

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Enterprise and Learning Committee

Specialist provision for young people with  
autism in further education

May 2010



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## **Enterprise and Learning Committee**

The Enterprise and Learning Committee is appointed by the National Assembly for Wales to consider and report on issues within the areas of economic development, transport, and education, lifelong learning and skills. In particular, the Committee may examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Welsh Government and associated public bodies.

### **Powers**

The Committee was established following the National Assembly Elections in May 2007 as one of the National Assembly's scrutiny committees. Its powers are set out in the National Assembly for Wales's Standing Orders, particularly Standing Order 12. The Standing Orders are available at [www.assemblywales.org](http://www.assemblywales.org)

### **Committee membership**

<i>Committee Member</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency or Region</i>
Gareth Jones (Chair)	Plaid Cymru	Aberconwy
Christine Chapman	Labour	Cynon Valley
Jeff Cuthbert	Labour	Caerphilly
Andrew Davies	Labour	Swansea West
Paul Davies	Welsh Conservative Party	Preseli Pembrokeshire
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Brian Gibbons	Labour	Aberavon
David Melding	Welsh Conservative Party	South Wales Central
Jenny Randerson	Welsh Liberal Democrats	Cardiff Central

### **Previous relevant reports published by the Committee**

Report of the Enterprise and Learning Committee's consideration of the petition on post-19 students with additional learning needs.

Published: 1 May 2009

All previous committee reports can be found at [www.assemblywales.org](http://www.assemblywales.org)

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## The Committee's Recommendations

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The Committee's recommendations to the Welsh Government are listed below, in the order that they appear in this Report. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions:

**Recommendation 1.** We recommend that in order to plan effectively for service provision in the future the Welsh Assembly Government and local education authorities should continue to improve data collection on the number of children and young people with autism in Wales and that consistent criteria and methodology be used. (page 9)

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should explore the area of provision in further and higher education for people with autism as a priority, possibly through the continuing work of the Adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder Task and Finish Group, and that our Committee's report should inform that process. (page 11)

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should ensure there are senior-level transition workers for all young people in Wales with autism from the age of 14, and that all those workers should have detailed knowledge and experience of autism. (page 15)

**Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government carry out an analysis of the transition element of local authority ASD action plans, and that where weaknesses are found, regional support officers should work with the local authorities to strengthen them. (page 16)

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the parents of young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder should be enabled to make applications for funding for specialist placements 12 months before the start of the college term, and that they should receive notification of the decision on their funding place by March 31<sup>st</sup> before college starts to allow for adequate transition. There should be a timetable set in place so that each stage of the application and funding decision process is clearly identified. (page 17)

**Recommendation 6.** We recommend that given the success of the pilot approach in some parts of Wales, all areas of the country should be served in future by multi-agency forums, including the transition key workers. (page 18)

**Recommendation 7.** We recommend that one of the outcomes of the review of Careers Wales should be for all Careers Wales advisers to have training to

understand the particular needs of people with autism, and for some to be specialists. (page 19)

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should carry out a mapping exercise to establish exactly how many students with autism attend further education institutions in Wales and what facilities are provided for them in each college. This research should also extend to developing an understanding of how many students with autism from Wales attend colleges in England. (page 21)

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the ColegauCymru Network for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities managers should work with organisations such as Autism Cymru to ensure that knowledge on best practice in providing further education services for students with autism can be shared between all colleges. (page 21)

**Recommendation 10.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should take the lead in looking at the procurement of more coordinated and coherent provision of further education for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder so that students from Wales can receive the specialist further education services they need nearer to where they live. We suggest that this more managed market approach could be achieved through the establishment of a joint commissioning forum. (page 23)

**Recommendation 11.** We recommend that there should be more consistent levels of support for young people with autism and their families outside of college, such as during holidays and weekends and that the Welsh Assembly Government should look at how best this could be provided. (page 23)

**Recommendation 12.** We recommend that people right across the Autistic Spectrum Disorder and throughout the whole of Wales should have equal access to learning and life choices and that statementing pilots should actively seek to address the lack of a statutory framework around statementing and assessment in further education. (page 25)

**Recommendation 13.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should make a commitment to publish quality standards for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, following consultation, by the end of 2010. (page 25)

**Recommendation 14.** We recommend that mainstream further education colleges should provide better support for the development of social skills for learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. We also recommend that colleges should offer autism awareness training for the peers of students with ASD. (page 26)

**Recommendation 15.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should improve Welsh medium provision in colleges for young people with autism based on a sound understanding of identified need, and ensure that Welsh speaking families have the necessary support and guidance documentation in the language of their choice. (page 27)

**Recommendation 16.** We welcome the Minister's planned review of funding for the transition of young people with additional learning needs from pre- to post-16 education, and we recommend that the outcome should be to achieve consistency and stability of funding throughout the system. We also recommend that the review should examine how individual budgets could work for people with autism. (page 28)

**Recommendation 17.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should commission a study of the employment outcomes for young people with autism after they leave further education to better understand the barriers they face and how they can be best overcome. (page 29)

**Recommendation 18.** We also recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should address how best to improve understanding about Autism Spectrum Disorder among employers. (page 30)

**Recommendation 19.** We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should strengthen existing provision to ensure that there is in place a nationwide network of effective and expert advice, guidance and support to individuals and families affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder. (page 32)

## Background to the Inquiry

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### Purpose of the inquiry

1. The purpose of this short inquiry was for the Enterprise and Learning Committee to respond to the recommendation by the National Assembly's Cross Party Autism Group<sup>1</sup> that:

“The Enterprise and Learning Committee undertake a short review to further investigate the barriers to appropriate support in further education for young people with autism.”

2. We took oral evidence from a select number of witnesses – the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Welsh Government officials; the National Autistic Society Cymru<sup>2</sup> and mothers of young people with autism; Autism Cymru;<sup>3</sup> CollegesWales (previously known as Fforwm);<sup>4</sup> the specialist Beechwood College, Vale of Glamorgan;<sup>5</sup> and the charity organisation SNAP Cymru.<sup>6</sup>

3. The oral and written evidence we received is listed at the end of this report. We would like to thank all those people who provided us with information.

4. In particular, we welcome the fact that the Minister told us he was approaching this inquiry “with an open mind”.<sup>7</sup> We trust that he will accept our conclusions and recommendations to improve the specialist provision for young people with autism in further education.

### What is autism?

5. The challenges facing young people with autism can be multi-faceted and complex. There is a significant variation in the nature and severity of the impacts and difficulties posed by Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including Asperger Syndrome. The Cross Party Autism Group described autism as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> A snapshot of specialist autism education provision in Wales, A report into our research findings by the Cross Party Autism Group in the National Assembly for Wales, Liz Withers, May 2009

<sup>2</sup> The National Autistic Society Cymru is part of the UK's leading charity for autism

<sup>3</sup> Autism Cymru is Wales's national charity for autism. Set up in 2001 it has offices in Aberystwyth, Cardiff and Wrexham

<sup>4</sup> CollegesWales is the national organisation representing further education institutions

<sup>5</sup> Beechwood College is an independent specialist residential college that caters for students aged 16-25 years with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger Syndrome. It currently has 35 students (30 residential and 5 day students) with capacity for 38 and 10 respectively

<sup>6</sup> Snap Cymru is a national charity, unique to Wales, that provides services for families in relation to additional learning needs. Founded in 1986, it has four regional staff, and volunteer teams based in 14 offices

<sup>7</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 17, 25 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

“Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates with, and relates to other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, whilst all people with autism share three main areas of difficulty (social interaction, social communication and social imagination) their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives, but others may need a lifetime of specialist care [...] According to National Autistic Society Cymru figures, over 25,000 people in Wales have autism. Of these, around 6,000 are children and young people aged under 18.”

