring positive action is taken to secure sustainable and inclusive childcare in all areas of Wales.

Response: Reject

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of the intent behind this recommendation the statutory duty to address gaps identified in the CSAs rests with local authorities not the Welsh Government. To help support local authorities address gaps in provision the Welsh Government provides them with funding through the childcare and play element of the Children and Communities Grant. When using this funding local authorities are encouraged to give special consideration for the childcare and play needs of families with children with additional needs, to help ensure childcare provision is inclusive and accessible. Given that childcare provision is largely operated by private individuals or businesses local authorities are however limited in the mechanisms by how far they can go to secure sustainable and inclusive childcare in all areas of Wales.

Effective partnership working is a core element of the childcare sufficiency assessment. Under the duty to secure sufficient childcare provision, local authorities work with partners to develop and implement the Childcare Sufficiency Action Plans, that remove shortcomings and maintain the strengths identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments.

Local authorities are required to ensure a sufficient contribution from a range of partners and organisations, in meeting their duty to assess, plan and secure the sufficiency of childcare provision in their area. National Childcare Umbrella Organisations and Family Information Services have a key contribution to make in assisting local authorities to plan and safeguard the sufficiency of childcare provision in their area.

The Welsh Government have issued statutory guidance to assist local authorities to discharge their duty to ensure sufficient childcare is available, undertake childcare sufficiency assessments, and provide information, advice and assistance relating to childcare to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child.

Financial Implications – None.

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Government should set out how it can seek to streamline the various different funding streams available to childcare providers to ensure that it is easier for childcare providers to know what support they can access and how best to access this.

Response: Accept in principle

To ensure that the childcare element of the Offer for three-and-four-year-olds is inclusive to eligible children who need additional support, help has been made available by means of a separate funding stream called the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant (ASG). Local authorities can draw on this funding to help ensure that eligible children with additional needs are able to access the childcare element of the Offer in the same way as other eligible children.

An independent review of the ASG was undertaken during 2023/2024. One of the recommendations put forward from the report was that Welsh Government might consider working with local authorities to jointly develop communications and information campaigns to providers and families to ensure that all those who are eligible and need ASG support have access to it. Officials will explore the recommendation made in the ASG independent review and develop specific campaigns to align with the findings of the research and improve monitoring reporting requirements.

Flying Start commissioned childcare providers are supported directly by their local Flying Start Childcare Advisory teams in meeting the needs of individual children. However, there is no dedicated funding stream to support children aged three years who are not eligible for the Childcare Offer or those from birth to three years who are not eligible for Flying Start but attend childcare in the non-maintained sector. Local Authorities have adopted different approaches to meet needs and are able to draw upon the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) to support them in doing so. Officials, working closely with our delivery partners, will continue to explore the potential barriers to accessing funding and ways of addressing these barriers. We will also continue to explore the feasibility of streamlining existing funding streams within existing resources.

Financial Implications – Work which is currently underway to map funding streams and review recommendations made as part of the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant independent review will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government must ensure that financial support for childcare is based on a child and setting's needs and not on parental eligibility. In line with Recommendation 16, the Welsh Government should consider the use of ring-fencing to ensure that funding aimed to support inclusive provision is used for this specific purpose.

Response: Reject

While our longer-term ambition is to ensure that financial support for childcare is based on the needs of the child and the setting, rather than parental eligibility, we have already outlined our current support program within the constraints of the existing budget.

Flying Start Outreach provides an integrated approach to family support services utilising the structures and systems delivered by the programme. Outreach provides the flexibility to provide some or all of the core elements of the Flying Start programme (including childcare at aged two years) to children and their families who have been identified as being in need but living outside a Flying Start area. Each local authority can allocate up to 25% of their allocated numbers of children they receive funding for.

Most local authorities have Early Years Panels that accept referrals from Health Visitors or the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer for children identified with emerging needs and those with ALN who live outside Flying Start areas. Children with ALN aged two to three years who require childcare to meet developmental needs can (subject to resources) be supported via Flying Start.

The Children and Communities Grant (CCG) enables local authorities to deliver services flexibly to promote joint planning and commissioning of services to mitigate and remove disadvantage for vulnerable children, young people and adults.

The Childcare Offer for Wales is the Welsh Government commitment to providing 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare for 3 and 4-year-old children of eligible parents for up to 48 weeks of the year.

The Offer has been designed to take account of barriers that eligible parents may face in accessing the childcare element, in particular, those who have children with additional support needs including learning, physical and sensory disabilities. To ensure the childcare element of the Offer is inclusive to eligible children who need additional support, help has been made available through the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant (ASG). Local authorities can draw on this funding to help ensure that eligible children with additional needs are able to access the childcare element of the Offer in the same way as other eligible children.

In 2023/24, £2m was allocated across local authorities to respond to these needs, however this is a demand-led grant and we are committed to providing support to parents and childcare settings where needed. 2023/24 was the first year where

demand was higher than anticipated. For 2024/25, an additional £500,000 has been allocated to address anticipated continued pressure.

