

Easy Read

Cross Party Group on Learning Disability

December

12

Notes from the 7th meeting on 12 December 2023.

The meeting was on Zoom.



People who came to the meeting

- **Sioned Williams MS** – Member of the Senedd, Chair
- **Sara Pickard** – Mencap Cymru, co-Secretary
- **Sam Williams** – Learning Disability Wales, co-Secretary
- **Aled Blake** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Angela Kenvyn** – Engage to Change
- **Ashleigh Francis** – Bridges Centre
- **Darren Smith**
- **Grace Coppock** – All Wales Forum
- **Ishbel Hansen** – Swansea Parent Carer Forum
- **Julian Hallett** – Down's Syndrome Association (Wales)
- **Kai Jones** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Kelly Stuart** – All Wales People First
- **Kirsten Jones** – Natspec

- **Marg McNeil** – SEE Around Britain
- **Marie Gibson**
- **Nicky Williams** – Parent
- **Simon Rose** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Sion Jones** – Mencap Cymru
- **Victoria Hughes** – Parent
- **Wayne Crocker** – Mencap Cymru
- **Zoe Richards** – Learning Disability Wales



People who said they could not come to the meeting

- **Humie Webb** – Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group

About this document



This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. They have been explained in a box below the word. You can see what all the words in **blue** mean on **page 15**.

1. Welcome and introductions



Sioned Williams is a Member of the Senedd and **Chair** of the Cross Party Group.

The **Chair** of the group is the person in charge of the meetings.

Sara Pickard works for Mencap Cymru and is co-Secretary of the Cross Party Group.



The **Secretary** is the person or organisation in charge of organising the group. For example, booking meetings and sending out agendas.

A **co-Secretary** is when more than 1 person shares the job of **Secretary**.

Sioned and Sara welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Specialist education after the age of 16



Kirsten Jones works for **Natspec**.

Natspec is an organisation that represents specialist education providers for students with learning disabilities.



Kirsten talked about some of the problems young people with a learning disability are having when trying to find the right college course after the age of 16.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

She explained that Welsh Government is changing the way young people with a learning disability can get on a college course after the age of 16.

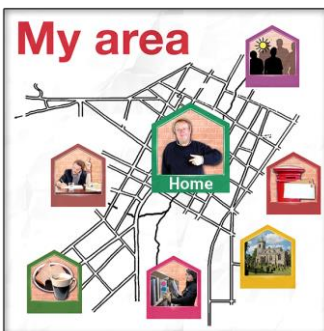


These changes are part of the new **Additional Learning Needs** law and rules for education in Wales.

Additional Learning Needs or **ALN** is the new name for Special Educational Needs or SEN in Wales.



After the age of 16, young people can choose to go to a further education or FE college to study.



There are different types of further education colleges:

- Local further education colleges that have lots of different courses for young people living in the local area.

This includes courses for young people with or without **additional learning needs**. For



example, independent living skills or catering.

- Specialist further education colleges that have special courses for young people with a learning disability or autism.



Some of the new changes are making it harder for young people with a learning disability to get the right college course for their needs.

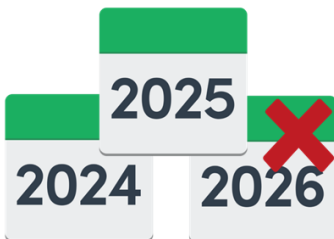


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Before, Welsh Government decided if a young person could go to a specialist further education college.



Now, local authorities are deciding if a young person with a learning disability should go to their local college or a specialist college.



All young people over 16 are only allowed to do a course for free for 2 years.

But many young people with a learning disability need longer than 2 years.



It is also not clear if the 2 years means:

- 2 years after the age of 16 or
- 2 years after they finish school.



This is important because lots of young people with a learning disability do not finish school until they are 19.



This means that some local authorities are planning to move some young people with a learning disability straight from school to day services.



Natspec and some other organisations are worried these changes will make it harder for young people with a learning disability to do the right courses and get the right skills.

3. Problems finding the right college courses



Victoria Hughes and **Nicky Powell** are both parents of young men with Down's Syndrome. Their sons are both called Dylan.