6. Welsh Assembly Government data suggest that there were 70 students with autism in further education in 2004/05; 105 in 2006/07; and 80 in 2007/08, which is about 0.5 per cent of all disabled learners (a lower number than reported by the colleges themselves).<sup>8</sup> The Government’s data were collected under previous guidance, however, and more recent data are due to be published.

7. CollegesWales stated that the number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at mainstream colleges in Wales ranges from about 10-35 students per college, although the numbers could be higher if more had diagnosis. In other words, there are more students who display ASD traits than there are accounted for by the official data, and the number of students with ASD applying for further education is increasing.<sup>9</sup>

**We recommend that in order to plan effectively for service provision in the future the Welsh Assembly Government and local education authorities should continue to improve data collection on the number of children and young people with autism in Wales and that consistent criteria and methodology be used.**

## **The Cross Party Autism Group**

8. The National Assembly’s Cross Party Autism Group was set up in 2002. The Group is chaired by Janet Ryder AM and its secretariat is provided by the National Autistic Society Cymru. The Group’s report was based on information gathered from 33 education providers including statutory and independent special schools, mainstream schools with autism resources, further education institutions, and from anecdotal evidence. The Group identified some good practice with specialist provision for young people with autism in further education, but also dissatisfaction about lack of organisation, awareness and understanding.

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<sup>8</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence paragraph 7

<sup>9</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraphs 3-4

9. The key findings of the Cross Party Autism Group regarding further education were:

- 58 per cent of schools who responded to the survey did not feel there was adequate further education provision for young people on the autistic spectrum in Wales
- 46 per cent of the schools felt that autism was a priority for their local education authority
- Transition from school to college can be a difficult time for young people with autism because they find change very hard to cope with and have difficulty in visualising changes outside of their normal routine
- Half of the schools have experienced problems with their young people with autism moving onto further education
- All of the colleges who responded agreed that support could be improved for young people at transition from school to college
- A quarter of the schools who experienced problems at transition highlighted a lack of training and knowledge about autism amongst further education staff as the main reason
- 44 per cent of colleges agreed that there is a lack of staff awareness and training in autism and that they require greater expertise
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the process of applying for specialist college placements needs urgent review as there is often only a very short space of time between the decision and the start of the course
- There is a lack of on-going support for young people with Asperger syndrome and others at the “higher end” of the ASD spectrum who need life and social skills training as well as their other learning needs.

## **Welsh Assembly Government Strategy**

10. The Welsh Assembly Government’s Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills published “The Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan for Wales” in April 2008. The priorities in the plan were to drive improvements across services for children, young people and adults in health, social services and education. The notion of joint working and agencies coming together to plan for better access to services and support for people with autism and their families was central to the plan. The National Autistic Society Cymru told us the plan was a “good first step on the road to improving the lives of people

with ASD and their families,” but added that “there are no specific actions in the plan around transition to further education (and higher education) for people with autism.”<sup>10</sup>

11. In July 2009, a written Cabinet Statement on services for disabled children and young people<sup>11</sup> provided an update on the strategic action plan:

- All local authorities now have an identified lead officer for Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- £1.8 million has been identified for 2009-10 to implement key actions in the strategy
- Discussions are taking place with Autism Cymru to update and publish “Quality Standards in Education”
- A range of Autistic Spectrum Disorder awareness raising packages are currently in development together with a new public autism information website called “ASD matters” on the Health of Wales Information Service site.

12. On 22 January 2010,<sup>12</sup> Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services, published the Adult Task and Finish Group Report, “The Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan for Wales,” October 2009 and the Government’s response to the Task Group’s recommendations. Although the Task Group did not look specifically at further and higher education, it recommended that this should be an area that the Government consider in future.

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should explore the area of provision in further and higher education for people with autism as a priority, possibly through the continuing work of the Adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder Task and Finish Group, and that our Committee’s report should inform that process.**

### **Enterprise and Learning Committee’s inquiry: petition on post-19 education provision for complex additional learning needs**

13. In May 2009, following a request from the National Assembly’s Petitions Committee, the Enterprise and Learning Committee carried out a short inquiry into a petition on education provision for learners aged 19 and over with complex

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<sup>10</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence pages 1-2

<sup>11</sup> Written Cabinet Statement - A Progress Update on the Welsh Assembly Government’s Policy Agenda for Disabled Children and Young People, 16 July 2009

<sup>12</sup> Written Cabinet Statement - The Implementation of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan for Wales, 22 January 2010

physical and learning needs, especially regarding the lack of a specialist, non-residential college in Wales. The Committee recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should:

- Undertake an immediate survey of the work of Careers Wales to determine where early transition planning is not happening and provide guidance and training to ensure best practice is implemented in future
- Establish effective procedures whereby decisions on funding support are communicated to learners and families no later than 1 July each year
- Develop a fully funded strategy, including funding necessary training, for the use of key workers in transition planning
- Identify a sustainable number of further education colleges throughout Wales to act as hubs, so that there can be a transfer of staff between specialist schools and the colleges to build expertise in the further education sector.

## Challenges and Opportunities

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### Transitional arrangements

14. The transition process is explained in detail in Annex A of this report. The importance of successful transition for learners with additional learning needs between any key stages, but particularly from school to college, is widely agreed. Yet despite the recent work undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government, we received evidence during this inquiry that transition from school to college can still be very stressful for some families and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

15. SNAP Cymru's written evidence states:

"Poor transition planning, ill informed families and young people, professionals and scarcity of quality provision cause stress and anxiety for families and conflict within families and between families and local authorities and other institutions. Of all individuals with disabilities this group of people with ASD find unplanned change, stress and anxiety both challenging and disabling."<sup>13</sup>

16. Beechwood College also stated that:

"We do not believe that the current system pays enough attention to the fact that those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder can greatly suffer from Transition Anxiety."<sup>14</sup>

17. In its written evidence to this inquiry the National Autistic Society Cymru argued that poor transition makes a placement much more likely to fail.<sup>15</sup> Written evidence from C-S.A.W. included testimonies from parents that capture only too well the frustration and anxiety of families seeking further education placements and other support for their children.<sup>16</sup>

18. In its written evidence, the National Autistic Society Cymru says:

"We take this opportunity to commend the positive work that...the Additional Learning Needs Branch are undertaking to drive forward improvements to transitional arrangements, some of which is referred to

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<sup>13</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 2

<sup>14</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraph 5.5

<sup>15</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 3

<sup>16</sup> C-S.A.W is a registered charity that provides autism support for families in North Wales

in the ASD Strategic Action Plan. However, there is a need for an autism-specific stream of work to complement this.”<sup>17</sup>

19. The National Autistic Society Cymru suggested that more key transitional worker projects, taster days in colleges followed by multiple supported visits, early planning, effective collaboration between all relevant partners, and consultation with the learner and his/her parents or representatives would all contribute to a successful transition process.<sup>18</sup>

20. Autism Cymru also informed us about “Deis Cyfle”, a joint project with its Irish counterparts, the Irish Society for Autism, which is aimed, among other things, at ensuring smoother transition routes between schools and further and higher education.<sup>19</sup> The project has received European funding and the areas in Wales that will be covered are Gwynedd and Môn (2009-10), Pembrokeshire and Wrexham (2010-11) and Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Flintshire (2011-12).