An independent review of the ASG was undertaken and the report findings and recommendations were published in May 2024. The review team issued a survey to all 2500+ childcare providers registered to deliver the Offer to develop a better understanding of providers concerns in accessing support and funding for those children with additional support needs that use their services. Views were also sought of parents accessing the Offer, including those who have received support via the ASG, to better understand how this support may be promoted, accessed, and coordinated. Officials are reviewing the recommendations from the report and will be putting advice on next steps to Welsh Ministers to consider.

Financial Implications – None. Any decisions which either flow from the independent review or which need to be taken more broadly will need to be considered by Welsh Ministers and assigned through the normal budget process. This would need to be subject to further advice.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government confirms the scope of the review into the ALN Act and Code, and outlines the timeline for completion of this review, and whether the findings of the review will be published.

Response: Accept

The Cabinet Secretary has communicated the Welsh Government commitment to review the ALN legislative framework to ensure it is clear and understood and delivers for all children and young people in Wales.

Work is underway to examine the legal framework to consider the clarity and accessibility of the Act and statutory guidance, to identify next steps to increase consistency of implementation across Wales.

The scope of the review will be completed by November 2024, and an update to the Senedd on the progress and findings of the review is expected by Summer 2025.

Financial Implications – The review will be managed and funded from within existing resources.

Recommendation 8

Explore the feasibility of the development of a suite of training, guidance and resources for childcare settings on the ALN Act and Code. As part of the feasibility work, the Welsh Government should give specific consideration to how childcare providers would be able to access and fund such training.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government will explore the feasibility of the development of a suite of training, guidance and resources for childcare settings on the ALN Act and Code. We will work closely with the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO)'s in local authorities and Cwlwm to consider existing arrangements and any additional guidance, training or resources that may be required. The existing arrangements are set out below:

- Local authorities have a statutory duty to have an Early Years ALN lead officer who should make arrangements, if appropriate, to train those in their local area on early years and ALN.
- The Welsh Government provides funding to Cwlwm and Play Wales to support their members across the childcare and playwork workforce. The Welsh Government is working with the Cwlwm partnership to support the childcare sector to understand their roles and responsibilities concerning the ALN Code.
- Cwlwm partners provide training, information, advice and guidance for settings to support and embed ALN changes. For example, a blog is available on the [Cwlwm website](#) providing information and guidance on the ALN code and Act. Mudiad Meithrin have developed a video on the ALN system which will enable its members to understand their obligations under the ALN Code. National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Cymru have planned a free webinar - 'Additional Learning Needs in Wales' to deliver in summer 2024, exploring the ALN Act and code, what it means for settings and how to embed effective practice.
- EYALNLO's are responsible for making arrangements for providing guidance to childcare providers, including those delivering funded nursery education in non-maintained nursery settings, on meeting the needs of children attending their settings.
- Local authorities receive funding via the Children and Communities Grant to support a range of training for childcare settings, from mandatory to effective practice training, to be determined by local authorities and based on local need. This can include ALN training or courses.
- Childcare qualifications and the All-Wales Induction Framework contain a focus on understanding the needs of disabled children or other additional needs and sourcing support via additional advice or adaptations. Childcare

qualifications assess on these elements as well as understanding of the legal frameworks that apply to the provision of services to children with additional needs.

- The Level 4 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development (CCPLD) qualification in professional practice aims to develop the knowledge, understanding, behaviours and skills that underpin Professional Practice within the children's care, play, learning and development sector. To achieve the qualification learners must take one of three pathways including 'Recognising and supporting children with Additional Learning Needs'.
- In addition to any training requirements outlined in National Minimum Standards, all childcare staff within Flying Start settings must undertake at least five days Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or professional learning per year, as designated by their Childcare Advisory Teams and, as far as possible, implement strategies recommended by the Childcare Advisory Team.

Financial Implications –the current training, guidance and resources to support childcare settings is undertaken within existing budgets, but if further work as a result of exploring feasibility is agreed, then this would result in financial implications that will be considered at that time and further advice will follow.

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should issue guidance for all childcare providers about what they are expected to do in supporting local authorities in discharging their duties in the ALN Act and Code. This guidance should provide concrete examples of what providers are expecting to do. This guidance should be regularly updated to ensure it remains up to date, relevant and useful.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government accepts in principle the recommendation to issue guidance to childcare providers about what they are expected to do in supporting local authorities in discharging their duties in the ALN Act and Code. We will re-consider the recommendation once the feasibility study at recommendation 8 has been completed.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to designate an Early Years ALN Lead officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the functions under the ALN Act and Code in their area for children under compulsory school age who are not attending maintained schools. This role should be promoting collaboration with childcare providers and making arrangements for providing guidance and sharing information to providers on meeting the needs of children in their settings with ALN.

Financial Implications – Any work in this area will be managed from within existing resources.

