



North Wales **Together**
Gogledd Cymru **Gyda'n Gilydd**

Seamless services for people with Learning Disabilities
Gwasanaethau ddi-dori i bobl ag Anableddau Dysgu

North Wales Together: seamless services for people with learning disabilities

Life after school: the onward journey for young people with learning disabilities in North Wales

Final Report
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We should be aspiring to much more than smoother systems and processes.

At heart here is the need to ensure that people with learning disabilities are able to take their place as full and active citizens.

This period from the mid-teens to the mid-twenties is a crucial window to ensure that young people are fully equipped and supported for life.

We need to have much greater expectations that as a society we are prepared to find ways to reduce the stigma and social exclusion of disability and welcome children and young people with learning disabilities as equal citizens in our schools, workplaces and communities.

(Don't Hold Back Report, p.5, Children's Commissioner for Wales)¹

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the findings from the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET (Wales) Act 2018 ('Act')) research that was undertaken by the North Wales Together Learning Disability Transformation Programme in 2020 to 2021. The research was aimed at exploring with a range of stakeholders, how well the region was currently meeting the individual development needs of young people with learning disabilities, with a particular focus on those with more complex needs in the transition from secondary school education to post-16 options and opportunities.

1.2 The publication of this report is timely as the region prepares for the implementation of the 'Act' in September 2021. The 'Act' will be implemented in phases over the next three years. The post-16 element of the Act will be introduced in year two or three, which presents a good opportunity for all stakeholders to consider the findings and the recommendations of this report and how the region can work together to enable young people with learning disabilities to achieve their full potential and the maximum independence to which they aspire.

2. Background

2.1 **The North Wales Learning Disability Strategy (2018 to 2023)²** was approved by all six local authorities and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) in

¹ <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Dont-Hold-Back.pdf>

² <https://www.northwalescollaborative.wales/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NW-Learning-Disability-Strategy-2018-FINAL-1.0-2.pdf>

March 2019. The strategy stresses the importance of getting the transition from secondary school to post-16 options and opportunities right for young people with learning disabilities. Young people with learning disabilities have made it clear that, like other young people, they want to have an 'ordinary life' and the opportunity to find education, training and employment, and to be independent.

2.2 In 2019, The North Wales **Regional Partnership Board** secured funding from the Welsh Government 'A Healthier Wales' transformation fund to establish the North Wales Together Learning Disability Transformation Programme (LDTP). The foundation of the programme is the region's Learning Disability Strategy. This enabled the region to put in place a transformation team to help facilitate the implementation of the strategy.³

2.3 In 2019 the team undertook a prioritisation exercise with all the stakeholders to agree the key areas the programme would focus on between 2019 and 2021. Through this a need was identified to 'get ahead' of the implementation of the 'Act' and in particular, the changes to be introduced to how the individual development needs of *eligible* young people with learning disabilities⁴ will need to be met during and after their transition from secondary school education. Relevant changes are summarised below:

- ✓ Local authorities will be responsible for **learners with additional learning needs (ALN) from 0 to 25 years of age**, ensuring they can access suitable education and/or training, including compulsory education and specialist post-16 education or training where necessary.
- ✓ **Individual development plans (IDPs)** will replace the existing variety of statutory and non-statutory plans for learners of compulsory school age and below, and those over compulsory school age in school or further education.
- ✓ Local authorities will normally only prepare and maintain an IDP in instances where the child or young person's needs are more severe or complex. Ordinarily IDPs will be the responsibility of **the maintained school or further education institution**.
- ✓ **High aspirations and improved outcomes**. The emphasis of IDPs will be on making provision that delivers tangible outcomes that contribute in a meaningful way to the child or young person's achievement of their full potential. (Please see Appendix 2 for a more detailed list of changes to be introduced under the Act).

³ The programme was initially funded for 2 years (2019 to 2021) but has been extended for a final year to Feb. 2022.

⁴ Note: the focus of this report is on young people with learning disabilities and not the wider group who may also be eligible under 'the Act'.

2.4 In response, transformation funding was secured through the North Wales Together Programme to employ a Planning and Development Officer to undertake a research project with the following aims:

- Understand the regional picture of current post-16 pathways for this group and how well they are meeting the aspirations and longer term outcomes of young people with learning disabilities.
- Collaborate with young people and their families, specialist schools, Careers Wales, and further education colleges (local and specialist) in order to have a better understanding of individuals' needs and expectations in relation to post-school options and opportunities.
- Scope out local pathways and opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and complex needs and identify barriers to access along with potential solutions. The focus of this element was to improve access to local options and opportunities.
- Produce a set of recommendations for the programme partners and other stakeholders in relation to how the development needs of young people could be better met locally.

2.5 Out of the scope of this research was looking at how well transition works from children's to adult learning disabilities services. Clearly this transition interacts with the transition from specialist secondary school to post-school options and opportunities as both an enabler and a disabler. The partners should thus consider the findings of this research alongside guidance and legislation relating to this transition such as the NICE Guidance noted below:

“There is guidance available on transitions within other services relevant to some learners with ALN which may help inform a more holistic approach to transition planning. Information on making the transition from children's to adult health care services can be found in NICE guidance

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng43/evidence/full-guideline-pdf-2360240173>.”

(The Additional Learning Needs Codes for Wales 2021, p.320).

2.6 The outcomes of the research will also be used to co-produce with young people with learning disabilities a regional resource for them, their families and professionals to support them in making informed decisions about post-school options and opportunities.

3. Methodology

3.1 A qualitative and quantitative approach was used to gather data from stakeholders. Data on post-school and post further education 'destinations' was requested from

professional stakeholders (e.g. learning disability teams, specialist secondary schools, Careers Wales, further education institutions both local and specialist). The requests for data were made prior to interviews and a standard data template was issued as part of the topic guide (see Appendix 1 b)). Interviewees were asked to gather the data in advance of their interview and/or return after.

3.2 Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the following groups:

- Young people
- Parents
- Specialist schools
- Specialist colleges
- Local Further Education colleges
- Third sector organisations
- Independent organisations
- Health professionals in children and adult services
- Social Services professionals in children and adult departments
- Careers Wales
- Other education professionals

3.2 Topic guides were developed by the researchers and approved by the project steering group. Interviews were conducted online via WebEx, on which interviews were recorded according to Flintshire County Council's data protection arrangements. Those completed on other platforms or on the telephone were recorded by hand during the interview. All participants were issued with a topic guide prior to interview, tailored to their position (see appendix 4 for an example topic guide).

3.3 Other key points on the methodology used to gather data include:

- Young people were largely interviewed in groups from schools plus one third-sector organisation. Some were older having already been through transition from school.
- The research targeted **specialist** rather than mainstream secondary schools in order to focus on young people with more complex needs and their transition experience.
- The specialist colleges approached for involvement in this research were those identified by the steering group as the main ones that young people in North Wales attend. Although Derwen College lies in England, it was considered necessary to interview them due to the high number of students from North Wales.

3.4 On completion of the interview stage of the research, responses were analysed thematically and structured around the areas within the topic guides. Table 1 shows the number of people interviewed from each stakeholder group, including comments regarding these groups and those that did not engage.

Table 1: Sample size and response rate

Stakeholder group	Number interviewed	Comments
Young people with learning disabilities	23	Groups from three specialist schools and a youth theatre group. All aged 16-19 years
Young adults with learning disabilities	3	Those with experience of transition
Parents of young people and young adults with learning disabilities	6	Despite advertising campaigns uptake was low with parents and carers
Specialist schools	5	3 schools did not respond to contact
Independent specialist schools	2	1 school responded but did not engage in an interview
Further Education providers (Group LLandrillo Menai (GLLM) and Cambria college groups)	2	Both GLLM and Coleg Cambria were interviewed
Specialist colleges (Pengwern College, Derwen College and Priory College)	3	Both North Wales specialist colleges were interviewed alongside Derwen college which takes many North Wales students
Health	9	Across children and adult services
Social Services	8	Across children and adult services. Only one county was not able to participate in the interviews
Third sector and independent organisations	13	Across accommodation, day services, employment, carer services, advocacy and other community organisations providing services and support to people with learning disabilities
Other relevant professionals	5	Education and direct payment professionals
Careers Wales	7	Group interview of all North Wales advisors and manager

3.5 The table above illustrates that the research was **successful in engaging with the majority of stakeholders targeted**. Ideally we would have liked to have interviewed more families. Despite an advertising campaign and support from carers' organisations, families were difficult to engage. Anecdotal feedback

suggests that parents of children with learning disabilities were experiencing additional stress as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and this impacted on their ability to make time for the research. The same was found with some health and social care professionals for the same reasons.

3.6 In relation to young people, the research was successful in engaging with a good sample size from across the region, facilitated by the specialist schools and third sector organisations. **This is a particular strength of the research and means that the voice of young people is at the centre of the findings and recommendations.** Overall, given the range and breadth of stakeholders interviewed, we can be confident that the findings are reflective of their views.

4. Response to data requests and key findings

4.1 The main purpose of requesting data on post-specialist school and post-college destinations was to develop a snapshot at a regional level, of the transition journey of young people with learning disabilities in order to understand the trends which were then explored with stakeholders through the qualitative interviews.

4.2 Responses to requests for this data were inconsistent across all stakeholders. We found that:

- Careers Wales provided data on destinations for young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) from year 11 to year 13 but were **not able to disaggregate this data for learning disability.**
- **Although requested**, and confirmation sought from Careers Wales, it remains unclear if that data provided was for all SEN learners in each locality or, just for those attending specialist schools.
- Careers Wales do not track the destination of young people in specialist schools who leave at year 14 despite the fact that the majority stay on until year 14.
- The biggest challenge we found was getting data on where young people with learning disabilities **move on to after further education.** We did receive data from three of the learning disability teams and this is presented in Chart 4 below. This was provided on the data collection template for the project. It was not clear whether the lack of response from the other teams was because they do not gather this data or do not have a system in place for doing so⁵.
- Two of the specialist colleges also provided data on next steps for their local students. However one did not use the data template and thus we were not able to cross reference and identify trends. None of the local colleges returned their data templates.

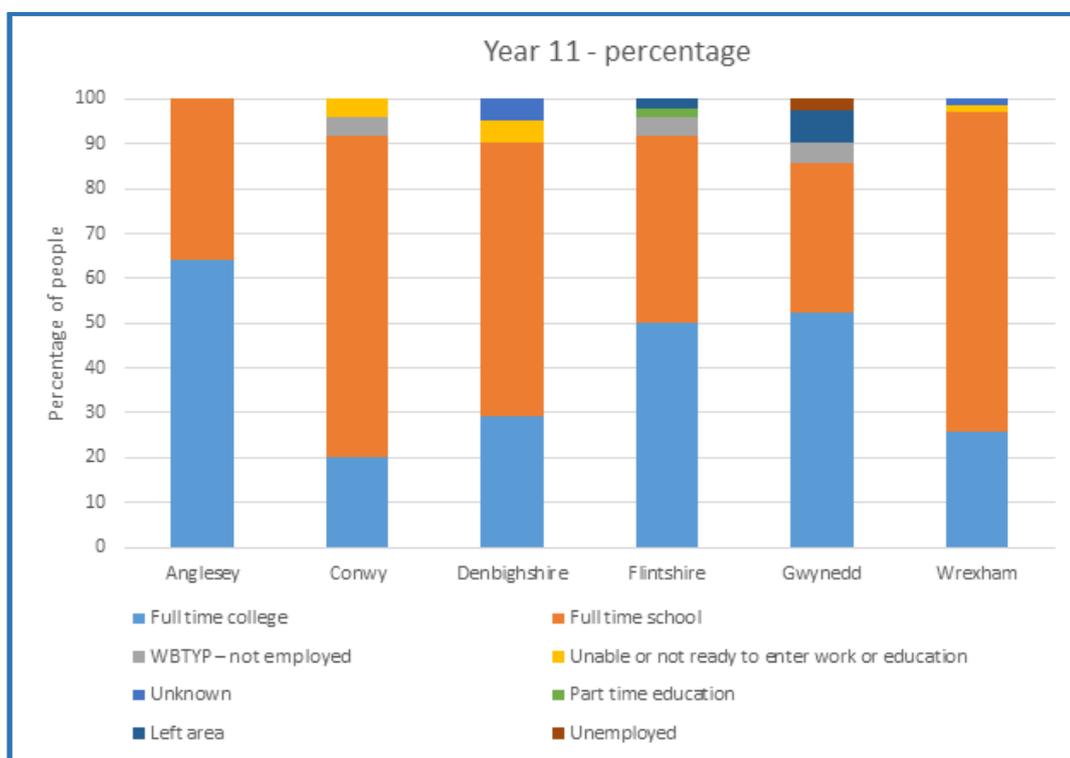
⁵ Given that we did not receive data from all the 0 to 25 teams, we are not able to determine if they are better at tracking and recording post-further education destination.

4.3 The charts below show the destination information for each local authority area for years 11, 12 and 13 for young people with SEN provided by Careers Wales.⁶ Careers Wales is contractually obliged to provide the Welsh Government with data on the destinations of pupils from all maintained and special needs schools who are at or above the school leaving age. This information is gathered by Careers Wales through the annual survey of school leavers. It provides a **snapshot of known destinations as of the 31st October of any given year**. The destination information provided below is for 2019.

4.4 The charts below show the destinations in percentages for each local authority area. Careers Wales use a set list of destination indicators (See Appendix 1 a) – where no young person enters any of these destinations they are not included in the return for that year. This explains why the destinations differ between the year groups.

4.5 Given that the data is made up of **all SEN learners**, and as noted above may include those in mainstream secondary school, it needs to be interpreted with caution when extracting ‘messages’ about young people with learning disabilities.

Chart 1: Destination data Year 11: SEN Learners, Careers Wales Annual Survey of School Leavers, 2019



⁶ Students attending Further Education College and independent institutions are not included in the survey.