21. SNAP Cymru suggested that:

“Much of the distress and resulting disability could be alleviated now with timely and appropriate multi-agency person centred planning which focuses on need rather than on what services are available. Ownership and responsibility for young people’s transition is required from all partners and agencies.

“SNAP Cymru’s experience is that there is willingness amongst professionals from all agencies and disciplines but ineffective last minute planning for post-school transition and a lack of ownership and coordinated effort is the norm. This results in young people given insufficient time to properly explore options to make informed choices.”<sup>20</sup>

22. In June 2009, Jane Hutt AM, the then Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, provided a progress update on the policy agenda for disabled young people and emphasised the importance of transition key workers as a “preventative, proactive and protective approach which is integral to supporting the policy agenda to transform the lives of disabled children and young people.”<sup>21</sup> These key workers are responsible for coordinating the planning and delivery of services before, during and after the process of transition and for monitoring young people until they reach the age of 25.

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<sup>17</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 2

<sup>18</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 3

<sup>19</sup> Autism Cymru written evidence pages 2-3

<sup>20</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 2

<sup>21</sup> Written Cabinet Statement – A progress update on the Welsh Assembly Government’s policy agenda for disabled children and young people

23. In 2007 the Minister allocated £500,000 a year for three years to provide additional key transition workers in five pilot areas – Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Monmouthshire. In February 2009, as a result of a successful bid to secure match funding as part of the “Reaching the Heights” European Social Fund grant scheme, the total funding available for transition key working was more than doubled to over £3million. We understand that funding will be increased to extend the scheme as a result of a successful bid for European funds.

24. In its written evidence the National Autistic Society Cymru welcomed the Minister’s investment in the key transition workers pilot projects, but expressed serious concerns about the financial sustainability of the scheme.<sup>22</sup>

25. We heard of examples of good practice that colleges are following to make the transition process as smooth and effective as possible,<sup>23</sup> but we heard from other witnesses that there are some very specific and complex challenges regarding transition for young people with autism and we understand how periods of change can often be particularly unsettling for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and very stressful for their families.<sup>24</sup> Beechwood College stated in its written evidence that it would welcome identified transition coordinators within local authority areas, which would reduce the impact of transition anxiety for both students and their families.<sup>25</sup> The College later told us how important it was to have individuals that could drive and coordinate the transition process on behalf of all parties concerned.<sup>26</sup>

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should ensure there are senior-level transition workers for all young people in Wales with autism from the age of 14, and that all those workers should have detailed knowledge and experience of autism.**

26. Finally on this issue, we heard from the National Autistic Society Wales that under the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan all local authorities in Wales will have to complete first-stage actions such as mapping local prevalence of ASD, local needs, current services and gaps in provision.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 2

<sup>23</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 12

<sup>24</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 2

<sup>25</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraph 5.2

<sup>26</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 115, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>27</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 100, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government carry out an analysis of the transition element of local authority ASD action plans, and that where weaknesses are found, regional support officers should work with the local authorities to strengthen them.**

## **Timeliness of decisions**

27. As with the Cross Party Autism Group, we received evidence that delays in funding decisions are a key source of stress in the transition process.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore crucial that transition should be introduced early and gradually. Yet in the view of the National Autistic Society Cymru, “unfortunately, the funding system does not allow for early and planned transition.”<sup>29</sup>

28. We understand that parents are not currently able to apply for funding for a specialist college placement for autistic young people until the end of January before a September term start. The National Autistic Society Wales’s written evidence stated that late funding decisions are consistently raised as a key concern by parents. The Society therefore recommended that our Committee should call on the Minister to introduce an earlier deadline for funding applications.<sup>30</sup>

29. In her oral evidence, one mother of a young person with Autistic Spectrum Disorder told us:

“The statistics are truly dreadful, and this has been raised time and again with the Assembly over the years. For the last year for which we have full statistics, 37 per cent of families did not know until September that their child had funding to start in August or September so people are getting the funding agreement after the term has started, and we are talking about the most profoundly and severely disabled children in the country.”<sup>31</sup>

30. The mother therefore requested that decisions should be made by 31 March so that families had the whole of the summer to work on the transition phase, such as arranging visits and taster days for their children. Beechwood College also stated in its written evidence that both students and providers should be informed at an earlier date of the outcome of funding decisions so that necessary plans could be made.<sup>32</sup> They later told us that delays were caused at various stages of the process although there were some “serial offenders”.

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<sup>28</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 24, 4 February 2010

<sup>29</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 3

<sup>30</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 3

<sup>31</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 27, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>32</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraph 5.4

31. In our report on the post-19 additional learning needs petition we recommended that funding decisions should be communicated to families by July for a September start. The Minister accepted this recommendation in principle, saying that applications are collated and submitted by Careers Wales and that delays in funding decisions are often caused because applications are incomplete and negotiations with a joint funding authority have taken a period of time.

32. When we discussed this issue with the Minister he acknowledged that some decisions are made late and he had sympathy about the impact such delays had on the people concerned.<sup>33</sup> His officials told us that the 31 January deadline was because of the “multi-agency” nature of the process.<sup>34</sup> We believe that it is exactly because of the multi-agency nature of this process that the parties involved need to work to earlier set deadlines throughout the application and funding decision process. It is the citizen that should be the focus, not the procedure.

**We recommend that the parents of young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder should be enabled to make applications for funding for specialist placements 12 months before the start of the college term, and that they should receive notification of the decision on their funding place by March 31<sup>st</sup> before college starts to allow for adequate transition. There should be a timetable set in place so that each stage of the application and funding decision process is clearly identified.**

### **Multi-agency forums**

33. It was clear from the evidence that the number of agencies involved in transitional planning for young people (as many as seven people could be involved in a meeting) can cause practical problems, barriers and delays.<sup>35</sup> Smooth multi-agency working practices were therefore identified as essential to help the process. In its written evidence, Beechwood College stated:

“It is our experience that different local authorities work in many different ways. We would welcome the opportunity for more cohesive working practices between education, social services and health agencies in all areas of Wales that would provide a platform for smoother transitions and information sharing.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 28, 25 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>34</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 34, 25 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>35</sup> Skill Wales written evidence pages 1-2; Record of Proceedings paragraph 190, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>36</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraph 5.1

34. The Committee heard of good practice in areas such as Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire,<sup>37</sup> but of variations in practice between other local authorities. In the words of one mother of a child with Autistic Spectrum Disorder:

“What should be everyone’s job becomes no-one’s job.”<sup>38</sup>

35. The Minister’s written evidence stated that he had provided additional funding for local authorities to assess their provision for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and to identify gaps.<sup>39</sup> CollegesWales stated that:

“Where local authorities have set up multi-agency fora, these appear to be working well.”<sup>40</sup>

This view was reinforced by SNAP Cymru.<sup>41</sup>

**We recommend that given the success of the pilot approach in some parts of Wales, all areas of the country should be served in future by multi-agency forums, including the transition key workers.**

## **Role of Careers Wales**

36. On 28 January 2010, Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, announced a revision to the terms of reference to the review of the Careers Service in Wales<sup>42</sup> so that the Review Group would work on the basis that a unitary structure will be established for the organisation. The review is considering the specialist functions of Careers Wales and its role with regard to additional learning needs.