Recommendation 10

The Welsh Government considers reviewing accessibility strategies and plans across Wales, with a view to issuing directions to any local authority or school who is failing to discharge their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government is committed to creating a Wales which will provide fair access to services for all and deliver fairer outcomes for our diverse people and communities across Wales. Our [National Equality Objectives](#) and equality plans, such as the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan provide a strong framework, helping to reduce complexity and further embedding equality into our policy making.

The preparation of accessibility strategies is a responsibility of local authorities, with schools in turn required to have up to date accessibility plans. ADEW have stated that they have issued model policies to schools and governing bodies and that they will be undertaking further training for schools on their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. We will work with ADEW to ensure all schools are reminded of their responsibilities in this respect, and of the need to review and update their plans in consultation with children and families.

We will review our guidance, 'Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils, with a view to considering whether it can be strengthened any further and whether there is scope for further alignment with the requirements of Welsh Building Standards.

Financial Implications – There are no financial implications with regards to reviewing our guidance, as this will be absorbed into 'business as usual' and funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Government working with the EHRC should develop practical guidance for all schools on understanding the social model of disability and how to ensure this approach can be adopted across all aspects of school life. This guidance should be as practical as possible, and should be developed in conjunction with children, young people and their families, as well as disability organisations. The guidance should be regularly updated to take account of developments. Estyn should undertake regular monitoring and evaluation to see how schools are implementing this guidance, and the impacts it is having on the experiences of children and young people.

Response: Accept

Understanding the social model of disability is integral to supporting the provision of inclusive education services. An initial meeting with the EHRC to discuss the premise of joint guidance has been held and further discussions around scope and timescales will take place in the autumn.

It should be noted that we are accepting the aspects of the recommendation directed at the Welsh Government. We are not able to comment on the aspects aimed at Estyn or accept this part of the recommendation on their behalf, given their independence. However, we will discuss how Estyn considers these issues and when would be an appropriate time to table this for consideration as one of their thematic reviews.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or low, implications associated with the development of the guidance and its ongoing maintenance. There may be some low-level costs associated with engaging key stakeholders including children and young people schools and parents, but these can be met from within existing budgets.

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government should undertake a comprehensive review into how non-teaching staff both within schools and local authorities can best support inclusive provision across Wales. This should include identifying best practice examples from across Wales. Such work should also consider the funding implications of best practice, and how local authorities and schools can be best supported to deliver.

Response: Accept

We recognise that non-teaching staff within schools and local authorities provide a range of support to increase inclusive provision in Wales. Although the employment arrangements of teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff are the responsibility of local authorities and / or schools, we intend to work with them to understand best practice in respect of supporting inclusive provision. This area is being looked at by the Schools Social Partnership Forum (SSPF) and a sub-group focused on Professional Learning for LSWs/TAs.

Financial Implications – None.

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Government commissions research into the use of reduced timetables, which includes the length of time children and young people are on them, the reasons for them being used, and the steps that are taken to return children and young people to a full timetable. This research should also review the mechanisms that are used when the guidance is not being followed, to ensure that reduced timetables are only used when appropriate, and that a child centred approach is taken when making decisions on their use.

Response: Accept

In October 2023, we published [guidance](#) into the use of part-time timetables. Whilst it is too early to evaluate the impact of this guidance, we acknowledge that we currently do not collect data about the number of learners who have a part-time timetable.

To address this, we are exploring how we can collect data about the number of learners who have a part-time timetable, via PLASC and the EOTAS Census. Introducing such changes is a lengthy process and, as such, in the first instance we will be undertaking an analysis of attendance data to estimate the number of learners who have a part-time timetable.

In the longer-term, we will explore opportunities to evaluate the impact of the effectiveness of the part-time timetable guidance in terms of whether these arrangements are being used appropriately.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or low, implications associated with the work to review existing data and explore ways of collecting additional data. Any such costs can be met from within existing budgets. Advice on the costs of collecting additional data, for both the Welsh Government and stakeholders, will be provided to the Cabinet Secretary once that work is complete. If additional research is required this would need to be costed at the time, with advice provided to the Cabinet Secretary. Additional costs would need to be considered in the context of the Education MEG and the wider Welsh Government budget.

Recommendation 14

In responding to the findings of the review of school funding, the Welsh Government should outline publicly how it will take forward any recommendations or actions arising from it and set out a clear timeline for delivery of these actions. In particular, they should outline how improved consistency will help ensure children and young people get the support they need in schools.

Response: Accept

The independent Review of School Spending in Wales highlighted the complexity of the funding system. We have previously published an update to the CYPE Committee on progress.

We are currently conducting a review of local authority school funding formulas. Through this analysis we intend to better understand the complexities and decision-making processes around these formulas across Wales. This review will help us to consider how the system can be improved.

