

## Assembly Communications: Outreach

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National Assembly for Wales

Children and Young People Committee

Education (Wales) Bill : Stage 1

Response from : Focus Group 2

# Children and Young People Committee Consultation on the Education (Wales) Bill

## Post-16 SEN provision

This document outlines the evidence gathered including the specific contributions of the focus groups and participants.

### Methodology

As part of the Children and Young People Committee consultation on the Education (Wales) Bill the Outreach team has conducted four focus groups across Wales on the post-16 SEN provision aspect of the Education (Wales) Bill – namely the provisions in the Bill relating to the post-16 assessment of educational and training needs.

The following audiences were targeted:

- Special education needs co-ordinators within schools
- Local authority staff who it may effect within Education departments



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In order to reach the target audience the Outreach team contacted a total of 13 local authority education departments in every electoral region in Wales. The local authorities contacted were:

- Ynys Môn County Council
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Gwynedd County Council
- Wrexham County Borough Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Powys County Council
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- The City and County of Swansea
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- Monmouth County Council
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
- Pembrokeshire County Council

Unfortunately due to time-constraints on the part of our target audiences and the difficulties associated with consulting during the summer holidays a number of the organisations contacted were unable to take part in the focus group programme.



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The final focus group programme entailed a total of four separate focus groups involving five separate participant local authorities, which were namely: Carmarthenshire, Flintshire, Monmouthshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Wrexham. The focus group participants encompassed a broad-spectrum of professionals working in the field of SEN provision including SEN Coordinators, Heads of Service, and Educational Psychologists.

### Summary

Total number of organisations contacted: 13

Total number of participant organisations: 5

Total number of focus groups: 4

Total number of participants: 24



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### Group name: Carmarthenshire County Council

*The participants from Carmarthenshire Council SEN Department represented all roles in SEN/ALN provision. The group comprised of an Educational Psychologist, Child Psychologist, ALN Process Manager, ALN Manager for Provision, Learning Networks Manager within the FE Sector and Behaviour Services Manager.*

Date: 11 September, 2013

Number of participants: Six

### Group name: Monmouthshire County Council

*The participants from Monmouthshire County Council represented the majority of roles involved in SEN/ALN provision. The group comprised of two Senior SEN Officers and the Head of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service. Prior to the focus group, the participants had consulted with 4 school-based SEN Co-ordinators across the county, and put forward their views on their behalf.*

Date: 5 September, 2013

Number of participants: Three

### Group Name: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

*The participants from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council represented a broad spectrum of roles involved in SEN/ALN provision. The group represented roles involved in the support for Learning, Behaviour, Autism, Visual Impairment and Educational Psychology.*

Date: 9 September, 2013

Number of participants: Nine

Point of contact: Gaynor Cynon Jones (Learning Support)

### Group Name: Wrexham County Borough Council and Flintshire County Council



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*This focus group comprised of representatives from both Wrexham County Borough and Flintshire County Councils. The participants represented the majority of roles involved in SEN/ALN provision, including Inclusion, Psychology and Learning Support.*

Date: 9 September, 2013

Number of participants: Six



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## Education (Wales) Bill

Questions for special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinators on the proposals for giving local authorities more responsibilities for assessing needs of, and securing provision for, post-16 learners with additional learning needs

Do you believe there are any problems with the way that specialist post-16 provision is currently assessed and then provided, and if so what are these?

### Carmarthenshire County Council

**Level of support** – *“when a young person is identified as having ALN/SEN in school the level of support is intensive – this isn’t the case for post-16 learners who may enter a different college, whose needs may not be reviewed as often”*. The level of support available is dependent on the level of the young person’s needs, in addition to the knowledge colleges have of those needs.

This is also the case for young people who become identified as having ALN/SEN at a later stage. The level of support given to young people identified as ALN earlier in the education system is greater than that provided for those identified later on in the education system.

**Understanding individual needs** - there is a *“variation in the education pathways open to young people with ALN/SEN. If the desired course isn’t available in the school they have been attending for 5+ years (a school which will be very aware of that young person’s level of need) that young person may have to attend a college/school in a different catchment area”*. They are then at a disadvantage of being in a new environment, within an institution that isn’t always as aware of their education needs, in comparison to the institution they attend previously.

