

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

Ymchwil gymdeithasol  
Social research

Number: 23/2013



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Post-19 Education Provision for Young People with Complex Learning Difficulties Living in Wales: levels of need and current provision



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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Social Research, 2013

ISBN 978 0 7504 7892 2

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## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our gratitude to all the families, young people and professionals who contributed to this research by taking part in an interview or a focus group. We are very grateful for the positive response we received from stakeholders across Wales to our requests for information and for their willingness to participate.

We were fortunate to be supported by a skilled fieldwork team, who between them were able to deliver the interviews in Welsh and English. Our thanks for their hard work and commitment go to: Ceri Christian-Jones, Rosemary Counsell, Mary Dykes, Sue McGuire, Kathryn Sharp and Margiad Elen Williams. Thanks must also go to Claire Pimm and Andrea Meek at the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities (Cardiff University), Susie Nash at the University of Bangor, Linda Davies at the University of Manchester and Eric Emerson at the University of Lancaster for advice and input at specific stages of the work.

The research project benefited hugely from the input of others involved in the research, policy, management or delivery of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties who provided advice, answered queries and offered practical assistance as the work developed. In particular, we are very grateful to Matthew O'Grady from Scope Cymru, Sally Elliott and Katy Burns from Colegau Cymru, Alison Boulton from Natspec, Jill Hale from Scotland's Colleges, Denise Inger from SNAP Cymru, Sally Rees from Care Co-ordination Network Cymru, Jassa Scott from Estyn, Andrew Kirby from Careers Wales, and Stephen Hughes, Christine Roberts, Gareth Hopkins, Michelle Evans, Sian Evans, Bethan Webb, Liz Rees, Heather Payne and Deborah Campbell at the Welsh Government.

Finally, and in particular, we would like to thank Karen Bathgate, Bethan Cowan and David Tutton at the Welsh Government, for their support, encouragement and input throughout this project, and of course to the Welsh Government for commissioning and funding the research.

## **Glossary of acronyms**

ALN	Additional learning needs
AN	Additional needs
ADEW	Association of Directors of Education in Wales
ADSS	Association of Directors for Social Services
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
DAQW	Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further education
FEI	Further education institution
GCH	Guided contact hours
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
ILS	Independent living skills
ISC	Independent specialist college
LA	Local authority
LAP	Learning Area Programme
LDD	Learning difficulties and/or disabilities

LHB	Local health board
LLDD	Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
LLWR	Lifelong Learning Wales Record
LSO	Learning and Skills Observatory
MCA	Mental Capacity Act
MLD	Moderate learning difficulties
Natspec	The Association of National Specialist Colleges
NPFS	National Planning and Funding System
NPTC	National Proficiency Tests Council
OCN	Open College Network
OCR	Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
PA	Personal assistant
PECS	Picture exchange communication system
PEG	Percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties
SAW	Subject area weighting
SEN	Special educational needs
SLD	Severe learning difficulties
UPOSS	Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools
WBL	Work-based learning

WCLD	Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities
WG	Welsh Government
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

# 1 Introduction to the research

- 1.1 Young people with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) form the core of those described by the Welsh Government as having 'complex learning difficulties' (Welsh Government, 2012a). Typically, in Wales, most young people with complex learning difficulties receive secondary education in special schools until the age of 19 (Year 14). Although relatively small, this group of young people has become the focus of concern for policy makers, practitioners, family members and voluntary sector groups because their post-school choices are significantly limited compared to other young people with additional learning needs (National Assembly for Wales, 2009).
- 1.2 In 2009, the Welsh Government received several petitions calling for action to address issues relating to post-19 education for students with additional learning needs. Two petitions highlighted a lack of appropriate, accessible, further education (FE) programmes at mainstream FE colleges and further education institutions (summarised in National Assembly for Wales, 2009). Specifically, a petition from Scope Cymru highlighted the very significant difficulties experienced by young people with PMLD and their families in accessing appropriate local FE provision. A third petition raised the issue of inconsistent access to funding for travel to and from further education settings (summarised in Thornthwaite, 2011).
- 1.3 The National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Learning Committee considered these petitions and conducted their own, initial inquiry (National Assembly for Wales, 2009). In 2010, this was followed by a review of future arrangements for funding post-16 additional learning needs in schools and further education conducted by a Task and Finish Group comprising

representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors, as well as learners and family members (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). The Task and Finish group concluded that improved planning is essential to ensure more local choices for young people whose post-school options may currently be very limited. The group made 15 recommendations which focus on greater consistency in approach across Wales, regional collaboration and attention to value for money when commissioning further education provision for young people with additional learning needs.

- 1.4 In March 2010, Leighton Andrews, Minister for Education and Skills, agreed all of the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group (Andrews, 2010). The Welsh Government is currently working with stakeholders to take forward these recommendations and, as part of this process, commissioned the research, reported here, to inform the development of policy.

### **Aim and research questions**

- 1.5 The research aimed to identify levels of need and current provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales and to assess how unmet need can be provided for. The research questions which we were tasked to consider were:

#### *Existing provision of post-19 education*

- What post-19 education provision is currently available for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales?
- What barriers do young people with complex learning difficulties experience in accessing post-19 education provision which meets their needs?
- What challenges do FE colleges and other further education institutions (FEIs) including independent specialist colleges (ISCs) experience in providing post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties?

### *Demand for post-19 education*

- What is current demand (met and unmet) for post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living within Wales?
- To what extent does current provision meet the needs and wishes of young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales?
- What proportion of demand is currently met outside of Wales?
- What is the future estimated demand?
- What do young people want from post-19 education and how would they like that education delivered?

### *Cost effectiveness*

- What is the existing cost of providing post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties?
- How can value for money be achieved in the provision of post-19 education which meets the needs of young people with complex learning difficulties?

### *Developing post-19 education provision in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties*

- How can access to post-19 provision for young people with complex learning difficulties be increased?
- What other options/models exist for delivering post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties?
- How might these alternative options/models (a) meet demand/needs of young people and families; and (b) deliver positive outcomes for young people?
- What are the cost implications and feasibility of adopting approaches identified as effective?

## **Overview of research approach and methodology**

1.6 The research was conducted between March and September 2012 and involved the following phases:

- Scoping work, including a policy and literature review, to map key issues and inform the development of the interview schedules.

- Interviews with head teachers (or other lead professionals) in state-maintained schools providing Year 14 education to young people with SLD or PMLD.
- Interviews with professionals at FE colleges, ISCs and local authorities.
- Interviews with families and young people with complex learning difficulties.
- Review of other models of FE provision outside of Wales.
- Collection and analysis of costs data from colleges, local authorities and the Welsh Government.
- Focus groups with stakeholders from across the FE sector, to feed back initial findings and to discuss potential recommendations in response to the research.

1.7 In order to quantify the extent of met and unmet demand for post-19 education, it was necessary (a) to focus on a clearly defined cohort of young people with complex learning difficulties in order to collect meaningful statistical data; and (b) to collect data about all post-school destinations of this cohort, and the extent to which these destinations were young people's first choice.

1.8 The focus of the interviews with professionals was young people, with SLD or PMLD, aged 19 to 20, who had reached the end of Year 14 of state-maintained secondary education in Wales in July 2011. The rationale for selecting this specific cohort was as follows:

- The focus of the research was post-19 education; hence a need to pinpoint young people aged 19+.
- The main entry point to FE for young people aged 19+ is most likely to be when they leave school at the end of Year 14.
- Statistics taken from the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) showed that almost all of those pupils with SLD and PMLD who stayed on at school until Year 14, were enrolled within state-maintained, special schools.

- 1.9 Anonymised data was collected, in the form of a 'young person record', to ascertain the young person's initials, gender, date of birth, home local authority and post-19 destination. For those young people whose destination was recorded as post-19 FE, more specific details about the costs and funding of their placement was collected where possible. More than 300 young person records were collected from respondents, but once the project cohort inclusion criteria were applied<sup>1</sup> this number reduced to a dataset of 138 records. In addition, interviews with professionals asked more broadly about their experience of supporting young people with SLD or PMLD to access post-19 education and the nature of the provision that was currently available.
- 1.10 The focus of the interviews with families was their son or daughter's current post-school destination and whether this was their first choice, or not. For families with a young person in post-19 education, more information was sought about the experience of accessing and participating in further education and any on-going barriers or issues. Interviews with young people focused on what they wanted from post-19 education and their hopes for the future.
- 1.11 A total of 67 separate interviews were conducted with 75 individual professionals. This included representatives from 26 schools (out of a possible 28 providing Year 14 education to the target group of young people), from 14 FE colleges (out of a total of 20 in Wales at that time<sup>2</sup>), from three ISCs in Wales (out of a total of five in Wales at that time), from four ISCs in England (out of a sample of six) and from 15 Welsh local authorities (out of a

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<sup>1</sup> The cohort only included young people with SLD or PMLD, with a date of birth between and including 1<sup>st</sup> September 1991 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 1992, who left Year 14 of state maintained education in July 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Two colleges interviewed have since merged into one FEI, however at the time of the research they were interviewed as two separate providers.

total of 22). We also interviewed a sample of 21 family members (out of a total of 27 who responded to a letter sent, via schools, to 111 families). In addition, we interviewed eight individual young people with SLD or PMLD, identified by transition key workers involved in a Cardiff University evaluation of the European Union funded, SEN Regional Transition to Employment (Real Opportunities) Project.

1.12 Each interview was given an anonymous, unique code number. This ensured that interview data could be discussed by the research team and presented in the report whilst maintaining the anonymity of the institution or respondent. In this report, data from interviews is attributed to these linked codes to help the reader understand the provenance of the material. The codes used are listed below. Please note that numbering is not necessarily consecutive:

- SCH 001 to SCH 03 interviews with special school staff.
- FE 033 to FE 049 interviews with FE college staff.
- ISC 073 to ISC 130 interviews with ISC staff.
- LA 050 to LA 069 interviews with local authority staff.
- FAM 082 to FAM 104 families interviewed.
- YP 106 to YP 115 young people interviewed.

1.13 In addition to collecting primary data from stakeholders in Wales, we also conducted a review of models adopted outside of Wales for delivering post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties. The purpose of the review was to explore what other delivery models exist to meet demand, and to document these as options for discussion and consideration by the Welsh Government and other stakeholders. Seven initiatives were sampled for follow-up work, which included interviews and costs collection, where data were available. Information about some of these initiatives is presented in case study form in chapter six.

- 1.14 At the end of the fieldwork phase, focus groups with 21 stakeholders were conducted in three areas of Wales: north/mid Wales, south east Wales and south west Wales. The purpose of the focus groups was to provide feedback to stakeholders on the summary findings; to present and discuss case studies of other models adopted outside of Wales for delivering post-19 education to young people with SLD and PMLD; and to contribute to the development of recommendations in response to the research findings.
- 1.15 A full description of the methodology is given in Appendix A and the results of the interviews with young people are outlined in Appendix B.

### **Summary of chapter one: introduction to the research**

- 1.16 Young people with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) form the core of those described by the Welsh Government as having 'complex learning difficulties'. Several recent petitions to the Welsh Government have highlighted that this group of young people may experience significant difficulties in accessing appropriate, local, post-19 education opportunities and that local provision may vary from one local authority area to another.
- 1.17 In response to these petitions, and as part of a wider remit to inform the development of policy relating to further education (FE) provision for young people with additional learning needs, the Welsh Government commissioned the research, reported here. The aim of the research was to identify levels of need and current provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales and to assess how unmet need can be provided for.
- 1.18 The research was conducted between March and September 2012 and involved the following phases:

- Scoping work, including a policy and literature review, to map key issues and inform the development of the interview schedules.
- Interviews with head teachers (or other lead professionals) in state-maintained schools providing Year 14 education to young people with SLD or PMLD.
- Interviews with relevant professionals at FE colleges, ISCs and local authorities.
- Interviews with families and young people with complex learning difficulties.
- Review of other models of FE provision outside of Wales.
- Collection and analysis of costs data from colleges, local authorities and the Welsh Government.
- Focus groups with stakeholders from across the FE sector, to feed back initial findings and to discuss potential recommendations in response to the research.

## **2 Policy, practice and funding context**

### **Young people with complex learning difficulties**

2.1 In the context of this research, the term ‘young people with complex learning difficulties’ describes young people, aged 19 and over, with ‘severe learning difficulties’ (SLD) or ‘profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)’ (Welsh Government, 2012a).

2.2 The Welsh Government requires maintained schools to collect and submit data relating to numbers and ages of pupils with statements of Special Educational Need (SEN), or with School Action and School Action Plus status, as part of the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). Since 2008, this has included providing information on what schools assess to be the major educational need of each statemented pupil across 11 broad categories as follows:

- Moderate learning difficulties.
- Severe learning difficulties (SLD).
- Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).
- Specific learning difficulties.
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- Physical and medical difficulties.
- Hearing impairment.
- Visual impairment.
- Multi-sensory impairment.
- Speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

2.3 Guidance from the Welsh Government (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007) defines young people with SLD as those who:

“... have significant intellectual or cognitive impairments. This has a major effect on their ability to participate in the school curriculum without support. They may also have associated difficulties in mobility and co-ordination, communication and perception and the acquisition of self-help skills. Pupils with SLD will need support in all areas of the curriculum. They are likely to require teaching of self-help, independence and social skills. Some pupils may use sign and symbols but most will be able to hold simple conversations and gain some literacy skills. Their attainments may be below level 1 of the

National Curriculum for much of their school careers.” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007, pp7-8).

Young people with PMLD are described by Welsh Government (2007) as those who:

“...have a profound cognitive impairment/learning difficulty, leading to significant delay in reaching developmental milestones. In addition, they display one or more of the following: significant motor impairments; significant sensory impairments; complex health care needs/dependence on technology. The inter-relationship of these disabilities increases the complexity of need, in turn affecting all areas of learning. Pupils with PMLD need a distinctive curriculum to help them to develop sensory, motor, social and communication skills all through their school careers, and into adult life. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Pupils require a very high level of adult support, both for their own learning needs and also for personal care.” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007, p8).

- 2.4 PLASC statistics for January 2011<sup>3</sup> show that the majority of pupils aged 11 to 19 (Year 7 to 14), whose major special educational need<sup>4</sup> was defined as SLD or PMLD, were attending a state-maintained special school. Typically, in Wales, most young people with complex learning difficulties receive secondary education at special schools until the age of 19 (Year 14). Analysis of PLASC data indicates that half of pupils with SLD and three-quarters of pupils with PMLD continue their post-16 education in the school sector until the end of Year 14 (age 18 to 19).
- 2.5 Further analysis of PLASC records for the academic year 2010/11, indicates that for the 141 pupils with SLD and PMLD who stayed on at school until Year 14, the vast majority (139 out of 141) were enrolled within the special school sector. There may also have been a small number of young people with SLD and PMLD registered as Year 14 pupils at non-maintained, independent, schools. Figures from the Independent Schools

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<sup>3</sup> PLASC data provided by the Welsh Government, June 2011.

<sup>4</sup> This includes pupils with statements of SEN issued and maintained by a local authority, and pupils whose needs have School Action or School Action Plus status.

Census<sup>5</sup> indicate a total of 12 statemented pupils with SLD and one statemented pupil with PMLD aged 16 and over were attending non-maintained schools for the academic year 2010/11. Thus, according to Welsh Government PLASC statistics, for the academic year ending July 2011, there would have been at least 141 pupils with SLD or PMLD, aged 18 to 19<sup>6</sup>, leaving Year 14 of education in July 2011, 139 of whom were leaving the state-maintained special school sector. Since the focus of this research was post-19 education provision, it was this, small group of young people with SLD and PMLD, who left school in the year of their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, who became the central focus for data collection and analysis.

### **Post-school destinations of young people with complex learning difficulties**

2.6 If most young people with SLD and PMLD stay on at school until Year 14, where do they go next? Currently, there are no publicly available data providing details of post-school destinations of Year 14 leavers with either SLD or PMLD in Wales. Careers Wales runs an annual survey of pupil destinations for Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 school leavers<sup>7</sup>, but this does not extend to pupils leaving Year 14, nor does it currently provide details of pupils' major recorded special educational need<sup>8</sup>. The post-school destination categories under which data are currently collected by Careers Wales are as follows:

- Continuing in full-time education.
- Continuing in part-time education (less than 16 hours a week).

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<sup>5</sup> Independent Schools Census data provided by Welsh Government, November 2012. Data are not collected, or broken down by year group and only include pupils with SLD or PMLD who have statements of SEN.

<sup>6</sup> Date of birth range: 1<sup>st</sup> September 1991 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 1992.

<sup>7</sup> <http://destinations.careerswales.com/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> We are aware that there is on-going work by Careers Wales to link their destination data with Welsh Government PLASC data. However this analysis does not yet extend to Year 14 pupils, is not in the public domain, and was not available during the timescale for this study.

- Work-based training (non-employed status).
- Work-based training (employed status).
- Employed (other).
- Known not to be in education, training or employment (NEET).
- Left the area.