37. Careers Wales plays an important role in the transition process because it is required, on behalf of the Government, to draw up a Learning and Skills Plan for all young people with additional learning needs in their final year at school.<sup>43</sup>

38. In its written evidence to us, National Autistic Society Cymru stated:

“A key role of Careers Wales is to ‘assist the young person and their parents to identify the most appropriate post-16 provision, provide counselling and support, and have a continuing oversight of, and information on, the young person’s choice of provision.’ Unfortunately,

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<sup>37</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 49, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>38</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 36, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>39</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence paragraph 5

<sup>40</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 9

<sup>41</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 179, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>42</sup> Written Cabinet Statement, 28 January 2010

<sup>43</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence paragraph 23

many parents tell NAS Cymru that they do not feel that advisers have sufficient understanding of autism to fulfil their role effectively.”<sup>44</sup>

39. When they appeared before us, the organisation told us:

“We surveyed parents as part of the National Autistic Society’s Make School Make Sense campaign, and around a third of those surveyed said that they felt that Careers Wales advisers did not have sufficient knowledge to undertake their roles effectively. I believe that the figure increased to half in relation to mainstream schools.”<sup>45</sup>

40. Yet some of the colleges spoken to by our Committee researchers recounted some very positive experiences and good relationships with the Careers Service regarding transitional planning.

**We recommend that one of the outcomes of the review of Careers Wales should be for all Careers Wales advisers to have training to understand the particular needs of people with autism, and for some to be specialists.**

## **14-19 Learning Pathways**

41. 14-19 Learning Pathways is a commitment to transform learning provision for all young people in Wales. The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure provides the legislative basis for the 14-19 Learning Pathways strategy. It places a duty on local education authorities, governing bodies, head teachers and principals to provide a full menu of learning choices so that young people will have equal opportunity to have a range of education options irrespective of where they live in Wales.

42. SNAP Cymru’s written evidence states that the legislation has not been helpful in ensuring provision for specialist needs, and in some ways actually militates against making provision for low incident high dependency need. The organisation’s understanding was that existing partnerships between schools and colleges for meeting need are becoming untenable because of the legislation and the financial expectations for delivery.<sup>46</sup> The organisation later told us:

“Specialist provision is costly; it simply costs more and further education institutions do not have the funding to be able to put that in place.”<sup>47</sup>

## **Provision in colleges**

43. There are 22 further education colleges in Wales and two further education institutions.<sup>48</sup> They vary considerably in size, numbers and type of students and

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<sup>44</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 4

<sup>45</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 81, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>46</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 4

<sup>47</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 164, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

the range of programmes and services offered. Some colleges are primarily vocational; others run mainly academic programmes; while others offer both.

44. CollegesWales stated in its written evidence that some colleges are further ahead than others in establishing support for learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.<sup>49</sup> SNAP Cymru's written evidence also pointed to the variation in levels of support and monitoring, especially specialist provision, within further education colleges.<sup>50</sup> Transport to and from college is always a key concern.<sup>51</sup>

45. We were frustrated that there was no clear account of the provision provided for students with autism in colleges in Wales. We therefore asked our Committee research team to carry out telephone interviews with Welsh colleges, and they managed to speak to six of the eight further education colleges featured in the Cross Party Autism Group report. Their findings revealed that:

- There are on average between 5 and 35 students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder in each college in 2009/10 although Swansea College has 50 learners with ASD including four over the age of 20
- Each college said that there are also some undiagnosed students or other diagnosed students who had declined offers of additional support
- Some learners have Statements but others disclose a diagnosis of ASD at enrolment and produce supporting medical evidence
- Every college said that the number of learners with ASD is increasing noticeably. Neath Port Talbot College, for example, had 10 learners with ASD in 2007/08 and 38 in 2009/10, possibly because of the greater incidence of people with ASD, but also because of better diagnosis, revised definitions of ASD and more people with ASD undertaking further education courses
- Learners with ASD undertake mainstream courses, including Level 3 – A Level courses or discrete provision, including Independent Living Skills, pre-foundation life skills, literacy and numeracy, sport tasters and social interaction
- Most support for learners with ASD is provided by Learning Support Assistants who are usually in the class with the student and offer

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<sup>48</sup> There are 12 further education colleges; 5 tertiary colleges; 2 part-tertiary colleges; one land-based college; one Catholic sixth form college; and a residential adult education college

<sup>49</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 15

<sup>50</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 4

<sup>51</sup> Skill Wales written evidence page 3

one-to-one specialist support, but some college staff are undertaking Learning Coaching Training

- All the colleges provide autism awareness training for all college staff
- Several colleges have good relations with the Careers Service, including monthly meetings
- Some colleges said that the number of multi-agency partners needed to support learners with ASD does cause logistical difficulties, especially during the application stage
- There are many examples of good practice during the transition stage, e.g. supported visits, regular telephone calls to parents, good links with feeder schools, local authorities and Careers Wales, taster sessions and tailored timetables.

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should carry out a mapping exercise to establish exactly how many students with autism attend further education institutions in Wales and what facilities are provided for them in each college. This research should also extend to developing an understanding of how many students with autism from Wales attend colleges in England.**

46. As stated in paragraph 9 above, the Cross Party Autism Group's survey found that 58 per cent of schools do not feel there is adequate further education provision for young people on the autism spectrum in Wales.

**We recommend that the ColegauCymru Network for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities managers should work with organisations such as Autism Cymru to ensure that knowledge on best practice in providing further education services for students with autism can be shared between all colleges.**

47. The Cross Party Autism Group's report also quoted anecdotal evidence that there is inadequate provision in specialist residential colleges in Wales so that learners have to take up places in England, where there are long waiting lists. This view was confirmed by SNAP Cymru,<sup>52</sup> who also told us of examples where families have had to move house in order to access the provision their children need.<sup>53</sup>

48. There are four residential colleges in Wales: Beechwood College in Sully, Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend College (Weston House), Coleg Elidyr in Llandovery and Pengwern College in Rhuddlan, Wrexham. Derwen College, although not in Wales,

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<sup>52</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 3

<sup>53</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 147, 4 February, Enterprise and Learning Committee

is located very close to the Welsh border in Oswestry, Shropshire. The National Star College is located just outside Cheltenham and the Royal National College for the Blind is just outside Hereford.