Chart 2: Destination data Year 12: SEN Learners, Careers Wales Annual Survey of School Leavers, 2019

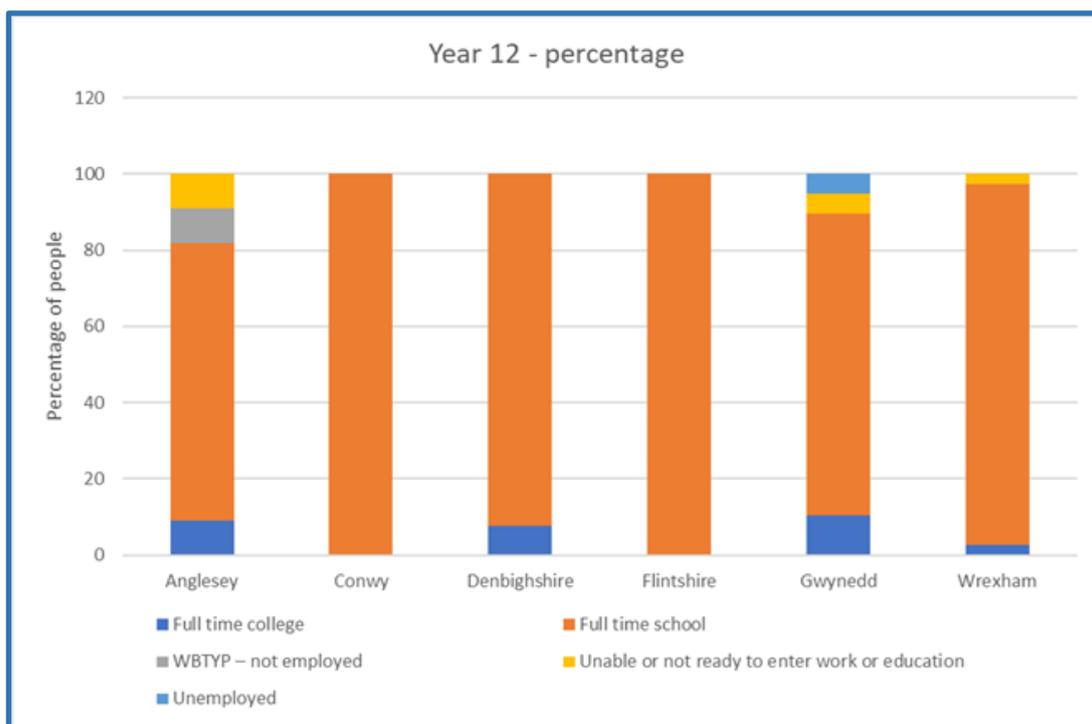
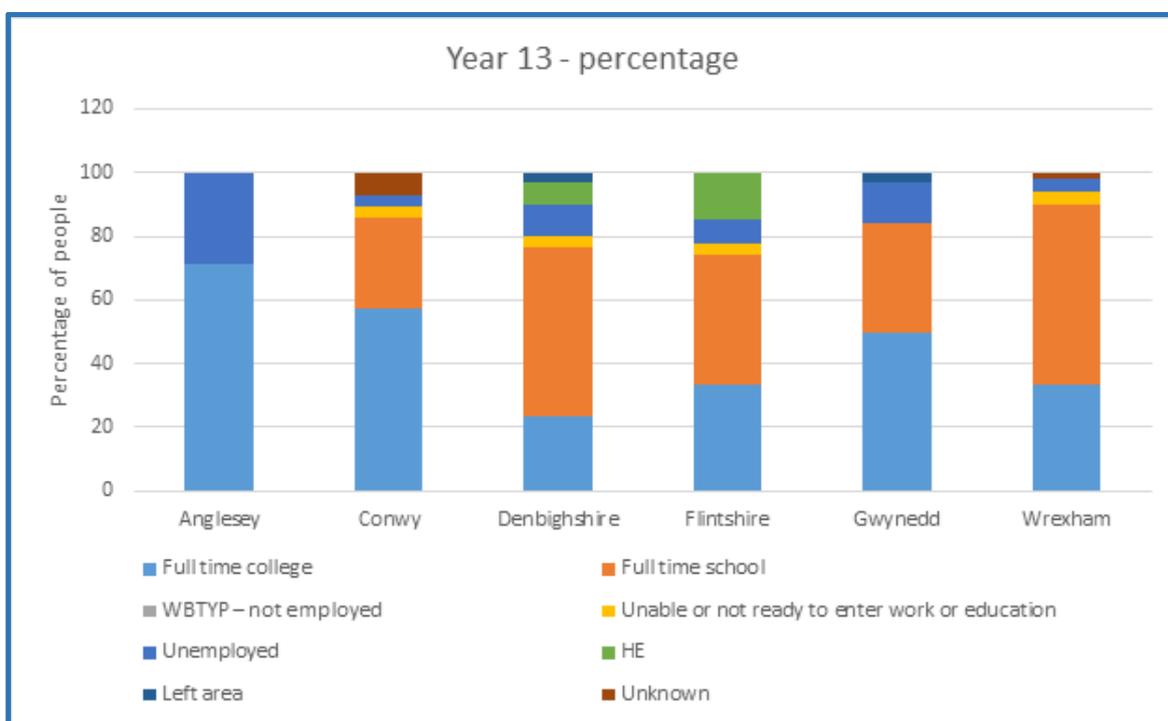


Chart 3: Destination data Year 13: SEN Learners, Careers Wales Annual Survey of School Leavers, 2019



4.4 The available data from Careers Wales indicates that the majority of SEN learners, including those with a learning disability, either stay on in secondary school until

Year 14 or transition to further education. These trends are backed up through the stakeholder interviews. Other key points:

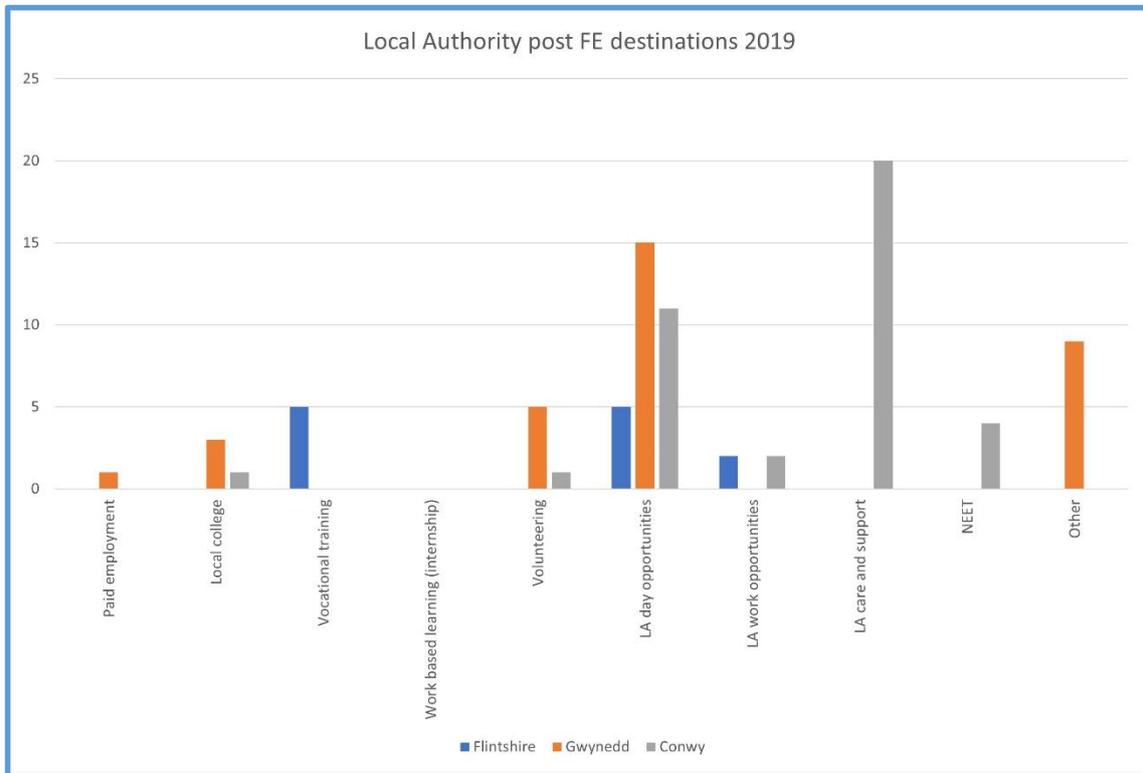
- In Year 11 there is a larger proportion who move onto further education compared to Year 12 and a much larger percentage in Year 12 who stay on until Year 13. It is not clear whether this suggests that the 'more able' SEN learners leave school to go onto college at Year 11 and those with more complex needs stay on at school.
- The pattern in Year 13 is more mixed across the counties but also suggests that the key destinations are either to stay on to Year 14 or move onto further education.

4.5 Entering Employment outside of Work Based Training for Young People (WBTYP) is a destination indicator for Careers Wales. It is thus notable that no young people are recorded as entering employment across all the year groups. By contrast and whilst the numbers are small, in Year 13 we see a small proportion of young people recorded as **unemployed**.

4.6 In relation to where young people with learning disabilities move onto after **further education**, and based on the available data, we can make some points:

- In terms of the data received from the learning disability teams, the main destinations were local authority care and support and day and/or work opportunities. The exception to this was in Flintshire where 5 young people were recorded as moving into vocational training and specifically, **Project Search**. Gwynedd also recorded 1 young person moving into employment. This is illustrated below in Chart 4.
- A small number of young people were recorded as NEET in Conwy (Not in Employment, Education, or Training).
- None of the local colleges returned their data template despite efforts to follow up. They noted this was an area they were developing under ALN.
- As noted above, two specialist colleges did provide data on post-FE destinations – one used the data template and the other provided ad hoc information suggesting they do not have a system in place to track next steps.

Chart 4: Post-FE destination data: young people with learning disabilities, Local Authority Social Services, 2019 to 2020



4.7 Essentially the available data we have on young people with learning disabilities and their post-school destinations at a regional level is patchy. There is a robust system for collating where young people with SEN move onto up to Year 13 via Careers Wales. Beyond this and specifically with respect to post-FE, the region does not have an agreed system or process for tracking where young people with learning disabilities ‘progress’ to.

4.8 It is also not clear how the data the region does have is being used by either Careers Wales and/ or the Local Authorities to monitor trends for young people with learning disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers⁷. Careers Wales state on their website that the data they collect is an invaluable aid to partners and colleagues involved in planning learning, training and employment opportunities.

4.9 We however found little evidence of this happening with the data for SEN learners. We pick up on this point throughout the report and in particular, the lack of data on

⁷ There is clearly a need for the region to have much better and disaggregated data on post-school destinations for young people with learning disabilities and to use this data to compare trends in destinations with young people without learning disabilities.

Year 14 post-school destinations and post-FE destinations. The remainder of this report focuses on stakeholder feedback in order to get underneath the ‘skin’ of the data to explore what it means for **outcomes** for young people with learning disabilities.

5. Awareness of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act 2018 (ALNET (Wales) Act 2018)

5.1 Interviewees were asked about their knowledge of the ‘Act’, the positive changes it would bring, anticipated challenges, potential impact on outcomes and how they were preparing for its implementation. This section looks at stakeholders’ **awareness of the Act.**

Table 2: Awareness of the Act

Stakeholder Group	Findings
Specialist secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the ‘Act’ amongst staff in maintained and independent schools was very varied, with management staff typically having greater awareness. Some staff were aware of the ‘Act’, but knew no detail. Most of those with little awareness recognised the need to become more familiar, and anticipated that training would be delivered.
Further education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further education colleges had the most awareness of the ‘Act’ and the changes it will bring into effect. Interviewees had been involved in briefings about the ‘Act’ since the onset of its implementation and were familiar with the changes it would bring them and their learners.
Health and social care professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the ‘Act’ across health and social care professionals was mixed; all were aware of the Act but with varying familiarity with the changes and impact it may have. • In Social Care, Senior Managers and Team Leaders were well informed and aware of the implications of the Act on service provision but this was less apparent amongst frontline staff, indicating a need for more training and forward planning. • Health professionals at all levels, seemed less advanced in their awareness and understanding of the implications of the Act on their roles and responsibilities. • We are aware that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) has now appointed a Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer

Stakeholder Group	Findings
	<p>(DECLO) who has the responsibility for raising awareness of the ALN system across the Local Health Board and preparing for the ALN system coming into force, including establishing new systems to support the Local Health Board to discharge its duties under the Act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should now assist health colleagues to become better prepared for the implementation of the Act.
<p>Young people and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The families interviewed for this project had little or no knowledge of the 'Act'. Some were aware that the Special Educational Needs (SEN) process was being replaced but were unaware of the changes it would bring. • One parent called for young people to be educated about the new Act, stating “they should be included and know their rights” and questioned how and what information schools are sharing with young people about the changes it will bring. • We were made aware that the Conwy ALN Transformation Project has been doing considerable work around engaging parents via information sessions and that regionally, all schools had been asked to hold parent engagement sessions and to circulate a regionally-produced letter regarding the transformation. It was less clear if this was also happening in other local authority areas.
<p>Careers Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good awareness of the Act and the changes it will bring.

5.2 In terms of knowledge and awareness, the findings suggest that in the case of both health and social care professionals, there is a need for more preparation in relation to knowledge of the 'Act' and the implications of it on roles and responsibilities. This appeared to be particularly urgent for frontline staff who will be key to its delivery. The same applies to staff within specialist secondary schools.

5.3 If the intention of the 'Act' is to place young people at the centre of the new system, it is concerning that the families interviewed felt universally ill-informed about it and in particular, the key changes it will bring for their children. This indicates that across the region, much more needs to be done to engage families and young people by Local Authorities who under the 'Act', **“must** make arrangements to provide people with information and advice about ALN and the ALN system. In doing so, they **must** have regard to the principle that information and advice

provided under the arrangements must be provided in an impartial manner.” (The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales, p.62).

We acknowledge, as noted above, that many families with young people with learning disabilities have struggled to engage beyond their immediate pressures in the home due to the pandemic. **It may be that more creative methods are need to engage families and young people alongside written information and information sessions.**

6. Anticipated Benefits of the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018

6.1 Apart from families and young people, those with knowledge of the ‘Act’ **were largely positive about its implementation** and noted in particular the improved focus on the young person at the centre of the transition process and planning for post-school destinations. There was hope for a positive impact on outcomes for young people given that they *should be* more empowered to express their needs and wishes and there will be better informed forward planning with consideration of long-term goals.