2.7 The 'My Future' sub-site of the main Careers Wales website provides a list of the main post-school options that may be available for people with learning difficulties (including those with SLD and PMLD) in Wales:

- Local college – full-time or part-time course.
- Specialist college – day or residential basis.
- Work – full-time, part-time or supported employment.
- Work-based learning.
- Volunteering.
- Daytime opportunities – these are provided by local authorities and by independent organisations. In some areas of Wales, the only choice offered may be to attend a day centre for people with learning difficulties; in other areas of Wales, people may be supported to choose and engage in mainstream community-based activities and/or to attend a day centre if they wish.

2.8 Very few research studies have investigated the post-school destinations of young people with complex learning difficulties, either in Wales or elsewhere. A survey of 270 special schools in England 10 years ago (Florian et al, 2000) found that at age 19+, most young people with 'profound and complex learning difficulties' (PMLD) remained in school<sup>9</sup> (39%), 24% attended day centres on a full or part-time basis, 13% attended full or part-time courses at their local FE college, and 6% attended residential specialist college. Two per cent of this group of young people, at that time, were not in education, employment or training, their

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<sup>9</sup> This is not an option available to young people living in Wales.

destination categorised as ‘family home (no day service)’, and no-one was in work or supported employment. The remainder were doing a combination of activities or results were missing. These findings are consistent with a more recent review for the English Department of Health (Mansell, 2010), which quoted previous research by Emerson and Hatton (2008) and suggested that less than 14% of all adults with ‘profound intellectual and multiple disabilities’ are in some form of education or training.

- 2.9 Access to post-19 education by school leavers with SLD may well be significantly higher. Research on the post-school transition for people with learning difficulties more generally<sup>10</sup>, found that it is common for 75% or more special school leavers to move onto some form of full or part-time time FE course (Heslop et al, 2002; Mitchell, 1999) and Emerson and Hatton (2008) found that 38% of all people with SLD were in some form of education or training.

### **Main providers of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties**

- 2.10 Currently, post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD) living in Wales is delivered through discrete and some mainstream provision in further education colleges (FE colleges) and designated further education institutions (FEIs), and through discrete provision at independent specialist colleges (ISCs) in Wales and England. Discrete provision refers to learning programmes aimed exclusively at young people with SLD and/or PMLD. Mainstream provision refers to learning programmes that are open to all learners. Potentially, some young people with complex learning difficulties may also be able to access post-19 education through local authority community learning where there is a formal enrolment with a further education institution (FEI), and through

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<sup>10</sup> Including young people with mild or moderate learning difficulties, as well as those with SLD and PMLD.

work-based learning (WBL) where this is pursued as a WBL programme via a FEI.

- 2.11 FE colleges may be 'local' to the young person's home area, or they may be some distance away and involve significant travel, especially for those young people who live in rural or geographically isolated areas of Wales. At the time of the research there were 20 FE colleges in Wales, of which 15 were delivering some form of discrete and/or mainstream provision to young people with complex learning difficulties. One of these, Bridgend College, also offered week-day residential accommodation (at Weston House, a hostel owned and run by the college).
- 2.12 At the time of the research, there were five ISCs in Wales, four of which<sup>11</sup>, potentially, offered specialist residential provision, on a seven days per week basis, to young people with complex learning difficulties. Pengwern College and Beechwood College, also offered day-only placements to young people from the surrounding area.
- 2.13 There are more than 60 ISCs in England offering specialist residential provision to young disabled people of post-school age<sup>12</sup>. Each college specialises in providing education for a specific group of young disabled people. As such, applications from young people are made on the basis of the particular specialism and learning support offered by individual colleges.

### **Funding of post-19 education provision for young people with complex learning difficulties in Wales**

- 2.14 Currently, the Welsh Government funds the provision of further education and training for all young people aged 16-19, and for

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<sup>11</sup> Beechwood College, Coleg Elidyr, Pengwern College and Plas Dwbl Farm College (a satellite of Ruskin Mill College, England).

<sup>12</sup> [www.natspec.org.uk](http://www.natspec.org.uk)

19-25 year olds who have a 'learning difficulty' assessment as defined by section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Section 140 assessments can be carried out from the last year of compulsory schooling up to age 25, where a young person with a statement of SEN is likely to access further or higher education. The assessment process is designed to capture information about young people's learning, training and support needs and to translate this into a 'learning and skills plan' for each individual. The Welsh Government discharges its duty to arrange for section 140 assessments via its contract with Careers Wales. Careers Wales also has the lead role in drawing up learning and skills plans for each young person eligible for a section 140 assessment, ensuring the delivery of the plans, and for co-ordinating the funding arrangements for post-19 education placements.

- 2.15 The role of Careers Wales is due to change as part of the Welsh Government proposed reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs (Welsh Government, 2012). The Welsh Government has proposed, that from a date no earlier than 2015, the responsibility for arranging section 140 assessments will be transferred to local authorities. This is a response to a recommendation by the Post-16 ALN Task and Finish Group, which was established by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2010, to consider the funding of transition from school to FE (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). The other recommendations made by the group included retaining Careers Wales' responsibility to use section 140 assessments to draw up individual learning and skills plans, agreed with the young people concerned and delivered to relevant providers. It is further recommended that the section 140 assessment should include consideration of the ultimate aspirations of the young person, so that the training or education meets those aspirations and can

enable the young person to move towards their wider life goals (Andrews, 2010).

- 2.16 All post-16 learning provision in Wales (excluding higher education) is funded under a standard National Planning and Funding System (NPFS). The NPFS has regard for learners with LDD by recognising additional resource implications as part of the general allocation for post-19 education. In practice, this means that learning programmes<sup>13</sup> designed specifically for learners with LDD are subject to a higher 'subject area weighting' (SAW) per unit cost of learning activity<sup>14</sup>, which can be up to three times the unit cost for mainstream learning activities. Funding is calculated through Credit Equivalent Units (CEU) where every learning activity is allocated a basic credit value based on the time required to deliver it successfully. The NPFS was suspended in 2011, for a three year period, to allow for a review of the post-16 funding system. The aim is to have a revised system in place for the 2014/15 academic year where the focus will be on planning and funding programme based learning (Welsh Government, 2012d). In the meantime, colleges' financial targets are being monitored based on the 2010/11 CEU values<sup>15</sup>.
- 2.17 Taking data from the 2011/12 academic year, 1,502 learners undertook 5,543 learning activities with a SAW of three. The total spend on these activities was £7,874,489.62, which equates to an average of £1,420.62 per activity and an average of £5,242.67 per learner<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The term 'learning programme' refers to a group of related learning activities.

<sup>14</sup> The term 'learning activity' refers to a specific course, module, or unit, pursued by a learner.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Personal communication, Further Education Division, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government, January 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Personal communication, Further Education Division, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government, February 2013.

## **Funding of support to access post-19 education in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties**

2.18 In addition to the funding of provision, the Welsh Government also funds the learning and personal support needs of learners with SLD and PMLD via the following funding streams:

- Supplementary funding to access mainstream provision at FE colleges.
- Exceptional funding to access discrete provision at FE colleges.
- Specialist funding for specialist day or residential placements at ISCs in Wales and England.

### *Supplementary funding*

2.19 Supplementary funding is a discretionary award, intended to augment a college's main source of funding. It is made available on a 'block grant' formula basis to individual FE colleges to enable them to make their mainstream provision more accessible to all learners with additional learning needs. The funding allocation to each college is made on the basis of the previous year's distribution and the annual amount is confirmed to colleges in March for the current academic year (e.g. in March 2012 for the academic year 2011/12).

2.20 Supplementary funding is used by colleges in different ways to provide additional support to learners. It can be used to cover the costs of human support and technical support (e.g. note takers, communicators, sign language interpreters, specialist software, specialist equipment such as Braille writers, and so on).

2.21 For the academic year 2011/12, £6,406,288 of supplementary funding was made available to FE colleges and designated FEIs in Wales<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Source: Funding data provided by Support for Learners Division, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government, September 2012.

### *Exceptional funding*

- 2.22 Exceptional funding is a discretionary award, made available to FEIs on a case by case basis. Its purpose is to assist colleges to make their discrete provision accessible to specified, individual learners with exceptional levels of learning and personal support needs. Because of the nature of their learning and support needs, these learners are almost all likely to be young people with SLD or PMLD.
- 2.23 A FE college may request exceptional funding for an individual young person to enable them to access a discrete learning programme designed exclusively for learners with LDD. As stated above, these discrete learning programmes are usually subject to the highest level of 'subject area weighting' per unit cost of learning activity. At present, exceptional funding is only awarded to those learners wishing to access local FE provision, whose support needs are such that they would otherwise have needed to access out-of-area residential provision at an ISC college.
- 2.24 FE colleges make their own assessments about the likely learning and personal support needs of applicants. They then make an application to the Welsh Government for exceptional funding to cover the educational element of the support needed, based on an estimation of the likely number of support hours needed per week for each learner. Colleges are encouraged to seek funding from learners' home local authorities to cover some or all of any additional personal support costs for individual learners. A very small number of young people aged 18 or over may have a recognised need for 'continuing NHS health care', as defined by adult continuing health care guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b). In these cases, the young people's local health boards (LHBs) are responsible for any health care related support the young people will need whilst at college. However, there may be other young people requiring

support with complex health care (including tube-feeding or administration of medication), whose needs are not covered, or recognised by the current adult continuing health care guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b). For these learners, negotiations to agree and resolve the allocation of joint and tripartite exceptional funding for FE discrete placements can be lengthy and complex and in some cases may be delayed until after a learner has started their course.

2.25 The Welsh Government clarified the conditions associated with exceptional funding as follows:

“Colleges are responsible for managing their core funding which includes the resourcing of discrete programmes aimed at meeting the individual learning support needs of learners with SLD/PMLD. It is recognised that on occasion, high need learners requiring high levels of specialist support may choose not to attend a specialist college which they would otherwise be funded to attend. In these cases Welsh Government may, at its discretion and on a case-by-case basis, make exceptional funding available to assist FEIs make their discrete provision accessible to these learners. Exceptional funding is discretionary and additional to the core funding colleges use to provide for learners with SLD and PMLD. It is intended to assist colleges in exceptional cases, and should not be relied upon or used as a condition of entry.” Support for Learners Division, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government, January 2013.

2.26 In total, £862,383 of exceptional funding was made available to FE colleges in Wales for the academic year 2011/12<sup>18</sup>.

*Specialist funding*

2.27 Specialist funding is made available for ISC residential and day placements, on a case by case basis, to those learners whose exceptional needs cannot be met by a local FE provider. The funding is paid directly by the Welsh Government to individual ISCs and covers all, or part, of the yearly fee for an individual learner. Learners are funded for a maximum of three years. In a few cases, the Welsh Government funds the whole fee for an ISC placement. In most cases, however, placements are funded

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<sup>18</sup> Source: Funding data provided by Support for Learners Division, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government, September 2012.

jointly by the Welsh Government and the young person's home local authority. A small number of ISC placements are funded via a tripartite agreement between the Welsh Government, the young person's home local authority and their local health board (LHB).

- 2.28 Applications for specialist funding are co-ordinated by Careers Wales and may only be authorised once a clear case has been made that no local FE provision is available that meets the post-19 education needs of the learner. The actual per capita funding allocation for each individual is made on the basis of information provided by Careers Wales to ISCs about the learning and support needs of applicants. ISCs will also conduct their own assessments, usually when young people visit the college for taster or preparation sessions in their last year of school.
- 2.29 ISCs make assessments using a 'matrix' which allows them to estimate the number of hours per week of input needed for day or residential learners in terms of education, independent living support, care and therapy. The number of assessed hours is linked to a fee band, ranging from D to H. There is also an H+ category, where the costs exceed the maximum H allocation. The Welsh Government then examines the section 140 assessment and the matrix assessment and seeks to allocate some of the proposed social care or health costs to the learner's home local authority or local health board. Negotiations to agree and resolve the allocation of joint and tripartite funding for ISC placements can be lengthy and complex and may often not be made until weeks, or even days, before a young person is due to start their first term of study.
- 2.30 For the academic year 2011/12, the Welsh Government made available a total of £8,625,315 to fund specialist placements in Wales and England.

## **Implications of the current funding methodology for post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties in Wales**

2.31 The Welsh Government currently has a single budget for funding learning and personal support for young people with additional learning needs to access further education provision. For the academic year 2011/12, the overall allocation for supplementary, exceptional and specialist funding was £15.8 million. This represents an increase of 9% since 2008/9 (£14.5million), and an increase of 93% since 2005/6 (£8.2million). Over half of the allocation made in 2011/12 was for the funding of specialist day or residential placements (£8,625,315), with £862,383 (5% of the total allocation) being committed to exceptional funding for FE college discrete placements, and £6,406,288 (40%) going into supplementary funding for mainstream GFE provision.

2.32 The review undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government (2010a) noted that this single budget is resource limited and allocated against the three main cost elements in the following priority order:

1. Specialist funding – application based.
2. Exceptional funding – bid based.
3. Supplementary funding – formula based and allocated at financial year end from balance of one and two above.

2.33 As the Task and Finish Group report (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010) noted, the current system of funding does not reflect the actual structure of costs at provider level, many of which may be fixed. In other words, in order to ensure that they can offer provision to learners with SLD and PMLD, post-19 education providers will have fixed, recurrent costs such as staff salaries, as well as additional, capital costs such as providing equipment and adaptations to the learning environment. A bid based funding system, where there is no certainty, year-on-year, about the levels of funding available, makes the planning and

delivery of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties a risky proposition for many providers. Indeed, a recent communication from Welsh Government to FE colleges (Welsh Government, 2012b) advised that there was no guarantee that the 2012/13 allocation of supplementary funding would remain at the same level as that allocated for 2011/12. The communication also stated that the level of resource available for supplementary funding for 2011/12 had fallen significantly, due to increased pressures arising from demand for residential specialist college placements (although resources sought from other budgets enabled the overall allocation for 2011/12 to be sustained).

- 2.34 It has been noted elsewhere (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010) that the cost of funding ISC college placements is increasing due to higher demand from learners. The current funding formula, which prioritises funding for ISC college placements over local FE provision, is inconsistent with the Welsh Government policy commitment to local, inclusive education for all young people (National Assembly for Wales, 2006). Moreover, if supplementary funding allocations to FE colleges are not maintained or are actually reduced, this may further inhibit local authorities and FE providers from moving to a more inclusive education model for young people with additional learning needs.

### **Proposed changes to the way post-19 education funding is managed and delivered in Wales**

- 2.35 The Welsh Government review of arrangements for funding post-16 additional learning needs in schools and further education (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010) concluded that existing funding mechanisms are over complex and the existing structure does not adequately support a value-for-money approach to commissioning.

2.36 The 15 recommendations agreed by Leighton Andrews, Minister for Education and Skills in March 2010 (Andrews, 2010) include the proposal that from a date no earlier than 2015, the responsibility for specialist funding of ISC college placements and for exceptional funding in FE colleges, will be transferred to local authorities. The review also recommended that the timing of assessments for specialist funding should be brought forward from the final to the penultimate year of compulsory schooling. In addition, it set out plans to establish an alternative means of distributing supplementary funding to FE colleges via mainstream funding allocations.

### **Post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties: curriculum and accreditation**

2.37 Within FE colleges, young people with complex learning difficulties are most likely to be enrolled on foundation learning programmes<sup>19</sup> which fall within the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) subject area classification of Preparation for Life and Work<sup>20</sup>. Where learning programmes are aimed specifically at learners with additional learning needs, they will tend to be discrete, although some may include 'taster' courses on mainstream vocational programmes such as hairdressing, catering and horticulture. Within these discrete programmes, young people with complex learning difficulties will typically be undertaking learning activities at pre-entry level, or entry level 1, as defined in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, 2003).

2.38 Colleges can offer a range of learning opportunities for the Preparation for Life and Work curriculum at pre-entry level or

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<sup>19</sup> Foundation Learning is the description given to all adult learning provision at entry level 1 (inclusive of pre-entry level), entry 2, entry 3 and level 1. Foundation Learning supports a wide range of learners including young people with complex learning difficulties.

<sup>20</sup> This includes the sub-areas of Independent Living Skills, Adult Basic Education, Foundation for Work and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

entry level 1. The pre-entry curriculum framework includes milestones from one to eight (known as P levels) against which learner progress can be monitored and recorded. Learning activities funded by NPFS can include accredited and non-accredited learning, although non-accredited learning draws down less funding.

2.39 Any qualification that is recognised by the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) or the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW) is fundable. Several awarding bodies offer accreditation for adult learners in Wales working at pre-entry and entry 1 level. These include Agored Cymru, ASDAN, OCR, Edexcel, and City & Guilds. The types of accreditation and qualifications offered include, for example:

- ASDAN or City & Guilds Personal Progress award, certificate or diploma, for learners working at or below entry level 1.
- ASDAN Personal and Social Development award or diploma, for learners working at entry level 1, 2 and 3.
- ASDAN Life Skills diploma, for learners working at entry level 1, 2 and 3.
- OCR Life and Living Skills diploma for learners working at entry level 1, 2 and 3.
- Edexcel Personal and Social Development qualifications for learners working at entry level 1, 2 and 3.

