Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee
Bil Anghenion Dysgu Ychwanegol a'r Tribiwnlys Addysg (Cymru)| Additional
Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill

ALN 43

Ymateb gan: Rhwydwaith Grwpiau Anogaeth
Response from: Nurture Group Network

Executive summary

- The Nurture Group Network welcomes the general principles of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill, in particular the focus on identifying the needs of learners' early and addressing them with timely and effective interventions.

- Nurture Groups are an impactful intervention in schools for children and young people with additional learning needs whose barriers to learning fall into the category of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They allow children with social, emotional and behavioural additional learning needs to stay in mainstream school and develop the skills and resilience they need to make the most of learning and school.

- As such, Nurture Groups should be considered by local authorities, schools and ALNCos as an additional learning provision support option. All children and young people who would benefit from this provision should have access to a Nurture Group at their school, or at a neighbouring school through a cluster model.

- The Boxall profile, the online tool used by teachers to assess children and young peoples' social, emotional and behavioural needs, should be used as part of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) process for all children with an ALN. This can help teachers to understand children's levels of emotional and behavioural functioning to enable them to target impactful interventions and monitor progress and outcomes.

1. Introduction to the Nurture Group Network and this submission:

1.1　　The Nurture Group Network is a UK charity that aims to break cycles of low achievement and tackle social exclusion by ensuring that an unequal start in life does not mean an unequal chance to engage with learning. We work to ensure that every disadvantaged or disengaged child has access to a nurturing intervention in mainstream school to equip them with the skills and resilience they need to make the most of learning and school.

1.2　　We do this by supporting the development of nurturing interventions in schools through training, resources and support. There are 144 nurture groups on Wales. This is a ratio of 1 nurture group for every 11.8 schools.

1.3　　NGN welcomes the reforms proposed in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. We fully support the Welsh Government's vision for a fully inclusive education system where all learners have equity of access to education that meets their needs and enables them to participate, benefit from, and enjoy learning. In particular we welcome the emphasis on identifying the needs of learners' early and addressing them with timely and effective interventions.

1.4　　This submission details how Nurture Groups and nurturing interventions can support some children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), as defined in the Act, to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential. Nurture Groups have been specifically designed to support children and young people whose barriers to learning fall into the category of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who, for a variety of reasons, have not developed those necessary early skills essential to thriving in the mainstream classroom: trust of adults; self-esteem; empathy; cooperation skills; self-control; positive relationships with peers;

and language and communication skills. These barriers to learning can effect and impact on pupils of all ability levels.

1.5   Nurture Groups may also help some children and young people who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and who are identified as needing 'differentiated teaching', but who are not defined as having an ALN. For these children and young people, Nurture Groups can provide additional support when required (perhaps due to external factors and circumstances) and, if there are continued concerns, be referred for assessment for ALN.

2. About Nurture Groups and nurturing interventions, and how they can support children with ALN

2.1

urture Groups are an educational psychologist-designed, teacher-led intervention for disengaged and troubled children, which removes behavioural barriers to engagement and attainment in schools through re-creating missing or distorted early attachments. First developed in Hackney, London more than 40 years ago, there are now more than 2,000 nurture groups in nursery, primary and secondary schools across the UK including 144 groups in Wales.

2.2

Nurture Group is a small group of 6 to 12 children or young people supported by two trained adults. Nurture Groups are, on average, provided 5 times a week for 2.5 hours a day per child and are the only intensive psychosocial intervention available full-time whilst allowing students to remain a part of their mainstream class. Placements in the Nurture Group can be either short or medium-term with the average pupil returning fully to their mainstream classes between two and four terms. Both part-time and full-time nurture groups have been found to work well and nurture groups are effective in both primary and secondary school settings.

2.3

eaching staff trained in the theory and practice of Nurture Groups create an attractive, safe, structured environment, usually within the context of a mainstream educational setting, with a number of areas and resources designed to bridge the gap between home and school. Not only does sharing the Nurture Group environment with other students help the pupils practice social skills that are fundamental to their reintegration into mainstream classes, it also prevents any inappropriate attachment between themselves and nurture group staff; the goal of nurture group is not to usurp the parent–child relationship, but to create a positive attachment to the school. The nurture group staff engage intensely with each student, within a daily routine that is explicit, uniform and predictable; activities undertaken include emotional literacy sessions, news-sharing, group activities, curriculum tasks and nurture breakfast.