Anglesey and Gwynedd have been using IDPs in schools for two years and have worked hard to properly introduce person-centred meetings. They noted that this approach is proving to be “...**more child and parent friendly; their voices are coming through and it is more tailored to their needs**”. (Local Authority Education professional)

6.2 Social Services interviewees not already working closely/ aligned with health hoped that health would play a bigger role going forward, and that previous barriers between health and other agencies would be broken down and better working relationships formed with closer partnerships benefitting the young people involved.

6.3 Likewise, health colleagues commented on looking forward to working in closer partnership with other professionals and families, and to the benefits that would bring for all. The hope that closer working with education will allow the views of health colleagues to be taken more into account has, reassuringly, **been the experience of health in Gwynedd and Anglesey where IDPs are already being used as noted above.**

6.4 Social services staff noted that the new plans will be **more person-centred** with a focus on what people can do rather than what they can’t do, in line with the Social

Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014. It is hoped the implementation of the 'Act' and the IDP process will serve to further enhance this through its focus on personal individual outcomes first and then the provision that needs to be put in place to enable these to be achieved.

Key to this working well will be **for the young person to feel they have ownership of their plan and for their voice and aspirations to be at its centre.**

Another key area welcomed by interviewees is the focus of the IDP on short and long term outcomes defined by the individual and what plans and pathways are put in place to meet these outcomes.

6.5 Social Services colleagues commented that they look forward to being able to make decisions on a more local basis, review how they fund placements and what is on offer to young people, and potentially have more say **regarding what they think local colleges should be offering.** Careers Wales shared the hope that more would be available locally for young people.

6.6 Overall it is hoped that the 'Act' will bring more discussion about local post-school education provision, and greater partnership working between the local colleges, the local authorities and the Health Board.

Overall in relation to anticipated benefits, the majority of those interviewed were of the opinion that the Act would bring **much needed change to an outdated system; improve partnership working; and ultimately outcomes for young people with learning disabilities.**

As part of any plan to evaluate the implementation and impact of the 'Act' on outcomes for young people will be to ensure that **young people with learning disabilities and their families are involved and at the centre of this.**

7. Anticipated Challenges of the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018

7.1 As with any large scale system change, challenges were anticipated. The articulation of these challenges varied across professional groups with some being very clear about what these might be and others less sure. The table below outlines key points raised by stakeholder group.

Table 3: Anticipated challenges by stakeholder group

Stakeholder Group	Challenges
Health professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the voice of the young person was being truly heard and that their involvement was not tokenistic. One nurse highlighted this as crucial, commenting that “many have a good idea of what they would like to do”. • The importance of ensuring that the young person’s voice was heard above that of their parents, which can be a complex area to manage. • A number of health colleagues noted that having a lead nurse dedicated to transition within the learning disability teams (children and adults) may help to smooth the transition to the new system. In some areas this is already happening but did not appear to be consistent across the region. • Health professionals also anticipated an increased demand for advocacy support and general support to families anxious about meetings and worried about being able to express their opinions which they might struggle to meet within current resources.
Social Services professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key concern raised by Social Services colleagues was around funding for post-16 education; where financial responsibilities would sit and how decisions about need would be made when specialist provision was being considered. • The ‘Act’ will bring significant changes to the way specialist college provision is funded and funding will be devolved to the local authorities. It was not clear at the time of this research how this would be administered and if there would be a consistent approach to decision making across the region in this respect. • A related concern was that there would be an increase in appeals by parents when specialist placements are desired but there is not necessarily a clear case of need. • They also noted the need to develop more options locally to meet the individual development needs of young people especially for those with more complex needs (physically and/or behaviourally) to counter-balance the demand for specialist educational provision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like health professionals, they noted the importance of the voice of the young person being at the centre of the transition process and raised concerns about the availability and quality of independent advocacy and self-advocacy for young people in North Wales. Self-advocacy for young people with learning disabilities was noted as an area requiring development.
<p>Local colleges</p>	<p>Interviewees from further education, who as noted earlier have been actively preparing for the implementation of the 'Act' raised the most concerns.</p> <p>This is not surprising given that the majority of young people with learning disabilities leaving specialist secondary schools move onto local college as their next step.</p> <p><u>Key concerns raised:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to health, social care and other education professionals, college staff interviewed anticipated an increase in appeals and more tribunals if families are unhappy with the decisions made about post-school placements for their young people, especially if the focus during school has been on Specialist College but a local FE college can meet the needs of the young person. Local colleges expressed concern that teaching staff may not be able to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities; not due to a lack of will but due to a lack of expertise and experience, for example with specific communication technology. Colleges employ a huge number and range of staff, and they acknowledge that there is a way to go to raise staff awareness and ability to support students with complex needs (physical and/or behavioral). A key concern raised related to the change in eligibility for ALN extending to the age of 25 and potential parental expectation that colleges will offer provision to this age. In their view, a culture change was still needed across young people, parents, and professionals. Progression to college should have a clear purpose and serve that young person's development and progression rather than what can sometimes be the current view of it as "where you go when you finish school and the next thing to tick off" (college professional).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With respect to ALN learners they further highlighted that they have few suitable courses for them to attend through to the age of 25.
Specialist colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist colleges raised concerns that it could be harder to obtain funding for students; they reported that this is a worry shared by specialist colleges across Wales. • In their view, the current application process works well with government ownership. They are concerned that local authority ownership may slow down the application process and that they will see the same issues they have seen for English students – such as late applications resulting in a delayed start for students and that they will have a regular stream of students needing placements part way through the year following breakdowns of local further education (FE) college placements. • Those with experience of the changes within the English system were concerned about the potential “bureaucracy” and “time-consuming” nature of the new system; and if local authorities have different processes and practices around transition it will be difficult for them to navigate. • For example Derwen College commented that “English local authorities all do it differently”, and that plans vary greatly in length and content; they hoped for more standardisation in the Welsh system. • They also anticipated that the administration around the new review process will be resource intensive for staff, again as they have seen with English students. • More positively they reported that they are looking forward to developing closer relationships with local authorities and becoming more familiar with options and opportunities for young people leaving their institution and addressing gaps in provision.
Careers Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers Wales expressed concerns regarding the uncertainty of their role going forward and who would provide impartial advice to young people if their involvement is not essential. • Concern was raised that if funding were harder to obtain for specialist college there may be an increase in young people who are not in education, employment or training.

7.2 The feedback above raises a number of areas critical to the successful implementation of the 'Act' including:

- The need for a consistent approach across the region to decision making for **specialist college provision** – this was a concern raised by all professional stakeholders. And also the need for a joined up approach across sectors so that families and young people are provided with consistent messages in this respect.
- The need for access to good quality and independent advocacy/ self-advocacy for young people and their families so that they are at the centre of decision making.
- How young people will access **independent and impartial** advice and guidance on post-school options and opportunities given the uncertainty around the role of Careers Wales.

7.3 The other area of concern is that many of those interviewed anticipated an **increase in appeals and tribunals** as a result of changes the 'Act' will bring in this respect.

7.4 This is an area where closer working relationships between specialist secondary schools, local authorities and local colleges to improve the local offer for young people with learning disabilities seems key to preventing an escalation of appeals and tribunals. This research found pockets of good practice in this respect but it is clear there is considerable room for improvement.

8. How well does the transition process work from specialist secondary school?

8.1 It is generally agreed across North Wales that transition from specialist secondary school starts to be discussed at reviews at the age of 14. Most young people with learning disabilities remain in school until 19, with a minority choosing to leave school at 16 or 18 to attend a local FE college. Of those young people we spoke to for this project, that choice had clearly been their own, which was positive to see.

8.2 Those leaving school before 19 tend to be those with more mild learning disabilities, whilst those with more complex needs typically remain in school for as long as possible. The reasons given for this were that school is "**safe**", "**familiar**", "**routine**" and offers five day a week provision. Many families prefer young people to remain in school as long as possible because of the full-time provision; with

concerns around the impact of part-time alternatives on families and the care arrangements in place.

8.3 Transition from secondary school for young people with learning disabilities is a challenging and worrying time for the majority of families, with the word 'transition' being referred to as **“taboo”** by some. Parents sometimes struggle with meetings and can feel lost in the system, especially in mainstream education where one parent reported there to be “no clear plan” and **the focus on academic achievements not being helpful for all pupils.**

Those families interviewed had either had negative experiences of transition, expected negative experiences if they were yet to go through it, or knew of others who had struggled during this time.

By contrast, professionals across agencies tended to believe that the young person is central to the transition process and that parents are well involved.

However, the parents we interviewed did not always feel that the young people are at the heart of the process, **feeling that it is more “service-based”.**

8.4 Some families reported the process feeling rushed, with communication not as consistent and regular as they would like. Parents commented that they would like education to be more supportive regarding their concerns for their children's futures. Some parents felt their children were not always asked what they would like to do after school and that families could be better informed about the process of transition; **this was particularly apparent for those with experience of mainstream education, with specialist schools providing greater support and person-centred practices.**

8.5 It was apparent that the specialist schools involved in this research have the young people's needs and wishes at heart; they spoke passionately about getting it right for their students and showed genuine care and commitment. The young people we spoke to did feel that they had been involved and listened to. Specialist schools spoke highly of the role of Careers Wales in providing information on post-school options and opportunities though this appeared mainly focused on what was available via the local colleges and advising on when local FE would not be able to meet the needs of young people and specialist provision should be considered.

8.6 However, given the feelings of some parents more needs to be done to ensure that transition planning practices are truly person-centred, and not just tokenistic.

Some helpful suggestions were provided including:

- ✓ Better information about what to expect during the transition phase from secondary school, **with peer support available**, and ensuring that young people are also well-informed about processes and expectations.
- ✓ A **'transition forum'** was recommended by one parent, with regular access to professional and peer support, advice and guidance during secondary school. Families also spoke about the importance to them, and especially their children, of knowing the professionals involved prior to meetings, to reduce anxiety.
- ✓ Parents and some professionals spoke of the need to avoid giving families false hope. Families want to be presented with realistic expectations for their children. **One nurse highlighted that although a young person may not be able to pursue their ideal career, this does not prevent them from being supported to develop that interest in other ways.**

8.7 Another important area of concern highlighted by health colleagues was the potential for young people with learning disabilities to experience significant **loss** when they leave secondary school. Whereas many other young people at this stage in life are able to 'self-direct' and have unstructured/ unsupervised social experiences this is often not the case for young people with learning disabilities. The loss of the school environment thus has the potential to lead to isolation and social exclusion compounded by the fact that their school friends also have a similar lack of agency in this respect.

Leaving school can more often than not mean losing their friendships and most of their social experiences, with limited opportunities to continue these outside of school due to a reliance on their families to support them with this.

It was felt that this loss needs to be taken into greater consideration by professionals supporting young people through transition, with a more holistic approach to transition considering all life areas and what matters to the young person at this stage.

8.8 Some professionals and parents thought that transition conversations should begin sooner, and that it is important to talk to parents, in particular, about transition early to help them prepare for the inevitable changes. Others argued that families and young people can find it stressful discussing transition too soon. **Nonetheless, there is agreement that late decision making is unhelpful for young people and families, with early consideration of post-school life being especially important for those with more complex needs.**

8.9 Although not the focus of this research, the interplay between transition from secondary school to post-school options and opportunities and the transition from

children to adult services was also noted. Some health professionals commented on the benefits of adult health services identifying young people earlier to develop relationships and help families understand what adult services will look like. Similarly, schools spoke **positively about transition social workers, and the benefits of consistency of professionals during transition and beyond the age of 18.**

8.10 Health colleagues also commented that being involved in transition planning can add to already high workloads, and that it is important that they are involved with only relevant individuals. As noted earlier, they spoke about the benefits of having a lead transition nurse and the importance of sharing good practice across North Wales to improve practice combined with clear and supportive messages from managers.

Those professionals who felt they had good transition processes in place were still keen for continual practice improvement.

There was call for better information sharing about good practice in this stage of transition across North Wales; with professionals keen to learn from one another.

9. How well does the transition process work: from further education (local and specialist)

9.1 This research found that transition from college is an area that needs urgent improvement and that planning for this transition also needs to start earlier potentially **as part of the transition planning within secondary school.** Many of those interviewed felt that young people with learning disabilities can “**drop off a cliff**” after leaving local and specialist college, with some professionals commenting on the risk of young people losing their new found independence and autonomy if they return to live with parents after college and do not continue to progress.

9.2 One local FE College explained that this is an area they have been actively developing; instilling person-centred values in reviews in anticipation of the ‘Act’. However, it was reported that plans for young people are often made last-minute, and **young people often leaving college without knowing what they will do next.**

9.3 Longer term planning within secondary school, which considers life post-college, and not just the **next step**, may also support young people and their families to make more focused choices about which college course to pursue and also which college to attend that will enable them to achieve their longer term goals in the community where they will be living. And also whether attending college is the best way to meet their longer term goals and aspirations.

9.4 One specialist college stated that if young people's long-term aspirations were discussed in school, they would be better placed to support by designing a curriculum geared to enabling these longer terms outcomes.

A more holistic approach to planning life after secondary school, which considers a wider range of life areas such as friends and relationships and 'having their own place to live' which are so important to young people, may also help to prevent the transition from college feeling like a cliff edge.

Some interviewees spoke to us about using a **'blended approach'** during transition planning combining college with community based activities to meet the individual development needs and longer term goals of young people.

This also seems to be the view of the Welsh Government:

"The intended outcomes should have a strong focus on enabling children and young people to move towards long-term aspirations, be that employment or further or higher education, independent living and/or community participation.

To this end, it is essential to consider what is important to the child or young person and what they want to achieve....**IDPs can also include outcomes with a wider focus, such as positive social relationships and emotional resilience and stability**" (The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales, p.278).

9.5 For example, if a young person was attending college to improve their independent living skills and perhaps are also engaged in a community based development opportunity this could create a five day a week package with the benefit of enabling the young person to have the opportunity to develop stronger connections within their own community and have a progression pathway in place once they leave college.

9.6 Regardless, the emerging picture of transition for young people with learning disabilities in North Wales is one where they are for the most part **'channelled'**

into further education without a longer term progression plan in place and/or outcomes to be achieved. Given the region has very little knowledge about post-college destinations and outcomes, the current system does seem to be largely made up of a series of **'stop gaps'** which compounds rather than addresses the extreme social exclusion of people with learning disabilities in our communities.