49. Funding for specialist residential placements is generally provided by three key organisations – the Welsh Assembly Government, local authority social services and local health boards. In 2008, the Government funded or jointly funded 210 placements in specialist residential colleges: 48 of those were learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorder; 34 per cent of the places were in Wales and 66 per cent were in England.

50. Beechwood College in Sully currently has 18 placements funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. The majority of its learners come from South Wales but students are referred to the college from across the UK. In its written evidence the College stated that:

“We still feel that there is insufficient provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Asperger Syndrome in Wales and that consequently many have to attend a school in England which is a long distance from their home, making family contact very difficult.”<sup>54</sup>

51. The College also stated that many parents who had visited the college had not been made aware of its services by the agencies allocated to support them, which raises questions about the level of information sharing among professionals working in the field.<sup>55</sup> The College went on to say:

“The [autism] strategy provides an exciting opportunity to develop and deliver much needed and extended services in response to need.

“However, this can only be achieved by world-class commissioning based on informed knowledge and a robust commissioning framework. Considerable financial resources have been allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government and these must be used effectively with mechanisms in place to measure agreed outcomes, value for money and the achievement of key performance indicators by agencies and educational providers.”<sup>56</sup>

52. When we later questioned Beechwood College about these comments, we were told that what they envisaged was a “managed market” and that:

“World-class commissioning is achieved through a tendering process, which will include quality performance indicators and payment by results

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<sup>54</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraph 4.1

<sup>55</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraph 4.1

<sup>56</sup> Beechwood College written evidence paragraphs 7.1-7.2

[...] good quality providers [do not] have anything to worry about with a tendering process. It is really good at improving quality; it makes you look at your practice and what you are doing, you learn from it, you improve and everyone gains. The commissioners get exactly what they want, and you agree on a robust monitoring and evaluation system. The people who will win from that are not just the commissioners, but also the students.”<sup>57</sup>

53. Beechwood later confirmed for us that since 2005, 15 potential students had been turned down for a place at the College because of a lack of funding.

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should take the lead in looking at the procurement of more coordinated and coherent provision of further education for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder so that students from Wales can receive the specialist further education services they need nearer to where they live. We suggest that this more managed market approach could be achieved through the establishment of a joint commissioning forum.**

54. We were made aware by CollegesWales that there is sometimes a lack of support outside of college for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and their families, particularly those with higher functioning autism above the threshold for accessing some services.<sup>58</sup> We also heard from parents of children with ASD about the lack of support in colleges for those young people during lunch and break-times.<sup>59</sup>

**We recommend that there should be more consistent levels of support for young people with autism and their families outside of college, such as during holidays and weekends and that the Welsh Assembly Government should look at how best this could be provided.**

### **Statements, or an assessed record of need, in further education colleges**

55. Under the current system, the support provided in a Statement is maintained when a student continues into the sixth form, but there is no statutory statementing and assessment framework in further education – even if students are taking the same courses as they would at a sixth form college. In its review of Special Education Needs, the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee of the second Assembly recommended in its report on Transition that the development of statutory assessments based on a continuously assessed record

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<sup>57</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 124, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>58</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 24

<sup>59</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraphs 62-63, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

of need should continue post-16 and be used as the primary means of assessing needs in further and higher education and work-based learning.

56. The then Minister accepted this recommendation in principle but said that there was already provision for such assessments up to the age of 25 under section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act. She also said that the Welsh Assembly Government could at any time arrange for an assessment of a person with learning difficulties during his or her last year of compulsory schooling or if they were over compulsory school age but aged under 25 if they were receiving or likely to receive post-16 education or training. The Government discharges its functions through an arrangement with Careers Wales who carry out the assessments.

57. In its report, the Cross Party Autism Group strongly supported the notion of a support plan or Statement being carried with a young person through into college. In its written evidence, SNAP Cymru criticised the inconsistencies in the issuing of Statements and provision of services between different parts of Wales:

“[However] it is also evident that the provision made by a local authority is not dependent on the issuing of a Statement. There are instances where young people without Statements have a provision that meets their needs and achieves the desired outcomes. SNAP Cymru are increasingly concerned that young people will continue to have inequitable access to learning and life choices.

“There is inconsistency in post-16 provision that can sometimes depend upon location in which the young person is receiving their education. If a young person remains in a designated school, the Statement is in place until the age of 19. If they move to college the Statement is not maintained. There has been confusion and a lack of consistency across Wales. Whilst statutory reform is on-going the need for clarity is vital.”<sup>60</sup>

58. SNAP Cymru added that Statements are “still too often used as criteria by other statutory and non-statutory agencies to access other services including specialist support, transport and benefits.”

59. CollegesWales told us that the Statement provided a “baseline” or “starting point” and that although colleges do work with learners that do not have a Statement by carrying out their own assessments, they “end up with more work if there is no Statement.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 3

<sup>61</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraphs 25-30, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

60. The Welsh Assembly Government is currently working towards the reform of the current statutory procedure for the assessment, intervention and support for learners with additional learning needs.<sup>62</sup> The Government defines complex needs as profound and multiple learning difficulties.<sup>63</sup>

**We recommend that people right across the Autistic Spectrum Disorder and throughout the whole of Wales should have equal access to learning and life choices and that statementing pilots should actively seek to address the lack of a statutory framework around statementing and assessment in further education.**

### **Quality standards**

61. The development of “Quality Standards for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder” (ASD) was a key action with the ASD Strategic Action Plan. In January 2010, Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services, in her written update on the “Implementation of the ASD Strategic Action Plan for Wales”, said that the final draft consultation on quality standards for pupils with ASD would be issued “early in the New Year.”

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should make a commitment to publish quality standards for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, following consultation, by the end of 2010.**

### **Training for staff and students in further education colleges**

62. In its written evidence, the National Autistic Society Cymru called for more autism awareness training for key transitional workers and for Careers Service staff.<sup>64</sup> Beechwood College mentioned the lack of awareness among further education staff.<sup>65</sup> SNAP Cymru stated that:

“Parents and professionals understand that further education colleges need funding and training to meet the higher levels of support required for pupils with autism. Many young people with autism do not require specialist autism provision but staff working with them need training to be able to meet their needs.”<sup>66</sup>

63. CollegesWales stated in its written evidence that further education institutions are providing more training opportunities on autism for a range of staff, from awareness raising to postgraduate degree level, often in partnership with the local

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<sup>62</sup> Welsh Assembly Government website, Statutory Assessment Framework (Statementing)

<sup>63</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 4

<sup>64</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 5

<sup>65</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 174, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>66</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 4

authority.<sup>67</sup> Skills Wales highlighted the importance of awareness training including non-teaching posts at further education level in supporting young people with autism from education to employment.<sup>68</sup> CollegesWales also highlighted the importance of autism awareness training for the wider student population.

64. When our Committee researchers spoke to six of the further education colleges, they were told that each of those institutions provided autism awareness training for all its staff – in both teaching and business / administrative posts.

65. According to the National Autistic Society Cymru, social skills support for learners is the most commonly requested support by adults. CollegesWales told our Committee researchers that life and social skills courses are provided to learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorder as discrete courses rather than mainstream college courses.

