

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad: [A oes gan blant a phobl ifanc anabl fynediad cyfartal at addysg a gofal plant?](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for the inquiry: [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

AEC 07

Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

Response from: Individual

Re: Evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into disabled children and young people's access to childcare and education and the extent to which childcare providers, schools and local authorities meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide evidence to your inquiry. I am prompted to provide evidence by my recent experience, as the father of a daughter with l'a learning disability, of obtaining funding for a course in further education that suited her needs.

Our daughter was assessed by a college as needing a three-year course to achieve a qualification in [REDACTED] that would improve her chances of gaining employment. Our application was refused as it is the Welsh Government's policy to fund further educational courses lasting up to no more than two years¹. We started legal proceedings to challenge this decision, but we were obliged to terminate them as the outcome was a) uncertain and b) proceedings were likely to be so lengthy that the start of the course would be delayed by more than a year. We eventually accepted an offer of a two-year course leading to qualification at a lower level at a different college.

It is my opinion that the policy of funding courses only up to two years in length is discriminatory in two ways:

1. A neurotypical young person is able to access an affordable university degree course by means of loans and grants without making the provision of that funding dependent on a university's course lasting only two years.

¹ Welsh Government "Securing provision for young people with learning difficulties at specialist further education establishments"

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/securing-provision-for-learners-with-learning-difficulties-specialist-fe-establishments.pdf>

The obvious objection to this argument is that what is being considered here is an application for funding for *Further* Education, not Tertiary, so it is not a like-for-like comparison.

However, children with learning disabilities are unlikely to be able to access Tertiary Education because of their special needs and the intellectual demands of a university course.

Only a quarter of disabled people in 2021 compared with 42.7% of non-disabled people, not to speak of specifically *learning*-disabled people, had a degree or equivalent as their highest qualification.² Thus, it is likely that Further Education will be the *only* substantive vocational education available to them after leaving school.

In simple terms, a neurotypical person has access to a three-year degree course that will give them a qualification leading to employment at the highest level they can achieve, but a learning-disabled person is denied a three-year course that provides a qualification at the highest level that *they* can achieve.

2. The application process for funding is opaque, bureaucratic and stressful and discriminates against those who are not articulate or educated enough, or who lack the time and IT skills to navigate it.

I hope you will consider this evidence and that it will help to steer the WAG's policy on Further Education for people with learning disabilities towards one that – unexceptionally – funds courses up to three years in length if a learning-disabled person is assessed as needing a three-year course that stretches them to gain a vocational qualification at their highest achievable level.

Your sincerely,

² ONS: Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2021

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/outcomesfordisabledpeopleintheuk/2021#education>