9.7 As the region transitions to the new approach under the 'Act', addressing this fragmented journey will be critical to breaking the cycle of social and economic exclusion that people with learning disabilities currently face. This will involve, to some extent, turning the current approach on its head so it is outcome rather than provision led as is the intention of the Act. What would support this is a more **strategic approach to collating and interrogating data on the longer term goals and outcomes young people** identify at transition from secondary school and how well this is matched to available/ accessible local provision. This would provide the region with the intelligence required to design future provision to ensure it is effectively meeting the individual development needs of young people and supports a truly person centred approach.

9.8 There is also a clear role here for independent advice, information and guidance to help open up the range of options and opportunities. Whilst this is currently the role of Careers Wales within specialist schools, we did find that the focus of Careers Wales was primarily directed towards further education options rather than a wider focus on what else young people could access in the community such as pathways into employment. We note in particular the lack of focus and reference to employment as a viable option by interviewees from Careers Wales. We were made aware of **SNAP Cymru**⁸ during the course of the research and were thus struck that this service was not mentioned by any of the young people and/or families we interviewed

9.9 All of this suggests that more broadly there is a need to raise aspirations across all professional groups around what young people with learning disabilities can achieve and thus the full range of options and opportunities that they could be accessing. Whilst it is understandable that professionals and families have concerns for the 'safety' of young people; it is also clear that this culture of risk aversion is 'disabling' young people from fulfilling their social and economic

⁸SNAP Cymru is a national charity, unique to Wales, founded in 1986. They offer free and independent information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities. We give advice and support on a range of issues including assessments, statements of special educational needs, bullying, school attendance, exclusion, health and social care provision and discrimination.

potential; again pointing to the need for young people to be empowered to have a stronger voice and control.

As one third sector interviewee put it – young people need to feel that they are truly in the driving seat and that it is **‘their life, their voice and their choice.’**

10. ‘Choosing’ Specialist College: views of professionals

- 10.1 As we noted, the majority of young people transition from specialist secondary school to local colleges with the minority moving onto specialist college. There was variation across the region with young people in the West being less likely to attend specialist college due to geographical availability and more likely to attend in the East – a good example is Wrexham where many young people will attend the Priory as day students as it is based in Wrexham. The Priory and the local college have a good working relationship meaning that many of those young people will also attend the local college – an example of a hybrid approach.
- 10.2 In terms of why a young person may attend a specialist college, Coleg Cambria was helpful in highlighting the reasons why specialist provision may be more appropriate to meeting the development needs of some young people. These included:
- When they require therapeutic interventions to be embedded throughout the curriculum for example, speech and language therapy; or,
 - When a young person presents with behaviours of concern that put themselves or others at risk.
- 10.3 Specialist colleges are, however, equipped with the expertise and resources to meet both the development and therapeutic needs of young people with more complex needs and in this respect would seem to have a role to play in the absence of local FE having the capacity to provide a similar offer.
- 10.4 In addition, some professionals felt that specialist residential college does offer the unique opportunity to develop independence skills which can prepare young people well for adulthood, and that young people will be more inclined to learn from adults who are not their parents.
- 10.5 By contrast, other professionals argued that while there can be some specific skills development from attendance at specialist college, there was concern that those skills are sometimes lost when the young person returns home, or to a local college. For example, if particular communication tools are not used in

the home area, or if they learn specific transport routes which are not transferable to the public transport routes in their local community, then these may need to be re-learned when they return home.

- 10.6 Many professionals also believe that families prefer residential specialist college because of the respite it offers. Attending as a day student also offers five days a week provision compared to the part-time offer at local colleges. This can be favourable to parents who are exhausted, have competing responsibilities such as work, struggle to manage behaviours at home, or cannot provide transport to local provision.
- 10.7 It was suggested that if there were similar types of residential opportunities available locally which replicated this experience whilst also giving families a 'break', then this might encourage families to (re)-consider local provision.

11. Choosing Specialist College: views of young people and families

- 11.1 The views of families and young people indicate that this picture is more complex from their perspective. They highlighted a number of benefits that they believed were not on offer through local colleges. For example, the young people we interviewed who have been to, or are planning on going to, specialist college spoke highly of the increased independence and social aspect that was not part of the local college offer.

One young man referred to it as the **“best two years of my life”** and noted that **“Derwen gave me confidence and helped me believe in myself”**.

Whilst a young woman planning on attending Derwen College as a residential student said she wanted **“to learn to do things myself”**.

- 11.2 In their view and the view of some families, residential college offers the social element of college life, with the evening provision and extra-curricular activities being held in high regard by schools, young people and families. Many referred to it as comparable to a university experience, offering parity with siblings in mainstream education.
- 11.3 Specialist college is often seen by parents as a better provision because of the specialist nature, which some stated is more bespoke, adaptable and person-centred than mainstream colleges. It is true that specialist college staff have

greater experience and skills in working with young people with learning disabilities, with smaller class sizes and smaller campuses, and that lends itself to parents feeling their young people's needs will be better met.

- 11.4 There was also a theme of trust regarding parental preference of college. Parents noted a risk of bullying and intimidation in mainstream college, with concerns that young people would be less protected. This was echoed by professionals on behalf of other parents. There is a clear feeling that specialist college provision offers a safer environment for the more vulnerable students, both physically and socially.
- 11.5 Some parents, young people and professionals that we spoke to believed that it is a young person's 'right' to attend college, and that they should have the option to attend specialist provision. This was challenged by other professionals who argued that it is not a right to attend college, and that mainstream residential provision comes at a cost to individuals who lose connections with their local community and who often cannot maintain friendships made at specialist college when they return home. This echoes the concerns around the 'loss' that young people with learning disabilities often experience during transition from secondary school.

12. Specialist College: when is it appropriate?

- 12.1 It is clear from sections 10 and 11, that there is a tension between the views of families and young people and those making decisions about when attendance at a specialist college might be the best option for a young person. It is also important that this decision is not driven solely by financial reasons – though this is a real factor. The cost of specialist provision has increased over the last decade and this does need to be met through public funds so cannot be ignored but must be balanced with what provision will enable the young person to 'have the best life possible'.
- 12.2 At the same time, as we have seen, there are other hidden costs to attending specialist college, particularly where it is **out of area and residential**. Whilst clear that this provision is highly valued by young people and families, young people still have to return to their local community at the end of their placement. As we have seen, this transition can be similar to the one they experience from secondary school and local FE in that there is not always a clear plan in place for when they leave and thus young people are vulnerable to experiencing the same sense of 'loss' and 'cliff edge'.
- 12.3 Given the way the current system works it also seems that there is little joint planning between specialist colleges and the local authorities in relation to the

specific outcomes that young people will achieve and thus how the curriculum provided will enable young people to meet their longer term goals when they return home. This is a clear source of frustration and many professionals spoke of young people returning home from specialist college only to go onto to a local college to repeat a similar curriculum.

- 12.4 It is not clear whether this is symptomatic of a **‘revolving door’** with respect to young people with complex needs i.e., keep them in education for as long as possible or, a result of local FE lacking the capacity to meet the support needs of young people with complex needs such that they need to attend specialist provision to acquire the skills to be **“accepted”** into local FE provision.
- 12.5 Once ALN goes live responsibility for agreeing and funding specialist college will be devolved by the Welsh Government to the local authorities. It is the Welsh Government view that this is positive as it will mean that:

Decisions regarding suitable educational provision for young people with complex needs will be taken locally by people who will usually have been involved in supporting the young person for their entire education. This will also encourage and enable local authorities and post-16 providers (both mainstream and independent) to work together to plan for and develop the future provision required to meet local needs (The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Programme, FAQs, December 2019).⁹

- 12.6 More positively, those interviewed from across local authorities, local FE and specialist colleges expressed an interest in working more closely together under the new legislation to better plan how best to meet the individual development needs/ outcomes of young people with more complex needs. Earlier in the report we highlighted the potential benefits of using a **blended approach** to meeting the outcomes of young people with a wider focus than just education.
- 12.7 Whilst specialist provision may have a place in this for some young people , there is a stronger argument that **investing locally in a wider offer** to develop independence, strengthen skills and involvement in the local community would be better for those whose ultimate goal is to ‘make a home’ in North Wales. This could be extended to look at the ‘softer’ and ‘more rounded’ aspects of specialist college life that young people and families value thereby reducing the ‘demand’ for specialist provision. Making this a reality will require local authorities, the health board, local colleges and potentially the third sector to

⁹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/additional-learning-needs-transformation-programme-frequently-asked-questions.pdf>

work together in new ways with young people and their families **to co-produce** local provision.

As one young person put it when asked what other kind of options and opportunities they would like to know about at transition, ***“where can I go to have fun!”***

This illustrates the need for all partners to adopt a **more holistic approach to post-16 transition planning** beyond the current narrow focus on further education (local and independent) which addresses the wider aspirations and young people with learning disabilities.

By doing so and with better coordination between young people, families, specialist secondary schools, local authorities, the health board and local colleges, it should be possible to meet the individual development needs of the majority of young people with learning disabilities locally.

As one social services professional noted: “we were looking at out of county support but working with the family we were able to offer support locally instead” emphasizing the key role of co-production when working with young people and families.

12.8 Fundamentally this means moving away from a narrow focus on college and having in place a wider menu of options and opportunities to meet the aspirations and outcomes of young people which could include specialist provision. This may go some way to overcoming concerns around how specialist provision will be funded under the ‘Act’ as it can be drawn upon in a more targeted way. In turn a ‘blended approach’ may also help re-balance the ‘demand’ from families if they can see that a local package can be put together that is comparable to the specialist offer; whilst also not ruling this out of the menu.

12.9 This leads us onto the next section where we explore the **local offer in North Wales for young people with learning disabilities.**

13. Post-school options and opportunities for young people with learning disabilities in North Wales: the local offer

13.1 The majority of young people who transition to further education go onto independent living skills courses, with some entering (pre) vocational courses geared towards young people with special educational needs. Historically the range of vocational courses for this group of young people has been limited to

a small number in the areas of **catering, recycling, horticulture and small animal care.**

- 13.2 The young people interviewed for the research fed back that they were largely happy with the range of post-school options that had been given and with the subsequent course choices they had made. However a number of the young people from across the region commented that the foundation level college courses that they wanted to do (for example hairdressing) were no longer available and they had struggled or were still struggling to find a suitable alternative.
- 13.3 Arguably, the young people content with their options may be so because those are the same paths their peers have taken over many years, and they are not given the opportunity to explore outside the box or consider any other pathways. As one third sector organisation lead commented, **“Some don’t know that they have options, it is easy to choose what has always been there”** and “People need opportunities to try different things. How do people know what they are good at unless they have experienced it?”
- 13.4 More concerning was that in each group interviewed there were a small number of young people whose interests and aspirations were not met by the FE courses options **available to them**. One young man told us that he had been offered two options at his local college, both of which he had covered in school and had no further interest in. At another school there were two young men we spoke to who wanted to pursue other interests but their options were limited to three course options. In this particular example it was clear that for both young men this was a cause of distress and anxiety and the staff member present was struggling to identify suitable alternatives.
- 13.5 Another young person interviewed had been accepted onto a college course but told us he would prefer to do **‘real work experience’** and if he could he would not go to college. This was echoed by some families who had already been through the transition process who stated that they were given few options with no alternatives to college and that it was clear that in the view of the school, **FE was the expected pathway for their children**. Another parent commented that not all young people with learning disabilities are necessarily interested in these narrow number of vocational options but that it feels like **“young people with learning disabilities are being shoehorned into them”**.

Another parent complained that she wanted more inclusive options for her son and not just those aimed at people with a learning disability.

- 13.7 This re-enforces the need for the region to have a strategic approach to ‘capturing’ information on **unmet need** at this stage of the transition journey. Whilst this research was able to capture ‘anecdotal’ information from young people and families; a structured approach to this across the region for the purposes of planning local provision will be key to ensuring all young people have the opportunity to reach their potential.
- 13.6 Feedback from specialist secondary schools highlighted their own concerns in this area. Whilst keen to ensure that every young person attending their school had an offer of education to continue onto, some did question whether mainstream college courses could be made more accessible for their learners, for example by providing an ALN teaching assistant. One school highlighted that some young people have particular vocational interests or aspirations but within the current FE offer they are not able to follow their ideal path due to entry requirements. **Concerns about course entry criteria and a reduction in accessible courses were shared by Careers Wales.**
- 13.7 Many schools spoke positively about the role of Careers Wales advisors in supporting young people to consider their post-school options and there was general consensus that they had a good understanding of whether a local FE college could support the needs of young people with more complex needs. Some of the young people had also found the Careers Wales website useful regarding potential careers.
- 13.8 However, there were some families who had a more negative experience with reports of inconsistent communication and young people being presented with limited post-school options or families having to seek out opportunities for themselves. One group of young people interviewed had no knowledge of Careers Wales and no contact with them during the pandemic.

14. Gaps in the local offer

- 14.1 There are a clear number of themes emerging from this research. Perhaps the key one is that, historically, there has been an **over-reliance on further education as the next step for young people with learning disabilities leaving specialist school**, combined with a limited curriculum offer that segregates young people with learning disabilities from their non-disabled peers.

Health practitioner “Unless you’re in college, that’s it, you’re finished”

- 14.2 As well one local college highlighted that some of the courses available to young people with learning disabilities are not **realistic pathways into the labour market**. For example there are few labour market opportunities in small animal care and yet this is one of the most popular courses for young people. Local colleges also echoed this point in relation to over-reliance stating that post-college outcomes could be improved if young people came to college knowing why they were there and how this would help them achieve their longer term goals at the end of college.
- 14.3 Similarly, one specialist college commented that if they were aware of the opportunities in a young person's local area and what they may move on to, they could tailor their college experience to prepare them. Specialist colleges also commented that because there is usually no plan in place of where a young person will live when they leave college, this further complicates plans for employment. If they knew where someone was likely to live, they could help them work towards employment in that locality.
- 14.4 Over-reliance on further education and the lack of longer term planning for the future is further compounded by a **lack of information on alternatives options**. Many of the professionals and families interviewed spoke of a limited awareness of what other options and opportunities are available. Children's health professionals and some specialist education providers noted they had limited knowledge of both post-16 options and opportunities for young people and expressed a keenness to expand their awareness but were at a loss of where to obtain this information.
- 14.5 Families are often guided by professionals, trusting them to make suitable suggestions for their young people. More pro-active families may seek out their own options, but there is room for better information sharing across North Wales for both professionals and citizens. One education professional called for **"Clear and readily available information on provision available in one place regarding education/training/employment opportunities that is clearly signposted for professionals, young people, families and schools/colleges to access."**
- 14.6 Education professionals with experience of working with young people from English authorities spoke highly of the **local offers system in England**, whereby each local authority website has a section on information and local opportunities for children and young people with special educational needs, and suggested that something similar in North Wales would be of benefit to those exploring options for young people post-education.