**We recommend that mainstream further education colleges should provide better support for the development of social skills for learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. We also recommend that colleges should offer autism awareness training for the peers of students with ASD.**

### **Provision in the Welsh language**

66. Witnesses referred to the lack of post-16 provision for learners with autism whose first language is Welsh. The National Autistic Society Cymru told us that:

“Because autism is fundamentally a communication disability, young people with autism should have their education in their first language. To receive an education that is not in your first language, your home language or the language that you speak outside school can only compound the difficulties that young people with autism experience.”<sup>69</sup>

67. Beechwood College told us that:

“The problem is that we do not know the size of the need, because it is being hidden due to the fact that there are very few Welsh-medium schools with specialist units. So, inevitably, when we go to assess people from Pembroke to Chepstow...they are nearly always in an English-medium school [...] Children are usually diagnosed at around four years of age. If

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<sup>67</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 19

<sup>68</sup> Skills Wales written evidence page 2

<sup>69</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 92, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

you are looking at children at the age of four upwards, then you are projecting what the needs are going to be for Welsh-language provision.”<sup>70</sup>

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should improve Welsh medium provision in colleges for young people with autism based on a sound understanding of identified need, and ensure that Welsh speaking families have the necessary support and guidance documentation in the language of their choice.**

## **Funding**

68. Funding is provided to further education colleges through the post-16 funding formula (the National Planning and Funding System) which includes funding for courses designed specifically for students with learning difficulties.

69. Statistics for 2008/09 show that 71 learners from Wales with additional needs were funded in specialist residential colleges in Wales and 136 in specialist residential colleges in England. Funding for these students was provided jointly by the Welsh Assembly Government, local authority social services and local health boards.<sup>71</sup>

70. There is a single budget for Students with Learning Difficulties in Further Education Institutions (Supplementary Funding) that includes pay for Specialist Placements. The first call on this funding is for specialist residential placements. Supplementary Funding is usually paid in two tranches to take account of the total cost of eligible support identified by each further education institution and any reclaim from the previous academic year. The pro-rata allocation is based on the overall budget available, but in recent years, the percentage of support provided by the Welsh Assembly Government has varied from 69 per cent to 100 per cent. The figure for the 2009/10 academic year was initially 70 per cent,<sup>72</sup> although the Minister told us he would look favourably at making up the difference as much as he could if additional money became available.<sup>73</sup>

71. On 22 March 2010, the Minister announced the final allocation for post-16 learners in special schools and out-of-county placements of £20.2m for 2009-10 (funding in full the final estimates of local authorities) and £20.49m for 2010-11 (85 per cent of local authorities' initial estimates). The Minister also announced a Task and Finish Group with the remit of putting forward a new coherent process

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<sup>70</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 182, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>71</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee on post-19 additional learning needs petition EL(3) 10-09 (p1) ANNEX D, 2 April 2009

<sup>72</sup> Welsh Assembly Government Decision Report, Allocation of Supplementary Funding for Further Education Institutions for 2009/10, 8 December 2009

<sup>73</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 32, 25 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

for funding the transition of young people with Additional Learning Needs from pre- to post-16 education.<sup>74</sup>

72. In a meeting of the National Assembly's Finance Committee on 20 January 2010 as part of its inquiry into the Funding of Post-16 Further and Higher Education, the Welsh Local Government Association said that it was discussing with the Government how to take post-16 special educational needs provision back into the settlement because the National Planning and Funding System is "not able to accommodate the requirements of funding post-16 SEN provision. It is too basic and simplistic a tool."<sup>75</sup> The Minister told us he would welcome direct conversations with the WLGA to look at that issue.<sup>76</sup>

73. CollegesWales raised concerns about Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Supplementary Funding in that colleges are not informed of the level of that funding until mid-way through the academic year even though they will have already committed resources to those learners. CollegesWales said that this created difficulties for colleges as well as serious impacts on some learners who require support to remain in mainstream learning.<sup>77</sup>

74. The National Autistic Society Cymru later provided us with a note on personal budgeting, which supported the principle but expressed concern that for many adults with autism, personal budgets were failing to have the desired impact.<sup>78</sup>

75. After we finished taking evidence on this inquiry, but before we published this report, the Minister made a statement that:

"I [therefore] intend to set up a Task and Finish Group with the remit of putting forward a new coherent process for funding the transition of young people with additional learning needs from pre- to post-16 education. I am very keen to see things done differently in the future."<sup>79</sup>

**We welcome the Minister's planned review of funding for the transition of young people with additional learning needs from pre- to post-16 education, and we recommend that the outcome should be to achieve consistency and stability of funding throughout the system. We also recommend that the**

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<sup>74</sup> Welsh Assembly Government Written Statement, Funding for Learners with Additional Needs in Sixth Forms and Further Education, 22 March 2010

<sup>75</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 41, 20 January 2010, Finance Committee

<sup>76</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 18, 25 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>77</sup> CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 21; Record of Proceedings paragraph 34, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>78</sup> Personalised budgeting is where the individual or adult carer has the responsibility for deciding which public services are required

<sup>79</sup> Written Cabinet Statement – Funding for Learners with Additional Needs in Sixth Forms and Further Education, 22 March 2010

**review should examine how individual budgets could work for people with autism.**

## **Post-further education**

76. SNAP Cymru's written evidence stated that transition to adulthood for many young people leaving residential college and returning to live in their community is "traumatic". The organisation referred to evidence of poor planning by statutory and non-statutory agencies resulting in inadequate social and health care, housing, employment, training, social activities and respite arrangements for families.<sup>80</sup> When SNAP Cymru appeared before us, we were told that transition after 22 or even 25 could be even worse than at 14, 16 or 18.<sup>81</sup>

77. One of the main aims of further education is to prepare learners for a life in employment after college. As the National Autistic Society Cymru said:

"Employment allows individuals to reach their potential, contribute to society, achieve greater personal financial stability, and increase independence."<sup>82</sup>

78. Yet only 15 per cent of adults with autism have a full-time job, even though 79 per cent of those on Incapacity Benefit want to work. Employers will also require training, support and incentives to change this state of affairs.<sup>83</sup> SNAP Cymru told us that a great deal more work needed to be done to bring employers on board in providing more and meaningful placements for young people with autism.<sup>84</sup>

79. The National Autistic Society told us that the Adult Task and Finish Group had recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should appoint an autism ambassador to work with businesses in Wales to highlight the skills that people with autism can provide in the workplace and that our Committee could play a role in pressing the Minister to move ahead with that recommendation.<sup>85</sup>

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should commission a study of the employment outcomes for young people with autism after they leave further education to better understand the barriers they face and how they can be best overcome.**

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<sup>80</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 4

<sup>81</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 150, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>82</sup> National Autistic Society Cymru written evidence page 5

<sup>83</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 5

<sup>84</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 160, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>85</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 41, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

**We also recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should address how best to improve understanding about Autism Spectrum Disorder among employers.**

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## Conclusions

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“Autism is still relatively unknown and misunderstood.”<sup>86</sup>

80. One of the main conclusions we drew from this short inquiry was the gap between strategy and policy for provision for young people with autism within further education, and delivery and implementation on the ground. This gap must be closed if Wales is truly to meet its objective of putting the citizen at the centre of its public services system.