2.4

Nurture children' are carefully selected using the Boxall Profile, an online resource enabling teachers to develop a precise and accurate understanding of children's emotional and behavioural difficulties and to plan effective interventions and support activities. Goals are set and outcomes are captured using the Boxall Profile.

2.5

nce in the group, a nurturing philosophy rooted in attachment theory is used to ensure that children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties are provided with the early nurturing experiences that are vital to learning. Nurture Groups turn children's lives around, ensuring no child is left behind, and are also an excellent 'sharp end' intervention, allowing teachers dedicated time and a framework through which to work with individual children to identify whether their needs could be met in school or if another course of action is necessary.

2.6

n a survey of 100 NGN-accredited nurture groups, the majority of

children have experienced significant trauma such as separation from family, exposure to family conflict, abuse, divorce, a new home or school, illness and hospitalisation, death of a loved one, parental drug exposure and maternal depression. 19% of primary school students in primary school nurture groups and 42% in secondary school have a diagnosed psychiatric disorder, most commonly ADHD[1].

3. Evidence of impact of Nurture Groups

3.1

here is a wealth of evidence showing a variety of positive outcomes from Nurture Groups for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These include: greater academic attainment[2] including improvements in metacognition skills[3] and language and literacy skills[4]; improved behaviour and social skills at school[5] and at home[6]; improved attendance[7] and reduced exclusions[8]; and long-term improvements to mental health and resiliency[9].

3.2

he most recent evidence of the benefits of Nurture Groups is an independent evaluation by Queen's University Belfast into the Northern Ireland Government's 'Nurture Unit Signature Project'[10],

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[1] Scott Loinaz, E., (2014), 'Pilot study summary'. Available at: http://www.nurturegroups.org/what-we-do/research-and-evidence/pilot-study-summary

[2] Reynolds, S., Kearney, M. and MacKay, T. (2009). Nurture Groups: a large – scale,controlled study of effect on development and academic attainment. British Journal of Special Education, 36 (4): 204 – 212; Seth-Smith, F., Netali L., Richard P., Fonagy p. and Jaffey, D. (2010). Do nurture groups improve the social, emotional and behavioural functioning of at risk children? *Educational and Child Psychology, Volume 27*, No 1.

[3] Gerrard, Brendan (2005). City of Glasgow Nurture Group Pilot Scheme Evaluation. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, volume10, n4, 245-253

[4] Hosie, Claire (2013). An Evaluation of the Impact of Nurture Provision upon Young Children, Including their Language and their Literacy Skills (Unpublished PhD thesis). East London University, United Kingdom

[5] Cooper, P. and Tiknaz, Y. (2005). Progress and challenge in Nurture Groups: evidence from three case studies. *British Journal of Special Education, Volume 32*, Issue 4, pages 211–222

[6] Binnie, L.M., and K. Allen (2008). Whole school support for vulnerable children: The evaluation of a part-time nurture group. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, volume 13,* no. 3: 201–16.

[7] Estyn (2014) Attendance in secondary schools – September 2014 http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/329401.8/attendance-in-secondary-schools-september-2014/?navmap=30%2C163

[8] Cooper et al (2001). The effectiveness of nurture groups: preliminary research findings. British journal of Special Education, 28 (4), 160-166

[9] Cooper, Arnold, R. and Boyd, E. (2001). The effectiveness of nurture groups: preliminary research findings. British Journal of Special Education, 28 (4), 160–166

[10] Queen's University Belfast (2016), The Impact and Cost effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Northern Ireland: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/nurture-provision-primary-schools

in which Nurture Groups were set up in twenty primary schools and a further ten existing Nurture Groups were supported. The evaluation found the provision to be "highly successful in its primary aim of achieving improvements in the social, emotional and behavioural skills of children from deprived areas exhibiting significant difficulties". It found that, whilst 77.7% of children who entered nurture groups as part of the trial were exhibiting difficult behaviour this reduced to just 20.6% at post-test. However, for those children in the control schools, 62.8% of children exhibited difficult behaviour at the start of the year and this remained largely unchanged at post-test (61.9%). The study also found that in comparison with the estimated costs of providing other additional educational services to children with behavioural difficulties, Nurture Group provision presents direct savings to the education system and that investment in Nurture Groups is "cost-effective and represent significant economic return to society".