- 14.7 A number of English Local Authorities have also developed **post-16 transition guides for young people with Special Educational Needs** and their families and in some cases, have established independent transition services to support families and young people to navigate the world of post-16 opportunities and options (see Good Practice Section). We are aware that the ALN Transformation Project is working with Flintshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council to develop a transition guide and there is a clear need for a similar approach across the region.
- 14.8 Alongside a gap in information on post-16 options and opportunities for young people with learning disabilities, is a deeper and more structural issue in relation to the lack of alternative pathways to local/ specialist FE. As one professional commented: ***“College isn’t for everyone, but there isn’t a strong enough pathway if you choose not to go to college”.***

The consensus across stakeholders was that in North Wales, **there is a distinct lack of alternative options and opportunities** across the region for young people with learning disabilities leaving specialist secondary school apart from what is on offer from further education (specialist and independent).

For those young people that did not want to ‘slot’ into this offer; it was clear that they and the school staff were struggling to find anything else for them to move onto that matched their interests and aspirations.

This is particularly true of those young people with more complex needs. As one health professional commented:

“The more complex your needs the more limited your options”.

15. Gaps in provision: pathways into employment

- 15.1 The gap most frequently flagged up was in relation to **pathways into employment**. The majority of interviewees commented on the particular lack of employment opportunities and pathways to employment for young people with learning disabilities. Many of the young people we interviewed (as noted in earlier sections) wanted to work; some were ready to do so from school, whilst others felt college would provide more time to decide on a vocation and yet, **we found very few examples of coherent routes into employment for this group at any stage of the transition journey.**

Unfortunately this is a situation that has not improved since the publication of the ‘Don’t Hold Back Report’. This report found that **“work was the most**

important aspiration for young people. The route to jobs was found to be fractured. No one (young people or professionals) mentioned supported employment as a possibility” (p.32)

- 15.2 The one notable exception to this is Project Search, which a few of the young people we spoke to were transitioning onto after specialist secondary school in lieu of further education. One young man we spoke to who was joining Project Search as an intern in September 2021 spoke of an employability course he had done at his local college and from there he had been accepted onto Project Search as an intern. This is a course being run by Agoriad Cyf in the West in partnership with Coleg Menai called **Raising the profile of employment as a life choice for those entering Transition** aimed at young people and their families aged 14-19. It is the only example of such a course we came across in North Wales geared at enabling young people at transition age to practically consider and access employment opportunities such as Project Search.
- 15.3 Project Search is the *brand name* for a Supported Internship Programme that originated in the United States of America and is aimed at young people aged 16-24 with learning disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It is a form of **supported employment** which evidence and research¹⁰ demonstrates is the model of support that works to enable young people with learning disabilities and ASD to effectively access full time, paid employment in an integrated work environment (i.e., working alongside non-disabled employees in a real versus sheltered employment setting). See the good practice section for more details on Supported Employment and Project Search.
- 15.4 North Wales currently has two Project Search sites; one in Flintshire which is delivered by HFT as part of their day and work opportunities contract with the council and the other in the West run by Agoriad as part of the Wales Engage to Change Project Search pilots overseen by Learning Disability Wales. The North Wales Together Transformation Team is also working with Engage to Change, Agoriad Cyf, and Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council to set up a new site in the Central area.
- 15.5 Professionals we interviewed spoke highly of Project Search but did comment that they felt the entry criteria was **‘restrictive’** and that young people were **‘cherry picked’**. This is not necessarily true but it underscores that supported

¹⁰ There has been significant research undertaken on the evidence base for why supported employment is the preferred model for people with learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder. https://www.base-uk.org/sites/default/files/%5buser-raw%5d/11-06/research_literature_review.pdf

internships are only one route into employment for people with learning disabilities and thus has to be **seen as a part of rather than the whole solution to improving pathways into employment.**

- 15.6 What Project Search does demonstrate clearly is that with the right support young people (and adults) with learning disabilities can achieve paid work in non-traditional settings and be real assets to their employers as commented upon by a number of interviewees.

“Employment is the way to go. What it gives individuals is priceless.”

“(Project Search) has demonstrated that given the correct support, young people can thrive”

(GLLM College)

- 15.7 Almost unanimously stakeholders commented on the need for more supported employment opportunities/ structured routes into employment post-school and post-college. One college professional said it is ‘tragic’ that someone had been on a pre-vocational or vocational course and when it ends they don’t go onto anything, stating ***“you can see that they can do something and there is potential”***.

- 15.8 Nationally and regionally there is a strong policy push and significant amounts of funding directed to reducing the numbers of young people who do not have the opportunity to achieve their full potential as set out in the **Welsh Government’s Youth Engagement and Progression Framework**¹¹. This targets those young people who are more vulnerable to becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) post-16 and statistics show that young people with disabilities/ learning disabilities are much more prone to becoming NEET.

- 15.9 And yet from this research, it seems clear that young people with learning disabilities are **slipping through the gaps in this offer** which is an equalities issue that needs urgently addressed. As we see in the statistics below the crucial gap is 19 to 24 year olds re-enforcing the need to join up the transition journey particularly post-FE.

¹¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/implementation-plan-youth-engagement-and-progression-framework.pdf#:~:text=Youth%20engagement%20and%20progression%20framework%20Implementation%20plan%203,effective%20systems%20in%20order%20to%20achieve%20this%20change>.

The proportion of young people who are NEET is higher for disabled people for both age groups.

Disabled young people are more likely to be NEET than young people that are not disabled. This difference is even more pronounced for 19 to 24 year olds compared to 16 to 18 year olds. The proportion of disabled people who are NEET rises from 17.7% at age 16 to 18 to 40.3% at age 19 to 24.

By comparison in the same period, 9.2% of non-disabled young people aged 16 to 18 were NEET and 15.4% aged 19 to 24.

(<https://gov.wales/young-people-not-education-employment-or-training-neet-april-2019-march-2020-html>)

16 Other Gaps in local provision

16.1 **Young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) and complex behaviour:** the local offer for young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and complex behaviour was identified by the majority of interviewees as an area requiring improvement and more innovation. As we have seen this is the group that typically would be in scope for specialist college placements due to local FE being unable to meet their physical/ therapeutic/ behavioural needs. Some college and social services professionals expressed the view that further education was not always the best place to meet the individual development of these young people but there were few if any local alternatives to progress onto. Other gaps identified included:

- The lack of accessible buildings and facilities – particularly changing facilities locally in North Wales and this restricts people with complex needs being able to access services and opportunities in the community.
- Some interviewees felt that the day and work opportunity offer for those with PMLD/ complex behaviour was under-developed and also in need of refreshing and re-visioning to provide a more individualised experience focused on outcomes.

As one Social Services professional commented “in order to develop local provision we need to invest in the environments”

- Competing demands – if there were a wider range of pathways for other young people with learning disabilities it might be possible to relieve pressure on statutory services and enable them to focus more energy and

resources on improving the local offer for young people with PMLD and complex behaviours.

The related issue is that the region currently **lacks suitable accommodation/ homes for life for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and complex behaviour** who require bespoke approaches. This means that young people with these needs often need to be placed in out of area/ out of county placements and/ or residential college. A placement at a residential college still amounts to a 'stop gap' however, thus the importance of looking at accommodation needs as part of the transition planning from specialist secondary school alongside other life areas as already highlighted.

This is a priority area for the Learning Disability Transformation Programme this year.

- One example of how the needs of this group were being met locally was in Conwy where the Conwy County Council Disability Team are working in partnership with the local college to provide a joined up offer. The provision is a formal partnership between Llandrillo and Conwy County Borough Council though does not include health other than where an individual accessing the service has a Learning Disability Nurse who will input where needed. The model involves the Council providing social care support along with accessible premises and the college providing a tutor on-site to deliver an independent living skills curriculum in the community. A new site is also in development in Conwy and does involve Health as a member of the Board.
- Another good example is Ceredigion (see good practice section for more details) where the council is working with the local college to develop blended provision to meet the needs of young people with very complex needs with longer terms plan to develop a bespoke community based facility. In this example the model had the added benefit of enabling the young people to stay in-county and to develop and mature in their home community whilst also being a more cost-effective approach to out of county provision.
- This is clearly an area where the Health Board has a role to play in providing therapeutic inputs that are currently only available via specialist FE provision.

16.2 **Travel:** key to enabling young people with learning disabilities to access post-16 opportunities and options is adequate transport, a view by all stakeholder groups.

Key issues:

- Some of the young people interviewed said that public transport to and from local college causes anxiety for them and their parents. One young woman told us that she is so anxious about using public transport alone that if she has to do this she may not go to college.
- Some parents have concerns about young people travelling alone on sometimes long and convoluted routes where they may be vulnerable, perhaps when their closest college did not offer a suitable course for them. One young man explained that his mother was worried in case something happened at college and he was far away by public transport, as she does not drive.
- Careers Wales gave examples of young people facing multiple buses to reach college and the issues this raises for people, especially if they have had the benefit of taxis and escorts travelling to school.
- The rurality of much of North Wales presents issues with public transport, especially if parents do not drive or have the time to provide transport, but it was apparent from this research that citizens and professionals feel more could be done to support people with learning disabilities to safely travel.

“How are they going to get to college is always an issue”. (Careers Wales)

16.3 Respite services: as noted earlier in the report, one of the key reasons parents might prefer specialist college is that it offers both a residential option but also full-time provision which local FE does not. This can provide respite to families once their children leave secondary school particularly if they are already struggling to balance life and work commitments at home. Earlier intervention with young people and families around respite needs as part of transitioning planning could prevent this from becoming ‘critical’ at the post of leaving statutory education. This research is not able to comment on whether there is a lack of respite provision in North Wales but it is an area that is important to families and their wellbeing and thus requires equal consideration.

16.4 Day and work opportunities: There was mixed feeling about day services across the region.

- Some areas were more positive about their offer, whereas others felt that day services would benefit from being refreshed and expanded. Many professionals questioned whether it was appropriate for a young person to leave school or college and **end up in a day or work opportunity** as by and large there was little progression from this and in most cases, people tended to **stay for life**.

- There was particular feeling that there is not enough day service provision aimed at just younger people, but that where there was it was enjoyed more when young people could interact with peers their own age.
- A consistent view was that day or work opportunities should not be an end in themselves i.e., the next step for young people once they leave college because there are no other clear alternatives to this. This merely perpetuates the experience of exclusion and segregation that characterizes the life of many young people with disabilities together with their reliance on statutory services.

16.5 With the introduction of the ‘Act’, a more person-centred approach and the IDP it will be important for professionals to work together with young people and families to address earlier on, the barriers they might face to accessing post-16 options and opportunities locally such as accommodation needs, respite and travel.

Day and work opportunities funded and/or provided by the County Council Learning Disability Services will also need to adapt under the new Legislation to ensure they are meeting **the longer term aspirations and outcomes of young people with learning disabilities who access this provision.**

This research did not extend to looking at how well this is happening at the moment though the statistics show that there are some young people who leave specialist secondary school and move into day opportunities. An area worth exploring is how this provision could be more meaningfully directed to meeting the individual development needs of young people with the most complex needs as noted above whilst investing in the development of more bespoke, inclusive pathways for other young people.

17 New Developments

17.1 During the course of this research there have been a number of new and promising developments that should improve the options and opportunities for young people with learning disabilities. Together with the introduction of ALN in September 2021 these include:

- Learning Disability Wales via the Engage to Change Project have called on the Welsh Government to fund a **national internship programme** and a **national job coaching service**¹² which would establish the supported employment infrastructure needed to enable many more young people with learning disabilities to access paid work.

¹² <https://www.engagetochange.org.uk/article/what-needs-to-change-to-allow-people-with-a-learning-disability-and-or-asd-equal-access-to-employment/>

- The National Training Foundation for Wales is currently piloting supported apprenticeships with its work based learning providers and a reasonable adjustment has been made to the ‘essential skills’ requirements for apprenticeships in relation to literacy and numeracy for ALN learners where these skills can be demonstrated in other ways.
- The Welsh Government has introduced a new ILS curriculum which will come into effect at all further education colleges in Wales from September 2021. This curriculum will be full-time and inclusive of all young people with learning disabilities including those learners with **profound and multiple learning disabilities**.

Destination-led planning is a key feature of the new curriculum. Programmes must have clear outcomes for each learner that are directly related to the learner’s aspirations and needs in terms of life after college. Outcomes must be based around the four pillars of ILS and be designed specifically to provide activities that enable the learner to develop the skills which prepares him/her for future living.

17.2 There will be four pathways for learners of different abilities with the potential for learners to progress to the next pathway. This is a welcome development in light of this report and in particular, the current offer from local colleges. Importantly Pathway 4 is for supported internships and this represents the only Welsh Government funding for this opportunity as per the call from Engage to Change.

17.3 However there is an issue in North Wales that must be highlighted. Our understanding is that the **North Wales college groups have opted to deliver Pathway 4 in-house**¹³: they will act as the host employer and provide the employability skills curriculum as they currently do within the Project Search model. Concerns with this approach are:

- Supported Internships, as already noted, are a form of supported employment. The backbone of supported employment, and what makes it a successful model for people with learning disabilities is specialist job coaching. As with college tutors, this is a recognised profession with a qualification framework and occupational standards.
- Job coaching is crucial to achieving paid employment for participants, as when they finish the internship (which lasts for one academic year) it is the job coaches that provide the longer term follow on support to enable young people

¹³ The exception to this is Coleg Menai who continue to be a partner in the Engage to Change Project Search together with Agoriad Cyf and Ysbyty Gwynedd.

who do not find employment with the host employer to find alternative employment opportunities.