**Assessments** - Careers Wales’s assessments aren’t in-depth enough for Welsh Government to support funding placements. The Local Authority and Careers Wales need to work more closely together to ensure efficient and effective packages of support for the learner, and pitch a more convincing case for funding support.



### Monmouthshire County Council

**Time** - there is a significant lapse in time between the applications being sent for the funding of placements and the decision to grant them. Initial applications are sent in the Spring of the academic year, but many young people don't receive a response until the week before the start of the new term which "*creates significant anxiety amongst parents*".

**Expertise** - as Monmouthshire does not have a specialist post-16 college, the participants rely on the expertise of Careers Wales to help place students in suitable schools in neighbouring counties and over the border in England. Should Careers Wales cease to be in existence, the Local Authority would not be in a position of expertise to place their young people in appropriate colleges.

**Careers Wales funding** - Careers Wales funding has reduced, but their capacity and remit haven't. At one point there were two SEN Careers Wales workers (one north and one south of the county), but this has been reduced to one worker throughout Monmouthshire. The participants felt that this funding should be ring-fenced completely – as the number of SEN students has not decreased and the workload has increased significantly.

**Role of the "Key Worker"** - the participants discussed previous proposals by the Department of Education and Skills to incorporate the role of a "Key Worker" at this transition period which never manifested. These Key Workers would have directly supported each SEN student (and their parents) with choices open to them post-16. The participants felt that this was a real shame – particularly since the system of SEN provision and education has changed and is changing so rapidly through the SEN Framework reforms. This makes the system difficult to evaluate in terms of effectiveness. These roles were not introduced as the Revenue Support Grant had not been ring-fenced – "*authorities are always doing more with less*".



**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

**Time** – a *“significant proportion of assessments are stated late”*. This means that the child or young person’s family often only find out whether they have received a place in college/school a week or so before term starts in September. All young people return to school in the first week of September, but one participant highlighted that one young person they were currently working with was only given a decision on their place 4 days before the start of term.

**Funding placements** – as a significant proportion of assessments are started late, it naturally follows that the decision to fund that placement is given late too. Staff are often pressed for time to put transition plans into place, particularly from an Educational Psychology perspective where the young person requires significant resources to support their learning programme.

**Multi-agency working and communication** – the Local Authority will only *“find out about these late assessments for placements in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour”*, when they are asked to quickly help place a young person in an appropriate school/college. Multi-agency working between the Local Authority and Careers Wales isn’t always in place and parties aren’t kept in the loop of a young person’s progress. *“Careers Wales won’t liaise about a young person’s progress for placement until very late in the day”*.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION: How beneficial would taking the “middle-man” (i.e. Careers Wales) out be?**

**Resources** – the focus group participants agreed that taking the role of Careers Wales out of the SEN post-16 process *“would mean creating almost an entire new department”* dedicated to the provision. It would essentially benefit the young person in having a single point of contact within the Department, but it would be an issue of capacity and resource for the Local Authority. However, it would give the Local Authority a chance to prepare the logistics of getting all parties together to discuss statementing, placements, funding applications etc.

**Links to recent changes** – the focus group participants made us aware of future changes to the SEN Code of Practice and Framework. Any proposed change to post-16 SEN provision would have to be linked to this.



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**Capacity** - school SEN Co-ordinators are already stretched to provide information about a young person's progress/statement to local authorities and Careers Wales. If changes were adequately designed, the process of working and provision through the Local Authority alone, without Careers Wales, would be much more streamlined.

**Training** – if Careers Wales were to be “cut-out” of the process, sufficient and robust training would need to be provided for in-school SEN Co-ordinators as the expertise does not currently exist. There would need to be some form of transfer of staff or knowledge from Careers Wales to local authorities.

### Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council

**Multi-agency working** - local authorities don't have much involvement post-16 with SEN provision. They usually sit in on annual reviews which look at the young person's statement, and identify any needs that they want to raise.

