

# A Natspec manifesto

## for specialist further education in Wales

### Who is Natspec

Natspec is the membership association for organisations in England and Wales providing specialist further education (FE) for students aged 16–25 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### Our vision

Our vision is that all young people with additional learning needs (ALN) or disabilities can access high-quality, person-centred education that supports independence, employment and community participation.

5 things

MSs can do right now

who share our vision for specialist FE

- 1 Publicly support the vision for a high-functioning FE system for young people with ALN and champion specialist FE as an integral part of that system.
- 2 Engage Welsh Government ministers and committees on the importance of specialist FE ahead of the 2026 Senedd election.
- 3 Highlight the role of specialist colleges in Senedd debates and questions, particularly on ALN and post-16 policy.
- 4 Visit specialist FE colleges in your region/constituency to understand current challenges and successes.
- 5 Work with regional partners to promote employment, housing and lifelong learning pathways for FE leavers with complex needs.

Contact [christina.welsh@natspec.org.uk](mailto:christina.welsh@natspec.org.uk) for more information about Natspec and specialist FE.

Natspec

### What is going wrong?

- Inconsistent interpretation of the ALN Code, leading to a postcode lottery and poor decision making.
- Weaknesses in Individual Development Plans (IDPs), including reduced ambition, omissions in therapeutic needs and inconsistent reviews.
- Funding and commissioning uncertainty, including the absence of ring-fenced budgets and designated lead commissioners.
- Limited information and guidance for families on specialist FE options.
- A narrow concept of inclusion that risks excluding learners with complex needs from appropriate FE settings.

### What a future Welsh Government should do

#### Guarantee fair access to FE

- Publish clear statutory guidance on commissioning specialist FE and defining 'further education' for learners with complex ALN.
- Set national quality standards for IDPs and require qualified, independent professionals to assess 'reasonable need'.
- Ensure impartial information, advice and guidance so every family understands the full range of post-16 options.

#### Fund and assure high-quality FE

- Guarantee ring-fenced, multi-year funding for specialist FE placements, with a designated lead commissioner.
- Create a capital improvement fund for publicly funded specialist FE colleges and include them in future FE capital rounds.

#### Secure strong post-college opportunities

- Require multi-agency post-college planning at least a term before leaving FE and before any IDP can be ceased.
- Increase employment support: specialist careers advice for all, more disability employment advisers trained in supported employment.

