

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 08

Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

Response from: Individual

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Hi

I am writing regarding the consultation. I am the neurodivergent mother of [REDACTED] sons now aged [REDACTED] of whom are autistic. All of those [REDACTED] have accessed the autistic or specialist education systems in [REDACTED]

None of mine could access childcare with the exception of a childminder for a few hours a week whilst I studied, they simply could not cope in the noisier environment and also one was having behavioural issues at school and the parents told the nursery that if they took my son they didn't remove their children. The school was told telling us about the problems they were having and it for to the stage where parents would be banging in my door to threaten me or waiting at the gates to shout at me, even when I had a newborn. I stopped going out alone for a while. School never admitted any of it but at [REDACTED] we managed to gain him a place at a specialist autism provision that combined support with access to mainstream and a full education: he thrived and is doing well in university.

Our [REDACTED] son is more severe in presentation so it hasn't been as hard fi get help but I really want to praise the support he had at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] tailored a support system that has meant he has loved college and was a very clear contrast to a miserable time high school (out of county) at a base that he just dismissed fit into, he is very gentle and quiet and autism provisions are full of noisy young people with behavioural issues because they are often the most urgent in a system of limited availability. The biggest problem we had in his time was access to transport at post 16, we had to go to the papers and bring in a solicitor.

Our [REDACTED] son has been hugely let down. We moved him from the local primary where he had a statement but couldn't cope with the number of other pupils to a village school at [REDACTED]. He didn't thrive there but it was a bit better with smaller numbers of pupils. At [REDACTED] we looked at the local autism base, the same one our [REDACTED] attended: they wanted him as they'd met him in several occasions and saw the need but the LEA point blank refused and said he had to go to

mainstream. There was no chance he's cope at the local comp so we negotiated a place at a different more academic one- our son is very quiet but also academic. Working with the LEA on that was hellish: the only times they took my calls was when they knew I was on our only ever package holiday abroad as a family, destroying our chance for a break. They point blank refused transport even though legal advice said we were due it as it was named in our statement, we couldn't afford to hire a lawyer and they were full with legal aid work. We had to lay for a bus which was a challenge.

The comprehensive truly tried but he was too sensitive to be educated in mainstream and too bright to stay in their hwb base, it was taking longer and longer to get him to school and he was regularly getting ill and having to be sent home, we now know anxiety linked. His world closed and he lost all friends, he now says he has given up in friendships and won't try again.

His school didn't class him as vulnerable for lockdown so he lost routine and developed an eating disorder (ARFID) alongside avoidant anxiety and OCD. When they reopened he was a full scale school refuser, the bus didn't resume so I had to drive him in and it was taking up to two hours to get him out of the car and he'd b scream and hit me in fear. His eating disorder meant he'd been under the amazing eating disorder team for some months after losing a huge amount of weight and becoming very unwell. He was also under a psychiatrist and still is- CAMHs have been amazing. He was trying to access knives and anything he could to hurt himself and spoke often about wishing to die. His school were understanding but it was damaging us all.

We called an emergency LEA meeting to swap school but everywhere was full. He was paced in a nurture unit run by the PRU and at first it was pretty much 1-1 in a quiet placement and he thrived, they had plans for him to take [REDACTED] as he wants to be a [REDACTED] so will need to study hard.

After summer we went to see the new school unit and found that he was without warning being taught in a full class of extremely challenging young people, none of the others able to access GCSE work. He witnessed extreme violence and his teacher left within a few weeks.

At that stage I stated to try and get his GCSE pathway in writing as he hadn't started any. I had to involve the LEA, Senedd Member, and children's commissioner and after a fight that led to me seeking help for C- PTSD we only managed to get agreement for [REDACTED] GCSEs, and one that has simply not happened (we are at the end of year ten). This wasn't enough for his career path and because of changes to financial support we knew he could only do 3 years in college unlike the [REDACTED] his brother had so wouldn't be able to make up the gap. I met with the head of the local college and we negotiated a revised offer just for him but that's extreme and the pressure (he puts it on himself) led to a mini breakdown recently. He should have been able to have support under universal

credit or other finance to make up for this huge mess (there should have been a suitable school place for him) by jumping back to level 1, level 2, level 3 and then university. It worked for his brother.

We were never able to get any short breaks or respite even when our son was literally screaming and trying to hurt himself twenty hours a day. We tried but he refused to access big groups so that was that. If you can't fit in there is no system to help you even if it ruins your chances and breaks your family. With him and his brothers all educated from home in and off over lockdown we had two and a half years where there was constantly an autistic young person in the actual house with us at all times- not a single break. My family is in [REDACTED] and elderly so we had no back up network at all. We relied on our non autistic student son to cover us for essential appointments but without him couldn't have coped.

There were many barriers that the older [REDACTED] shouldn't have encountered but there was enough system to get by eventually. The youngest has Ben completely and thoroughly let down at every stage. We are hoping he gets funding for a specialist autistic placement at [REDACTED] and college have said he needs this to stay in school, we have that meeting next week with his ALN conversion meeting. I have zero trust in the system.

The cuts to council funding combined with slashed welfare access and the cost of living crisis has dramatically reduced the chance for disabled children to achieve or even be well, it's truly awful. I worked for a [REDACTED] two decades ago and have since gained a post grad in autism and the changes I have seen are devastating, the system is in tatters- and my neurodivergent [REDACTED] in England has had it even worse, he was just left out of education entirely after age [REDACTED]

With thanks

[REDACTED]