- Pathway 4 seems to have been introduced without associated guidance on quality and performance – as a form of supported employment it should follow the delivery and occupational standards set by BASE UK as a minimum¹⁴

17.4 This raises concerns around the quality of the provision and also, **how the colleges plan to deliver this longer term support** or, if at the end of Pathway 4 and in the event that the learner leaves college that responsibility for the longer term support will be passed back to the local authorities/ community. As we have seen, North Wales does not have a coherent supported employment infrastructure in place and the risk is that young people who complete Pathway 4 and leave college will not have an appropriate service to progress onto in order to find paid work.

17.5 The other aspect of the new curriculum is that it continues the pattern of separate provision for young people with learning disabilities. We appreciate that the FE colleges in North Wales have a range of learners needs to meet and that the new curriculum does represent an improvement from the current offer towards one that is person-centred and outcome-focused with a much stronger focus on employability and employment.

17.6 A new report from the European Agency for special needs and inclusive education demonstrates that there is a strong link between inclusive education and inclusion in the areas of education, employment and living in the community.

The review provides the research evidence to suggest that inclusive education is an important requisite for the social inclusion of people with disabilities, both during school years and later in life. According to the review, attending inclusive education settings increases the possibilities for participating and interacting with peers at school, obtaining academic and vocational qualifications, being employed, being financially independent, and so on. At the same time, the research findings indicate that attending segregated settings minimises the opportunities for social inclusion and is correlated with poor academic and vocational qualifications, employment in sheltered workshops, financial dependence, fewer opportunities to live independently and poor social networks after graduation. <https://www.european->

¹⁴ <https://www.base-uk.org/model-fidelity#:~:text=%20BASE%20is%20using%20a%20short%20version%20of,This%20quality%20accreditation%20aims%20to%20provide%20that%20assurance.>

- 18.2. In terms of being prepared for the implementation of the Act, the findings from this report suggest that the work of the ALN Transformation Programme has for the most part been successful in preparing the region for its introduction though there are some areas of weakness including:
- The readiness of BCUHB LD services but with a new DECLO now in place this is already changing this picture.
 - The need for understanding of the Act to filter down to frontline staff in health, social services and the specialist secondary schools.
 - Awareness of the 'Act' and the changes it will bring amongst families with children with learning disabilities and this is picked up in the recommendations in section 20.
- 18.3. The crux of the findings from this research lies not so much in the need for better systems or procedures but for much better coordination and partnership working across specialist secondary schools; FE colleges (local and specialist) and Local Authorities together with young people and their families to plan not just the **next step** after school but how their longer term social and economic aspirations can be met. This requires considering a much wider set of life areas when planning transition from specialist secondary school and thus considering a much wider set of options and opportunities to meet these aspirations with forward planning around accommodation being key for those with more complex needs.
- 18.4. There is an immediate need, however, for much better tracking of young people as they transition from secondary school, to post-school options and opportunities so that they don't, as we have seen, fall off the edge of a cliff after leaving further education. Better partnership working between the local authorities and the colleges (local and specialist) is also key to **closing this gap**. This is an area picked up in the recommendations.
- 18.5. Connected to this is a need for the region to have a better understanding of **unmet need** and how well the aspirations and outcomes of young people with learning disabilities are being met through available and accessible post-16 options and opportunities. This report highlights a number of examples where the aspirations of young people leaving specialist school were not being met by 'what was on offer' to them.
- 18.6. As well, it is important to be mindful that the IDP is a 'tool' and that to work effectively it must be underpinned by person centred planning and its associated values together with much better partnership working. Otherwise

the risk is that the IDP becomes a 'hot potato' that gets passed back and forth between the specialist schools, the local authorities and the FE sector especially with respect to those young people with the most complex needs.

- 18.7. **The very poor employment outcomes** currently experienced by young people with learning disabilities is another crucial area that needs to be addressed in North Wales. As we have seen models such as Project Search demonstrate that with the right support, young people can find paid employment in an integrated setting. As it stands the pathways into employment are ad hoc and not equally spread across the region. The mainstream offer for young people at risk of becoming NEET in the region also does not appear to extend to young people with learning disabilities and this needs to be addressed.
- 18.8. Ensuring that employment is an option within transition planning at secondary school (along with other life areas) should become routine and with better pathways in place to enable this based on what works for people with learning disabilities (supported employment) it should be possible for many more young people to enter the labour market as valued and valuable employees. In turn, this is where further education has a role to play in ensuring that their curriculum they provide includes realistic preparation for labour market opportunities and there are clear progression pathways in place for young people once they leave FE.
- 18.9. Work to improve the employment offer for all people with learning disabilities is a focus of the Learning Disability Transformation Programme this year and it is clear from this report that it is everyone's business and that both specialist schools and the FE sector must play a role in this.
- 18.10. There is a clear need as well for the local offer for young people with PMLD and complex behaviour to be improved in order to prevent them having to leave North Wales and/or their home community to have their individual development needs met. We have seen some examples where partnership working between local authorities' specialist Learning Disability services and local colleges have been successful in meeting these needs locally. There does seem to be an appetite within the FE sector (local and specialist) to work more in partnership with the local authorities in general and hopefully this will begin to break down some of the 'silos' we have found in this research.

In conclusion we repeat the message from the Children’s Commissioner for Wales in her ‘Don’t Hold Back’ report

We need to have much greater expectations that as a society we are prepared to find ways to reduce the stigma and social exclusion of disability and welcome children and young people with learning disabilities as equal citizens in our schools, workplaces and communities.

In North Wales we are still on that journey and it is not one that sits with any one organisation to ‘solve’ or ‘deliver on’. Instead it requires committed and concerted effort across all stakeholders if we are to make true progress combined with leadership nationally, regionally and locally.

At a more profound level, the research on the link between inclusive education and social inclusion raises the question of whether a more radical transformation is required with respect to segregated approaches to education for young people with learning disabilities regardless of the complexity of their needs if as a region, we are to achieve true inclusion.

20. Recommendations

Key

Short Term = achievable can be completed within 1 year

Medium Term = achievable within 2 to 3 years

Long Term = achievable within five years

North Wales Learning Disability Partnership Group

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>1. Ensure that frontline staff are adequately prepared for the implementation of the Act. The six local authorities, BCUHB, specialist secondary schools and ALN Transformation Leads should work together to ensure that frontline staff in learning disability services (health and social</p>	<p>Local Authority and BCUHB leads for learning disability services.</p>	<p>Learning Disability Transformation Programme</p> <p>ALN Transformation Programme</p> <p>Specialist Secondary Schools/ Secondary Schools with special units</p>	<p>Short Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>services) and specialists secondary schools are adequately prepared for the introduction of the 'Act'. A partnership approach to this at a local level could also support better joined up working across these sectors (i.e., joint information/training and networking sessions).</p>			
<p>2. Examine the business case for replicating and upscaling the local approaches implemented in Conwy and Ceredigion for young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities or complex needs across North Wales. Both models offer the region a promising alternative to specialist/ out-of-county post-16 provision. From the perspective of families local provision that provides the combination of accessible facilities, skill building and meaningful activity; respite; access to therapies and longer term planning for accommodation would offer a real alternative to specialist college provision. We acknowledge there will be challenges where colleges cover more than one Local</p>	<p>North Wales Learning Disability Partnership Group</p>	<p>Learning Disability Transformation Programme</p> <p>Local Further Education Institutions</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>Authority however this would enable more equitable provision for young people with PMLD.</p>			
<p>3. Local Authorities should review their travel policies especially in the more rural areas of North Wales and ensure that young people with special educational needs have the opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to use public transport independently. We came across examples of local authorities in England offering Independent Travel Training to young people with special educational needs that teach them the skills, knowledge and confidence to use public transport on their own. We came across similar provision in North Wales (see good practice section) in the East but the demand for this is more apparent in the West/ rural areas of North Wales.</p>	<p>North Wales Learning Disability Partnership Group</p>	<p>Learning Disability Transformation</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>4. Local further education colleges should explore opportunities and ways for including more young people with learning</p>	<p>North Wales Learning Disability Partnership Group</p>	<p>Learning Disability Transformation Programme</p> <p>Local Further Education Institutions</p>	<p>Medium to Long Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>disabilities within mainstream courses based on their career aspirations, for example by the provision of specialist teaching assistants and mentors.</p> <p>- Where a young person has significant personal care needs etc. partnership working with Local Authority Social Services Teams and Health to provide this would also be beneficial. Recent research highlights the positive impact on social inclusion outcomes when young people with disabilities are educated alongside their non-disabled peers. See good practice section for examples of inclusive education.</p>			
<p>5. Establish a peer-led regional advice and support forum for families and young people with additional learning needs approaching and going through transition from secondary school.</p> <p>There is strong support for this from families who took part in the research. This could be primarily peer-led with input from people with lived experience, and from professionals - including colleges and third sector and</p>	<p>North Wales Learning Disability Partnership Group</p>	<p>Learning Disability Transformation Programme</p> <p>North Wales Advocacy Services, All Wales People First and families/ carers</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
independent organisations / direct payments etc. This would provide a place for families to pass information to other families and for networking across services.			
<p>6. Co-produce guidance and criteria to help all stakeholders understand when specialist college provision is in fact the best option to meet the individual development needs of young people with learning disabilities.</p> <p>Co-producing this with young people and their families or carers alongside schools and colleges should make the decision making process more transparent and help to prevent an increase in appeals/ tribunals.</p>	North Wales Learning Disability Partnership Group	<p>Learning Disability Transformation Programme</p> <p>Specialist Secondary Schools</p> <p>Further Education Institutions</p> <p>Careers Wales</p>	Short to Medium Term

Learning Disability Transformation Programme on behalf of Learning Disability Partnership Group

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>1. Develop a career planning toolkit for young people with learning disabilities within specialist secondary education to raise aspirations and awareness of employment options.</p> <p>The National Deaf Children's Society have developed a career planning toolkit that can be</p>	LD Transformation Programme/ Employment & Transition Workstream	<p>Specialist Secondary Schools</p> <p>Secondary Schools with special units</p> <p>Careers Wales</p> <p>Local Authority Education Services</p>	Short to Medium Term

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>delivered as part of the curriculum within secondary school (see Good Practice Section). We recommend that a similar approach is developed for young people with learning disabilities within specialist secondary school as part of planning for transition to raise aspirations that employment is a real option.</p>			
<p>2. Support the development of a national job coaching service which draws up the expertise of indigenous supported employment providers. As per the Engage to Change partnership lobby to the Welsh Government. This should be all age but target young people at transition phase as a priority group. In terms of North Wales, the Welsh Government should work with the existing strategic partnerships in place for people with learning disabilities to co-produce the best model for North Wales.</p>	<p>LD Transformation Programme, Employment & Transition Workstream</p>	<p>Learning Disability Partnership Group Welsh Government</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>
<p>3. Co-produce a ‘local employment offer’ for young people with learning disabilities to support progress into paid employment. This should be underpinned by the supported employment model of best practice and associated quality assurance standards developed by BASE UK and adopted by</p>	<p>LD Transformation Programme/ Employment Workstream and Transition workstream</p>	<p>Learning Disability Partnership Group</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>the Scottish Government in their Supported Employment Framework and include access to Project Search/ supported internships. (See good practice section).</p>			
<p>4. Explore the role that technology could play to support the independence of young people during the transition phase and also with issues such as independent travel and personal safety. The use of digital technology was not a specific focus of this research but through the Learning Disability Transformation Programme a range of APPS and devices are being introduced to the Learning Disability Community to support them to have voice, control and greater independence. We believe there is potential for all the partners to consider the role that technology could play to support the independence of young people during the transition phase. We highlight some examples in the good practice section.</p>	<p>LD Transformation Programme Transition and Assistive Technology Workstreams</p>	<p>Specialist Secondary Schools</p> <p>Local and specialist Further Education Institutions</p> <p>Local Authorities</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>5. Improve availability and access to independent and impartial advice and guidance about post-school options and opportunities for young people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Learning Disability Transformation Programme Transition, Employment and Communities Workstream</p>	<p>North Wales Advocacy Services, All Wales People First Local Authorities Careers Wales</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>There is evidence to suggest that a community based service that links with secondary schools and local authority/ BCUHB Transition Leads may do this more effectively than a statutory service. This could be combined with a self-advocacy offer for young people which appears under-developed.</p>			

ALN Transformation Programme

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>1. Using the Individual Development Plan as a tool, ensure that a wider range of life areas are considered when planning transition from specialist secondary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This should be based on what matters to young people and include the key priority areas of employment; long term accommodation plans and maintaining friendships. 	ALN Transformation	Mainstream and specialist secondary schools	Short to medium-term
<p>2. Improve recording and tracking of the destinations of young people at two key transition points: Year 14 of specialist secondary school and on completion of further education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The key points are year 14 of specialist secondary school and on completion of further education. Tracking post-FE is particularly inconsistent across the region. Better 	ALN Transformation	<p>Mainstream and specialist secondary schools</p> <p>Local Further Education Institutions</p> <p>Independent Specialist Colleges</p>	Short to Medium Term

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>joint working at these points will further help to ensure that all young people with learning disabilities have appropriate transition arrangements in place to enable them to achieve their longer term social and economic goals and aspirations.</p>			
<p>3. Ensure that young people and their families are aware and informed about the statutory changes the implementation of the Act will bring. Those responsible for ensuring young people and their families are aware and informed about the statutory changes the Act will bring should increase their efforts to engage with families with young people with learning disabilities who may be experiencing additional stress and pressure due to the pandemic. The role third sector partners could play in this should be considered as per Chapter 6: Advice and Information about ALN and the ALN system, ALN Code for Wales 2021.</p>	<p>ALN Transformation</p>	<p>BCUHB DECLO Local Authority Education Services Mainstream and specialist secondary schools</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>4. Local authorities should develop accessible and co-produced information sources (e.g. websites) to help young people and families during transition planning. To support this each local authority and/or groups of local authorities should</p>	<p>ALN Transformation</p>	<p>Local authorities, Young people and families and/or carers. North Wales Advocacy Services</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>develop information web sites and other media that is helpful to young people and families during transition planning. Co-producing this will also ensure that the information and resources are relevant and meaningful. This would also provide a platform for the ALN Transition Resource being co-produced via this research project. This could be inclusive of all ALN learners and promote and raise awareness of the SNAP Cymru service. An example of this in Suffolk is available via this link - https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/localoffer.page?localofferchannelnew=0</p>			
<p>5. Supporting young people to maintain and develop new friendships and social connections should be embedded as a core element of transition planning. Using an asset based approach, those responsible for supporting young people and families through transition should work in partnership with them to and help identify practical ways that the family can help their children sustain friendships and/or meet new friends and identify where social care needs or other agencies can help them do this.</p>	<p>ALN Transformation</p>	<p>Local authority learning disability services Young people and families</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>6. Improve understanding of how the interests and aspirations of young people in transition match to the actual provision available to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This intelligence would help the region to develop post-16 options and opportunities to meet these aspiration versus slotting young people into what is available/ accessible. A useful approach that is underpinned by person centred planning is the Helen Sanderson, Working for a Change process – which is a partnership based way of making informed decisions about future direction, based on data and information collected through person-centred reflection. See good practice section for more details of this. 	ALN Transformation	Local Authorities Secondary Schools (all) Local Further Education Institutions Careers Wales	Medium to long Term

Welsh Government

Recommendation	Lead partner	Others	Timescales
<p>1. The region should aim to improve inclusive education for all children with disabilities. A first step could be the implementation of disability and equality training across all school provision in North Wales to combat hidden bias and support effective inclusion strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The final recommendation is more fundamental in scope as many of the 	Welsh Government	Local Authorities Primary, Secondary and other school provision Local Further Education Institutions and Higher Education Institutions Self-advocacy	The first step is medium term with the transition to a fully inclusive education system being longer term.