**Communication** - the participants felt that there was better communication between schools and the local authorities than between Careers Wales and schools.

**Legal framework** – the participants raised the point that there is no legal framework in place for handing over responsibility for their young people in transition to Careers Wales, (as they are still accountable for their assessments until 19) and this causes them concern as they're handing over to another organisation.

**Inconsistency of service** - the participants raised an issue whereby there are systems in place for young people with a 'statement' of SEN, but not for young people with “learning disabilities”.

**Capacity** – some young people without a history of SEN will request an assessment for statementing, before entering post 16/18 education. This puts pressure on the services that the local authorities provide, as assessments take up a lot of time and resource.



**Level of support** - Participants described that there are a number of young people that have “*gone off the edge of the cliff*”. During their school years young people with ALN/SEN are heavily involved with the Local Authority but following their leavers review, they no longer have a real involvement with the Local Authority.

**What impact do you think giving local authorities a greater role in respect of post-16 learners will potentially have?**

**Carmarthenshire County Council**

**Capacity** - it was made clear that young people are entitled to education until they are 19 years of age, so a capacity issue is raised from the prospect of having to assess them until 25. This is an additional six years of monitoring and assessing, even if the young person enters higher education or even the world of work.

**Communication with FE Colleges** – the focus group participants felt that they didn’t have influence over this sector, as opposed to the link they have built with specialist schools within the area. The Local Authority has a privileged relationship with schools, but having the duty to provide and assess the needs of young people going into FE Colleges could be a legal minefield. If the young person’s needs are not being met there, the local authorities do not have the clout to ensure that they do and ultimately become culpable for potential failings on the part of FE Colleges.

**Ambiguity of the Bill** - clarification of Section 40A 1) a) of the Bill. “*Why would the Local Authority have to reassess a 16-19 learner who is already in school and are still therefore entitled to the education provision?*” They felt that many provisions within the Bill were vague and poorly drafted. Concerns were raised over the interpretation of Section 40B 2) b) – who will decide whether the young person is entitled to a discretionary assessment and on what basis? Will that young person need to be identified as having a “significant need”? The participants felt that this needed to be defined.

**Assessments** - the participants highlighted the need to clarify what sort of information the post-16 assessment would need to contain if a young person’s education would continue outside of the school setting. “*Many young people entering Adult Services become identified as having*



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*mental health needs – are mental health needs going to be incorporated in the assessment?”* Participants felt that a significant number of assessments were delayed by health professionals, who do not always see it as a priority. At present, it’s mandatory for a Paediatrician to be part of the needs assessment but it’s not always relevant or necessary for some. There is a link here to the transition from Child to Adult Services – will the involvement of Doctors be mandatory in the assessment process post-16?

**Training** – all members of the SEN Department are trained to work with a young person up to 19. A significant amount of training would need to be undertaken to ensure the same level of support up until 25. This would have a knock on effect on all those currently involved in a young person’s learning and needs process, and training would have to be offered to schools and colleges.

**Financial impact model** – this would definitely need to be scrutinised before any implementation. The participants felt that it was somewhat inconsistent in light of the Robert Hill Report. *“Will local authorities, in their current form, even be in existence by the time these provisions come into force?”* – will it then be a question of wasting valuable time, resource and money?

**Qualified members of staff** – the participants highlighted that there is a significant shortage of Educational Psychologists in Wales, in particular those who are bi-lingual. If duties are to be extended and assessments to be made up until the age of 25, where are they going to find the capacity?

**Co-ordinating placements and local provision** – funding for a placement can be anywhere in the UK – *“if the specialist college with the course desired is in Newcastle for example, the Local Authority will now have to be partly responsible for funding. It is the monitoring of the young person’s process which is difficult and most time consuming”*.

### Monmouthshire County Council

**Financial** - from the school’s perspective, it was felt that assessments, which can be requested until the age of 19, would increase the burden on their budget. Schools will also be pressured for answers by parents whilst waiting for their decision. Careers Wales are well versed in this



and schools/local authorities aren't.