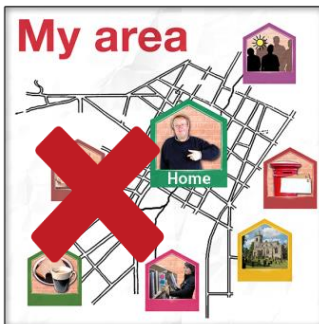
In the future, both Dylans want to get jobs and live independently.



When they finished school, they wanted to do courses that would help them to get jobs and live independently.



Victoria and Nicky started looking for courses for their sons before they finished school.



The courses at their local colleges were not right for the 2 Dylans. They could not give them the support they needed or help them get the right skills.



Victoria and Nicky started looking at specialist colleges for their sons.



Some of these courses were not right for them either. 1 college was for autistic people, not people with a learning disability.



The 2 Dylans wanted to go to a college where they could live there in term time and learn how to live independently.



Victoria and Nicky finally found a specialist **residential** college that seemed right for their sons.

Residential means you stay or live there.



The families were not allowed to start applying for college courses until their sons were in their last year at school.



It took a long time to do the application and get a decision about if they could get the money for the courses they wanted to do.



By the time they were finally told they could do the courses they wanted, they had already missed the first term.



1 of the Dylans decided to start the course straight away, even though he had missed the first term.



The other Dylan decided to wait until the next year to start his course from the beginning.



This made it difficult for both of them at the start. But they are now really enjoying their courses and living in college in term time.



Victoria and Nicky said applying for the right courses for their sons was very difficult and took a long time.



They said that it should be easier to find the right courses for young people with a learning disability to meet their needs.



They did **not** feel like they were always listened to when they were trying to explain what their sons needed.



And they **did** not feel that their sons were asked what they wanted or what was important to them enough.



They also said that families should be able to start applying much earlier to make sure there is enough time before the courses start.



Young people with a learning disability can find moving from school to college very difficult.



They need time to find out about the new college and what it will be like.



They might need to visit the college a few times and meet the staff and other students before they feel ready to start their course.



This is why it is important that there is plenty of time for young people to find the right course, apply and get a decision before the course starts.



Young people must always be asked what they want and what is important to them before any decisions are made.

4. Questions and ideas



After the presentations, some people asked questions and shared their ideas.



Wayne Crocker said that the group could write to the Cross Party Group on further education about the problems we have talked about today.



The 2 Cross Party Groups might be able to work together on this.



Julian Hallett said that he was very worried about local authorities planning to move some young people from school to day services.



This would not be fair as they would miss out on further education and the chance to get new skills.



Also, there are not enough day services for adults with a learning disability across Wales so where would they go?



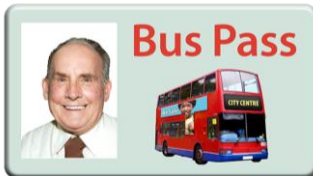
Grace Coppock said that the All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers is working on a toolkit for families.

The toolkit is to help when young people move from children's services to adult services. This is called **transition**.



Sioned will write to the Minister for Education about the problems the group talked about today.

5. Any other business and ideas for future meetings



Sioned told the group that the Deputy Minister for Transport had replied to the group's letter about problems with bus passes.



The Deputy Minister said that disabled people should be able to use their bus pass to travel with someone else if they need to.



But if their bus pass says they can travel with someone else, this does **not** mean that they cannot travel on their own if they want to.



He said that he will be working with Transport for Wales to make sure bus drivers understand this.

And that they have training on how to work with disabled people.



Sioned thanked everyone who spoke at the meeting.



If anyone has any ideas about important things to talk about at future meetings, you can email Sam Williams: samantha.williams@ldw.org.uk or Sara Pickard: SaraE.Pickard@mencap.org.uk.



The next meeting will be on Zoom on 19 March 2024 at 12.15pm.



You can find all the agendas and notes of the Cross Party Group here: <https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/cross-party-group-on-learning-disability/>

Hard words

Chair

The Chair of the group is the person in charge of the meetings.

Secretary or co-Secretary

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Additional Learning Needs or ALN

Additional Learning Needs or ALN is the new name for Special Educational Needs or SEN in Wales.

Residential

Residential means you stay or live there.

Transition

This is when a young person moves from children's services to adult services.