<p>issues raised in this report with respect to the poor outcomes experienced by young people with learning disabilities arguably stem from being educated separately from their non-disabled peers. Whilst a complex policy area, and one that requires more than simply placing young people in the same physical environment with their peers, we have seen evidence that inclusive approaches lead to much better outcomes across the board and thereby have the potential to prevent rather than perpetuate social exclusion and thus the need for more costly 'service based' intervention further downstream.</p>			
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APPENDIX 1

1a) Full List of Destinations used by Careers Wales

Possible destinations for all school leavers in years 11to 13
Continuing in full-time education – same school
Continuing in full-time education - school
Continuing in full-time education - college
Continuing in full-time education- HE
Continuing in part-time education
GAP year
Entering employment outside WBTYP
Entering WBTYP (employed status)
Entering WBTYP (without employed status)
Able to enter Employment, Education or WBTYP (unemployed)
Unable or not ready to enter Employment, Education or WBTYP (e.g. due to illness, custodial sentence)
Known to have left the area
Not responding to follow-up and therefore unknown

WBTYP = work based training young people

1b) Data Template issued to interviewees

Note – organisations were asked to complete the sections where they held relevant data. For example Careers Wales was not asked to complete the section on post-FE destinations.

Baseline information (post-secondary school)

1. How many young people with learning disabilities did you support in transitioning during the last academic year?
2. What were the destinations/ outcomes of these young people post-19:

Outcome	Number	Notes/ Comments
Local FE college		
Specialist Residential College:		
• Pengwern		
• Derwen		

Outcome	Number	Notes/ Comments
Local FE college		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other (please specify) 		
Vocational Training		
Employment		
LA Day opportunities		
LA Work opportunities		
External Day Opportunity		
NEET (not in employment, education or training)		
Other		

3. If young people went to college, what kind of courses did they do?

Courses	Number	Notes/comments
Local FE College:		
Specialist college:		

Baseline information (post-FE, college data template)

- 1. Number and characteristics of young people with learning disabilities who attended your college in the last academic year from specialist schools in North Wales.**

Specialist School	Number of young people	Age
		Under 19 years
		19 plus years

- 2. What type of courses did they enrol on?**

Course / programme type	Number of young people	Age
		Under 19 years
		19 plus years

- 3. How many young people were you not able to admit to your college due to the complexity of their health and social care needs or for other reasons?**

Number of young people	Reasons for not being able to admit	Comments
		Under 19 years
		19 plus years

- 4. How many young people with learning disabilities did your institution support to transition from your college (post-19) during the last academic year?**

- 5. What were the destinations/ outcomes of these young people:**

Outcome	Number	Notes/ Comments
Continued in FE college		
Specialist Residential College (please identify)		
Vocational Training		
Employment		
LA Day opportunities		
LA Work opportunities		
External Day Opportunity		
Volunteering		
NEET (not in employment, education or training)		
Other		

APPENDIX 2: Examples of Good Practice

Good Practice Example	Summary
<p>Person centred planning tools</p>	<p>Working for a Change process, Helen Sanderson Associates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for a Change uses an 8-step process to make sure that you are taking into account the needs, wishes and aspirations of the people you support and your other stakeholders. • The process collates person-centred information gathered from Person-Centred Reviews and person-centred care and support plans and helps the organisation see the emerging trends in the data. This will show both what is working well, and what people would like to see change. • Following this, the process supports participants to create a plan to take them forward, which can then be implemented over time and regularly reviewed. <p><u>Working Together For Change helps to support people better by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing organisational strategic change, based on what we know really matters to people, so we can ultimately provide better, more personalised services • Helping staff have a voice in organisational strategy • Ensuring that services designed on a foundation of co-production <p>http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Working-together-for-Change.pdf</p>
<p>Local, community based, joint approaches to post-16 PMLD / complex needs provision</p>	<p>1) Camu 'Mlaen programme, Ceredigion:</p> <p>In response to the ALN Act and the need to develop post-16 provision for those with complex needs, Ceredigion County Council, alongside Coleg Ceredigion and other partners, are planning for a number of young people with complex needs to be able to now remain in-county for post-16 education. A mixture of college-based learning and day centre provision will offer a five day a week timetable aimed at personal development, with some young people also having access to supported living opportunities. They offer transition from January to July from school to the local college and adult day services one day a week. The project has involved the local FE college, education, Social Services, housing and health and also offers therapeutic services.</p> <p>https://walesnewsonline.com/new-ceredigion-centre-development-for-post-16-complex-needs-provision/</p> <p>2) Conwy local provision for complex needs:</p> <p>Conwy Council are in discussion with Llandrillo College around developing local provision within Conwy to support individuals with complex needs. Whilst this is in the early stages of development, the aim is that individuals with complex needs will have access to a bespoke curriculum in a suitable environment within their local area. Both Conwy and Llandrillo have recognised that this is an area that needs to be developed locally in line with the 'Act'. This development builds on existing partnership work between the Council and the</p>

	<p>College for individuals with PMLD aimed at meeting their individual development needs locally. (See 3 and 4 below).</p> <p>3) Conwy PMLD Provision in the community</p> <p>The Conwy Council Disability Team and Llandrillo college are working in partnership to provide individuals with PMLD access to independent living skills in the community. The model involves the Council providing social care support along with accessible premises within the Canolfan Marl complex and the college providing a tutor on-site to deliver an independent living skills and sensory curriculum to individuals who would otherwise not be able to access ILS provision in the college.</p> <p>4) Hybrid approach to ILS</p> <p>Linked to the above, the Team have worked in partnership with Llandrillo College to provide them with access to the flat within the Canolfan Marl complex for use during college term by students. Students are able to practice independent living skills in a 'real' environment.</p>
<p>Independent Information, Advice and Support Services</p>	<p>SNAP Cymru SNAP Cymru is a national charity, unique to Wales, founded in 1986. They offer free and independent information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities. They give advice and support on a range of issues including assessments, statements of special educational needs, bullying, school attendance, exclusion, health and social care provision and discrimination. The provision includes specific support for young people. https://www.snapcymru.org/.</p> <p>KIDS SENDIASS (commissioned by a range of Local Authorities in England) KIDS is one of the leading providers of Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) which provide information, advice and support around special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The services are free, impartial, confidential and accurate. The services are for children and young people aged 0 – 25 who have or may have SEND, their parents and carers. It is a legal requirement that all local authorities have a SENDIAS service and KIDS provide a number of these services across the country. Each KIDS SENDIAS service has a local page with their contact details, local information and local resources. https://www.kids.org.uk/sendias</p> <p>Conwy Connect Family Transition Service Funded through the Learning Disability Transformation Programme, the service provides free and independent support and information to young people and their families experiencing difficulties at transition stage (from school and/or children to adult services). The service has worked well to connect young people to a wider range of community based options and opportunities and to help them develop new social networks via an Online Youth Club. https://www.conwy-connect.org.uk/transtition</p>
<p>Alternative approaches to meeting</p>	<p>1) Bespoke use of Direct Payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers Wales gave an example of a young man who used direct payments to fund a Personal Assistant to help him travel to deliver

<p>individual development needs and outcomes</p>	<p>speeches. He was mentored for this role by another individual with additional needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another creative example of direct payments was of a young man who pays for daily 2-1 support to help him do whatever activity he wants to do that day. Being active helps to manage his depression and anxiety. He employs males his own age as he wants to be seen to be with friends rather than support when in the community. <p>2) Just Enough Support:</p> <p>This approach utilises pre-existing support rather than looking at paid services. A parent provided an example of a young person still in school who does not want to attend college. They are instead using Just Enough Support to meet personal independence goals such as traveling on a bus alone, alongside volunteering, with the ultimate objective of applying for and gaining employment.</p> <p>3) Circles of Support</p> <p>A non-statutory approach to supporting people with learning disabilities to make their own decisions about their life; it involves bringing together friends, families, and professionals to create a personal support network with the individual at the centre. The I-Team project run by Flintshire Do-It is a good example and has supported a number of young people at transition stage to have a stronger voice about what is important to them and to develop a personal plan for how to achieve this.</p> <p>https://northwalestogether.org/circles-of-support/do</p> <p>4) Support Brokerage Pilot</p> <p>The Learning Disability Transformation Team have funded Imagineer to deliver workshops / training to help individuals including citizens and professionals to become support brokers. Support Brokers can help people to find the support / activity / resource that is right for them, using their direct payments. Additional funding this year will focus on building the North Wales Brokerage Network which will lead to a group of people who are leading on the delivery of brokerage throughout the region and; the delivery of Support Brokerage, achieving the outcomes and evaluating the difference this has made.</p> <p>https://www.imagineer.org.uk/</p>
<p>Inclusive education</p>	<p>Ysgol y Gogarth inclusion links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ysgol y Gogarth in Conwy have an inclusion link with Ysgol John Bright. It was recognised that some students at Ysgol y Gogarth needed greater academic challenge and in response the school provided GCSE courses and the Welsh Baccalaureate. However, some student's lack of social inclusion remained a barrier to accessing places at local FE colleges. Ysgol y Gogarth set up an inclusion link with Ysgol John Bright for 12 students to spend 50% or more of their time at Ysgol John Bright following GCSE courses. This link has flourished, with a good level of achievement at GCSE and AS level. They have an allocated classroom and the link is now well-established. <p>Trinity College, Dublin</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Certificate in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice is highly innovative in Irish and international terms, pioneering an exciting approach that opens up specially designed third level study opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities. The programme is aimed at transforming possibilities open to people with intellectual disability as they make transitions towards adult life and the workforce. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a roll-out of this model of provision across other interested third level institutions in Ireland and elsewhere. https://www.tcd.ie/tcpid/courses/certificate/ <p>Up the Hill Project, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an inclusive and supportive opportunity at Flinders University which enables people, who have a learning disability, to access the University environment, develop social skills and social networks and to experience a range of educational opportunities and activities. Similar to the Trinity College example above, the participants audit and attend University classes of their choice with the intention of developing skills and improving the potential for future employment. With connections in the community participants will open new doors for their future. The programme is supported by close links with parents, coordination of efforts by specifically employed personnel and the work of voluntary mentors. https://www.flinders.edu.au/engage/community/clinics/up-the-hill-project <p>Inclusive Campus Life Co-funded by the Erasmus + programme of the European Union, this programme is aimed at testing and developing best practice in including people with learning disabilities in higher education (inclusive education) via providing buddy systems, developing campus accessibility, providing work placements and involving people in teaching activities. The aim is that regular higher education students and students with intellectual disabilities will be able to follow their personal study path while enjoying campus life. Persons with intellectual disabilities will take courses befitting their aspirations and will be involved in teaching activities as life experts. As such they will teach higher education students. https://www.iclife.eu/</p> <p>How we do school (a series of videos produced by the Lien Foundation in Singapore highlighting how different countries do inclusive education.) Follow link to explore their series of videos. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=how+we+do+school+lien+foundation</p> <p>British Columbia British Columbia are a leading province in Canada providing inclusive education. The video below shows the journey the province made from a segregated model of education to a fully inclusive model. By 2000 British Columbia had closed all of its public sector special schools. In their view inclusive education is about citizenship and building inclusive communities. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XT0n5uTSjyY</p> <p>Another example of this from Finland. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aheDzMrKuEM</p>
Employment	<p>Supported Employment Framework The main targeted type of employability provision for people with additional support needs – which includes people with a learning disability – is supported employment. Supported Employment promotes the model of “place and train”.</p>

“Place and train” recognises that for many people learning on the job is an effective model with a key element of this being the building of natural supports in the workplace and backs this up with the skills of a Job Coach who provides well-structured support to the service user and potential employer to find and retain a job. Supported Employment is recognised by a 5 stage process. Supported Employment is guided by the three main principles below:

- The job should be in an integrated work place;
- The jobholder is paid the rate for the job; and
- All individuals have the right to end their reliance on welfare benefits i.e. reduce poverty

<https://www.base-uk.org/about-supported-employment>

Scottish Government Supported Employment Framework

The Supported Employment Framework for Scotland was published in February 2010 by the Scottish Government and COSLA. Scottish Government, along with other partners, is working to improve the quality and consistency of supported employment in Scotland. Funded by Scottish Government, a Supported Employment Professional Development Award (SQA Level 7) has been developed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which is the first industry-specific professional qualification. Scottish Union for Supported Employment and the British Association for Supported Employment are working to produce quality standards for supported employment services; and SUSE is working with the Scottish Government to produce a set of outcomes for supported employment which can be used in the commissioning, design and evaluation of supported employment services.