3.3   The positive benefits of Nurture Groups have been recognised in several Welsh Government and Estyn publications:

- '*Nurture Groups: A handbook for schools*' (Welsh Government, 2010)[11], which outlines how to set up and run a nurture group, as well as providing an overview of how they operate.
- '*Inclusion and Pupil Support Guidance*' (Department for Education and Skills, 2006)[12] highlights the use of nurture groups as an effective strategy in aiding pupils who are experiencing behaviour and attendance issues.
- '*Attendance in Secondary Schools*' (Estyn, 2014) recommends nurture groups as an intervention.[13] They described nurture groups as a multi-agency strategy that can engage the families of vulnerable new learners and create a welcoming environment where children can learn with their families.

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[11] Welsh Assembly Government, (November 2010), 'Nurture Groups: A handbook for schools'. Available at: http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/101124nurturehandbooken.pdf

[12] Welsh Government Department for Education and Skills, (2006), 'Inclusion and Pupil Support Guidance'. Available at: http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/publications/circularsindex/2006/inclusionandpupilsupport/inclusionpupilsupport-e.pdf?lang=en

[13] Estyn (September 2014), 'Attendance in Secondary Schools', http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/329401.8/attendance-in-secondary-schools-september-2014/?navmap=30,163

- *'Guidance for using the Pupil Deprivation Grant: What really works? (Estyn, 2014)* highlights Nurture Groups.

4. Individual Development Plans (IDP): Using the Boxall Profile to assess social, behavioural and emotional needs

4.1   NGN believes that all children with an ALN should have their social, emotional and behavioural needs assessed using the Boxall Profile as part of the IDP process. The Boxall profile is considered as a "highly regarded diagnostic and assessment instrument by a large number of teacher and educational psychologists who have used it".[14] It is used by teachers to measure children's levels of emotional and behavioural functioning to enable teachers and schools to target impactful interventions and monitor progress and outcomes.

4.2   The Boxall Profile is divided into two sections. The first section, the Developmental Strand, deals with the developmental factors underpinning the individual's ability to engage effectively in the learning process. The second section, called the Diagnostic profile, deals with the child's behaviour characteristics that may inhibit or interfere with the child's social and academic performance. The Boxall profile is uniquely placed to support teachers in:
- early identification and assessment of children with social, emotional and behavioural needs;
- developing their observational skills and their understanding of children and young people's difficulties;
- target setting and appropriate intervention;
- setting individualised, achievable targets that reinforce target behaviour and skills;
- tracking progress of individual/class and school;
- reviewing children and young people's target behaviour.

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[14] Couture, C., Cooper, P., Royer, E., (2011) A study of the Concurrent Validity between the Boxall Profile and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. The International Journal of Emotional Education. 3 (1) 20-29

4.3 NGN is currently piloting a programme where all children in schools in two local authority areas in England are profiled, to give the teaching staff have a more rounded view of the children and young people in their care. It will be used as a method of assessing and identifying needs, and informing teaching and support staff in next steps. NGN recommends that the Welsh Government should consider piloting the Boxall Profile for all children in a selection of schools in Wales.

5. Looked after children

5.1 NGN notes that responsibility for identifying looked after children with an ALN, and developing their IDP, will rest with local authorities. Nurture Groups have had particular success in supporting looked after children. Many looked after children have not experienced or had sufficient variety of opportunities or consistency of approach to develop the necessary skills to cope with the demands of an educational setting. Nurture Groups can provide the environment, staff, curriculum and social grouping to develop skills for looked after children whilst also developing resilience and enabling the children / young people to achieve their potential.

5.2 For example, the independent evaluation of 30 Nurture Groups in schools in Northern Ireland found that "whilst progress was found amongst children from all subgroups identified, there was some evidence that greater progress was being made by: those attending on a full-time basis; looked after children; and by those not eligible for free school meals."[15]

6. Costs and funding

6.1 Most nurture groups cost less than £10,000 for schools to establish. The most popular option in terms of funding for nurture

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[15] Queen's University Belfast (2016), The Impact and Cost effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Northern Ireland: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/nurture-provision-primary-schools

group provision is annually via the Pupil Deprivation Grant, followed by Local Authority funding and then by individual school funding streams, Government funding or a combination of these different sources.

6.2   NGN recommends that every local authority should ensure that there is sufficient provision of Nurture Groups at schools in their area to allow all children and young people who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to access this provision. This is currently not the case and should be addressed.