2.40 Currently<sup>21</sup> Agored Cymru offers 71 units at pre-entry level and 250 units at entry level 1. These units can be combined flexibly to meet credit requirements for a range of qualifications including:

- Independent living.
- Vocational qualifications (catering, food hygiene, retail, etc).
- Literacy and numeracy.
- Performing arts.
- Arts and crafts.
- Sport.

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<sup>21</sup> [www.agored.org.uk](http://www.agored.org.uk) website accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

- Information technology.
- Environment.

2.41 The Welsh Government and Colegau Cymru are currently consulting on the development of generic curriculum area models known as 'Learning Area Programmes' (LAPs). Each LAP would specify the expectations for providers offering learning programmes in a range of subject areas including: core skills expected for each level, the preferred qualifications, work experience or work related experience, the total credits and the total guided contact hours (GCH). A generic model for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (the LLDD LAP) has been developed and consultation is currently taking place with provider organisations.

2.42 ISCs are free to set their own learning programmes, curricula and qualifications for young people with complex learning difficulties. Some independent providers choose to follow learning pathways leading to recognised qualifications; others do not. Funding for placements at ISCs is not conditional on programmes being accredited and non-accredited learning does not draw down less funding, as it does in the FE sector.

2.43 The English government has begun a move towards funding new programmes of study rather than individual qualifications, as recommended in reviews by both Ofsted (2011) and Wolf (2011). Although this reform has not yet been implemented, it is hoped that it will allow for a much more flexible approach to planning a personalised curriculum.

2.44 A project<sup>22</sup> run by Scotland's Colleges has produced an overview of the key elements of a meaningful learning programme for young people with SLD and PMLD (Scotland's Colleges, 2011). Given its central relevance to this research, this list is reproduced in full below.

- A curriculum which is coherent - learning programmes must have an explicitly stated purpose with statements on what learners can expect to understand and be able to do better on completion of the programme.
- A set of entry criteria - which matches the purpose of the learning programme and the specific context in which it will be delivered.
- A carefully managed transitions process - which will include:
  - A systematic approach to the involvement of partnership agencies.
  - An informed judgement of an individual's ability to learn in a college setting matched to the learning programme and based on a thorough needs assessment.
  - A Personal Learning Support Plan detailing how learning support needs will be met.
  - An exit strategy which is identified at the start of the learning programme and includes time scales, inbuilt review periods, potential progression routes; in consultation with appropriate partner agencies.
- Learning and teaching approaches - which are sufficiently flexible to offer development from a learner's known skills and qualifications base.
- Individual support agreed and in place - prior to a learner embarking on a learning programme.

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<sup>22</sup> The 'Support for Learners with Profound and Complex Needs' project aimed to support and enhance post-school learning choices for learners for profound and complex needs. The project was based at Scotland's Colleges, from 2010 to 2012. The focus was on sharing practice, developing resources and provision, and managing support issues. The project has also developed two USB resource sticks: one focusing on free and open source software, plus tutorials from the project on making interactive materials using Microsoft Office; the other has information about research and resources for learning and teaching. These USBs are freely available to the FE sector.

- Meaningful target setting - built into the learning programme, including opportunities to share targets with partner agencies. For learners with the most profound intellectual disabilities, close professional working with partners is essential.
- Appropriate methods for gaining learner feedback/listening to learners.
- Formal recognition of achievement.
- Effective monitoring of learning and teaching.
- Staff development and training opportunities available to cover the specialist pedagogy relating to this learner group (Scotland's Colleges, 2011, p2).

### **Learning programme outcomes**

2.45 The national arrangements for collecting and recording data about learning programme outcomes do not appear to be consistent across the FE and ISC sectors. FE colleges in Wales submit data about enrolments, qualifications and learning activities undertaken by individual learners to the LLWR<sup>23</sup>, but there is no requirement for ISCs to do so. The LLWR also collects detailed data from FE colleges on the impairment status of individual learners and on colleges' assessment of learners' functional ability in numeracy and literacy at the start of the learning programme, although these data are not publicly available. The Learning and Skills Observatory Wales (LSO)<sup>24</sup> uses data from the LLWR to derive success<sup>25</sup>, completion and attainment rates. The LSO publishes Learner Outcome Reports (LORs) for all FE colleges in Wales. These reports show colour-coded information on success rates for the past three years, by subject area (the subjects studied) and by course type (the level

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<sup>23</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/datacollection/llwr09>

<sup>24</sup> The Learning and Skills Observatory Wales (LSO) is a portal that provides users access to education, learning, skills and labour market news, information and research materials. The LSO is dedicated to the provision of up-to-date information in the field of education, learning and skills in Wales and encourages the development and exchange of evidence-based policy and improved decision-making across Wales.

<sup>25</sup> This measures the number of students achieving a qualification as a proportion of the number who started it.

of course followed from entry level upwards). These reports are designed to inform the general public about the outcomes of further education funded by the Welsh Government. Whilst very helpful, the LORs do not record any data on pre-entry level provision.

- 2.46 The Welsh Government and LLWR do not collect, or hold, data on success and completion rates for ISCs attended by young people from Wales. In England, ISCs are now completing the Individualised Learner Record (ILR)<sup>26</sup>. The ILR collects data about learners and their learning from all FE provider organisations receiving public money distributed through the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency.

### **Post-college destinations**

- 2.47 For both FE and ISC placements, transition **out** of college can be particularly difficult for young people and their families. Sinson's (1995) study of ex-residential college students found that families' concerns post-college focused on their youngsters' future accommodation needs, community reintegration, and danger of social isolation from local peers. Similar issues have been highlighted by other researchers investigating residential placements for young disabled people (Pinney, 2005; McGill et al, 2006; Heslop et al, 2007). Young people themselves may be anxious and uncertain about what they might be able to do after college and what support they can expect (Holtom, et al, 2013).
- 2.48 ISCs have a responsibility to liaise with young people's home local authorities regarding post-college transition and vice versa. In England, there are formal requirements for regular, detailed reviews of each student's progress and the local authority uses this information as the basis for recommending whether funding

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<sup>26</sup> The Information Authority owns and governs the data standards and specification of the ILR. See <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/> for more details.

of the ISC placement should continue (National Audit Office, 2011). However, anecdotal evidence suggests this is not common practice amongst all local authorities, either in Wales or in England, even where significant local authority resource is committed to an ISC placement.

2.49 The LLWR collects post-college destination data about learners three months after they have left FEIs in Wales. This information is recorded by FEIs for learning activities with guided contact hours of 450+ per year, but currently these data are not made available publicly, or used for any audit purposes other than by the work-based learning programme Skill Build. Individual colleges keep and maintain their own records on post-college destinations and may make these available in prospectuses, websites or other forms of public information. For example, some colleges may conduct learner surveys to find out more about the post-college destinations of ex-students.

### **Lack of information on outcomes and quality of different types of post-19 education**

2.50 Having robust and comparable data, on learning programme outcomes and post-college destinations, is essential in order for families and professionals to judge the relative benefits of different types of post-19 education provision for young people with complex learning difficulties. Such data are also needed by Welsh Government, Careers Wales and local authorities as the basis for informing funding decisions for specific placement types. Currently, this level of outcome and destination data is not available, but plans for collecting it are being piloted as part of the proposals for reform of the legislative framework for SEN (Welsh Government, 2012b). The proposals include an intention to improve the quality-assurance processes relating to children and young people with additional learning needs by introducing a mapping system which would track outcomes of pupils with

additional learning needs and resources allocated to meet their needs. At present, this system only covers the school system. However, further pilot work is on-going and the eight pilot local authorities are working with their local colleges to trial the quality-assurance system extending to FEIs. It is unclear whether the proposals will include extending the tracking system to the ISC sector.

- 2.51 Reviews conducted in England (National Audit Office, 2011) and Scotland (Millar and Aitken, 2005) have also highlighted a severe lack of information, transparency and awareness of post-19 education options amongst those providing support and information to young people with complex learning difficulties. In England, the National Audit Office review (2011) drew attention to the discrepancy in inspection arrangements between specialist provision for learners at FE colleges as opposed to those at independent specialist colleges. In ISCs, the quality of the education provision is the main focus of Ofsted inspections with the residential and social care element inspected by the Care Quality Commission (or the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales). Yet in English FE colleges, inspections cover the college as a whole and inspectors may give very little scrutiny to mainstream or discrete provision aimed at young people with complex learning difficulties.
- 2.52 In Wales, Estyn conducts monitoring visits and inspections of FE and ISC provision. The current inspection cycle runs from 2010 to 2016. All FE colleges and ISCs will be inspected within this time period and each college will receive an annual monitoring visit. Inspection reports are published on Estyn's website. The notes from monitoring visits are not published, but are provided to the Welsh Government and summarised in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report (Estyn, 2013).

2.53 Our analysis of Estyn’s published inspection reports<sup>27</sup> found that although all of the FE colleges in Wales offering post-19 education to this group had been inspected between 2008 and 2012, only two of these inspections had included any scrutiny of provision specifically aimed at young people with complex learning difficulties. Even in these two cases where inspection data were available, it was at a very general level with little detail available on which Welsh Government, local authorities or families could make assessments about value for money or suitability of the provision for the young people it served. The current inspection framework does not consider the quality of standards and provision in particular learning areas and although it does consider support for learners with ALN generally, this is unlikely to give detailed information about the support and provision specifically available to those with SLD or PMLD<sup>28</sup>.

2.54 In contrast, Estyn’s published inspection reports for Welsh ISCs are very comprehensive, although only two<sup>29</sup> Welsh ISCs offering provision to young people with complex learning difficulties had received inspections since 2008, in line with the inspection cycle. An overview of ISC provision is published yearly, in the Chief Inspector’s Annual Report (Estyn, 2013).

### **Access to a choice of post-19 education provision**

2.55 Recent consultation work in Wales suggested that attending a local FE college whilst living at home may be the preferred choice for the majority of young people with complex learning difficulties and their families, but that in some areas there may be a scarcity of quality, local, FE provision and high demand for a handful of places (SNAP Cymru, 2010). Other concerns included the fact that discrete provision aimed at young people with complex

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<sup>27</sup> Estyn’s website catalogue of reports was accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Personal communication, Estyn, December 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Coleg Elidyr and Pengwern College.

learning difficulties is rarely full-time and timetables can be subject to change without notice. It was also noted that resources, equipment and appropriately trained staff are sometimes not in place before the start of term (SNAP Cymru, 2010). The concerns about education provision for young people with complex needs living in Wales are consistent with the findings of research studies conducted in England (Clarke et al, 2011) and Scotland (Millar and Aitken, 2005). Millar and Aitken (2005) interviewed over 30 young people with communication, sensory, physical or learning impairments in Scotland about their experiences of going to a local FE college. These young disabled people described how their access to college was problematic. In particular, the young people highlighted issues relating to transport, access to the part of the curriculum they wanted, and finance/funding. However, those that did go to college valued the social aspects of the experience, as well as the opportunity for academic success to be recognised formally. When asked, most of the students interviewed said they would not have chosen to go away to residential college, even if their parents had wanted them to.

2.56 Nonetheless, the choice to go away to a residential ISC college may be seen as an important step on the road to adulthood for some young people with complex learning difficulties and their families (Mitchell, 1999). Research has highlighted how residential college placements can provide opportunities for young people to learn to take risks in a supportive environment, to develop an adult social life without family input, and to develop educational or vocational skills, particularly life skills, in preparation for a more independent future (Mitchell, 1999). The Welsh Government Task and Finish Group on post-16 FE funding arrangements (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010) acknowledged that, for some learners, specialist residential placements will remain the right option where their needs cannot

be met by their nearest FE college. However, as in England (National Audit Office, 2011; Ofsted, 2011), the current funding system, and local variations in availability of certain types of college placements, may mean that access to the choice of an ISC placement and funding allocations per learner may vary significantly from one local authority to another. Local authority decisions may also be influenced by budgetary constraints and local policy on the commissioning of out-of-area placements.

2.57 Clarke et al (2011) conducted a questionnaire survey of families whose disabled son or daughter had access to a multi-agency transition service. About 70% of responses highlighted lack of local, FE provision as an unmet need, listing lack of transport, lack of staff training, lack of suitable support and lack of funding as areas for concern. The authors suggest that these factors may contribute to families and young people feeling they are 'driven' to look for more suitable FE provision at a residential ISC, which may be located many miles from home.

2.58 From 2005 to 2006, an East of England Pathfinder project called 'Improving Choice' set out to develop local post-16 education provision for young people with LDD whose only alternative if they wished to continue in education would be to attend a specialist, residential college (Learning and Skills Council, 2006). The purpose of the project was to test a variety of models and packages of education and support that would enable learners to study in their home areas. The English Learning and Skills Council made available £3.6 million of development funding for a one year period to support a Pathfinder that would run over three years. The six Learning and Skills areas<sup>30</sup> included in the project were expected to develop action plans to meet needs in their own areas. As part of implementing these action plans, Improving

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<sup>30</sup> Bedfordshire and Luton, Cambridge and Peterborough, Essex, Southend and Thurrock, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk.

Choice developed individual packages for 31 young people across the region for the academic year 2005/6. Various approaches were taken to meeting local need which included:

- Developing capacity through training FE staff.
- Developing links between FE colleges and special schools.
- Establishing 'specialist hubs' where individual FE colleges develop as regional centres of expertise (for example for learners with autistic spectrum disorders).
- Putting more resources into developing existing FE provision to better meet the needs of individual learners.

2.59 An evaluation of the Improving Choice Pathfinder (Learning and Skills Council, 2006) concluded that whilst each local action plan was different, a number of key themes had emerged which were critical to the success of local initiatives to improve a choice of local provision. These themes included:

- Partnership working and buy-in at strategic level across all agencies involved.
- Post-16 learning providers which have a culture that embraces a policy of inclusion for all young people, supported by senior management.
- Active engagement with parents to discuss choices and options.
- Active engagement with schools.
- Engagement with Connexions and support to careers advisers to contribute to the development of local initiatives.
- The involvement of 'transition brokers', who work independently of statutory agencies to support young people and families at transition, to help put together an appropriate post-16 package and who seek to access different funding streams to support this package.
- An assessment framework which clarifies the support each learner needs to access post-16 FE.
- On-going staff training and development.

## **Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for children and young people with special educational needs**

2.60 In June 2012, the Welsh Government (2012b) set out proposals for reform of the legislative framework for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). The key proposals put forward in the consultation document focussed on:

- Changing the definition from special educational needs (SEN) to additional needs (AN).
- Introducing a process of integrated assessment and planning through Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and a web based tool to support this.
- Extending the age range to include children and young people with additional needs from birth up until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Building quality assurance into the proposed new systems.
- Developing provision pathways.
- Transferring, to local authorities, the responsibility for the assessment, commissioning and funding of specialist FE provision (including residential placements) for learners with AN.

2.61 The Welsh Government (2012b) aims, through this process of SEN reform, to introduce a simpler, more person-centred system. It hopes that reforms will increase the trust and confidence of parents and carers in the system, provide greater consistency between schools and local authorities and foster more effective partnerships between agencies. A series of SEN reform pilot projects were established in 2009 to develop and test alternatives to the current SEN framework. The SEN pilot projects are being evaluated through a programme of action research and costs analysis and a report on the development phase was published in June 2012 (Holtom et al, 2012). A report on the second phase of the pilot projects will be published in due course. Consultation on the SEN reform proposals ended on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and a consultation response document is in progress. This document

will set out the next steps for the SEN reform agenda. However, for the purposes of the research, the existing statutory framework is used and the sections that follow use the current terminology (SEN, statements and learning and skills plans), unless stated otherwise.

### **Summary of chapter two: policy, practice and funding context**

- 2.62 Typically, in Wales, most young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD) receive secondary education at state-maintained, special schools until the age of 19 (Year 14). Very little is known about their post-school destinations. Research conducted in England estimated that 14-19% of young people with PMLD and 75% of all special school leavers may be accessing part-time or full-time further education. There are no publicly available data providing details of the post-19 destinations of young people with SLD or PMLD leaving Year 14 of school in Wales.
- 2.63 Post-19 education for the vast majority of learners with SLD and PMLD in Wales is delivered through mainstream and discrete provision in FE colleges, and through discrete, specialist provision at independent specialist colleges (ISCs). Some young people in Wales may also access ISC provision in England, where it has been assessed that their post-19 education needs cannot be met locally.
- 2.64 Currently, the Welsh Government funds the provision of all further education and training for young people aged 19-25 with section 140 assessments under a standard national planning and funding system (NPFS). Learning programmes designed specifically for learners with additional needs are subject to a higher 'subject area weighting' (SAW) per learning activity which can be up to three times the unit cost for mainstream learning activities. The Welsh Government also makes funding available for learning and

personal support for young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD) through the following funding streams:

- Supplementary funding to access mainstream provision at GFE colleges.
- Exceptional funding to access discrete provision locally at GFE colleges.
- Specialist funding for specialist day or residential placements at ISCs in Wales and England, and at one GFE-run residential unit in Wales.