In the autumn, we will provide a further update to the CYPE Committee detailing how the Welsh Government has further progressed the recommendations of the review. We will also set out a timeline for future planned work in this area.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or limited, implications associated with providing an update on taking forward the recommendations of the review and will be funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Government identifies the most common conditions, such as dyslexia, which would benefit from universal provision and support being developed and provided to all schools. This should be done in consultation with children, young people and their families, as well as education professionals, local authorities, and health professionals. Once this work has been done, the Welsh Government should provide a clear timeframe for roll out of this universal provision. This provision should be free for all schools.

Response: Reject

This is rejected because work is already underway with the roll out of the Curriculum for Wales which has been developed to be accessible and inclusive to all, enabling every school and setting to develop a curriculum that reflects their context and their learners.

In particular, the '[Enabling learning](#)' section of the [Curriculum for Wales](#) guidance has been developed to support practitioners in planning, designing and implementing a developmentally, pedagogically appropriate curriculum for all learners from 3 to 16. It provides the firm foundation that all learners need to support development, at their own pace, towards realising the four purposes of the curriculum. The guidance focuses on key principles essential for holistic and meaningful learning for all learners. This includes child development, which is integral to teaching and learning, and is expressed as five developmental pathways: belonging, communication, exploration, physical development, and well-being. We recognise that taking a learner centred approach, working collaboratively with families and partners can support holistic development. We shall continue to embed this guidance throughout schools and settings working with senior leaders and practitioners to raise awareness.

The Welsh Government is continuing to work with third sector organisations, parents and practitioners to develop helpful resources to support learners and practitioners. For example, this year, a set of learning modules was developed and published in collaboration with the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA). These modules aim to help practitioners improve their knowledge and understanding of various learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, and disabilities. They also offer strategies for supporting learners with specific needs. The modules are available on the Welsh Government's [Hwb page](#).

Financial Implications – None

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Government should issue guidance clearly setting out the responsibilities and duties of local authorities and schools to ensure they are providing the necessary support so that all children and young people are able to access their right to an education. They should also consider whether ring-fencing would be an effective and appropriate way of ensuring that money that is intended to support these groups of children and young people is spent in that way.

Response: Accept

The ALN legislation and ALN Code set out the responsibility and duties on local authorities and schools to ensure they are providing necessary support for children and young people with ALN. As part of the review of this legislation next steps and actions will be identified to ensure the legislation and the Code are clear and understood.

The Welsh Government issues guidance via the school governors' guide to the law setting out schools' responsibility in respect of equality legislation. This includes the reasonable adjustments duty, ensuring barriers to education for learners with disabilities are anticipated and actions are taken to remove these barriers as far as reasonably possible.

In taking forward the work on recommendations 11 and 31 we will consider whether or not additional information should be included in the school governors guide.

Local authorities have a duty to ensure the availability of suitable education provision in their area. In considering ringfencing, it's important to note that the Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities to support their funding of pre-16 provision in schools in Wales mainly through the local government revenue settlement. The settlement is not ring-fenced; the funding allocated to each authority is available to the authority to spend as it sees fit across the range of services for which it is responsible, including schools. This is in line with the Welsh Government's policy that local authorities are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances and to fund schools accordingly.

Although funding for schools in Wales is mainly provided through the local government settlement, the Welsh Government's education budget also supports spending in and on schools, teachers and wider education programmes.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or low, implications associated with the work to review existing guidance, or the work to consider financial controls and will be funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Government should revise the criteria for ITE to strengthen the requirements around disability and additional learning needs. This should ensure that all teachers at the end of their ITE have a basic level of skills and understanding in issues around disability and ALN and have the confidence to be able to support all children and young people they teach. It should also ensure that ITE keeps up with the latest clinical knowledge so that newly qualified teachers have the most up to date information and knowledge to help inform their practice.

Response: Accept

We have refreshed the [Criteria for Accreditation of ITE programmes in Wales](#) for courses that will operate from September 2024. These refreshed criteria have strengthened the requirements for ITE programmes to ensure that all student teachers have an understanding of the needs of learners who have Additional Learning Needs. Sections 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 specifically relate to the requirements for student teachers to be able to identify and meet the needs of ALN learners.

In addition to these specific sections, there are requirements throughout the Criteria that set out the understanding that all student teachers must have around equality, inclusiveness, safeguarding and well-being for all learners.

All ITE programmes have a requirement that student teachers must be research informed and continue to develop their knowledge and skills based on the most up-to-date research.

Specifically, we have introduced into the Criteria an Appendix 4: Specialist primary phase ITE provision for ALN, that allows ITE Partnerships to submit for accreditation a pilot PGCE Primary programme with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) that includes an ALN specialism. Under this Appendix the Caban ITE Partnership at Bangor University has recently been successful in achieving accreditation for a PGCE Primary programme with QTS with a specialism in Neurodiversity. We are working with the partnership to monitor and evaluate the programme. This will include uptake rates, destinations of those undertaking the programme and an assessment of whether the programme meets the quality and professional standards required for the award of QTS.