81. Also, in our view, coordination between all partners in the specialist provision for people with autism in further education has to be improved. Learners themselves are all too often not informed about their future choices and options and left without timely and proper services to meet their individual needs.

82. Earlier planning, better communication and closer collaboration between agencies are therefore important for alleviating the stress and anxiety that many families have to suffer. As SNAP Cymru concluded in its evidence:

“There appears to be no strategic regional or national planning of provision. This has resulted in gaps and/or inadequate limited provision. There is a misunderstanding that provision is about a physical space when it is more about the availability of appropriately trained and qualified staff and safe inclusive places.”<sup>87</sup>

83. We heard during our evidence taking that what was required to initiate better working between different agencies, was a change in “culture, attitudes, values and beliefs.”<sup>88</sup> The Minister himself agreed with this point.<sup>89</sup>

84. Finally, every young person with autism has different requirements and preferences, whether for residential or day care, or even for further education at all. The individual must, therefore, be at the centre of policy delivery in future so that provision can be tailored to individual needs and preferences. As SNAP Cymru told us:

“Person-centred planning is absolutely vital.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> National Autistic Society Wales: Record of Proceedings paragraph 13, 4 February 2010

<sup>87</sup> SNAP Cymru written evidence page 6

<sup>88</sup> Beechwood College - Record of Proceedings paragraph 90, 11 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>89</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 17, 25 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

<sup>90</sup> Record of Proceedings paragraph 153, 4 February 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

**We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should strengthen existing provision to ensure that there is in place a nationwide network of effective and expert advice, guidance and support to individuals and families affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder.**

85. We look forward to the continuing work of the Government's task and finish group and trust that our recommendations will be reflected in its final report.

## ***Annex A The Transition Process***

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The *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales*<sup>91</sup> states:

“All concerned with the child should give careful thought to transfer between phases. Advance planning is essential. The move should initially be considered at the review meeting prior to the last year in the current school.”

In accordance with the *Code of Practice*, the needs of pupils who have a Statement of Educational Need are reviewed each year. These annual review meetings are attended by the pupil and his or her parent. The annual review of the statement in Year 9 should involve the agencies that may play a major role in the young person’s life during the post-school years and must involve Careers Wales.

The ‘transition planning’ process allows for planning for the transition from school to adult life for young people with special needs. It involves the young person and his or her parents/carers, and draws together information from a range of individuals from different agencies. It starts with the first annual review after the fourteenth birthday, following which a Transition Plan is drawn up. A young person without a statement can also go through such a process.

The Transition Plan should address the pupil’s comprehensive needs and should draw together information from a range of individuals within and beyond school in order to plan for the young person’s transition to further learning.

The *Code of Practice* places head teachers in charge of overseeing and co-ordinating the delivery of the Transition Plan. Careers Wales has responsibility for ensuring the delivery of those elements of the plan that relate to the young person’s transition into further learning or employment. Careers Wales is represented at annual reviews by specialist careers advisers. Where a multi-professional recommendation is made for residential further education provision the specialist careers adviser will co-ordinate the application to the Welsh Assembly Government and make arrangements for placement follow-up.

A full range of options for post-school learning should be considered by all those attending annual reviews from Year 9. Where post school provision has been identified, the *Code of Practice* states that it is good practice for a representative from the future provider of education and training to be invited to attend one or more of the transition review meetings. In addition, a copy of the pupil’s statement of educational needs, the most recent annual review and the Transition Plan should be passed to the post-school provider in sufficient time for appropriate support to be put in place.

Careers Wales is requested to inform the Welsh Assembly Government if it transpires at the Year 9 review or at subsequent reviews that a young person is likely to become eligible to attend a specialist establishment.

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<sup>91</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales](#), April 2002

## Learning and Skills Act 2000

In the young person's final year of compulsory education, the Welsh Assembly Government has a duty under section 140 of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*<sup>92</sup> for ensuring that an assessment of needs on leaving school is undertaken and provision identified. Section 140 also gives powers to Welsh Ministers to conduct an assessment of any young person under the age of 25 where it appears that s/he may have learning difficulties and where s/he is undertaking, or likely to undertake post-16 education or training or to enter higher education. This is to enable assessments to be made where young people continuing in post-16 education or training develop learning difficulties shortly before or after leaving school and so do not have an SEN statement. The power applies in respect of people up to the age of 25 to enable assessments to apply for the duration of a course. The power also reflects the fact that some young people with learning difficulties may require longer to complete a course or start a course later than their peers.

Careers Wales, as part of its contract with the Welsh Assembly Government, will make the assessments. This assessment will result in a written report of the learner's educational and training needs, known as the Learning and Skills Plan and the provision required to meet them.

Assessment by Careers Wales for the purposes of Section 140 of the Act involves drawing together information about a young person from a range of sources and meeting with him/her to establish his/her perspective of the situation, in order to identify his/her strengths and any barriers to participation in learning. This in turn will inform the development of a report, which outlines educational and training needs and the provision required to meet them, in order to help the young person make a successful transition to adult life.

The Welsh Assembly Government has a duty to have regard to a report of an assessment conducted under section 140.

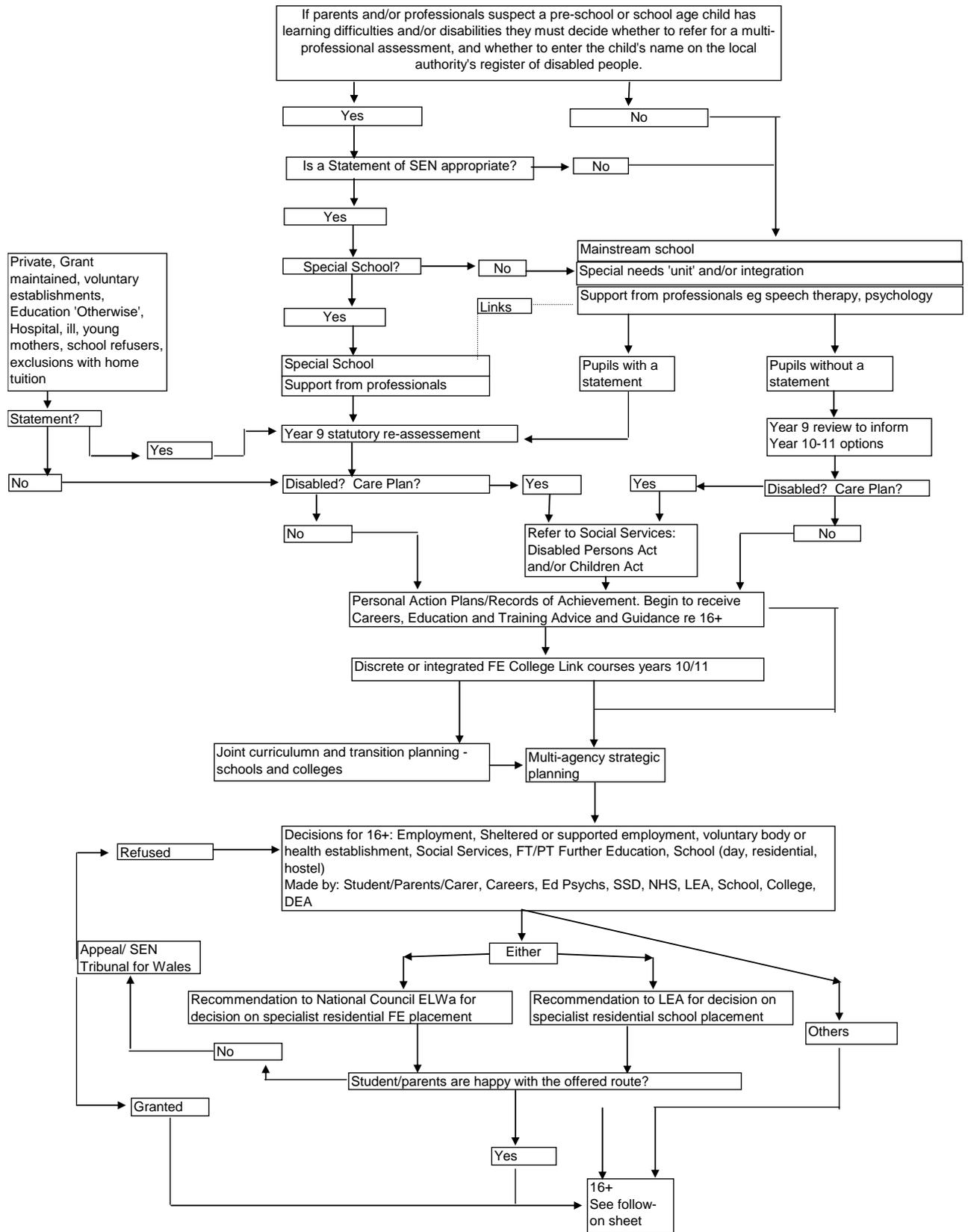
The Welsh Assembly Government circular, *Securing Specialist Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities*<sup>93</sup> included a flowchart which provides an overview of the process of school to post-16 provision transition. It is reproduced below.