2.65 For the year 2011/12 the overall budget for supplementary, exceptional and specialist funding was £15,893,986. This represents an increase of 9% since 2008/09 and of 93% since 2005/06. Over half of the budget for 2011/12 was allocated to fund specialist day or residential placements (£8,625,315), with £862,383 (5% of the budget) being committed to exceptional funding for FE college discrete placements, and £6,406,288 (40%) going into supplementary funding for mainstream GFE provision.

2.66 The overall budget for supplementary, exceptional and specialist funding is a single budget, is resource limited and is allocated against the three main cost elements in a priority order whereby specialist funding is allocated first, then exceptional funding, and finally supplementary funding is allocated from the remaining balance. This current funding methodology, which prioritises funding for specialist placements, has been acknowledged (by a recent Welsh Government review) as over-complex, risk-inherent for FE providers and inconsistent with the stated policy commitment to local, inclusive education for all young people.

2.67 Within FE colleges, young people with SLD and PMLD are most likely to be enrolled on discrete, foundation learning programmes which fall within the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

subject area classification of Preparation for Life and Work, and will typically be undertaking learning activities at pre-entry level, or entry level 1. Learning activities funded by the national planning and funding system (NPFS) can include accredited and non-accredited learning, although non-accredited learning draws down less funding. Any qualification that is recognised by the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales or the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales is fundable.

- 2.68 ISCs are free to set their own learning programmes, curricula and qualifications. Funding for placements at ISCs is not conditional on programmes being accredited and non-accredited learning does not draw down less funding, as it does in the FE sector.
- 2.69 It is unclear how, if at all, consistent information is collected and recorded by local authorities and the Welsh Government about the outcomes of learning programmes on which young people with SLD and PMLD are enrolled within GFE colleges and ISCs. Data about post-college destinations for this group of learners are also lacking. Having robust and comparable data on learning programme outcomes and post-college destinations is essential for families, young people and professionals to judge the relative benefits of different types of post-19 education provision. Such data are also needed by the Welsh Government and local authorities to inform funding decisions and to provide evidence on value for money of particular placement types.
- 2.70 Very little is currently known about the factors influencing choice of post-19 provision by young people with SLD or PMLD and their families. Recent research and consultation work indicates that a number of factors may effectively limit the choices available to young people and families. These factors may include: the current funding system; local variations in availability of certain types of college placements; the degree to which all available options are considered when making placement decisions; lack of

appropriate information on which to base decisions about provider type; local authority budgetary constraints; and local policy on the commissioning of certain post-19 education placements.

- 2.71 The Welsh Government has recently set out proposals for reform of the legislative framework for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) aged 0 to 25. These proposed changes, if fully implemented, will have a significant impact on the way that education and support is delivered to, and experienced by, young people with additional learning needs and their families.

### **3 Existing provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales**

3.1 This chapter maps the existing provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales. Using data collected from interviews<sup>31</sup> with professionals in 14 Welsh FE colleges, three ISCs in Wales and four ISCs in England, the chapter covers the following areas:

- Applications and admissions.
- Learning programmes offered during the academic year 2011/12.
- Extent and nature of support available to access learning programmes.
- Staff training and development.
- Accessibility of physical environment.
- Transport to and from college.
- Learning outcomes.
- Post college destinations.
- Funding issues.
- Challenges to accessing and providing post-19 education for young people with SLD and PMLD.

#### **Applications and admissions**

3.2 Data was requested from the 14 colleges included in the research, about the number of applications they had received from young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 and the number of admissions that were subsequently accepted.

3.3 For the FE sector, 12 out of the 14 colleges had received applications from at least one young person with SLD or PMLD for the academic year 2011/12. Two GFE colleges had not

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<sup>31</sup> Interviews were conducted between April and July 2012 and related to provision that was available for the academic year 2011/12.

received any applications from young people with complex learning difficulties for that year. One of these colleges thought this was due to no young people with SLD and PMLD wishing to take up FE locally for that year. The college had, in fact, accepted applications in the past and would do so in the future:

“Normally we have several students with PMLD or SLD but this year was unusual in that we did not have any in September 2011. We have three identified for the coming year and we have taken PMLD students in the past with support from exceptional funding. We’ve had students needing two personal assistants, hoists and all sorts of equipment.” FE 045

- 3.4 The other college explained that the physical environment of the college was currently unsuitable for young people with complex learning difficulties, so schools and Careers Wales tended to discourage students with SLD or PMLD from making applications, as they were unlikely to be accepted. This college was hoping that a new building project would open up access to the target group for the next academic year (2012/13):

“None [no young people with SLD or PMLD] this year. This is because it is an old building, with poor physical environment, no nurse and there is a huge expense in catering for SLD and PMLD students. Our facilities are changing and we are more suited to a range of disabilities but often these students need more support than we can offer. Local special schools know what we offer here so they don’t encourage the most disabled to apply, knowing that they will fail to get in. Next year a new building is opening which will be better able to cater for this cohort.” FE 044

- 3.5 However, even for those colleges who had accepted applications from the target group, there was variation amongst them in terms of whether applications were accepted from both young people with SLD and from young people with PMLD:

“We can take young people with SLD but we have no facilities for sensory input so certainly not PMLD. We have good access for disabled students, but we are not able to accommodate people with medical needs or with a need for a high degree of personal care.” FE 036

- 3.6 Of the 12 FE colleges who had received applications from the target group for 2011/12, three had accepted all the applications made, whilst nine explained that there were some students who applied whom the college could not accommodate. The most

common reasons given by colleges for not being able to accept certain applications related to not being able to support high levels of health care needs, behavioural issues or specific communication needs. This was often linked to lack of staff with appropriate training on site (e.g. nursing staff) and the limitations of the physical environment:

“We can meet their learning needs whatever their level of entry, but if they need a lot of medical or personal care, we are not able to provide that.” FE 047

“We did not offer a place to one applicant because of behavioural issues - we were too close to home and he would have absconded. His parents and us agreed this would be dangerous and he ended up going to a distant college where he is resident. His behaviour was too challenging and hyperactive for us.” FE 042

“It’s mainly related to the curriculum we offer and the decision not to accept two students was based on an assessment process [over several days] where both students spent a day on the course they had applied for. One student [who was not accepted] had her own communication, made up signs, not Makaton or BSL. This wasn’t meaningful in terms of the classroom and she would not have been able to manage in a college environment. The other student we wouldn’t accept had no speech, and very limited communication, plus he was unable to sit still. He’d also have been unable to manage in college environment.” FE 043

3.7 For the three Welsh and four English ISCs included in the research, all had received applications from young people with SLD or PMLD for the academic year 2011/12 (n=67) and over half of these applications (52%) had led to an admission. The reasons for ISCs not progressing an application are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Reasons given by ISCs for not accepting or progressing certain applications from young people with complex learning difficulties**

Reason cited	Applications
Young person had needs ISC could not accommodate or meet	12
Young person or parents had changed their mind	9
Application deferred until next academic year	5
Lack of funding for ISC placement so application not progressed	6
<b>Total number of ISC applications not accepted or progressed</b>	<b>32</b>

3.8 The quotations below reflect the range of reasons given by ISCs for not accepting or progressing applications from individual young people with SLD or PMLD. Similarly to the FE sector, several ISCs mentioned that the limitations of the physical environment were a barrier:

“We don’t really cater for PMLD students because the main building is not wheelchair friendly. Also many of our courses and programmes are outdoor.” ISC 073

“Our campus is very open and this is not suitable for some people with autism, who may need a smaller environment and specialist input that we don’t offer at present.” ISC 076

“We had a young man we had to turn down because he presented a behavioural challenge in the form of absconding. We have an open site near busy roads and we felt we could not offer the secure environment he needed.” ISC 130

3.9 Some ISCs also drew attention to the fact that, as ‘specialist’ colleges, their purpose is to specialise, thus, by definition, they were not able to provide post-19 education to all young people with complex learning difficulties:

“The person’s needs were too complex for us. She had very significant learning difficulties as well as health needs and her main impairment was not her sight loss. We try to ensure that for the students we take, visual impairment is the main issue even when they have other sensory or learning difficulties.” ISC 081

### **Learning programmes offered by FE colleges in Wales during the academic year 2011/12**

3.10 During the academic year 2011/12, there were 20 FE colleges in Wales, of which 15 were offering some form of post-19 education provision to young people with complex learning difficulties. Of the 14 colleges interviewed as part of this research, 12 offered learning programmes that could potentially be accessed by young people with SLD, and 11 colleges had provision available for young people with PMLD.

3.11 Interviews with FE colleges indicated that they were mostly offering one main discrete learning programme aimed at young people with SLD and/or PMLD. Where there was more than one

programme available, this tended to be aimed at those who were ready to progress to a higher learning level. For example, FE 034 offered two programmes aimed at young people with complex learning difficulties: one programme at pre-entry level with a range of learning activities available (e.g. cookery, art and craft, music and drama, sports), and the other programme at entry level 1 focusing on independent living skills. Both programmes included a 'sensory communication' course aimed at learners with PMLD.

3.12 Of those FE colleges providing learning opportunities to the target group, each college typically enrolled six to 12 students with SLD and/or PMLD for the first year of programmes running for the academic year 2011/12. The mapping data<sup>32</sup> we collected from colleges, indicated that there were at least 124 FE places<sup>33</sup> potentially available within Wales for young people (aged between 16 and 25) with SLD and PMLD for the year 2011/12.

3.13 The amount of direct contact time varied greatly between programmes and included a mix of part-time and full-time learning programmes. Part-time programmes ranged from as little as two hours per week to up to 12 hours per week. Full-time programmes typically involved 16-25 hours of direct contact time per week. One college (FE 043) delivered its discrete programme through five days per week, 24 hours a day, residential provision for up to 10 young people with complex learning difficulties. Another college (FE 039) offered a programme where the hours and mode of learning varied according to the needs of the students and how best to meet these:

"It's classified as a full-time course as four days a week. But for some students it has been three days a week... For one student who has particular medical needs, we have secured funding so he has a home

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>33</sup> Data was missing from one college interviewed (FE 036), and three colleges offering provision to the target group did not respond to request for an interview, so the total number of places was likely to have been significantly higher than this.

tutor (funded through exceptional funding) coming to him at home three days a week, and he averages about one day per week in college.” FE 039

- 3.14 Four colleges offered young people with SLD and PMLD the opportunity to access a variety of ‘mainstream taster’ courses, either formally, as an integral part of the otherwise discrete learning programme, or on a more ad hoc basis where a student had a particular interest or ability. Overall, it appeared that the majority of FE provision for this group of learners was delivered by specialist teaching staff employed specifically to teach on the discrete programmes. It did not appear that there was significant teaching input from other vocational areas and faculties.
- 3.15 Most FE colleges were providing nationally accredited learning activities and one college offered its own accreditation. As expected, most programmes aimed at young people with complex learning difficulties were being offered at pre-entry level or entry levels 1 to 3. Some colleges only seemed to be offering entry level provision, possibly indicating that this was aimed mainly at learners with SLD rather than those with PMLD. For most programmes, young people could be accredited for several learning activities within the programme, and the individual activities could also be accredited at different levels depending on the abilities and interests of the learners.
- 3.16 Although learning activities funded by the NPFS can include accredited and non-accredited learning, non-accredited learning draws down less funding. A curriculum which is structured in order to work through the learning stages required for accreditation, and which requires learners to be taught in groups of around six to eight students, may not support the development of truly individualised learning plans. FE 033 summed up this issue as follows:

“We are very constrained in terms of the curriculum we can offer. We can’t run the course if we have less than six students and due to the funding system we have to put the curriculum plan together the

September of the previous year and we are funded on this plan. This limits what students can do, the number of staff, etc, and makes it difficult to respond to specific needs of individuals.” FE 033

- 3.17 However, individual colleges approached the issue of individualised learning in different ways. Four colleges felt they were able to offer personalised learning opportunities that were very much led by the needs and interests of the young people with SLD and PMLD involved in their programmes:

“Students are able to do everything they ask for. We can be very flexible in terms of what’s available. We have good collaboration between staff and Careers Wales, therefore, we are able to formulate a curriculum that meets the needs of each young person.” FE 034

- 3.18 Four other colleges felt they could respond to the interests of groups of students and offer ‘some extent’ of personalised curriculum:

“Each student has an Individual Learning Plan, which is tailored to their needs, to a certain extent, given the modules/units that are available on our learning programme. In terms of individual interests, the college can adjust the mainstream tasters that are available as part of the vocational unit so some years these have been different - eg bricklaying, carpentry, etc.” FE 039

- 3.19 A further four colleges explained that they were unable to offer the sort of truly individualised curriculum that they felt this group of young people needed:

“Generally the young people who need very individualised programmes do not apply here as we don’t have the provision available. We are aiming at the upper end of pre-entry – MLD [moderate learning difficulties] or SLD, but certainly not PMLD. And the students we accept tend not to have additional social or behavioural issues, or if they do, they are within manageable parameters. So they don’t generally require highly individual programmes.” FE 036

- 3.20 Local authority staff and family members expressed a wish to see more individualised learning programmes and more flexibility in the courses offered by FE colleges:

“Parents are not offered enough alternatives to residential colleges. The set courses on offer at local colleges may not meet the needs of the young people and more flexibility would be better.” LA 67

## **Learning programmes offered by ISCs in Wales and England during the academic year 2011/12**

- 3.21 During the academic year 2011/12, there were five ISCs in Wales, of which four were offering post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties. Of the three ISCs interviewed, all offered provision to young people with SLD, but just one offered learning programmes to young people with PMLD. Of the four English ISCs interviewed (out of a sample of six), all offered provision to young people with SLD and three offered learning opportunities to young people with PMLD.
- 3.22 The funding for placements at ISCs is based on an academic year of 38 weeks, although some ISCs may offer 52 week residential placements. Each ISC in Wales typically enrolled 12 to 30 students with SLD and/or PMLD per year. The mapping data<sup>34</sup> we collected from colleges indicated that there were 109 ISC places potentially available in Wales to young people (aged between 16 and 25) with SLD and PMLD for the year 2011/12.
- 3.23 ISCs deliver specialist education to meet specific areas of learner need such as autism, hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning disability, and multiple physical impairments. As explained in chapter two, ISCs' annual fees include all aspects of education, training, care, support, therapies, transport and residential costs whilst the young person is at college.
- 3.24 For most ISCs, particularly those in rural locations, the emphasis of the learning programmes they offered could be summarised as 'therapeutic, practical and vocational':

"It's about their developing independence and understanding processes so that they understand where milk comes from, that plants grow from seeds etc. This involves making things to sell locally or in our retail shop. We want them to understand the processes from start to finish." ISC 073

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<sup>34</sup> See Appendix C.

“Right from day one the emphasis is independence and employability. The main aim on leaving college is for students to live independently with support if they need it and to have employment. And for some learners, it’s also about continuing their college education locally once they leave us.” ISC 076

3.25 All provision offered by the seven ISCs included in the research was available on a full-time, five days per week basis as part of a 24 hour, seven days per week residential placement. One Welsh college (ISC 073) also offered non-residential, full-time learning programmes to young people with complex learning difficulties from the local area and another English college (ISC 130) offered a similar arrangement on a non-residential, full or part-time basis. Several of the ISCs interviewed pointed out that not all the places available to learners with SLD and/or PMLD for the academic year 2011/12 had been filled.

3.26 The broader nature of the provision offered by independent specialist colleges, and the fact that accredited and non-accredited learning activities are fully funded through annual fees, meant they were able to offer very individualised learning programmes for young people with learning difficulties:

“We do not use standard programmes of qualifications. We wanted to create a college that challenged the conventional curricula on offer. When parents ask what can be offered? The answer is what does the young person need?” ISC 074

“Learners have a taster of each of the programmes they could follow and then make their choice at the end of the first term with the advice of a personal tutor. This leads to a personal and individualised programme for that particular student and, indeed, for each one of our 251 students. No two timetables are the same.” ISC 076

However, all the ISCs included in the research used some form of nationally recognised qualifications to accredit some aspects of young people’s learning, as appropriate.

3.27 As residential establishments, where most young people are resident for seven days a week, ISCs need to offer appropriate and relevant non-educational opportunities, such as leisure and social activities in the evenings and at weekends. With the

exception of one college, the ISCs included in the research appeared to offer full programmes of social and leisure activities for their students which included the option to have support to stay in on their own or with friends, alongside options to fill virtually every non-educational hour:

“The whole infrastructure of the college is set up to support young people socially. We have a personal tutor system with staff available 24/7 to help with support on an individual basis and with relationship building more generally. There are lots of opportunities to do things with other students... We also have a large number of clubs, including a Welsh club, and a trips programme where students can plan their weekend activities for the whole year ahead if they like!” ISC 076

### **Extent and nature of support available to learners with SLD or PMLD to access learning programmes at FE colleges and ISCs**

3.28 The availability of appropriate support is essential to enable this group of learners to access post-19 learning opportunities. The response below is typical of the range of learning and personal needs colleges were supporting for this group of young people:

“Well, for example, we have one learner who has very limited speech, he has a one-to-one support worker and also gets additional speech therapy and physiotherapy, and we are using computer technology to assist his communication. It’s all working well.” FE 040

3.29 We asked professionals working in FE colleges and ISCs about whether learners with SLD and PMLD were able to access support in the following four areas<sup>35</sup>:

- Support for learning needs – this included ‘human support’ such as learning support assistants, note takers, communicators, sign-language interpreters, etc, and ‘technical support’ such as access to communication boards or devices, use of Braille writers and other specialist equipment needed to access the curriculum.
- Support for personal needs – help with personal care (toileting, washing), help with eating, support at breaks and lunchtimes, behavioural support.