We are working with partners to arrange a workshop with all stakeholders to identify and better understand the barriers to engagement between ITE and special schools. This will provide more empirical evidence for any changes that can be made in order to meet the needs of the sector.

Financial Implications – None as will be managed within existing budgets.

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Government provides an update on its work around ITE provision for the special school sector.

Response: Accept

The Special School sector is already able to join ITE Partnerships and provide periods of clinical practice on programmes. School experience placements may take place in a special school or ALN unit. In these cases, Partnerships should ensure that no more than 30% of school experience is undertaken outside a mainstream learning environment to ensure that student teachers are prepared to teach both in mainstream and ALN environments. We are continuing to engage with ITE Partnerships and Special Schools to identify how we can increase engagement with the sector whilst ensuring the core requirements of ITE provision continue to be delivered. This will be informed by the evaluation of the PGCE Primary with ALN that is being piloted by the Caban ITE Partnership.

Financial Implications – None as will be managed within existing budgets.

Recommendation 19

The Welsh Government commissions the development of a mandatory training module for all school staff on disability awareness. This should cover the social model of disability, and equip all staff in a school with a basic level of awareness, as well as signposting them to other resources if they want to develop their skills and expertise. It should also be in line with the latest research and clinical knowledge, and is kept up to date to reflect any subsequent changes or developments.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government does not mandate professional learning in relation to specific areas of professional practice. The only exceptions apply to professional qualifications for example routes to teaching and specific training stipulated by employers e.g. GDPR. Research evidence demonstrates that voluntary engagement in professional learning and enquiry-based learning is the most effective way to develop practitioners' knowledge and improve learner outcomes.

Our national mission commitment is to establish a culture of mutual responsibility in relation to professional learning, through the [National Professional Learning Entitlement](#). Well-led professional learning should be bespoke to, and driven by, practitioners in the context of school, national, wider professional and personal priorities.

We are focused on ensuring that the development of education practitioners is continuous, collaborative and evaluative, rather than a one-off, isolated, prescribed experience. There are no direct powers to enforce specified mandatory professional learning for all education professionals. However, in some instances the Welsh Government will use existing levers to promote professional learning in priority areas e.g. the professional standards, INSET and the Professional Learning Grant.

The Welsh Government has worked with education consortia and regional partnerships, and local authority participation workers, with support from the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Disability Wales, to create an online [professional learning package](#) on the UNCRC and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

This national professional learning resource supports practitioners, headteachers, governing bodies and local authorities to develop an awareness and understanding of the UNCRC and UNCRPD. A consistent professional learning offer was required to support schools to meet the requirements of Section 64 of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). The first two modules were made available in 2023 via our [Hwb](#) learning platform.

The first module provides a universal introduction to children's human rights, including a useful tool for all public sector organisations to broaden their understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNCRC and UNCRPD. This module also includes a short video providing a simple explanation of the social

model of disability and its relevance within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The second module provides a more in-depth exploration of how headteachers, governing bodies and local authorities can embed the UNCRC and UNCRPD in their new curricula. To date, the modules have attracted over 2,600 views and also link to additional resources produced by Disability Wales, The Children's Commissioner for Wales, UNICEF and other appropriate organisations.

A third module is currently under development and will support practitioners to understand ways to plan, design and review their school curriculum in relation to the UNCRC and UNCRPD, by providing practical case study exemplars. This new module will be published later this year.

We are also working with partners to develop professional learning to support the implementation of the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing which will include professional learning on child development and neurodivergence.

The Welsh Government established the Disability Rights Taskforce to bring together people with lived experience, representative organisations, and Welsh Government policy officials to consider recommendations required to achieve improvements for disabled people in Wales, which the Welsh Government, wider public services and disabled people will work together to deliver on. The Taskforce's key findings will inform the development of Disability Rights Action Plan.

One of the key priorities of this Taskforce was to consider recommendations for children and young people. To do this, the Taskforce's Children and Young People working group consulted with parents, disabled children, and their educational settings. The group's recommendations are rooted in promoting and embedding the social model of disability and to address the challenges that impact disabled children's full participation in education, in areas such as play.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 20

The Welsh Government should issue guidance to schools and local authorities to ensure that either new buildings, or changes to current school estates are based on the experiences and evidence of children, young people, families and staff with lived experience. This engagement should also ensure that future needs are considered so that buildings are fully accessible to all who may attend in the future.

Response: Accept

Any new build or major alterations of a school requires to follow both regulations and guidance. Building Regulations Part M is a set of regulations that sets out the requirements for access to and use of buildings. The aim of Part M is to make buildings accessible to everyone, regardless of their disability or mobility impairment. Further guidance on design and space requirements is currently under review, with a new Welsh Building Guidance – Area Guidelines for Schools in Wales being published this Autumn to replace the Building Bulletin 98, 99 and 104. Welsh Government's expectation and good practice in designing any new facility is to consult with all relevant stakeholders including staff, pupils, and the community which it serves. This will be included within this guide and within the wider Sustainable Communities for Learning Business Case Guidance.

