

# Children, Young People and Education Committee

## Sixth Senedd Priorities Consultation

July 2021

In order to help inform our strategic planning and forward work programme, we are asking for your views on what you think, at this stage, our **main priorities should be during the Sixth Senedd (2021-2026)**. Where overlaps between Committee remits exist, we will ensure that relevant issues are shared with other committees.

We are keen to start this work as soon as possible, to make sure our plans take account of your views. We know people take a well-earned break over the summer, and many education institutions also pause for a holiday, so we will run this consultation until **Friday 17 September 2021** to make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute when they return to work. Please be aware that it may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.

A key priority for us is to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard in our work. To do this in a meaningful way, we know that we need tailored and appropriate ways of engaging. In light of that, **this consultation is not aimed at children and young people. Instead, we will run activities with children and young people in the autumn to help us understand their priorities for the Sixth Senedd.** We will share the findings of this work with all Senedd committees. If you are – or your child is – under 16 and interested in being involved in this activity, please email us on [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales) to let us know. You can also use this mail address to send us your ideas on how you would like to see us engaging with children and young people – we have lots of ideas ourselves, but we're also interested in yours!

Information about consultations, which you should consider carefully before submitting a response, is available in our [privacy notice](#). Please answer questions 6-8 at the end of this proforma to enable us to process your response appropriately.

The Senedd has two official languages, Welsh and English. In line with the [Senedd's Official Languages Scheme](#), we request that you submit your response in both languages if you are able to do so. If your response is not submitted bilingually, we will publish in the language submitted, stating that it has been received in that language only. We expect other organisations to implement their own standards or schemes and to comply with their statutory obligation.

If you have any queries about this consultation, please contact the CYPE Committee team on [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales).



**1. Name:**

Dr Kirsten Jones

**2. Email address:**

[Kirsten.Jones@natspec.org.uk](mailto:Kirsten.Jones@natspec.org.uk)

**3. Please tell us in what capacity you are responding to this consultation** (Please select one answer only.):

Individual responding in a personal capacity (go straight to question 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual responding in a professional capacity (go straight to question 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual responding on behalf of an organisation (please answer question 3.1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**3.1.** If you are an individual responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation you are representing and your job title:

Natspec  
Policy Officer (Wales)

**4. Would you like to be added to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's contacts list in order to receive updates about our work?** (Please select one answer only.)

*Please note that you can unsubscribe by emailing [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales)*

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>



**5. What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.**

Please answer in relation to as many of the themes below as you are able.

Please keep your response to no more than 2000 words in total.

**Theme 1: School-age education**

Natspec's vision is that all young people with learning difficulties and disabilities can access quality education and training which meets their individual needs and supports their aspirations for skills, work, and life.

In terms of school-age education, our priorities for the CYPE Committee focus on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and its role in overseeing the implementation of the reforms. The COVID-19 pandemic leaves the sixth Senedd facing unprecedented challenges and the CYPE Committee has a crucial role to play in ensuring the intentions of the Act are realised. Overall, we welcome the introduction of the new system, but believe the reforms present a real danger that children with complex additional learning needs (ALN) may not be given sufficient information and encouragement to pursue further education and training opportunities. It follows that in-school support for post-16 planning will be critical to individuals' life chances.

The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) code that accompanies the Act is ambiguous on how or if, the post-school education and training needs of young people with complex ALN should be met. Without intervention and support for local authorities, finance-driven rather than person-centred decision making is inevitable.

Ways the CYPE Committee may address the issues raised include working with Welsh Government to:

- ensure adequate support and accountability measures are in place so no child is discriminated against by the nature of their additional learning needs
- ensure children, young people and their parents or carers are given access to timely and sufficient information on post-16 options and the rights afforded them within the ALNET Act
- introduce measures for monitoring the efficacy of the ALN code in supporting the aims of the ALNET Act.



## Theme 2: Further and higher education

We believe that equity of opportunity and improving transparency on the quality of further education provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities across Wales should be priorities for the CYPE Committee.

Welsh Government currently use discretionary powers to provide further education and training opportunities for young people with complex ALN who have stayed in special schools until they are 19 years old. Typically, these young people either progress to a regional further education institution (FEI) or a specialist further education college where they access an adult-orientated skills-based curriculum to best prepare them for post-college adult living. For those young people whose education and training needs cannot be met by a regional FEI, the new legislation does not explicitly uphold the maintenance of the discretionary powers currently used to facilitate placements at specialist further education colleges. We believe this will result in a postcode lottery of post-school provision for young people with the most complex ALN. As the pandemic continues to exacerbate existing inequalities, a commitment to safeguarding equitable access to further education is now urgently needed.