<http://socialfirms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/A-Working-Life-for-All-Disabled-People-Main-Report.pdf>

<https://www.base-uk.org/nos>

Project Search

North Wales has 2 Project Search Programmes and one in development. Project Search is the brand name for an intensive supported internship programme that follows the supported employment model of best practice. It is aimed at young people with learning disabilities and ASD aged 16 to 25 and typically involves a partnership between a local authority, a local supported employment provider, a host business and a training provider. The main outcome of the programme is to enable young people to secure full-time, competitive paid employment in an integrated work environment. Project Search has an employment outcome rate of 60 to 70%. DFN Project Search holds the master franchise rights in the UK. In Wales, the Engage to Change pilot programme is testing the model across Wales

- **East** - HFT/ Flintshire County Council/ Clywd Alan Housing Association (DFN Project Search)
- **Central** – Denbighshire County Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Agoriad Cyf, Ysbyty Glan Clywd (in development, Engage to Change)
- **West** – Agoriad Cyf, Ysbyty Gwynedd, Coleg Menai (Engage to Change).

<http://www.engagetochange.org.uk/>

<https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/>

NHS England Learning Disability Employment Programme

Launched in 2015, the Learning Disability Employment Programme is supporting the development of local and national solutions to remove barriers

and increase employment opportunities for people with a learning disability in the NHS in England. Examples include:

- Developing a Learning Disability Employment Pledge
- Produce recruitment guidance and guidance on a paper easy read job application form;
- work in partnership with the wider NHS England Transforming Care Programme to support the development of employment pathways for people with a learning disability

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/ld-emp-prog/>

The National Deaf Children's Society

Created a free toolkit and resource for careers advisors, teachers and teachers of the deaf to help them support deaf young people to plan for a great future. So that deaf young people are able to achieve their goals, it's vital they get the support they need from education professionals like you.

What's included?

- A detailed toolkit containing eight lesson plans that cover a range of topics and discussions suitable for deaf young people aged 13-25
- A workshop presentation and a range of activity resources to support each lesson
- A supplementary guide and resources on how to adapt the activities for online delivery
- Information on where to find more support for deaf-specific career advice.

<https://www.ndcs.org.uk/search?q=career%20planning%20curriculum#search-results>

Together Matters – I'm thinking ahead: how to be part of the world of work

Have co-produced a range resources for people with learning disabilities, families and carers to help them plan independently. As part of the 'I'm thinking ahead' guide, they have a new section on 'how to be part of the world of work' which can be downloaded from their website. They can also help local areas adapt the guide for their own area.

<https://www.togethertomatters.org.uk/resources-and-information/>

Raising the profile of employment as a life aspiration

Agoriad Cyf have developed a non-vocational course for young people and their families at transition age to raise aspiration of paid employment as a real option for young people. This course is being delivered in partnership with Coleg Menai with young people on their ILS course. The aim is to provide young people with an insight into what employment and vocational training involves for individuals with learning disabilities. Funded through the Transformation Fund, an additional 2 courses are being delivered in 2021. In the first round of delivery, 4 young people went onto secure supported internships through the Engage to Change project run by Agoriad, the college and Ysbyty Gwynedd. <https://www.agoriad.org.uk/your-employment.html>

Bespoke employment opportunities

	<p>Ace Anglia have co-produced a model to improve the uptake of annual health checks by people with learning disabilities in Suffolk. The unique feature of the model is that it employs and trains people with learning disabilities to be peer educators. This year with support from Transformation Funding, Conwy Connect is adapting this model for North Wales with support from Ace Anglia. https://www.aceanglia.com/what-we-do/peer-educator-networks/</p> <p>https://www.conwy-connect.org.uk/news-om/2021/4/12/new-health-check-service</p> <p>Step into work, BCUHB BCUHB have developed an accessible recruitment pathway for people who face disadvantages in the labour market and has including adults with a learning disability. The programme, which lasts around nine months, offers participants a unique opportunity to prepare for a career within the NHS through training, a work placement and support to navigate the health board's standard recruitment procedures, such as DBS checks and occupational health clearance. BCU works in partnership with a wide range of organisations such as Agoriad Cyf who refer adults with learning disabilities to the programme.</p> <p>Fair Shot Café and West London College At West London College, young people with learning disabilities are being taught how to make coffee, prepare food and give good customer service in the hope they will soon find paid work via a partnership with a social enterprise. About 80% of staff at Fair Shot Café have learning disabilities. The café opens its first retail outlet in Mayfair, central London, in November, but it's hoped the training will eventually be extended to colleges around the country.</p> <p>https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-london-58807152</p>
<p>Friends and relationships</p>	<p>Gig Buddies North Wales The idea behind Gig Buddies is to enable people with learning disabilities and/or autism to enjoy all the great things going on in their community, especially live music. Gig Buddies is a project that pairs up people with and without learning disabilities (and/or autism) to be friends and to go to events together. With support from the Learning Disability Transformation Programme Gig buddies launched last year in North Wales. https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/frindiau-gigiau-gig-buddies/</p> <p>Luv2Meet U Luv2meetU is a friendship and dating agency for people with a learning disability and/or autism aged 18 and over. They support people to make friends, share interests and develop relationships. It is run by HFT in Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire. https://www.hft.org.uk/our-services/empowering-individuals/friendship-and-dating/luv2meetu/</p>
<p>Examples of Travel Training in north Wales/ schemes run by Local Authorities in England/ Travel APP</p>	<p>https://www.wirral.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/funding-and-financial-support/free-travel-school/travel-training-young-people</p> <p>https://www.wirral.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/funding-and-financial-support/free-travel-school/travel-training-young-people</p> <p>https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/preparing-for-adulthood/travel-training.aspx</p>

	<p>Link to Mencap site with examples of travel training initiatives https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/transport/local-transport-initiatives</p> <p>Way2Be The Learning Disability Transformation Programme have been piloting the use of a phone app called Way2Be in Flintshire and Wrexham with people with learning disabilities. It is an APP that has been specifically designed for people with learning disabilities to support them to travel independently. https://vimeo.com/241160325</p>
<p>Assistive Technology</p>	<p>Here2There Here2There.me (H2T) is a person-centred planning and outcome recording App for individuals receiving targeted support. It is a way for people to capture a story of their achievements through words and pictures, and link them to their outcomes and goals. These can then be shared with their circles of support, to help people stay connected, and understand how they can help people to achieve the outcomes they want. https://northwalestogether.org/how-we-communicate/</p> <p>Multi me The Multi Me software is being piloted through the transformation programme as part of the assistive technology workstream. Multi Me is a secure, person-centred planning, social networking platform that is accessed via the internet through a web browser. The Multi Me software is mobile optimised accessible across a variety of devices including smart phones, tablets, laptop and desktop computers. https://northwalestogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Project-Briefing-6-full-English.pdf https://www.multime.com/</p> <p>Help Talk This app is a communication aid for people who are non-verbal or have a speech impairment. You can create a profile containing the spoken actions most useful to any situation, such as a specific event, travelling, working, education, socialising, plus much more, and suited for your day-to-day life. In addition, for people with reduced dexterity, there are a big Yes/No buttons.</p> <p>This app is available in multiple languages and includes an emergency contact and location request services if you were to be in danger or go missing. The APP is available from Google Play.</p>

APPENDIX 3: Overview of changes to be introduced under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 12 December 2017 and became an Act on 24 January 2018 after receiving Royal Assent.

This will create the legislative framework to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision, through a person-centred approach to identifying needs early, putting in place effective support and monitoring, and adapting interventions to ensure they deliver desired outcomes.

The Act will be supported by:

- ✓ regulations – secondary legislation where further detail is required
- ✓ ALN Code for Wales 2021 – statutory guidance and mandatory requirements to help people and organisations work within the law.

The Act will:

- ✓ The introduce of the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- ✓ The Act replaces the terms ‘special educational needs’ (SEN) and ‘learning difficulties and/or disabilities’ (LDD) with the new term ALN.

0-25 age range

There will be a single legislative system relating to the support given to children and young people aged between 0-25 years who have ALN. This is instead of the two separate systems currently operating to support children and young people of compulsory school age who have SEN; and young people in further education who have LDD. As a result, transition of learners between school and post-16 education will be improved to allow greater support and rights for this group of learners.

A unified plan

The Act will create a single statutory plan (the individual development plan (IDP)) to replace the existing variety of statutory and non-statutory SEN or LDD plans for learners in schools and further education. This will ensure greater consistency and continuity and, unlike the current system, ensure that provision and rights are protected regardless of the severity or complexity of needs.

Increased participation of children and young people

The Act requires that learners’ views should always be considered as part of the planning process, along with those of their parents. It is imperative that children and young people see the planning process as something which is done with them rather than to them.

High aspirations and improved outcomes

The emphasis of IDPs will be on making provision that delivers tangible outcomes that contribute in a meaningful way to the child or young person's achievement of their full potential.

A simpler and less adversarial system

The process of producing and revising an IDP should be much simpler than is currently the case with statements of SEN and should avoid the adversarial nature of the existing approach.

Increased collaboration

The new system will support a strong focus on collaboration. Encouraging improved collaboration and information sharing between agencies, which are essential to ensuring that needs are identified early and the right support is put in place to enable children and young people to achieve positive outcomes. Three fundamental new roles are created by the Bill to facilitate increased collaboration – Additional Learning Needs Coordinators in education settings; Designated Educational Clinical Lead Officers in health board; and Early Years ALN Lead Officers in local authorities.

Avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution

The new system will focus on ensuring that where disagreements occur about an IDP or the provision it contains, the matter is considered and resolved at the most local level possible.

Clear and consistent rights of appeal

Where disagreements about the contents of an IDP cannot be resolved at the local level, the Act will ensure that children and young people entitled to an IDP (and their parents in the case of those that are under 16 years) will have a right of appeal to a tribunal.

A mandatory Code

The provisions included in the Bill will be supported by a new statutory ALN Code for Wales 2021. The Code will ensure that the new ALN system has a set of clear, legally enforceable parameters within which local authorities and those other organisations responsible for the delivery of services for children and young people with ALN, must act.

It will, therefore, be a type of subordinate legislation, and confer duties and rights on those subject to it. The Code will also set out practical guidance on how the statutory duties will be carried out, which will be supported by best practice illustrations.

A bilingual system

Services will be required to consider whether the child or young person needs ALP in Welsh. If they do, this must be documented in the IDP and 'all reasonable steps' must be taken to secure the provision in Welsh. A series of strategic duties are also aimed at driving progress towards a truly bilingual ALN system and the Bill includes a mechanism so that the duties to provide ALP through the medium of Welsh become absolute over time.

APPENDIX 4: Example topic guide (for families)



Additional Learning Needs (ALN) research project

1) Introduction to the project

The North Wales Learning Disability Strategy highlights the importance of getting the transition from secondary school to post-school opportunities right for young people with learning disabilities. Young people with learning disabilities have told us they want to have an ordinary life and the opportunity to find education, training and employment, and to be independent.

The North Wales **Regional Partnership Board** secured funding from the Welsh Government transformation fund to establish the North Wales Together Learning Disability Transformation Programme. The foundation of the programme is the region's Learning Disability Strategy.

On the horizon is the implementation of the **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (2018)**. This will bring significant changes to the statutory responsibilities of education, health and social care services in meeting the educational support needs of children with learning disabilities.

In response, this project aims to map out regional post-19 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision, with a focus on young people with learning disabilities with complex needs. The purpose of the mapping will be to develop:

- A regional picture of current post-19 ALN pathways for this group and, in particular, the proportion who transition to specialist, residential colleges.

- Collaborate with young people and their families, specialist schools, Careers Wales, and local further education colleges etc. in order to have a better understanding of individuals' needs and expectations in relation to post-school options and opportunities.
- Scope out local pathways and opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and complex needs and identify barriers to access along with potential solutions. The focus of this element will be to improve access to local options and opportunities.

The findings of the research will be used to produce a report of findings with recommendations along with a good practice guide that supports young people and families to make informed decisions about post-school options and opportunities.

You are being asked to participate in this research because of your unique perspective on these matters.

Please advise us if you wish to be interviewed in Welsh.

1) Privacy notice

Your personal data is processed by Flintshire County Council for the purpose of collecting your views for this project. You have been invited to participate in this research project because of your unique perspective.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary and your personal data, including any special category data, is processed with your explicit consent. You can choose not to participate and can withdraw at any time. Please notify us by email at Stephanie.hall@flintshire.gov.uk if you wish to withdraw consent to participate.

Participation involves one interview, conducted on WebEx. Your responses are confidential. The information you provide to this research project will be used to inform a report and guide for young people and their families about post-school options, these will not contain any information that personally identifies you. However, we may make use of quotes when we feel this would add to our report or guide. These would not be directly attributed to you and would not reveal your identity.

We are informing participants that the WebEx interview will be recorded. This is to allow for accurate transcription, and for the purpose of notes only. The recording will allow the interview to flow freely with information being detailed accurately. The recording will be deleted as soon as the interview has been transcribed. You can object to it being recorded if you wish, including at any time during the interview. The transcription of the interview will be held until the completion of the report and guides at end of this project by March 2021.

If you have any questions about the interview or research project, please contact Stephanie Hall at stephanie.hall@flintshire.gov.uk or on 07500 530429.

If you feel that Flintshire County Council has mishandled your personal data at any time you can make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office by visiting their website or by calling their helpline on 0303 123 1113.

For further information about how Flintshire County Council processes personal data and your rights please see our privacy notice on our website - <http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Contact-Us/Privacy-Notice.aspx>

2) Interview questions/topics

In preparation for the interview you may find it useful to familiarise yourself with the topics and questions in advance.

1. What is the age of the child you are supporting/have supported to go through transition?
2. What do you know about transition and the process involved? At what age should it start? How soon did the process start for your young person? Did you feel you had enough time to prepare?
3. How well have you and your child been supported and informed during transition? Who was involved?
4. How included did you and your child feel in the decision making process. Did you feel you were provided with a wide range of options (both mainstream and specialist) matched to your child's learning and development needs and their aspirations?
5. Barriers you faced in accessing local options/ opportunities, including Further Education.
6. Are you aware of any other agencies that can support you through transition?
7. What worked well, what could have been improved? Do you have any suggestions for how to improve?
8. Have you heard about the Additional Learning Needs Tribunal Act (ALN)? What is your understanding of your rights and responsibilities in relation to this?
9. What kind of information would be helpful to young people/families to support them to make person-centered choices about post-school options? How do you think this information would be best presented/in what format?
10. Are you aware of examples of good practice locally regarding innovative or creative education, post-school opportunities for young people with learning disabilities?
11. Any other comments?

Thank you for your participation!