Financial Implications – No financial implications as this will be absorbed into 'business as usual'

Recommendation 21

The Welsh Government should develop further mechanisms to ensure there are greater opportunities to share and disseminate good and innovative learner travel practice. This could include an annual summit with the relevant Cabinet Secretary or Minister.

Response: Accept

The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) already hold school transport sub-groups to discuss issues and share practices on school transport. However, as outlined in the Learner Travel Recommendations Report published in March 2024, the Welsh Government recognises that there is some excellent practice taking place across Wales to support a diverse range of travel options for children and young people. The Recommendations Report concluded that, in partnership with delivery partners, a suitable platform to promote innovative learner travel practice and support the sharing of best practice resources should be established. The Welsh Government are working with ATCO to establish a forum for local authorities to meet regularly to develop this network of good practice and share resources.

Financial Implications – None as will be managed within existing resources.

Recommendation 22

The Welsh Government prioritises the review and publication of the suite of statutory learner travel guidance. In responding to this report, the Welsh Government should provide a clear timetable for the work reviewing this with a definitive date for publication, and when the revised guidance will come into force. They should also set out how they will ensure there is a consistent application of the guidance across Wales.

Response: Accept

Work has begun updating the statutory learner travel operational guidance and the All-Wales Travel Behaviour Code.

The updated guidance document will go out to consultation before the end of 2024 with the intention of the guidance being published by Summer 2025, giving local authorities sufficient time to update their guidance document to come in to force by Summer 2026.

The Welsh Government agrees with the sentiment behind the recommendation of the need to improve consistency of delivery across local authorities whilst recognising that local authorities have different needs, geographies, and priorities so there may be variances according to these local requirements. Welsh Government's position remains that local authorities are in the best place to make decisions that reflect the needs of their communities within the framework of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure and supporting guidance documents.

The on-going work of ATCO as well as the Learner Transport Forum being established will provide a forum to support consistency of application of the guidance across Wales.

Financial Implications – £10,000 has been allocated to support the engagement and development of the guidance documents.

Recommendation 23

The Welsh Government explores ways of ensuring there are appropriate training opportunities for transport companies and staff to build up confidence and skills in supporting children and young people. As part of this, consideration should be given to developing accreditation for staff.

Response: Accept in principle

As set out in [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#) the Welsh Government is committed to transforming the customer experience of public transport including reliability, punctuality and training for staff and drivers, so people are more confident about using services.

Transport for Wales has already begun this process by developing a range of initiatives to support the provision of an inclusive and accessible rail service including the introduction of trained and skilled Travel Companions, the establishment of the Confident Traveller Programme and representative groups to ensure the voice of the traveller is embodied in TFW's developments including the Accessibility and Inclusion Panel alongside the Children and Young People's Advisory Group.

There are several challenges to delivering bus driver training with significant competing demands on time and resources within the current model of delivery.

Our future plans for delivering bus and taxi services in Wales provide potential opportunities to look at how and what training is currently delivered and to enhance it for the benefit of the workforce and users.

In the meantime, the Learner Travel Forum will provide an opportunity for local authorities to share common understanding and best practice on embedding skills and training requirements in to contracted provision for home to school transport.

Financial Implications – None at present

Recommendation 24

The Welsh Government undertakes further work to ensure a streamlining of services to deliver fully on a no wrong door approach across all public services, but with particular reference to the interaction between health and education services. This work should identify the barriers to effective coordination between services, as well as identifying best practice, and mechanisms for sharing this best practice.

Response: Accept

Increasing multi-agency collaboration across public services, particularly between health and education continues to be a priority.

Further work is being done through the ALN Multi-Agency Collaboration Working Group with representatives from health, education and other organisations, to develop solutions and agreed positions to emerging issues resulting from implementing ALN reforms. Work is in train to develop a national consensus on section 20 referrals, to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Health Boards/Trusts to monitor progress against ALNET Act statutory duties compliance, develop guidance and share effective practice, revise the supporting Learners with Healthcare Needs statutory guidance. These are critical actions to assure that Health boards are fulfilling their ALNET Act statutory duties including data on referrals and timescales, as well as providing data to identify areas of variation and concern.

Our ambition is for all schools in Wales to be Community Focused Schools (CFS) - responding to the needs of their community, building a strong partnership with families and collaborating effectively with other services.

As part of a Community Focused Schools approach, multi-agency engagement includes:

- Collaborating effectively with other key services and agencies to ensure that all children thrive and learn.
- Sharing information so that children and young people and their families are able to access the appropriate support at the right time.
- Supporting access to wider services which may be co-located in a school premises or located elsewhere within the community.

Financial Implications – No additional financial implications are anticipated in relation to the continuation of ongoing work in this area.

