

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 54

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Genedlaethol Meithrinfeydd Dydd

Response from: National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)

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NDNA are a charity and membership association supporting nurseries, early years settings and their workforce to deliver the best possible early education and care to our youngest children.

We are the national charity representing private, voluntary and independent (PVI) children's nurseries across the UK. We are the voice of the 24,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families.

We represent a network of over 20,000 members including PVI run nurseries and their practitioners in England, Scotland and Wales. NDNA Cymru is the office for Wales.

NDNA Cymru called for members in Wales to provide information to support NDNA to respond to the call for evidence.

We received responses from 22 members across Wales. The responses noted that understanding of the term neurodivergent varies greatly across settings. Over 80% of respondents noted that they had previously or are currently supporting children with neurodivergent, physical, sensory or learning disabilities, however less than 20% of these feel that their setting is currently fully suitable and that they are confident and prepared to welcome a child that is neurodivergent, has physical, sensory or learning disabilities into their setting in a way that will fully meet all their individual needs.

When asked what would help settings to feel more confident and prepared, nearly all settings noted that they would benefit from additional support from their local authority / multi agency teams and that they required further training. It was recognised that some generic training is available, but that it would be beneficial to have more specific training and that bitesize training sessions on strategies to support children would be beneficial, to aid settings to cater to children's individual needs.

One of the main overriding issues raised by respondents was that of funding to support settings to provide the required level of care for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), it was apparent from responses that this varies across local authority areas. Where funding is provided to pay for additional staff support for a child, the rate that is paid does not cover the additional costs incurred by the provider such as holiday pay, NI and pension contributions. This results in the childcare provider being required to cover these additional costs.

In local authority areas where there is no additional funding to provide support, it was noted that there is an expectation for childcare providers to be able to use existing staff which are counted in ratio's as 1-1 support. Whilst settings want to be able to provide support to all children, this is not always possible and the expectation placed on them to be able to continue to provide quality experiences to all children within the setting when using a staff member that should be working on a 1:8 ratio to carry out a 1:1 role is unsustainable.

A number of settings raised concerns that this expectation impacts upon both the care and learning experiences that they can provide for the child with ALN and the care and learning experiences that they are able to provide for other children within the setting.

Settings also raised concern with the lack of equity in terms of funding and support for children outside of funded places and also between those which are funded under Flying Start and Childcare Offer.

One childcare provider noted that whilst within their local authority the new ALN system has had some benefits such as a clear referral pathway, providing additional support from the local authority team the funding available to provide adequate support remains a great concern. This was evidenced

by the local authority informing providers that they had run out of money and would not be able to continue to provide 1-1 support, they then later informed settings they would continue to provide support to existing children receiving it but that no more funding would be available from spring 2024.

This has caused concern as currently the setting is able to confidently support children with ALN (at some cost to themselves), however will be unable to continue to provide the same level of support to children with ALN in the future. When asked what support this setting would require it was noted that a case by case look at individual children is needed to ascertain if additional financial support would be required to enable the setting to provide the required care and learning. Settings need clarity to be able to plan for the children they currently have attending their setting and to make decisions about children who would like to attend. Currently in some local authority areas there is a no funding blanket approach on the horizon.

Some childcare providers have raised concerns that they are going to be unable to provide support to children with neurodivergent, physical, sensory or learning disabilities and are concerned that this will be seen as settings not being inclusive. Providers want to be inclusive but also want to be sure they can meet the needs of children in their settings.

NDNA Cymru would like further clarity from the Welsh Government on the requirements, expectations and role of the non-maintained providers in supporting local authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations. Without the required support, settings which do open their services to children which need additional support without the resources to provide it, may not be meeting children's individual needs. This could be detrimental to the children with neurodivergent, physical, sensory or learning disabilities.

NDNA Cymru would welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the Children, Young People and Education Committee and would be happy to work with individual providers to develop case studies as further evidence.