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix C for an overview of the mapping data relating to support.

- Support for complex health care needs – administering medication, epilepsy care, changing dressings, tube-feeding, other forms of ‘complex care’.
- On-going access to therapies such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, etc.

*Support for learning needs*

3.30 At the time of the interviews (April to July 2012), learning support was available to students with SLD at 12 of the 14 FE colleges interviewed and at all seven ISCs interviewed (including all three of the Welsh ISCs interviewed). For young people with PMLD, learning support was available at 11 of the FE colleges interviewed and four of the ISCs interviewed (just one of which was in Wales).

3.31 All FE colleges providing support for learning needs used a combination of funding streams to do so, including the additional subject area weighting for LLDD provision, Welsh Government exceptional funding and college budgets. As explained in chapter two, exceptional funding is a discretionary award and the Welsh Government expects colleges to manage their provision for learners with SLD and PMLD within their core funding. However, several colleges alluded to difficulties in meeting this expectation, particularly relating to provision for young people with PMLD. Several colleges suggested that they would be unlikely to be able to accept an application from a student with high learning support needs without access to exceptional funding, as the quotation below illustrates:

“If a young person needs exceptional funding but the application is refused for some reason, we are not always able to accommodate them.” FE 033

3.32 For ISCs, the costs of providing learning support were included in the annual fees charged for each student to the Welsh Government (with contributions as appropriate from students’ home local authorities and LHBs).

3.33 The types of learning support offered by FE colleges and ISCs primarily included ‘human support’ such as specialist learning support assistants and sign-language interpreters. College respondents described learning environments which had a combination of teaching staff, general learning support staff and individual personal assistants for one-to-one work with students. Several respondents pointed out the scarcity of skilled learning support staff, particularly for colleges with sites in rural areas. However, in most colleges, training appeared to be available, albeit on an as-needed basis, to ensure teaching and learning support staff were up-to-date with the support skills needed:

“We do whatever we can to meet young people’s needs so we get extra training when we have new students with unfamiliar or very complex needs.” FE 040

3.34 Some respondents referred to the specialist learning support equipment their college provided to learners. In one case, a local authority had funded some of the IT-based equipment needed by one young person attending a FE college.

3.35 All except one of the ISCs included in the research had staff and resources available to support young people’s chosen communication systems. This included, for example, staff with expertise in sign language and symbol systems such as Makaton and Rebus, and with the specialist knowledge needed to programme communication boards and input new vocabulary. However, the picture in the FE sector was less clear with regard to in-house expertise in language and communication support for learners with individual communication needs.

#### *Support for personal needs*

3.36 Support for personal needs was available to students with SLD at 11 FE colleges and all seven ISCs included in the research (including the three Welsh ISCs which took part). For students with PMLD, support for personal needs was available at 10 FE

colleges interviewed and at four of the ISCs included in the research (including just one Welsh ISC). The types of personal care needs that students with complex learning difficulties had at college, ranged from a high level of need such as help with toileting, washing and eating, and some forms of behaviour support, to lower levels of need such as support at breaks and lunchtimes and help to use the mainstream areas of the college building such as the canteen, shops and grounds.

- 3.37 Although almost all FE colleges were organising some form of personal support, fewer were able to meet the behavioural needs and intimate personal care needs of some students with complex learning difficulties:

“Sometimes the level of personal care that’s required is beyond the college’s capabilities. We had one young lady with severe epilepsy with behavioural issues that we couldn’t meet. She needed someone with her the whole time to stop her wandering off site. She was fairly able in other ways and we couldn’t get the funding for the one-to-one support, so eventually we had to ask her to leave.” FE college 035

- 3.38 For those colleges offering support for intimate personal care, suitable facilities were necessary which would normally include accessible toilets with hoists and tracking systems, changing beds and showering facilities. At least five FE colleges had these facilities available and all of these had funded the adaptations from college budgets:

“We had to spend £9,000 to make a wet room and changing facility with a ceiling hoist at one site. But we can’t do that at all three sites.” FE 037

“We have changing facilities, wide doors, ramps, hoists but differing needs means the environment is constantly in demand of being updated.” FE 040

- 3.39 Organising support for personal needs can be very complex and time-consuming for FE colleges as it means liaising with students’ home local authorities and in some cases, their home LHBs. In Wales, these agencies are responsible for funding the ‘care’ elements of a support package for a young person with SLD or PMLD attending college:

“Local authority social services will pay for support for half an hour four times a day - at the start of the day, at break, at lunch, and at the end of the college day - this might be one-to-one, or one member of staff for a small group depending on their needs.” FE 045

3.40 Interviews with college respondents indicated that in most FE colleges, local authorities and LHBs funded the support, but the support workers and personal assistants (PAs) were usually recruited, trained and employed by colleges themselves. Diverse arrangements did exist, however. For instance, one FE college (FE 035) previously had an arrangement whereby the local authority paid for the personal care element of the work undertaken by college-employed specialist support workers. These support workers also undertook learning support for the individual young people to whom they were assigned. Senior management at the college had recently taken the decision that these specialist support workers could no longer carry out personal care tasks as part of their role. Even though the funding for personal support had not been withdrawn, it was unclear how this issue would be resolved for the young people involved, as a stalemate now existed between the college and the local authority about whose responsibility it was to recruit and employ staff for this purpose:

“Many people locally cannot attend the local FE college as staff contracts do not include that they must assist people with personal care. It’s a disgrace that people have to go out of county just because no-one will help them with their personal care and toileting.” LA 052

3.41 Respondents from colleges and local authorities readily voiced concerns about the complexity, uncertainty and fragility of the funding arrangements for personal support of students attending FE provision:

“The social services trail may go cold. There are big problems with getting funding for additional needs. Once assessed, it can take months to get any extra funding, and in the meantime the college ends up meeting the shortfall so the student can start their course on time.” FE 043

3.42 It is essential that personal support is in place before a student starts their learning programme at college. If exceptional funding

is sought for a student, the Welsh Government will seek a contribution from a student's home local authority to cover the care element of the overall sum requested by the college. Where exceptional funding is not available, FE colleges can ask local authorities to fund personal support for students on an individual basis. Discussions and planning regarding the funding for learning and personal support can be very lengthy and may not be resolved before the start of term:

"We had one young man where the exceptional funding of £15,000 was not made available until six months after he started!" FE 049

Understandably, college admissions departments may not permit students to start without funding being agreed for this support, especially if this is being provided by the college itself (with funding due from elsewhere).

- 3.43 The provision of personal support for students attending an ISC is much simpler. If the student is accepted by the college, the college will meet all the student's personal care needs as part of their placement. The costs of providing personal support are included in the annual fees charged to the Welsh Government (with contributions as appropriate from students' home local authorities and LHBs).

#### *Support for complex health care needs*

- 3.44 Some young people with SLD or PMLD will have additional and on-going health care needs requiring, for example, regular administration of medication, changing dressings, tube-feeds, tracheotomy or stoma care. Such complex health care needs generally require input from a trained nurse, or health care professional. Some young people may need to store medication and mobility equipment at college. Providing support for young people with complex health care needs to enable them to access educational opportunities in a college environment, clearly needs a great deal of multi-agency planning and funding as the capital

expenditure required is likely to be significant. However, there is currently no statutory obligation on LHBs to contribute resources to the support of any young person unless they have a continuing need for NHS health care, as defined by the Welsh Government guidance on adult continuing health care (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b). The definition of a 'continuing need for NHS health care', as specified in the current guidance, will not necessarily include all learners who have a 'complex health care need'.

- 3.45 At the time of the fieldwork (April to July 2012), six of the FE colleges included in the research stated that they could support young people's complex health care needs in college (data was not available on this issue from one FE college). This was on the proviso that the funding and provision of the health care support to individual students was met by young people's home LHBs. One college (FE 039) had invested heavily in providing the physical infrastructure and appropriate staffing to accommodate young people with complex health care needs, including the provision of a personal care/medical room and a full-time nurse on-site:

"It's a challenge. Some colleges don't offer as much as they might like to do for students with complex needs. We have a college nurse... That post has helped to train staff to support young people with tracheotomies, to do PEG feeds, to do all those things that you need for young people to come here... We've had to create a personal care/medical room for all of this to happen. We've had to invest in beds, ceiling hoists, all of that and we've funded it from the college's own budget. The local health board have supported us with a bed for one student – this came with him from the school. You almost have to go out there and help the parents and key workers to make sure everything comes with the young person. So things that health and social services have put in place for that particular young person can come with them to college." FE 039

- 3.46 At the time of the research, seven FE colleges were not organising and/or providing complex health care support to learners. Reasons given for this included difficulties in obtaining funding from LHBs, college policy and the sheer challenge of

providing complex health care in a mainstream educational setting:

“It’s a difficult issue. The policy of the college is not to become involved in medical procedures, eg medication. So we are unable to do some things that were done in special school. I’m not aware of health providing any funding. This affects who the college can provide for and it can be a contentious issue.” FE 046

“We have no nurse and getting facilities and equipment to meet health needs is often hard work and very difficult.” FE 037

3.47 Interviews with staff at ISCs indicated that the provision of support for complex health care needs reflected the specialist needs of their student intake. The three ISCs whose specialism included offering educational opportunities to young people with PMLD, all felt able to meet young people’s complex health care needs and had nurses and other health care professionals on site. One ISC who did not offer provision to young people with PMLD was, nonetheless, able to offer support to young people with SLD who might also have a complex health care need. The annual placement fees paid to ISCs for individual young people included all support for complex health care needs if this was required. Three ISCs (all in Wales) were not able to support young people’s complex health care needs.

#### *On-going access to therapies*

3.48 Many young people with complex learning difficulties will have received very regular access to therapies such as physiotherapy, speech and language therapy and hydrotherapy. For some young people, this may have been as frequent as several times daily whilst at special school. Most special schools have on-site therapists and many may have their own hydrotherapy pools.

3.49 None of the FE colleges included in this research had on-site therapies available to the target group of young people. However, eight colleges offered access to therapies if these were funded and provided by outside agencies (local authorities and LHBs). Three FE colleges were not able to offer access to therapies and

for the remaining three the picture was unclear. However, even where access to therapies was available, it was rarely anywhere near the level that young people had received in the school environment. A head teacher from a special school, drew attention to this discrepancy and to the need to provide adequate and suitable space for providing therapies for this group of young people:

“Young people with PMLD and complex health care needs have physio and mobility needs which can't be met in standard community settings. They need space to store large physio items and do physio work... In school we've been directed by physios to change people's positions hourly or half hourly. This all falls apart when people go onto community based provision where they have no base and are travelling around all day in their wheelchair. A base would give flexibility to do community based activities and space and time to meet health and well-being needs.” SCH 028

3.50 Several respondents described situations where young people had received daily therapy at school, but that this was now monthly or less at college. Reduced access largely resulted from adult services having fewer resources to provide therapies compared to the resources available to children's services and, as a result, demand was outstripping the small amount of provision available:

“We have no nurse on-site and getting facilities and equipment to meet health needs is often hard work and very difficult. We have district nurses calling but it's hard to get OTs and speech therapists to come in.” FE 037

“The support is not always available from outside agencies like language therapy, and this ends when they start college once they've transferred from school care.” FE 034

3.51 In contrast, all but one of the ISCs interviewed were able to offer access to physiotherapy and speech and language therapy from staff based on the college site. In addition, one ISC offered access to therapies but these were provided by external local authority or LHB professionals. For families and young people, access to therapy at a level equivalent to that received at school may be a distinct advantage when considering a FE college versus ISC provision:

“The challenge is that when young people come here they are moving from children’s services to adult services and often things like physio and OT input fall down. And families see that as a negative in terms of coming to a local college versus going to a residential. I’ve been in student review meetings where families have said they want their son or daughter to go to a residential college so they will get daily physio and access to hydrotherapy, etc.” FE 039

### **Staff training and development**

- 3.52 We asked all college and local authority respondents to tell us about any issues relating to staff training and development. Interview data indicated that in six out of the 14 FE colleges included in the research, current arrangements for staff training and development were thought to be sufficient. Staff at five FE colleges, however, expressed a need for more training and suggested that a lack of appropriate training made it hard to meet the learning and support needs of students with complex learning difficulties. Within the ISC sector, just one of the professionals interviewed felt that staff at the college were not appropriately trained to support this group of learners.
- 3.53 The professionals interviewed from FEs acknowledged the need for this group of learners to be taught by appropriately trained staff and highlighted that it was often difficult to recruit qualified and experienced staff, particularly for colleges with sites based in rural areas. Some colleges had supported existing staff to develop expertise in particular areas such as technology and specialist equipment to support communication.
- 3.54 Staff from FE colleges talked about the need for continuous training to ensure that all staff and new recruits were up-to-date in areas such as curriculum development, communication, technology and personal care for young people with SLD and PMLD. This was especially important in areas with high staff turnover, which was highlighted by staff from two colleges. Three colleges worked with staff in local special schools to update their learning on a regular basis and to understand the specialist

needs of the young people who would be coming into college the following year:

“We are working with special schools to become better trained but we also access health and social services courses. Hoisting and health and safety is a constant issue and differing needs each year with different intakes, means we need to keep ourselves updated on a constant basis.” FE 037

3.55 The need to begin the training process well before a young person starts at college was also highlighted:

“You’ve got to identify the staff at least six months before the student comes so they can do that work in schools and we can prepare for the student before they start at college.” FE 039

3.56 Specific suggestions for staff training and development activities included:

- Curriculum development for learning programmes at pre-entry level.
- Responding to personal support needs.
- Responding to complex health care needs.
- Specialist technology to support communication.
- Sign language and symbol systems.
- Supporting young people with epilepsy.
- Health and safety – including manual handling and using hoists.

### **Accessibility of the physical environment**

3.57 Attending a learning programme at the large, open campus of a typical FE college may be very difficult for many school leavers with complex learning difficulties, especially those used to the familiar, secure environment of a special school. Hale (2008) suggests that factors in the design of buildings and layout of campuses play an important part in determining the accessibility and suitability of the environment for students with SLD and PMLD and include:

- Accessibility.
- Security.
- Level of supervision during non-class times.

- Size of classrooms and training areas.
- Ergonomics (including furniture).
- Storage facilities for specialist equipment.
- Noise levels and availability of indoor and outdoor quiet zones.
- Signage and information.
- Space for meetings with external specialist services.
- Facilities for intimate and personal care – including adequately sized accessible toilets with hoists and tracking systems, changing beds and showering facilities.

3.58 Professionals interviewed from most FE colleges (nine out of 12) and most ISCs (six out of seven) interviewed, felt that their campuses and learning facilities were ‘mainly accessible’ to people using wheelchairs. For colleges with large sites that accommodate land-based training courses, there may be some areas which are very difficult to make accessible:

“Some areas are not wheelchair friendly like the grounds and animal care units.” FE 034

“We are not geared up for wheelchairs. We are working on this, but we have a 180 acre site and much is land based training.” ISC 073

3.59 Issues were also mentioned in relation to the overall space available in the fully accessible parts of the campus and the extent of storage space available for specialist equipment and mobility aids:

“The students at the local college have a specially adapted building, but the rooms are small so only a certain number of people who use wheelchairs can attend as there isn’t enough space.” LA 052

3.60 For FE colleges, the extent to which learning programmes for young people with SLD and PMLD were located in a separate facility, or were part of the mainstream campus or building, was unclear. In several colleges, accessibility across the whole campus was integral to their policy of inclusion:

“Our wheelchair access is extensive. There are one or two classrooms in the whole college that are not accessible for everyone. And for the discrete courses, all their accommodation is on the ground floor.” FE 036

“There’s been a lot of investment to make the whole campus as accessible as possible. We’ve got hoists, changing rooms, lower drinking fountains, low phones, lower part of reception desks, special desks and big screen computers.” FE 035

## **Transport**

- 3.61 There is currently no explicit duty on either local authorities or colleges to provide free transport, or transport at a charge, for students with additional needs who are aged 19 or over. For most students with complex learning difficulties, independent travel to and from college will not be possible. The question arises, therefore, of how their travel arrangements are organised and funded.
- 3.62 Modes of transport for this group include wheelchair accessible cars/taxis, adapted minibuses and one-to-one support (travel escorts) to use public transport. Some young people with complex health care needs and/or PMLD may also need escorts to use adapted taxis or minibuses. In Wales, distances between home and college can be significant – in excess of 30 miles each way in some rural areas.
- 3.63 The Welsh Government recently commissioned research to investigate the current situation regarding the provision of transport for learners aged 19-25 with additional needs (Thornthwaite, 2011). The research findings largely concur with those of Hale (2008) who mapped college provision, including access to transport, in Scotland for young people with PMLD. Key points from both reports are summarised below:
- Transport to and from college is difficult to source and fund for learners aged 19 and over.
  - Local authorities have different rules about providing and/or funding transport.
  - Local authorities often do not fully understand young people’s needs when making decisions about whether or not to fund transport.