**Time** – will local authorities have time to sort and source colleges?

**Financial impact model** - the group from the outset highlighted the importance of creating a financial impact model for the Bill "*before even beginning to scrutinise anything that the Bill was proposing*". The Bill needs to be scoped financially before deciding whether it is viable.

**Capacity and knowledge** – local authorities "*wouldn't have the capacity, knowledge or experience to fulfil the role*". SEN departments rely on the specialist knowledge provided by Careers Wales due to the lack of in-house knowledge beyond post-16 and 18 provisions. Capacity would need to be built at the local authority level, with more training and resources etc. to bridge this potential skills gap.

**Collaborative working** - the participants were sceptical of the Bill's proposal to place the duty of provision back to local authorities when most of the work they currently undertake is done on a collaborative basis. Any duty placed back on the Local Authority would mean that it would have to be carried out on a consortium basis with other local authorities, as there are no post-16 colleges within the county. The Bill should incorporate multi-agency working on a wider level, involving Health Professionals, Social Services, Careers Wales and the Education Department, who are all involved in the ALN/SEN statementing process.

**Transport costs** - the participants felt that there would need to be a financial impact model for transport. Many parents in this economic climate have, and will continue to ask for travel reimbursements as there are no colleges within the county for their children to attend: some students will have to travel 35 miles and more. This cost is huge – and the SEN Department don't really have the financial capacity to carry on funding it. The participants discussed the work of LIFT – a charity which provides a two-year course to Year 10 and 11 pupils which aim to empower their ability to travel to and from college independently. This was described as "*labour intensive*" – with one worker travelling on the bus with the student, one positioned at the start of their journey and one positioned at the end.

**Lack of expertise** – "*when you're talking about SEN post-16 provision, you're not just talking about education – you're talking about independence, community living, travel and life skills*". These would have to be taught to the individual. The greater role played by the Local Authority would essentially become an additional one – it would widen their current remit and the expertise is simply not there.



**Transition from Child to Adult Services** - the participants discussed the difficulty in the breaking of age categories as Adult Services generally become involved at 17.5 years and the criteria for support would therefore change. The multi-agency working should encompass a Joint Assessment and approach as the SEN Department would not want to be in a position of dictating "the right" approach. This, it was felt, needed to be part of a Statutory Reform.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION: Would you want multi-agency working to be included on the face of the Bill?**

All participants felt that the correct approach would be to include multi-agency working on the face of the Bill. Everyone involved needs to be working to a budget and consistent criteria.

### **Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

**Increased workload** – all participants agreed that the extra years of statementing and SEN provision from post-16 will bring about a significant increase in their workload. Whilst they may be well-placed to take on this greater role, they may be pressed to hire new staff and develop a brand new skill-set. Careers Wales are currently best placed to source the most appropriate school for a young person and know what is available. *"This knowledge even extends to schools and colleges in other counties and across the border"*. Staff will have to take all this new and specialist information on board. However, despite this additional need to develop, the impact of the changes would mean that the Local Authority is able to keep statementing records updated, leading to a smoother transition for the young person. The expertise of Careers Wales would be lost in the short term.

**Funding** – the funding for placements would need to be clarified. Many schools are unfortunately hesitant to allow new students and pupils to enrol without the certainty of funding from the Welsh Government. This could lead to further delays in placement applications being granted.

**Transition from Child to Adult Services** – some of the participants wanted clarification as to when the cut-off point of provision would be. What would happen if a post-16 learner decided to go to work? Would the Local Authority be required to make assessments for those entering



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the workplace? The type of assessment available is dependent on the age of the young person. If the Local Authority is required to make provision up until the age of 25, changes would have to be made to the forms of assessments available at different stages of the young person's learning programme, and subsequently make them more streamlined.

**Local knowledge** – Careers Wales have a very good local knowledge of what schools/colleges have available for each young person dependent on their statement of needs. RCT have often worked on a consortium basis with other local authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend and Cardiff to help each other place young people. The participants all questioned whether this form of collaborative working could continue in the way that it does currently, if the changes were put in to place and duties placed back on local authorities directly. This approach should be emphasised more clearly in the text of the Bill.

### Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council

**Funding** - there would be an impact on local authority funding, although the participants could see the benefits of having officers from local authorities involved, this would mean additional workload which in turn means additional cost to the local authorities - how would this be covered?

**Increased workload**- an Educational Psychologist noted that capacity was an issue - if there are as many cases as there currently are (and there are no reasons for it to decrease) then where does that staff time come from? In general it was felt that this would put significant pressures on staff workload within the department and that would put extra pressure on their resources, however they did recognise the benefit of this happening as it would ensure consistency and would mean that the local authorities are working with these young people and their families through their educational life.

**Reviewing assessments** - if learners decide to leave college after a short period of time e.g. a day or a week- then who's responsible? Would this mean that the Local Authority would need to review the assessment of the learner for potential other learners avenues?

**Training and specialist knowledge** - the participants felt that the role Careers Wales fulfilled at the moment was a specialist one, where they



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are seen to be experts - training would be needed for the SEN Co-ordinators to be able to fulfil that role. It was suggested that maybe a Careers Wales officer could then be based at each local authority to help with this element of the work. The current assessments are detailed documents - would the SEN Coordinators have the knowledge about the options available? Is it the role of an SEN coordinator to have this knowledge? Having a representative from Careers Wales within the Local Authority would also be a useful resource to have for children who have no statement and would also ensure consistency within the Local Authority.

**Local knowledge** – all participants believed that having someone from Careers Wales within the LA would enhance the service provided to young people and are the best people to provide advice on options on a regional basis with SEN learners. The group asked if Careers Wales were not fulfilling this role then their remit with regards to the process would need to be clarified.

### **Additional considerations that the participants raised**

- Would the assessment include person centred planning?
- Who would be responsible for the transition of the young person post 25?
- The group weren't sure if the Bill meant that there would be additional funding to assess from 19 to 25 years?
- What happens when a young person moves to another LA? What about cross- border issues with England?
- Who should sit on the panels that work on these assessment reviews? SEN Co-ordinators only? Who would have overall responsibility?

**Mainstream further education colleges that can meet the needs of SEN learners can apply directly to the Welsh Government for supplementary funding to meet the needs of learners rather than going through local councils for this funding. The Welsh Government wants supplementary funding applications to continue in this way. Do you have any views on this?**

### **Carmarthenshire County Council**

The participants felt that the less that had to be managed centrally by the Local Authority, the better.

### **Monmouthshire County Council**



**Funding** - the participants felt that they would prefer carrying on with this system in place but through a better planned scheme where levels of funding available are ring-fenced.

### Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

**Defeating the purpose** – all of the participants felt that if the Bill proposes to bring the duty of SEN post-16 provision back in the hands of the Local Authority then monies available to applications for supplementary funding should also be put in their hands. All of the participants felt that this provision was somewhat irregular when put in context of that the Bill is actually proposing.

**Timescales** – if the Welsh Government continues to receive supplementary funding applications, then timescales should be set as to when an application should be received, and when the applicant should hear back.

**Equipment** – participants felt that it would be more cost-effective if equipment (and thus applications for supplementary funding) were controlled by the Local Authority. This would mean that they could also monitor unused equipment and ensure that it is available for other young people (ensuring value for the Local Authority's money).

### Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council

**Funding** - the SEN Coordinators noted that there are some discrepancies in general regarding the amount of funding available to SEN learners. Some learners are told at the time the statement is done that they will only receive 70% funding towards their course, but by the time the course begins the learner receives 100% of the funding needed. Currently if the learner decides to try local provision, but then changes their mind and needs to attend a special FE college then the Local Authority have to find the money to fund this. With regards to funding for FE colleges, learners tend to include 'teaching time' only - by that it is meant that it does not include break times and lunchtimes and local authorities are getting requests from FE colleges for funding during these times. How about looking at giving the local authorities full responsibility for funding. It is a limited amount at the moment but does put pressure on local authority resources, especially if the number of



SEN learners increases.