Recommendation 25

The Welsh Government must ensure that services align and adjust their timelines when working across different services and professions to ensure support is holistic and best supports access to childcare and education.

Response: Accept

We will continue to work cross-government and co-constructively with our partners to align delivery of different services to ensure support is available for disabled children and young people to access childcare and education.

The ALN Multi-Agency Collaboration Working Group is specifically developing a national consensus on section 20 referrals which will look at aligning timelines across services.

The Welsh Government will work actively with Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLOs) to establish and review data presented from key performance indicators, and any recommendation from the review of the ALN Act and Code, to consider how Health Boards are fulfilling their ALNET Act statutory duties.

Our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales Plan was published on 15 March 2024 and is a cross-sectoral plan which brings together, for the first time, all our policies and programmes relating to early childhood play, learning and care from across Welsh Government.

Our plan places the child and child development at the heart of everything we do. Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care is about developing and delivering a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality play-based childcare and education opportunities, for all babies and young children aged 0-5 years old.

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care supports our wider early years policies and ambitions in Wales and is primarily concerned with promoting partnerships, consistency and join up between schools and settings as well as parents/carers, for the benefit of the child and their families.

Our Early Years Integration Transformation Programme (EYITP) is a time-limited, piloting programme, focussed on developing a more joined-up, responsive early years system that puts the unique needs of each child at its heart, which covers the period of life from pre-birth to seven.

Since 2017, the majority of Public Service Boards (PSBs) across Wales have joined the programme on a phased basis as pathfinders and the support we have provided has enabled them to explore different ways of delivering early years services in a more systematic way, applying the lessons from our existing programmes such as Flying Start and Families First.

Funding for the programme came to an end in March 2024 and the programme will formally close at the end of March 2025. We are working with PSBs, during 2024-25,

to embed the learning and good practice, as they consider how to mainstream piloting activity into business-as-usual practices, as they formally exit from the programme.

The learning and good practice from the programme will help shape our strategic thinking on how we can best support the integration and transformation of maternity and early years services in the medium and longer term and will provide a solid foundation for the future delivery of all our early years programmes and policies.

Financial Implications - None

Recommendation 26

The Welsh Government reviews the current numbers of key allied health professionals, identifies where there are current gaps, how these gaps will be addressed and the numbers needed to support future likely level of need, including the number of training places needed. This should then be supported by a clear delivery plan.

Response: Accept

[The National workforce implementation plan: addressing NHS workforce challenges](#) sets out an action to review the Allied Health Professional (AHP) workforce. Health Education and Improvement Wales will be required to review allied health professions to understand the current position and future needs to deliver our services, resulting in an AHP retention plan. Data scoping for the review is underway of which will inform the wider review and understanding of the gaps.

Financial Implications – None

Recommendation 27

The Welsh Government explores in more detail the good practice from Neath Port Talbot with schools able to access support from Occupational Therapists which is funded by the local authority and considers whether it would benefit from piloting such approaches in other parts of Wales. Such a pilot should then be fully evaluated, and if successful, consideration should be given to rolling out this model across Wales.

Response: Accept in principle

Arrangements are underway to hold a national sharing effective practice event across the education and health sector. There are a number of good practice models for children's occupational therapy which could be shared in the event. The Neath Port Talbot pilot will be considered as one showcase for the event. The models will also be presented at the ALN Multiagency Group, with early discussions on the models being used as a case study to share with delivery partners. Once a review is undertaken to evaluate the model and consider other models currently in place we will then consider the most effective model for rolling out.

Financial Implications - None

Recommendation 28

The Welsh Government encourages all local authorities to enter into partnership agreements to support the buying and recycling of specialist equipment and adaptations which can support children and young people accessing childcare and education.

Response: Accept

Officials will work with local authorities to identify and share good practice in this area.

The Children and Young People's Continuing Care Guidance for Wales describes the interagency process, led by health boards, that all organisations should implement in assessing needs and putting in place bespoke packages of continuing care that may include the provision of equipment. The concept of sharing and recycling equipment is an important aspect of managing resources efficiently and sustainably. This approach can help reduce costs and ensure that essential equipment is available to those who need it.

If a child or young person is found to be eligible for continuing care, Welsh Government expect agencies to work together to ensure that there are no gaps in meeting those assessed individual's needs. Any service provided and arranged by the Local Health Board, local authorities and their partners should enable the child or young person to function optimally within their family, community, education or care setting.

Financial Implications - Any work in this area will be managed from within existing resources.

Recommendation 29

The Welsh Government ensures that all local authorities develop clear and widely available pathways setting out what support is available, and who is responsible for providing this support. Such pathways should be kept regularly updated so the information remains timely and relevant. These should be easily available on local authority websites and should also be pro-actively made available to families when making initial contact with the local authority seeking support.

Response: Accept in principle

We are supportive of the underlying principle behind this recommendation however, this is a matter for local authorities. We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to ensure information for families is clear and widely available.