The CYPE Committee should consider the role it can play in increasing parity and transparency in the way the quality of post-school provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities is assessed and reported. Wales' specialist further education colleges are fully monitored by Estyn through annual visits and the scrutiny of a full inspection team in line with inspection cycles. All resulting judgements and reports are publicly available. In comparison, the quality and standards of provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities attending what are typically known as Independent Living Skills (or ILS) courses in FEIs is not assessed with anything like this rigour. As part of Estyn's inspection of post-16 providers, ILS provision may or may not be visited by Estyn Inspectors and no specific judgement is required of them on the quality and standards of provision for this group of learners.

As ALN transformation progresses, regional FEIs take on increased statutory responsibilities and are expected to meet the needs of learners with increasingly complex ALN. These learners do not typically achieve formal qualifications but use their time at college to build skills for adult life. Given the breadth of specialist teaching and learning approaches young people with complex ALN may need, we believe a more uniform and transparent approach is required to the assessment of quality within different providers.

In England, evidence given to the Education Select Committee's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inquiry demonstrated that the localism agenda is not fit for purpose in meeting the needs of young people with low incidence and high needs learning difficulties and disabilities. Measures include



low success rates for local authorities at SEND Tribunals (5%), the high percentage of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, as well as the frequency by which Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission SEND inspections report serious weaknesses with local area EHCP processes.

Ways the CYPE Committee may address the issues raised include working with Welsh Government to:

- proactively avoid the pitfalls and failings of the English system outlined in the House of Commons Education Committee report on SEND (2019)
- ensure safeguards are in place so young people are not denied equitable access to post-school education and training due to the complexity of their ALN. Local authorities must be supported to maintain the use of discretionary powers for post-school education and training and funding for young people requiring specialist further education provision should be ringfenced
- increase parity and transparency in the way the quality of different providers of further and education and training for young people with complex ALN is assessed and reported.

### **Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)**

We believe that priorities for the CYPE Committee should be to listen to the voices of children and young people and support the implementation of multi-disciplinary and person-centred systems.

Improvements to support health and well-being that young people in Natspec's Student Voice Parliament have told us they need are:

- more disability sport facilities and opportunities
- increased accessibility in different areas including transport, information (e.g. menus, leaflets, signs), IT and in future planning of communities
- more personalised education that builds on strengths and provides the right support where it is needed
- more meaningful social and employment opportunities and more ways to make a positive contribution to society
- increased disability awareness amongst the general public
- policy and decision makers hearing the voices of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities can often face cliff edge scenarios at the end of college placements with little or no provision in place to



ensure the maintenance and growth of personal and vocational skills. This has a profound and negative impact on the health and well-being of individuals and results in a loss of abilities as well increases in mental health problems.

We believe that the absence of post-college systematic planning for how young peoples' skills can continue to be built, and their aspirations realised, is symptomatic of a lack of ambition for Wales' young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is also exemplified by Welsh Government currently collecting no data on the achievements and post-college destinations of young people who have attended ILS courses at FEIs.

We also believe that through an increased focus on multi-agency collaborative working, the ALN reforms can impact positively on Wales most disadvantaged and vulnerable learners to increase life chances, reduce stress on families and positively impact the public purse.

Ways the CYPE Committee may address these issues include working with Welsh Government to:

- enable services and providers to work together to raise aspirations, expectations and opportunities for young people with complex ALN
- collate and monitor achievement and destination data for all post-16 learners with ALN.

#### **Theme 4: Children and young people**

Natspec welcomes the Committee's expressed commitment to engaging meaningfully with children and young people. In doing so, we urge that the voices of Wales' learners with the most complex additional learning needs in further education institutions and specialist further education colleges are appropriately sought alongside that of their non-disabled peers.

Natspec has a Student Voice Parliament and would welcome the opportunity to work with the CYPE Committee to facilitate tailored and appropriate consultations with young people with learning difficulties and disabilities across Wales.



## USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

In order to enable us to handle your information in accordance with our [privacy notice](#), please complete the questions below. We will be unable to process your response if these questions are not completed.

**6. We have stated our intention to engage meaningfully with children and young people, in tailored and appropriate ways, in the autumn. However, if you are responding using this proforma and are under 13 years old, we will only be able to accept your response if your parent or guardian has confirmed that you can participate.** They can do this by sending us an email to [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales).

**Are you under 13 years old?**

I am under 13 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am 13 or over	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**7. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you would prefer that your name is not published alongside your evidence.**

We will not publish the names of people under the age of 18.

I am aged 18 or over and I am content for you to publish my name alongside my evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I am aged 18 or over and I would prefer that you did not publish my name alongside my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am under the age of 18	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you have agreement from any third parties referred to in your evidence that you can share information that may be used to identify them and that they understand that it may be published.**

I confirm that any third party I have referred to in my evidence has agreed that I can share information that may be used to identify them, and that they understand that it may be published.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not have the agreement of one or more of the third parties I have referred to in my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have not referred to any third parties in my evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