The provisions in the Bill in respect of post-16 are one part of a wider consultation held in 2012 about reforming the SEN framework and giving the concept of 'additional learning needs' a legal footing. Do you have any views on whether all of this should have been combined in one piece of legislation rather than the post-16 elements being taken forward separately in the Education (Wales) Bill?

**Carmarthenshire County Council**

**One legislation** - the participants unanimously agreed that it would have been better for the Bill to have been incorporated, or become a part of, one piece of legislation (especially in the context of wider changes to the SEN framework).

**Monmouthshire County Council**

**One legislation** - all participants agreed that these provisions should be combined in one piece of legislation. All services involved have worked hard to keep parents and children informed of their rights and responsibilities.

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**



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**One legislation** –the participants felt that it would make sense for the provisions to be combined in one piece of legislation, highlighting the significant change that has recently come about in this area, and felt that it would have been more sensible to do it all together, rather than in intervals. They acknowledged that such a piece of legislation would be “*colossal*”,

### Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council

**One legislation** - the group felt that it should be combined, as it conforms to the usual collaboration. All participants agreed, but also said that they did not know what the counter arguments for this are. This would ensure that the transition is seamless between pre and post 16 provisions. They felt that the provisions should always be done using person central planning, so therefore why do it differently post-16.

### Are there any comments you wish to make on the way in which learners’ needs are met, in particular post-16?

#### Carmarthenshire County Council

**Transition and Multi-agency working** – all parties involved in the young person’s learning process need to be more supportive of the transition period. “*If the young person had a Key Worker, their needs would be better co-ordinated*”. More work needs to be done to make the transition from Child to Adult service more seamless, linking with Health and Social Care Departments. On the ground, multi-agency working is very difficult, but it is something we would strive for.

**Abuse of system** – some young people make requests for a needs assessment at very late stages in their education/young adult life (they are entitled to do so until 19, and under the provisions of this Bill, could be up until 25). This often allows access to resources and funds that a young person wouldn’t otherwise have going into HE/FE education.

#### Monmouthshire County Council

**Communication** - the participants have generally good communication with Careers Wales who retain a list of all Year 9 pupils whose



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assessments are about to come-up and a rapport is built with students at least 2 years before they make their post-16 decision.

**Curriculum** - there are many questions raised about the types of courses available and open to SEN students in colleges. Whilst there are courses aimed at students who perform well and students who perform badly within education, there aren't many courses available to disabled students. It's either one extreme or another – and nothing on offer in the middle. There should be *“more vocational courses away from the traditional ones which are reflective of the current market”* that are suitable for young people with ALN/SEN - (social media courses were used as an example).

**The role of the “Key Worker”** - the introduction of a “Key Worker” would have brought about major positive reform in this area and should be looked at again.

**Respite** - the *“Bill needs to reflect the fact that parents need respite”* (and that the hours freed-up by a child attending school/college/work can provide much needed respite).

### Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

**Local provision** – the participants felt that there should be more local provision available in Wales generally. *“There isn't a lot out there in terms of post-16 SEN provision and what exists, is full and such schools/colleges have limited spaces”*. Wales seems to have the expertise and capacity to deal with young people with a statement of SEN but the institutions aren't here, and so many young people have to leave to go to England. There are no residential spaces available to young people in Wales, and as such, a young person in need of a residential space in school/college post-16 will also have to go to England.

**Displacement** – one participant working within the field of Educational Psychology highlighted the links that are broken between the young person and their community, particularly where they have to be placed outside of Wales and even in a different part of Wales. *“That young person doesn't just lose their tie with the community but links with services”*. From this break in the link, families also lose the support offered by



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the Local Authority family support services.

**Consortium working** – the local education consortium has come together to work in a manner which would benefit the statementing and placing of young people on their registers. Many participants felt that they were now in the dark in terms of whether they could continue to do so with the introduction of the Bill. Multi-agency working should be included in the text of the Bill.

**Curriculum** – a number of young people on RCT's register fall within the Autistic spectrum and they are currently under-represented in terms of courses that are available post-16 and Autistic Spectrum Disorder specific.