- Decisions by local authorities about eligibility for transport to college can be made very late and sometimes days before the new term starts.
- Some colleges provide transport and sometimes this is free of charge. However this is not the case for all colleges.
- There is a lack of information to clarify the 'local offer' made by colleges and local authorities.
- In the absence of funding for transport, the task falls to family carers. Sometimes this means that young people may not be able to take up places they have been offered at college.

3.64 We sought information from colleges and local authorities about how transport for young people with complex learning difficulties is organised and funded. The overall picture is laid out in the table below. At the time of the research, south west and mid Wales had the best access to transport provision and funding, whilst north Wales appeared to have the least good access.

3.65 The lack of consistency across Wales was summed up succinctly by one college respondent as follows:

“Transport is a big issue. Up to age 19, the local authority will pay for special transport if a young person is statemented. After 19 there is no duty, so most colleges have to fund it. At the moment, we fund transport through a stream called the Financial Contingency Fund which is means-tested, so some families are over the threshold. Some colleges have said they will not deal with transport at all as it is so complex. Others have managed to get local authorities to pay for it. But there's a big difference across Wales. It shouldn't be a barrier, but it is. At the moment we are using the Financial Contingency Fund but if this goes I don't know what will happen.” FE 039

3.66 What is missing from this analysis is more detailed information about whether transport provided by colleges include additional support from escorts or PAs to make it accessible to young people with PMLD and/or complex health care needs. We are aware, for example, that a group of young people with complex learning difficulties who had been accepted for pre-entry provision at FE college 044 for 2012/13, had been offered transport by the college but were not able to take this offer up without personal support provided by the local authority. The parents of these

young people were particularly concerned that they would not be able to access the learning opportunities at the college without access to suitable supported transport.

- 3.67 Colleges which had decided to fund transport adopted a variety of approaches. Some, like FE 039 above, used general college budgets to support transport costs, but on the understanding that this situation might change at any time. Others had taken a policy decision to support transport arrangements for the target group:

“The college has decided to provide minibus transport for every student so there is equality of opportunity. Parents are paid mileage if they bring the young people in.” FE 043

- 3.68 Similarly, local authorities were using a variety of funding and provision arrangements, from insuring all college PAs (where these staff were local authority funded) to drive young people’s Motability cars, to taking a case-by-case approach to decision making. Local authorities pointed out that in most cases, there was no ‘blanket policy’ regarding access to transport, but that individual decisions were made on the basis of assessed need.

**Table 2: Arrangements for providing and funding transport to and from FE colleges for students aged 19+, by college and area of Wales for year 2011/12**

Area of Wales	Does FE college provide/fund transport?	Does relevant local authority provide/fund transport?		
<b>North</b>	No – FE 033	No – LA 052		
	No – FE 034	No – LA 053		
	Yes – FE 035	No – LA 054		
	No – FE 036	Unclear - LA 055		
<b>South, West and Mid</b>	Unclear – FE 037	LA in this area declined an interview		
	Yes – FE 039	Yes – LA 058		
	Yes – FE 040	Yes – LA 059		
	Unclear – FE 042	Yes – LA 061		
<b>Central South</b>	Yes – FE 043	Yes – LA 062		
	Yes – FE 044	No – LA 063		
	No – FE 045	LA in this area declined an interview		
	No – FE 046	Yes – LA 066		
<b>South East</b>	No – FE 047	Unclear - LA 067	No – LA 68	Yes – LA 069
	Yes – FE 049	LA in this area declined an interview		

### **Learning outcomes for young people with complex learning difficulties**

3.69 We asked professionals from colleges to explain how they determined, assessed, recorded and reported learning outcomes for young people with complex learning difficulties. We also asked local authority respondents about how they collected information from colleges about the progress and outcomes for individual young people whose placements they were funding wholly or partly.

3.70 Colleges used a range of existing pre-college data to help them determine which outcomes to pursue with individual young

people. This included looking at young people's statements of SEN, transition plans, section 140 assessments, learning and skills plans, and individual learning plans, where available. Where a young person had expressed a wish to attend FE, most colleges also attended transition planning meetings and school reviews during the young person's last year of school.

- 3.71 College respondents explained that prior to starting college, most young people with learning difficulties would have been involved in 'link courses' at FE colleges, or visits to ISCs, where their needs, interests and aspirations were assessed and recorded in an individual education plan (IEP), or individual learning plan (ILP). Most college respondents described the person-centred nature of this process and stressed that learning goals were negotiated through consultation and discussion with young people and their families. These individual plans were then revisited with the young person at the beginning of their first term at college and renegotiated if the young person's needs or aspirations had changed in any way. Most colleges highlighted the flexibility of the learning plans and how these, in most cases, enabled goals to be changed and updated. Respondents from four colleges explained how, although initial broad goals were set at the beginning of term, the full individual learning plan was not completed until the young person was settled into college. The settling in period ranged from six weeks to a full three month term:

"Some young people will come with particular ideas about what they want to achieve from college: be a gardener, be a cook, or whatever. Then, if they have those ideas, we will go with them if they are realistic. Young people spend a whole term working with different departments across the college and trying things out. Their personal tutor will review regular reports from the departments the student is working with. All the departments are vocational and fully functioning in terms of serving the college or externally. Everything is personalised, based on young people's interests and experiences during the first term." ISC 076

"We give students up to half-term to settle in, then negotiate targets with them. It's very person-centred and targets tend to be related to

behaviour, individual tasks, and so on. Students have three [targets] per term." FE college 043

3.72 The types of outcomes or goals that were set with young people varied across colleges. Most FE colleges took a person-centred approach to goal setting but explained that this was balanced alongside the need to ensure that the primary goals for any learner were related to the accreditation of the learning activities or learning programme they were following:

"Our aim is to push them to the highest level that they're capable of. Accreditation is usually a key aim – we are aiming for sense of achievement – any achievements they make we celebrate it. Targets depend on the individual. We promote aspirational but realistic targets." FE 035

"Every subject on the timetable is accredited. So for every course there will be outcomes for each part of the course. Each qualification is selected with the needs of the individuals in mind, and is offered at the appropriate level, so students leave with a range of attainments." FE 046

"The initial consideration is in relation to the course that's set out. A broad curriculum is in place that is then adjusted to meet individual needs. Personal targets beyond the accreditation will depend on the staff identifying things that each individual will need to work on. Overall, the programmes are not highly individualised as courses are centred around group activities." FE 036

3.73 Although accreditation is not required for a learning activity to be fundable, non-accredited learning does draw down less funding, and there was evidence from across the FE sector that most learning programmes for young people with SLD and PMLD were accredited by recognised bodies. This focus on accreditation may mean there is less time, resource and opportunity to record and monitor 'soft' skills and non-educational outcomes. Yet for this group of young people, it is precisely these sorts of outcomes that may be most useful in terms of skills for the future. As one FE college put it:

"We need some sort of recognition that FE for this group can't be all about the young people gaining accreditation. There has to be a realisation that young people gain a lot from coming to a local college but not every hour of their day can they be following an accredited programme. FE 039

3.74 In contrast to FE colleges, annual fees to ISCs do not allocate less funding to non-accredited learning activities. All of the ISCs represented in this research made use of relevant qualifications for this group of learners, although their responses reflected the broader degree of flexibility that was available to them in terms of setting goals and learner outcomes:

“After they come to us we establish 'destination' data - that is, from an initial assessment and then another after the first three months. From that they are given short, medium and long-term goals that help them reach that destination.” ISC 073

“We use any reports available from the special schools, hospitals and other places where they have lived up to the point of admission and use them for our starting point. We continue with their goals and put new ones in as needed - these will be educational and social goals. We use continuous assessment to plan goals with the young person and review these every term.” ISC 080

3.75 In terms of monitoring, assessing and recording progress against goals and desired outcomes, most colleges included in this research recorded data for learner purposes and for management purposes. Learner records included using learning diaries as well as photographic, audio, video and product evidence to record young people’s progress against agreed goals. Management records included keeping records of learning activities and programmes undertaken, qualifications achieved, and any ‘soft’ outcomes in terms of skills development and wider learning not formally recognised by the qualifications or learning programme curriculum. Most colleges collected data for learner and management records very frequently, sometimes at the end of every teaching session (e.g. photographic evidence, learning diary notes, etc). More formal records were completed weekly, termly, yearly, and at the end of educational placements. Colleges described a range of requirements for reporting outcomes, including the need to submit data to the Welsh Government, Careers Wales, the LLWR, Estyn and local authorities. None of the colleges mentioned any reporting

requirements for local health boards, even where LHBs were partly responsible for the funding of placements.

3.76 In addition, colleges have their own systems for keeping track of student progress and outcomes. One ISC, in particular, described a system which allowed staff to input different types of data on learning outcomes in a number of ways to ensure that every aspect of each student's progress was monitored and recorded:

"Each student's personal tutor will monitor their progress and programme over the term and whether any changes or adjustments are needed. We have personal tutorial files for all students. When a tutorial takes place it is documented. In each department there are work files for each student. We also have two databases which staff can input data into at any time - the extended curriculum database which records students' progress in relation to independent living and 'soft' skills and the core curriculum database which is for the vocational skills and more formal curriculum achievements. Between the two everything is recorded." ISC 076

3.77 Respondents from local authorities explained their own requirements for collecting information about young people's progress and outcomes in educational placements they were partly funding. All the local authorities included in the research had some form of audit system for recording and measuring progress. The frequency of data collection ranged from every three months (one local authority), every six months (four LAs), to annually (10 LAs). Audit systems were similarly varied in terms of the way data was collected and recorded, and the types of outcomes that were measured. Most local authorities collected and recorded their own data relating to progress and outcomes for funded educational placements, either by attending review meetings at the college or by conducting their own reviews with young people. Three local authority respondents described how information about progress and outcomes were fed into young people's unified assessments. Where local authorities collected and recorded their own data, the focus of the audit of college placements tended to be non-educational outcomes such as communication development or independent living skills:

“We measure change in outcomes that have been specified in the original unified assessments. We are moving towards making assessments even more outcome based and these will be specified to the FE colleges or residential colleges, rather than us accepting their outcomes. Outcomes need to be specific - independent living skills, be more adaptable to change, safety in the community etc. But these skills also need to be transferable, so placements need to concentrate on teaching these skills in different environments. Very rarely do people make massive gains while in FE, so it's more about people reaching their potential and little gains need to be celebrated. One example is a lady who went to a residential college with only a few Makaton<sup>36</sup> signs, but left using a very high level of PECS<sup>37</sup> - the advantages to her of being able to communicate her wishes and needs is priceless, but these things are often overlooked.” LA 052

3.78 Four local authorities had audit systems which relied entirely on information collected by colleges about young people’s progress and outcomes. In these cases, the focus of the audit reflected the nature of the information colleges provided to local authorities. This data was gained from reports provided by colleges or from minutes of (and/or attendance at) young people’s annual reviews in college.

3.79 We asked families about whether they thought their son or daughter with complex learning difficulties was learning any skills at college that might be helpful in the future. The skills highlighted by families are summarised below (in order of frequency of mention):

- Cooking skills.
- Communication skills.
- Independent living skills.
- Social and emotional skills.
- Use of money, money skills and budgeting.
- Art skills.
- Employment related skills.
- Computer skills.
- Personal care.

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<sup>36</sup> Makaton uses signs, symbols and speech to help children and young people with learning difficulties to communicate.

<sup>37</sup> PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) uses pictures to develop communication skills in young people with autism, communication difficulties or learning disabilities.

- Independent travelling.
- Feeding skills.
- Confidence building.
- Sport and keeping fit.
- Healthy eating.
- Going to the shops.
- Gardening skills.

3.80 The following quotations illustrate some of the skills that families particularly valued:

“He comes home on Friday now and puts his own washing in the machine. He’s learnt some personal care skills and is more confident to do things himself, like shaving.” FAM 099

“There is a social group for students who aren't as comfortable or as vocal in social situations. So they are encouraged to socialise together - he has learnt social skills in this group. His confidence has also grown as a result.” FAM 091

3.81 Young people with SLD and PMLD, who participated in interviews, highlighted a number of learning areas which they felt would be useful for their future lives, many of which are similar to the skills listed by family members above:

- Cooking.
- Using money.
- Cleaning.
- Shopping.
- Preparing for college.
- Reading.
- Writing.
- Numbers.
- Painting and decorating.
- Plumbing.
- Recycling.
- Signing.
- Sharing with others.
- Helping others.

## Post-college destinations

- 3.82 We asked FE college and ISC respondents about what they expected the majority of their students with SLD or PMLD to do after they finished their educational placement. Although we did not specifically ask about their arrangements for collecting post-college destination data, one ISC respondent (ISC 076) volunteered information about how his college tracked young people via an annual leaver destination survey.
- 3.83 Other professionals interviewed from FE colleges and ISCs talked in more general terms about the types of daytime activities and living environments that students sometimes moved onto, or wished to move onto. Several professionals described an 'ideal post-college package' for this group of learners, which might include the following elements:
- Supported employment or voluntary work.
  - Supported living placement.
  - Continuing to access learning opportunities in some form.
- 3.84 However, many college respondents contrasted this ideal with an expected reality which they thought might include:
- Local authority day service for people with learning difficulties.
  - Some involvement in work-based projects, which might mean some form of supported employment.
  - Living at home with the family.
- 3.85 Families were also asked about what they thought might be the next steps for their son or daughter after college. Nine families said that they could not, nor did not, wish to think about what might happen in the future, and were thus unable to answer. This may indicate the level of stress and fear that uncertainty about the future brings for this group of families. The responses of the 13 families who did answer this question are summarised below:
- Families' hopes for daytime activity destinations:

- Day service.
- Work or supported employment.
- Direct payments and personal assistant.
- Continue at college.
- Families' hopes for accommodation destinations:
  - Supported residential placement.
  - Live independently with support.
  - Stay in family home.

3.86 Families appeared to have very positive but realistic goals for the young person's future after college. The following quotations are typical of the family responses to this question overall:

"He talks about wanting to work - he would like a job - some sort of part-time work opportunity would be fantastic. We aren't so keen on day provision through social services, so we are more likely to opt for direct payments so that he can do what he wants to do and what interests him, as opposed to him fitting in with what's available." FAM 091

"We are hoping for supported accommodation. She's unlikely to get employment, but I would like to see her settled while I am still alive." FAM 085

"I have given it a lot of thought. I believe he has the potential to be semi-independent and I want him to be offered a place in a staffed house - somewhere where he can continue to develop and contribute to the community." FAM 098

3.87 The interviews with young people with SLD and PMLD explored young people's future goals and whether or not these included employment. All of the eight young people interviewed expressed a wish to work at some point in the future and although many youngsters were fairly vague about the exact nature of the work they might wish to do, some of the jobs they mentioned as possibilities are listed below:

- Gardening.
- Cleaning cars/car valeting.
- Kitchen work/chef/cook.
- Helping/looking after people.
- Work in a game shop.
- Cafe or restaurant work.

- Office work.
- Work in a gym.
- Work with domestic animals.
- Plumber.
- Mechanic.
- Run own business.

3.88 Since we did not ask the question, it was unclear overall as to the extent to which colleges collect post-college destination data for this group of young people. Certainly, this level of data does not appear to be collected from all FEIs by Careers Wales, the LLWR, Welsh Government or Estyn as part of their oversight and audit arrangements for post-19 education in Wales. As stated in chapter two, having robust and comparable data on learning programme outcomes and post-college destinations is essential in order for families, professionals, commissioners and inspection agencies to judge the quality and relative benefits of different types of post-19 education provision for young people with complex learning difficulties. It is important, however, to be mindful of wider societal and economic factors that can have an impact on post-college destinations and long-term outcomes for young people with complex learning difficulties. It is currently recognised that opportunities at the local level for participation in supported and open employment, and for transition to independent and supported living, are reducing (Ofsted, 2011).

### **Funding issues**

3.89 As explained in chapter two, the provision of post-19 education and support for young people with complex learning difficulties is financed through four main funding streams:

- NPFS subject area weighting as part of FE colleges' annual funding allocation.
- Supplementary funding to FE colleges to support learners to access mainstream provision.

- Exceptional funding to FE colleges to support learners with exceptional needs to access discrete provision.
- Specialist funding for specialist day or residential placements at ISCs in Wales and England.