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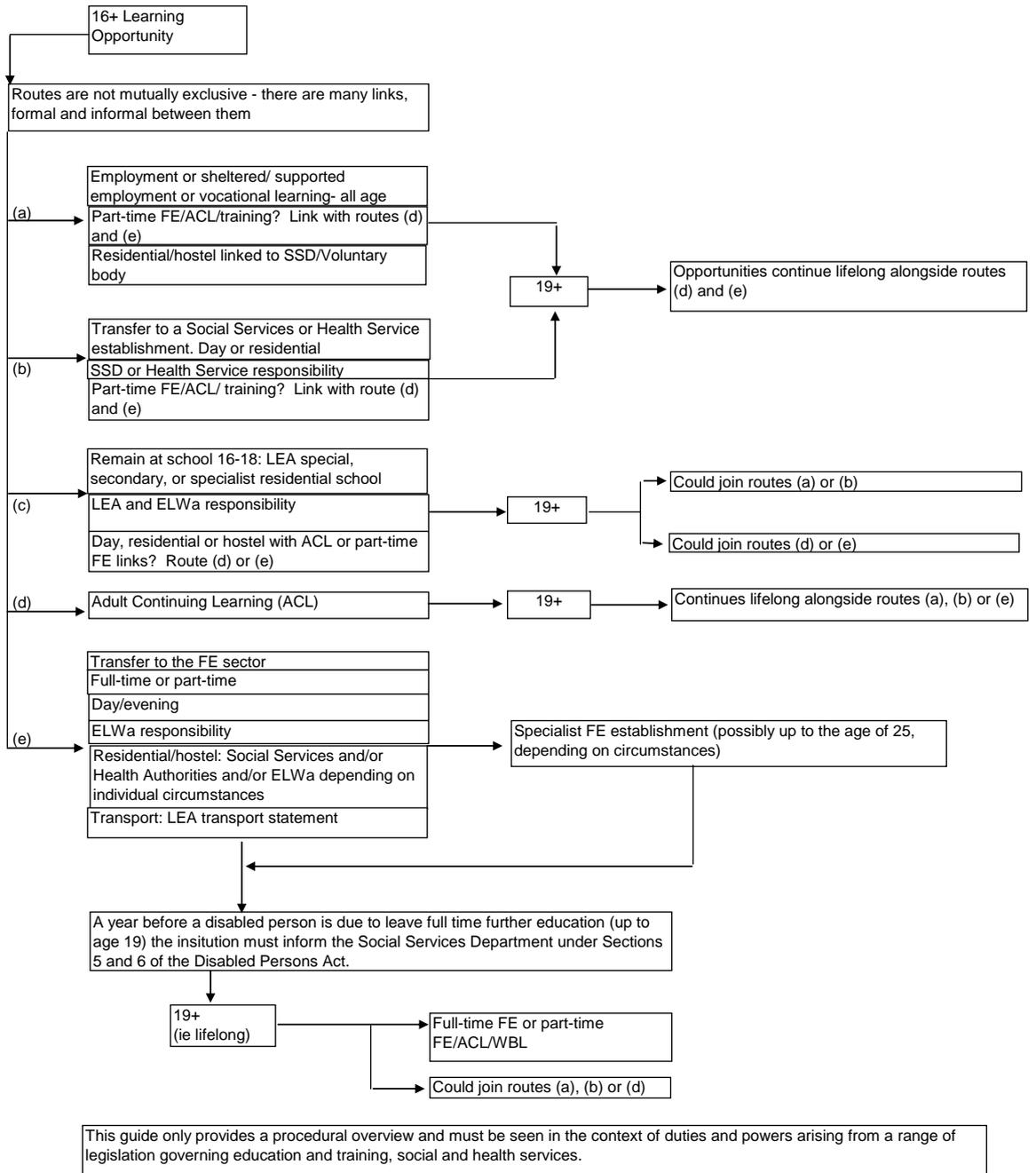
<sup>92</sup> The [Learning and Skills Act 2000](#) (Chapter 21)

<sup>93</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Securing Specialist Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities, Annex A](#), 2002 and 2005

**Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD): A Progression Route**



## LLDD: A Progression Route continued...



## Witnesses

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The following organisations provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Their written evidence and transcripts of oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full by following the links.

<b>4 February 2010</b>	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=166088&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=166088&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
National Autistic Society Cymru	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=164290&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=164290&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
Autism Cymru	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=164229&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=164229&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
SNAP Cymru	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=164372&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=164372&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
<b>11 February 2010</b>	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=167709&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=167709&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
CollegesWales	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165392&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165392&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
Beechwood College	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165338&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165338&amp;ds=2/2010</a>

**25 February 2010**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=170135&ds=3/2010>

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Government

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=167485&ds=3/2010>

## Written evidence

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The following organisations and individuals provided written evidence to the Committee.

*Name*

C-S.A.W.	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165396&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165396&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
Janet Ryder AM Chair of the Cross Party Autism Group	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165355&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=165355&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
Marie Macey	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=176199&amp;ds=2/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=176199&amp;ds=2/2010</a>
Skill Wales	<a href="http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=167551&amp;ds=3/2010">http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&amp;id=167551&amp;ds=3/2010</a>