The ALN Act and Code currently places a duty on Local Authorities to provide impartial information and advice about ALN and the ALN system. This includes making information available on their websites. Welsh Government will continue to monitor the delivery of local authorities through existing systems.

Parents of children from birth to five years would receive advice and information from their Health Visitor and the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer within their local authority.

Each local authority in Wales has a Family Information Service - the front door of the authority for parents and families looking for advice, information and signposting on a range of services available within their local area. They are experienced in guiding parents to services which can help their family circumstances on a range of issues, including childcare, costs of childcare, training, family programmes, health, financial matters and recreation.

Financial Implications - None

Recommendation 30

The Welsh Government issues guidance to local authorities setting out core principles for publication of information on childcare. This guidance should set out that information is co-produced with families, is easily and readily available, in multiple formats, is kept updated, and provides a basic level of consistency across Wales. The Welsh Government in drawing up this guidance should involve families from across Wales with relevant experiences to ensure the needs of families are at the heart of the guidance.

Response: Accept

Our [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan](#) sets out specific actions that the Welsh Government have done or are planning to do to support parents in developing and accessing relevant information on childcare.

The Childcare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) expands and clarifies in legislation the vital role local authorities play as strategic leaders in the provision of childcare locally. The 2006 Act reinforces the framework within which local authorities already work – in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent, community and maintained sector – to shape and secure children’s services and focuses in particular on the provision of:

Welsh Government has issued statutory guidance to local authorities ([Childcare Statutory Guidance, revised August 2016](#)) setting out how information to parents and prospective parents about childcare should be provided through their Family Information Service.

The guidance sets out broad principles for information provision to ensure that the provision of local information is:

- User friendly, reflecting parents’ perceptions and needs
- Accessible via a range of settings, outlets and channels
- Accessible in a variety of formats to comply with equality legislation and Welsh language standards

Each local authority in Wales has a Family Information Service (FIS) - the front door of the authority for parents and families looking for advice, information and signposting on a range of services available within their local area. They are experienced in guiding parents to services which can help their family circumstances on a range of issues, including childcare, costs of childcare, training, family programmes, health, financial matters and recreation. FIS can also be accessed via Teulu Cymru or “Family of Wales”, which has been set up for parents, carers and families of children aged 0-18, pointing them in the right direction for different Welsh Government sources of practical and financial support. It is aimed to directly support parents to access information and funding. Teulu Cymru will be kept under review and we will continually work with parents to ensure that it gives them the information they need.

Funded by the Welsh Government our key partners (Cwlwm) have also developed and published 'Choosing Childcare' booklet that supports families in their childcare choices.

Financial Implications- All activity planned or underway will be accommodated within existing resources.

Recommendation 31

The Welsh Government reviews the information currently available on rights in education, ensuring that it is widely available, accessible in a range of formats, and supports children, young people and their families to understand what their rights are, and how to seek redress if their rights are being breached.

Response: Accept in principle

Information about children's rights is currently available from a number of organisations, including the overarching right to an education. We recognise this range of sources can make it challenging for children and young people and their families to access definitive information on their rights. We will work with partners including but not limited to local authorities, disability organisations and the EHRC to ensure information provided by the Welsh Government is as definitive as possible and accessible. However, we cannot require other organisations to amend or withdraw the information they provide.

In April 2024, as part of our suite of Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Resources, the Welsh Government published a practitioners Childrens Rights leaflet and four Children's Rights leaflets for parents of 0-5-year-olds to support them in their understanding of babies and young children's rights

Financial Implications - There should be no, or low, implications associated with this work. However, there may be some low-level costs associated with engagement with stakeholders including children, young people and their families and with the development of accessible documentation. This will be met within existing budgets.

Recommendation 32

The Welsh Government sets out a clear delivery plan for addressing gaps in specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired, to ensure that all children and young people can access this support when needed. This delivery plan should have clear targets, deliverables and timeframes so it can be monitored and scrutinised.

Response: Reject

Local authorities are responsible for planning their workforce to ensure the availability of sufficient and appropriately trained staff. Under the ALN Act, local authorities are required to keep their arrangements for children and young people with ALN and those of their maintained schools under review. This review must include consideration of the size and capability of the available workforce. This is consistent with the Welsh Government's view that local authorities are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances. The Welsh Government does not therefore accept the recommendation for a delivery plan specifically around specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired.

To assist local authorities the Welsh Government provided additional funding for training support for teachers of the sensory impaired through 2018-21 as part of the ALN Transformation programme and we continue to highlight to local authorities that LAEG funding for ALN can be used for the professional training of specialist teachers where it addresses additional pressures.

The Welsh Government has published guides on effective interventions for learners with sensory impairments in education settings and in addition to developing a national ALN professional learning pathway to support ALNCos and other practitioners develop their skills to support all learners with ALN we have worked with the third sector to develop e-learning units for teachers on supporting deaf learners and learners with vision impairment.

Financial Implications – None