3.90 The interviews with staff in FE colleges and ISCs confirmed that providers were finding the current funding arrangements difficult, complex and administratively burdensome. From our interviews with FE college staff, it was clear that colleges found it hard to meet the learning and support needs of many learners with SLD and PMLD from their core budgets, as the Welsh Government expects them to. It appeared that for learners with the highest needs, many colleges were relying on the discretionary, exceptional funding system in order to offer an adequate level of provision and support to these young people.

3.91 Given this reliance, FE college staff explained that the exceptional funding system made the admission and planning process for new students very difficult. The main reasons for this are that applications for exceptional funding are not permitted until the October of the first term in which a young person starts their learning programme, and colleges do not receive their first tranche of funding until late December, right at the end of the first term. Clearly, the uncertainty of whether or not a placement will be funded creates huge tensions for college administrative systems, and demands FE colleges to accept the risk of offering placements to a group of very high cost learners, with no certainty that these placements will be funded. Many FE staff explained how this one factor had a very significant impact on their ability to offer and to develop further education options for young people with complex learning difficulties:

“Students start with us in September, but we don’t actually apply for exceptional funding until October, and you don’t hear until December. From a senior management perspective they are a huge risk. The residential colleges wouldn’t operate like this. We had our first lot of money on 19th December. So we’d provided support staff for a term with no funding. I’d had to go to our college executive and make an

individual representation to say we want these students to come to college, but they say “how do we know we are going to get the funding?” We’ve never had this funding turned down, but in the times that we are working now, it’s hard for College Principals to take these risks. That’s why our numbers are low, as there’s no way I’d get the college to take say 15 young people each year because of the financial risk involved.” FE 039

3.92 The application and decision-making timescale for exceptional funding is not consistent with the general application and admissions process for FE colleges. It is essential that appropriate and adequate learning and personal support is in place for young people with complex learning difficulties before they start college. However, the current reliance by colleges on the discretionary, exceptional funding system does not support this, thus potentially restricting access to FE for this group of learners with all the stress and anxiety that this uncertainty brings for young people and their family carers:

“We need early notice of funding being granted to get all the equipment in place in time. We apply for the funding when the student applies here but it is not guaranteed - then if it is not awarded the college has to absorb the costs - in fairness we are rarely turned down but the risk is there. It is a lottery - we never know in time.” FE 044

“It’s very complicated to get it. We have to wait to be told there is going to be funding. We need to put support in place without knowing whether funding will be agreed. There’s uncertainty for everyone, including families. And of course, there are huge personal implications for carers, who may be working and need to know whether their son or daughter will be in college or not.” FE 043

3.93 In contrast, the specialist funding system works to a different timetable, and whilst this still has inherent problems and limitations for ISCs, families and young people, it does mean that specialist funding is usually made available (just) before the young person starts their college placement. Given that most ISC placements are out of Wales, there are huge implications for delayed decisions about funding for families and young people in terms of preparing for a move to another area:

“Delays in decision making are one of the most fundamental issues. They have a major impact on families. They have to prove first that local colleges cannot cope. Parents and young people are often told they will start at residential college the next week and then they come

to us in crisis mode and high anxiety and this has to be worked with.”  
ISC 074

3.94 Several respondents highlighted that the application process for specialist funding puts a burden on FE staff too. As explained in chapter two, applications for specialist funding can only be made where there is evidence that a learner’s needs cannot be met by their local FE college. However, some families and young people may prefer a specialist, residential college option for many other, very valid, reasons. Despite the fact that these reasons may be understood and endorsed by local authorities and Careers Wales, the onus remains on FE colleges to state that they are unable to meet a certain young person’s needs, as part of the application process for specialist funding to attend an ISC. For some FE staff, not only was this felt to be an extra administrative task, but many FE staff felt very uncomfortable about having to support a course of action they did not necessarily agree with:

3.95 As noted in chapter two, the discrepancy between the timescales for the two systems, and a single budget which is allocated to fund specialist placements first, is inconsistent with the Welsh Government policy commitment to local, inclusive education for all young people (National Assembly for Wales, 2006). As the following respondent summed up:

“There is one pot of money for Wales - residential colleges get first dip into it - whatever is left goes to FE. This is because residential colleges have to be applied for at a very early stage so although young people will come to FE to be assessed in case we can offer a comparative course they and their parents may have their heart set on residential college. We can't compete with those places.” FE 037

3.96 The other key issue highlighted by FE colleges is that as it is a discretionary award, exceptional funding does not cover all the costs involved in employing staff to provide learning and personal support. The hourly rate at which staff costs are calculated for exceptional funding purposes does not include any on-costs, such as pension contributions, holiday pay and sick pay. These costs must be borne by providers (either colleges or local

authorities) which adds a further element of risk and reduces the willingness of providers to offer FE options to young people with high support needs:

“Exceptional funding doesn't cover staff on-costs like holiday pay, sickness pay, etc. It just covers an hourly rate. Nor does it cover lunchtime and breaks and these students can't be on their own at lunchtime or breaks as they need help with personal care and feeding. We have had some success locally in terms of getting the local authority to fund lunchtime support. But not all colleges across the board in Wales have had similar success.” FE 039

3.97 The need for FE colleges to liaise with other agencies to 'top up' funding for students with high support needs is also a complicating factor, and many college respondents simply stated that exceptional funding allocations are currently insufficient for this group of learners.

“The amount of exceptional funding isn't adequate to cover the needs of the young people and because it's focused only on the education contact time, we have to negotiate with other funding bodies for other things e.g. lunchtime, etc. And the money that's attached to each student is barely enough to maintain the optimal group size. All of the students need additional support beyond the scope of the funding.” FE 036

3.98 In conclusion, FE college respondents appeared to have significant issues with meeting the needs of many learners with complex learning difficulties from their core budgets, as is the expectation by the Welsh Government. Given many colleges are relying on discretionary, exceptional funding to meet the highest levels of learner need, they questioned the adequacy of the current system to support a fully inclusive learning environment with adequate local options. The respondent below summed up a need for a significant overhaul of the current funding, beyond that which is currently proposed, if the Welsh Government wishes to ensure commitment to local, inclusive education for all young people:

“Exceptional funding doesn't really serve the purpose it was meant to. It was originally intended to pay for residential provision, but over the years, day colleges have been allowed to use it. As day colleges we are now competing with residential colleges for the same source of money. We have been told by the Welsh Government that there isn't enough money to put into the day colleges because more is going to the residential colleges. If Welsh Government wants day colleges to

provide for learners with more complex needs, this will require greater resources. College senior managers are reluctant to put up the money, as they feel the Welsh Government should do this. Staff are caught in the middle. There are practical problems with the way the funding works, because of delays etc. It's time for rethink and the Welsh Government needs to come up with some new ideas." FE 046

3.99 We asked professionals working in FE colleges about their use of the supplementary funding system for this group of learners.

Almost all respondents explained that they rarely made use of supplementary funding for learners with SLD and PMLD as this group very rarely access mainstream courses except for 'taster' sessions as part of a discrete learning programme. However, a few issues were highlighted that are worth summarising:

- Supplementary funding allocations are not made until March for the current academic year, which is not conducive to planning and purchasing support for learners with additional learning needs.
- The annual funding allocation is based on 2007 returns and is now out-of-date for many colleges who may have significantly developed their inclusive learning since then and their intake of students with additional learning needs may well now be much higher.
- Learner needs change from year to year and, thus, an annual review system may better reflect the real costs of making mainstream programmes accessible.
- There may be some confusion about how supplementary funding is used at college level with some colleges using it to support access to discrete courses.

### **Challenges to accessing and providing post-19 education to young people with SLD and PMLD**

3.100 The mapping data collected from FE colleges and ISCs indicated there were at least 124 FE places and up to 109 ISC places in Wales potentially available to young people with SLD and PMLD (aged between 16 and 25) for the academic year 2011/12.

Clearly, only a proportion of these places would have been available to the project's target group (Year 14 leavers with SLD/PMLD) as most learning programmes were open to young

people of all ages and also to some young people with mild or moderate learning difficulties. Nonetheless, access to and take-up of these potential places by young people with SLD and PMLD was hampered by significant practical, organisational and financial challenges for providers, families and young people.

3.101 Not all FE colleges or ISCs were able to accept applications from all young people with SLD or PMLD, particularly those who had complex health care needs, challenging behaviour, or specialist communication needs. Lack of suitably trained staff and limitations of the physical environment were explained as the main reasons for limiting admissions from these groups.

3.102 Three out of the 14 FE colleges and two out of the three ISCs in Wales included in the research, were not able to accept applications from young people with PMLD for the year 2011/12 (although one FE college was planning to do so for 2012/13). For ISCs, this was due to their mission 'to specialise' and thus to limit their student intake to the groups of young people their provision is designed for.

3.103 Some FE colleges are unable to offer access to the support for complex health care needs and on-going access to therapies that this group of learners often need. This may mean that families and young people are not able to consider their local college as a viable option for post-19 education. Very complex multi-agency and administrative arrangements are needed to establish the funding and infrastructure for meeting the personal care and complex health care needs of this group and in some colleges this may be viewed as 'a step too far' by senior management.

3.104 For most FE college provision, full-time learning programmes were not equivalent in time to a full-time day in school and, typically, involved 16 to 25 hours of direct contact time per week. Many courses aimed at young people with SLD and PMLD were

also part-time and ranged from as little as two hours up to 12 hours per week. The short amount of time that young people are actually in college can make life very difficult for families and may lead them to suggest their son or daughter opts for another post-19 option (e.g. an ISC or day service) rather than take up a place at the local FE college.

- 3.105 The research confirmed that there is a lack of choice of learning programmes overall for young people with SLD and PMLD. This includes very limited opportunities to access mainstream provision (other than as part of a discrete programme). The research also highlighted that individual colleges approach the provision of an individualised curriculum in different ways and that not all young people have access to personalised learning programmes that meet their individual needs and aspirations.
- 3.106 Respondents acknowledged the importance of ensuring this group of learners are taught by appropriately trained and experienced staff, but noted that it was often difficult to find qualified professionals, particularly for colleges with sites in rural areas of Wales.
- 3.107 The accessibility of college and classroom environments can be problematic for people using wheelchairs and may not be conducive to the well-being of many young people with SLD and PMLD who are used to a smaller, familiar and secure environment such as a special school. Respondents also noted that space for storage of specialist equipment was lacking in many FE colleges.
- 3.108 In areas of Wales where transport and/or supported transport to and from FE colleges is not available, or may be withdrawn, young people with complex learning difficulties may be unwilling to consider local FE options or be unable to take up places on

courses they have been offered, even if the provision, support and funding for the courses are in place.

- 3.109 The current funding system for supporting learners with SLD and PMLD to take up FE and ISC placements is characterised by its complexity, uncertainty, fragility and lack of agreed timescales for decision making. Many FE colleges are relying on the discretionary exceptional funding system to support the learning and support needs of some learners with SLD and PMLD, despite the expectation from Welsh Government that LDD provision should be largely funded through colleges' core budgets. Application-based bids for exceptional and specialist funding are often not agreed, or made available, until after the start of term, the associated burden of risk and stress that this entails being shouldered by colleges, families and young people. Understandably, some colleges and many families are not prepared to accept this level of risk, stress and uncertainty and may opt for other post-19 options, or, may be persuaded to do so by other professionals (e.g. transition key workers, head teachers, etc).
- 3.110 Young people's right to a choice of provision may be significantly limited by a lack of robust, comparable, transparent and objective information about the range of choices available, and the quality and outcomes of these types of provision. This includes a mismatch between the type of outcome data collected by colleges and by local authorities, a lack of published Estyn reports for some ISCs, a lack of national outcome data for all pre-entry level provision, and a lack of detail in Estyn reports, where available, about the quality of FE discrete provision. Budgetary restrictions and policies about what type of placements to fund at the local level, may also mean that the local offer to families is restricted from the outset.

### **Summary of chapter three: existing provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales**

3.111 At the time of the research there were 20 FE colleges in Wales, of which 15 were delivering some form of discrete and/or mainstream provision to young people with complex learning difficulties. There were five ISCs in Wales, four of which offered specialist residential provision on a seven days per week basis, to young people with complex learning difficulties.

3.112 Of the 12 FE colleges interviewed which had received applications from the target group for 2011/12, three had accepted all the applications made, whilst nine colleges had been unable to accommodate all those who applied. All of the ISCs interviewed had received applications from young people with SLD or PMLD and 52% of these applications had led to an admission. The most frequently cited reason by FE colleges and ISCs for not accepting certain applications was that the applicant had needs that the college could not meet or accommodate, such as complex health care needs, behavioural issues or specific communication needs. This factor was often linked to lack of staff with appropriate training on site (e.g. nursing staff) and the limitations of the physical environment.

3.113 Of the 14 FE colleges that were included in the research, 12 were offering learning programmes that could potentially be accessed by young people with SLD, and 11 colleges had some provision available for young people with PMLD. For the academic year 2012/13, two colleges were planning to expand their provision to include learners with SLD and one was planning to run a programme suitable for learners with PMLD.

3.114 For the year 2011/12 there were five ISCs in Wales, of which four were offering post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties. Of the three Welsh ISCs that were included in the research, all offered learning programmes to young people

with SLD, but just one offered provision to young people with PMLD. Some young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales accessed ISC provision in England.

- 3.115 Learning support was available to students with SLD at 12 of the 14 FE colleges and at all seven ISCs included in the research. For young people with PMLD, learning support was available at 11 FE colleges and at four of the seven ISCs included in the study, just one of which was in Wales. Support for personal needs was available to students with SLD at 11 FE colleges and all seven ISCs, and for students with PMLD at 10 FE colleges and four ISCs (just one of which was in Wales). Regarding support for complex health care needs, this was available at six FE colleges and four of the ISCs included in the research (none of these ISCs were in Wales). Young people could continue to access therapies at eight FE colleges and at all the ISCs included in the research.
- 3.116 This research highlighted a number of significant practical, organisational and financial challenges which restricted (a) access to existing post-19 provision by young people with SLD and PMLD; and (b) the ability of FEIs to provide suitable and appropriate provision to meet the needs of these young people.

## **4 Demand for post-19 education by young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales**

4.1 The previous chapter examined the extent and nature of existing post-19 education provision for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales. It also highlighted that there are significant practical, organisational and financial challenges for providers in meeting the educational and support needs of this group of young people.

4.2 What we do not yet know, however, is the extent to which existing provision meets the demand for post-19 education placements from young people with complex learning difficulties and their families. In order to quantify the extent of met and unmet need and demand for post-19 education, it was necessary (a) to focus on a clearly defined cohort of young people with complex learning difficulties in order to collect meaningful statistical data; and (b) to collect data about all post-school destinations of this cohort, and the extent to which these destinations were young people's first choice. Questions to be answered in this chapter, thus, include:

- How many young people with SLD or PMLD left Year 14 of school in July 2011?
- What were their post-school destinations?
- Were these destinations their first choice of post-19 provision and if so, why was this?
- If not, what would the young people have preferred and what prevented them from accessing this provision?
- What do these findings tell us about levels of met and unmet needs and demand for post-19 education provision in Wales for this group of young people?

### **Defining a cohort of young people with complex learning difficulties for analysis purposes**

4.3 By the end of the fieldwork stage, respondents had returned over 300 records relating to individuals they believed met the project

working definition of 'young people with complex learning difficulties'. Individual, anonymised, coded young person records were completed by:

- Schools: giving details of date of birth, home local authority and post-19 destination.
- FE colleges: giving details of date of birth, home local authority and costs of post-19 education placement where possible.
- ISCs in England and Wales: giving details of date of birth, home local authority and costs of post-19 education placement where possible.
- Local authorities: giving details of date of birth, post-19 destination and costs of post-19 placement, where possible.

4.4 An initial analysis of the records confirmed that the criteria for defining the cohort of school leavers with complex learning difficulties needed to be clearly established prior to undertaking the analysis of post-19 destinations in order to draw any meaningful conclusions. Following discussion with the research team and the Welsh Government research advisory group, a dataset of 138 young person records was created that included only:

- Young people whose major need was defined by schools (and/or confirmed by other respondents) as SLD or PMLD.
- Young people who were described as working at pre-entry level or within entry level 1.
- Young people with SLD or PMLD who had reached the end of Year 14 and left state-maintained secondary education in Wales in July 2011. This group of young people had their 19th birthday in the year 1st September 2010 to 31st August 2011, with a date of birth range from 1st September 1991 to 31st August 1992.

4.5 The rationale for selecting this specific cohort was as follows:

- The focus of the research was post-19 education, hence a need to pinpoint young people aged 19+.

- The main entry point to FE for young people aged 19+ was most likely to be when they left school at the end of Year 14.
- PLASC statistics showed that almost all of those pupils with SLD and PMLD who stayed on at school until Year 14 were enrolled within the state-maintained, special school sector.