**Future-proofing provision** – any provision of future post-16 SEN/ALN services must be appropriate for those with the most severe physical and cognitive disabilities. Only Day Centres are currently available to such young people, which aren't always appropriate. The group agreed that the *"advances in medical technology over the last 10 years have meant that the nature of some young people's disabilities have become significantly more complex"* (particularly children born very prematurely and generally spend the first 12 months of their lives in Hospital). The question isn't always "how do we educate these children" but "how do we communicate with them".

**Parental views** – many parents are not ready to accept that their child has a statement of SEN, and thus not ready to accept that their child may have to be placed in a special school. Many parents will still request that their child attend mainstream education, which isn't always possible.

### Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council

**Local provision** - the participants said that it was difficult in some cases to match the criteria of some young people with the provisions available within the local area, and that the cost element was also a factor. They noted that this applies to the minority- the majority of young people have no issues finding suitable courses. There are an ever increasing number of people with SEN up to the 25 age group and these needs to be considered when developing policies. The group also felt that it was important that a learners needs were met on a local basis, and a young person should not be expected to go out of the county/ local authority area. They felt that there were issues with some young people having to travel far to get their needs met, and there were also issues with welsh language provisions.



**Multi-agency working** - participants wanted greater collaboration and partnership working between the Local Authority and colleges.

**Statementing** - young people post-16 that have additional learning needs but do not have a statement were considered to be 'a grey area', with local authorities funding their learning needs which was putting great pressure on LA funding.

**Benefits of specialist knowledge** - the participants agreed that Careers Wales has specialist knowledge of what provisions and opportunities are out there for a young person and are effective in identifying places available through their regional hubs.

**What changes would you like to see the Welsh Government make?**

**Carmarthenshire County Council**

**Financial** - the participants felt that it is "ironic at a time of great economic stress on UK Government, Welsh Government and Councils that the Bill could in time, bankrupt Local Authorities through a legal minefield of cases"- namely, where the Local Authority decide against assessing for SEN at their discretion as per the Bill, and the young person/young person's parents seek the intervention of the SEN Tribunal intervention to compel an assessment. A financial risk assessment would need to be undertaken as to the viability of the Bill.

**Monmouthshire County Council**

**Consistency in legislative approach** – the participants felt that there should be consistency in the Welsh Government's legislative approach. All new Bills should tie up Codes of Practice, Frameworks and Statutory Instruments – multi-agency working should be placed in legislation



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and not in Codes of Practice. *"This needs to be above political agenda for Monmouthshire, as any changes to legislation should be able to draw threads together with England"* as many of their SEN students go over the border.

**Consultation approach** – the consultation for this Bill should also be more robust – as it sits at many different levels and *"more parents should be consulted on this aspect of the Bill as they are very well informed of their legal rights"*.

### Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

**Streamlining** – it would be nice to see many of the frameworks and legislative provisions streamlined, but the Welsh Government would need to ensure that local authorities have the financial and physical capacity to carry out their new and existing duties.

**Training** – whilst there are many good initiatives in place, the Welsh Government need to ensure that adequate training is provided to implement these initiatives.

#### More local provision

**Better multi-agency working** – whilst the participants wanted to improve multi-agency working, they wanted the Welsh Government to understand *"how difficult it is for them to logistically join up and work together"*.

**Time** – more time needs to be left between each implemented reform so that services involved have enough time to analyse the effectiveness of each change.

**Funding for specialist projects** – the participants agreed that there was a lot of funding available for specialist SEN/ALN provision projects, but that they were *"too inflexible"*. The criteria set must be met to qualify spending it. Where there is a need, any funding available should be made open to apply for.



### Wrexham County Borough Council & Flintshire County Council

**Curriculum** - the group felt that in order to meet the needs of young people post-16, colleges have a big role to play and need to expand the provision of courses available by offering a broader range and a more suitable curriculum for SEN/ALN students. Giving better continuity from the courses that some schools currently offer. Participants felt that the Welsh Government should put pressure on colleges to provide this and felt that FE colleges are profit making (and do not follow the same essential principles that local authorities do), then they do have the funding to be able to provide this and offer these much needed provisions.