### **Numbers of Year 14 school leavers with SLD or PMLD for year 2010/11**

4.6 According to Welsh Government PLASC statistics, 102 young people with severe learning difficulties (SLD), and 39 young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) were in their last year (Year 14) of education at state-maintained schools in Wales for the academic year 2010/11. PLASC records indicate that 139 of these young people were attending state-maintained special schools. There may also have been a small number of young people with SLD and PMLD registered as Year 14 pupils at non-maintained, independent, schools. Figures from the Independent Schools Census<sup>38</sup> indicate a total of 22 pupils with SLD (1% of all pupils with SLD for that academic year) and two pupils with PMLD (0.3% of all pupils with PMLD for that academic year) across all year groups (from reception to Year 14) were attending non-maintained schools for the academic year 2010/11. Thus, according to Welsh Government PLASC statistics, for the academic year ending July 2011, there would have been at least 141 pupils with SLD or PMLD, aged 18 to 19<sup>39</sup>, leaving Year 14 of education in July 2011, 139 of whom were leaving the state-maintained special school sector.

4.7 Our research collected primary data about Year 14 school leavers directly from schools themselves, via interviews with head teachers or other lead professionals. We contacted all 32 schools listed on the Welsh Government's website<sup>40</sup> which offered post-

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<sup>38</sup> Provided by Welsh Government, November 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Date of birth range: 1<sup>st</sup> September 1991 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 1992.

<sup>40</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/about/reference/schooladdress/?lang=en>

16 provision to young people with SLD or PMLD. Of these, four explained they did not offer education provision to the target group of young people, giving an adjusted target sample of 28 schools. Interviews were completed with 26 of these schools. We asked each school to tell us how many young people with SLD or PMLD had left Year 14 in July 2011. The table below presents this data and also shows a column for Welsh Government figures for the same area, received after school interviews had been completed.

**Table 3: Number of Year 14 school leavers with SLD or PMLD for the academic year 2010/11, by area of Wales**

Area	Year 14 leavers for 2010/11 (data collected by the research team during direct interviews with schools)			WG statistics (SLD and PMLD) for same area
	SLD	PMLD	Total	
North Wales	27	6	33	30
South, West and Mid Wales	26	14	40	42
Central South Wales	29	7	36	41
South East Wales	17	12	29	28
<b>Total Year 14 leavers across Wales</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>141</b>

4.8 The table highlights some minor discrepancies between the data we collected from school staff between April to June 2012 and the data which schools had previously submitted to the Welsh Government PLASC in January 2011. Overall, however, our dataset of 138 young people was largely consistent with Welsh Government PLASC data for the same year, thus supporting a high confidence level in the accuracy of the post-school destination data for Year 14, July 2011 schools leavers with SLD and PMLD, collected for this study.

## Post-19 destinations of Year 14 leavers with complex learning difficulties

4.9 We asked respondents from the 26 schools included in the research to tell us about the post-19 destinations of the 138 young people with complex learning difficulties they had identified who left Year 14 in July 2011. The responses are summarised in the table below.

**Table 4: All post-19 destinations of Year 14 pupils with SLD or PMLD who left school in July 2011**

Destination	Leavers with SLD		Leavers with PMLD		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Post-19 FE	72	<b>73</b>	10	<b>26</b>	82	<b>59</b>
Other post-19 destination (day service, individualised support, supported employment, social enterprise, work based training)	20	<b>20</b>	21	<b>54</b>	41	<b>30</b>
Not accessing a service/at home	4	<b>4</b>	7	<b>18</b>	11	<b>8</b>
Not known	3	<b>3</b>	1	<b>2</b>	4	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100</b>

4.10 The table above shows that for Year 14 leavers with SLD, nearly three-quarters went onto some form of post-19 FE, yet in contrast only one-quarter of those with PMLD did so. For Year 14 school leavers with PMLD, three-quarters (72%) were recorded as being in 'other' post-19 destinations or were at home and not accessing any form of day activity, training or educational service.

4.11 From this, it is very clear that significantly fewer Year 14 school leavers with PMLD were accessing post-19 FE opportunities than school leavers with SLD. Young people with PMLD were also proportionately more likely to be at home, or to be accessing another form of post-19 destination such as a local authority day service.

## Post-19 education destinations of Year 14 school leavers with complex learning difficulties

4.12 Data was also collected from schools about the types of post-19 education placements that 2011 Year 14 school leavers with SLD and PMLD had moved onto. The responses from schools for all young people with complex learning difficulties are summarised in the table below.

**Table 5: Post-19 education destinations of Year 14 pupils with SLD or PMLD who left school in July 2011**

Destination	Leavers with SLD		Leavers with PMLD		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
FE college (day enrolment)	44	<b>61</b>	6	<b>60</b>	50	<b>61</b>
FE college (residential enrolment)	6	<b>8</b>	0	<b>0</b>	6	<b>7</b>
ISC college Wales (day enrolment)	3	<b>4</b>	0	<b>0</b>	3	<b>4</b>
ISC college Wales (residential enrolment)	9	<b>13</b>	0	<b>0</b>	9	<b>11</b>
ISC college England (residential enrolment)	8	<b>11</b>	3	<b>30</b>	11	<b>13</b>
Mix of FE and other post-19 destination	2	<b>3</b>	1	<b>10</b>	3	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100</b>

4.13 This table reiterates that a very small number of young people with PMLD were accessing post-19 education placements in comparison to overall numbers of young people with SLD who did so. It is particularly important to note the low number of young people with PMLD who were in FE day placements as they represented a very small proportion (six out of 50) of the overall number of young people with complex learning difficulties attending this type of provision. No young people with PMLD had taken up placements in any form of Welsh residential provision,

including FE residential placements or ISC provision. Nor were any of this cohort accessing day ISC provision. One young person had a post-19 placement which included a small amount of formal FE provision as part of a day service package. Three young people with PMLD, and eight with SLD, were in residential educational placements in English ISCs.

**Other post-19 education destinations of Year 14 pupils with complex learning difficulties who left school in July 2011**

- 4.14 Forty-one young people with complex learning difficulties (20 with SLD and 21 with PMLD) were in a post-19 destination identified as 'other' by the 26 schools interviewed. Table 6 below shows that the majority of these young people went onto local authority or voluntary sector day service provision.
- 4.15 A small number of young people with SLD had gone into employment at local social enterprises and two had moved into 12 week courses run as work-based training by Job Centre Plus. For the latter two young people, their destination after the 12 week course had finished was not known by the school staff interviewed.
- 4.16 Table 6 shows that two thirds (19 out of 29) of those in day service placements were young people with PMLD. Indeed, this was the most common form of post-19 destination overall for young people with PMLD: 19 out of 39 (49%) moved onto day service placements, whilst only 10 out of 99 (10%) young people with SLD did so. No young people with PMLD were accessing day services with a residential element, supported employment, social enterprise work or work-based training. Two of the three young people who were receiving individualised support on a one-to-one basis in the community, were young people with PMLD.

**Table 6: Other post-19 destinations of Year 14 pupils with SLD or PMLD who left school in July 2011**

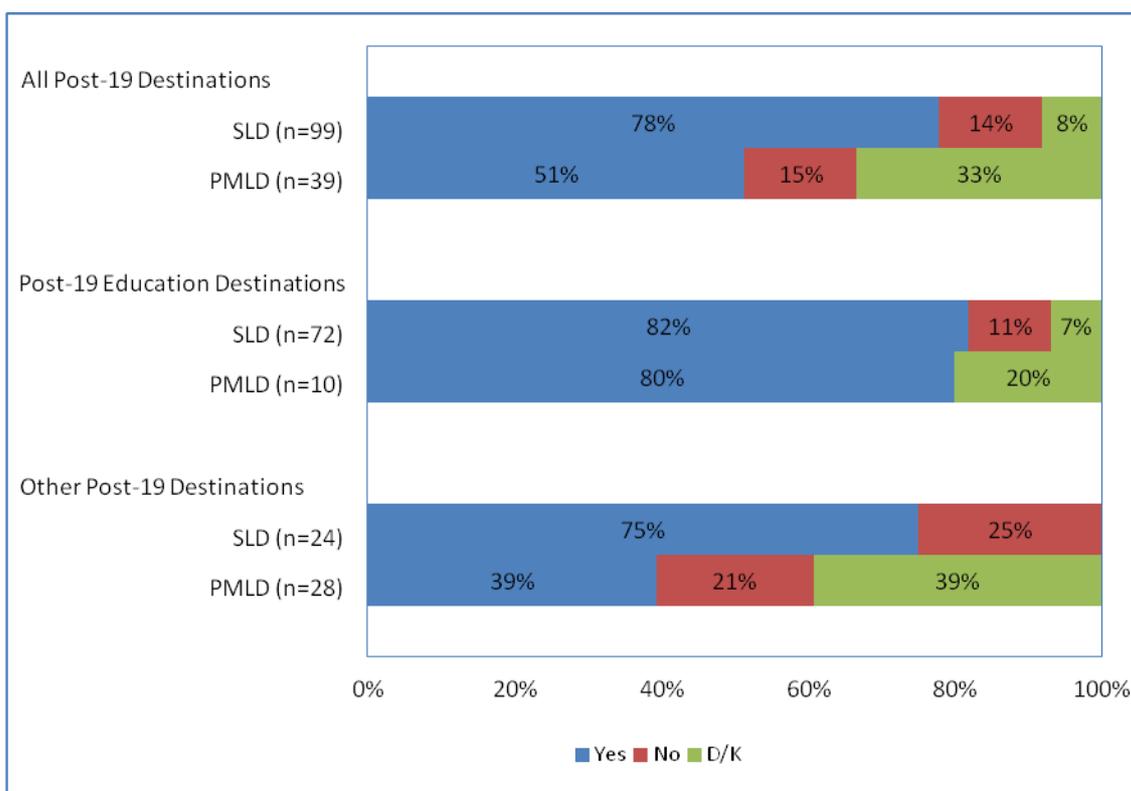
Destination	Leavers with SLD		Leavers with PMLD		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Day service	10	50	19	90	29	71
Day service and residential placement	2	10	0	0	2	5
Individualised support and day activities in community	1	5	2	10	3	7
Supported employment	3	15	0	0	3	7
Social enterprise	2	10	0	0	2	5
Work based training	2	10	0	0	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>

**The extent to which post-19 destinations were young people’s first choice of post-school provision**

4.17 We asked school staff and families of the 2011 school leaver cohort to tell us if the post-19 destinations had been the young people’s first choice. Answers were recorded as ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’. Figure 1 below summarises the responses to this question. If the response was ‘yes’, we asked about why this had been the first choice of post-19 provision. If the response was ‘no’, or ‘don’t know’, we asked what post-19 provision the young person would have preferred and what had prevented them from accessing this.

4.18 These data appear to show that the majority of young people with complex learning difficulties who left school in July 2011, had gone onto their first choice of post-19 provision. However, once again, the differences in the data regarding the situations of young people with SLD and of those with PMLD paint a much more nuanced picture. The following sections will look at these differences in more detail.

**Figure 1: Was the post-19 destination the young person's first choice of provision?**



**Post-19 destination choice for young people with SLD who left Year 14 in July 2011**

4.19 As Figure 1 above shows, most young people with SLD (78%) went onto a post-19 destination that was their first choice. Whilst 82% (n=59) of the post-19 education placements for young people with SLD (n=72) were described as the young person's first choice (n=59), several issues were noted that had made the situation difficult or had reduced the choices available:

- The funding decision had been made very late leading to stress for the family and young person.
- Parents had felt they had to fight for the first choice of provision.
- The placement offered was part-time and the young person and family felt they needed more hours of FE per week, (indicating unmet need in relation to FE for one young person).

- The young person's specific medical or behavioural needs could not be met locally (indicating unmet need in relation to FE for one young person).
- The placement (ISC in Wales) had been the first choice, but had since broken down as the college had not been able to meet the young person's communication needs (indicating unmet need in relation to FE for one young person).

4.20 For eight young people with SLD, the post-19 education placement had not been their first choice (indicating unmet need in relation to FE for eight young people) and reasons for this were as follows:

- Four young people had wanted to do a mainstream, vocational programme rather than a discrete, generic 'independent living skills' programme. The quotation below is illustrative of this situation:

"She would have preferred a vocational course in hairdressing but has had to accept a place at college doing access courses to keep her off the streets so she is not at home doing nothing. Colleges need more skills based courses for these young people. They may never be able to cut hair or run their own salon but they can be keen, loyal and hard-working employees with some self-respect and fulfilment in their own lives. Currently, colleges are asking for minimum qualifications, even on the most practical courses like hairdressing, so this cohort of young people are excluded because of their disability despite their ability to master some of the skills." SCH 024

- One young person wanted to try a residential placement rather than a day placement.
- One young person wanted to go to a FE college that was closer to home but her specific behavioural needs could not be met locally:

"The local college did not offer appropriate provision, either in the specific course or their general provision. The young person needed a 24-hour curriculum and a course suited to her needs." SCH 019

- For two young people, no other suitable options were available, thus their current placement was not considered to be their 'first choice' as there had been no other choices offered.

4.21 For five young people with SLD, it was unclear if the post-19 education placement had been their first choice or not (indicating

unmet need in relation to FE for five young people) and a few respondents were able to provide explanations for this:

- No other options were offered or were available – it was the ‘only choice’ for the young person so not really a first choice.
- The young person would have preferred a full-time course, not a part-time course.
- The young person would have liked more vocational learning opportunities and work experience options.

4.22 To sum up, 72 young people with SLD were accessing post-19 FE and of these (including those for whom it was their first choice of post-school provision), 16 had needs and wishes that were unmet.

4.23 For those young people with SLD in other post-19 destinations (n=24), 75% of these placements were described as the first choice of provision. For six young people with SLD, the other post-19 placement had not been their first choice. Of these, four young people would have preferred to go to college (indicating unmet demand for FE from four young people): one young person wanted to take up a residential placement in Wales and three would have chosen local FE provision. The reasons why these placements had not been possible at that time are explained below:

- In one case, the young person’s mother herself had learning difficulties. She did not understand the complex application procedures and thus missed the deadline:

“Mum has some learning difficulties herself and just assumed her son would be going to [residential college]. She missed the interviews and he was not accepted. He missed out because his family did not understand what was needed. The school tried to help but all the letters from the college were sent to his home address.” SCH 017

- In three other cases, the young people’s specific medical or behavioural needs could not be met by their local FE colleges, as the quotations below explain in more detail:

“Unfortunately due to his uncontrolled epilepsy the college asked him to defer until next year. The college did not have any suitably trained staff nor adequate policies and procedures to keep him safe. His

medication has been changed now and he is hoping to go next year instead." SCH 001

"His family would have preferred a local college but felt he needed specific help to manage the transition from school to college and this wasn't available. He has SLD and autism and challenging behaviour. There should be provision to help with the transition to college for these young people but it's not a priority for colleges. The canteen and communal spaces are not conducive - too noisy, large with a lack of familiarity. He needs a long lead-in time to get used to new things. We tried to explain this to the college but they did not recognise this or give a favourable response. So [the young man] has ended up in a day centre instead." SCH 014

"The family opted for him to stay at home rather than go to college due to the lack of physical activity on offer. It's such a shame as the school felt he would have benefited greatly from going to the local college. He loves sport and exercise and these needs could easily have been met, and were known well in advance of his leaving, but were left to the last minute by the social worker from the local authority. Also the college were unwilling to adapt their courses to meet his identified needs." SCH 016

- 4.24 To sum up, of 24 young people with SLD in other post-19 provision, four would have preferred to have gone to college, indicating an unmet demand for FE from four young people with SLD.

#### **Post-19 destination choice for young people with PMLD who left Year 14 in July 2011**

- 4.25 Figure 1 shows a very different picture regarding choice of post-19 destinations for young people with PMLD. Overall, it is clear that young people with PMLD were proportionately less likely to get their first choice of post-19 placement than young people with SLD.
- 4.26 Ten young people with PMLD (out of the total group of 39 young people with PMLD) were in post-19 education placements. For most (n=8), this was described as their first choice of post-19 destination. For those young people who were in FE college day placements, or a mix of FE college and day service, the most common reasons for this being their first choice of destination, in priority order, were:

- The learning programme offered was the most appropriate available for the young person’s learning and support needs.
- Going to FE college provided opportunities for the young person to socialise with non-disabled people and to mix with, and be around, other people generally.
- The physical environment and specialist provision was the best available to meet the young person’s needs (including complex health care needs).
- There was access to physiotherapy on site.

4.27 In two cases, the FE college had made recent and specific efforts to upgrade their facilities and physical environment to enable a particular young person with PMLD to attend a learning programme:

“There were no suitable facilities on the site when she came, so we spent over £9,000 on a wet room, toilet, changing facilities and ceiling hoist, including the purchase of a changing table. We had hoped to use it for two students, but in the end the other student had to attend another of our sites.” FE 037

“There was a risk of his needs not being met because he needs such a lot of personal care but we secured extra funding. The college had to look at their toileting and changing facilities and what they could offer to support his communication and mobility difficulties, so he was delighted when they said yes. It was very much his decision to go there and he got a lot of encouragement from his teacher who knew he would thrive there.” SCH 013

4.28 Just two issues were highlighted as problematic:

- For one young person, there was not enough space for her mobility aids to be stored at college (indicating unmet need for FE from one young person).
- For another young person, the FE programme was the best available but from a very limited choice of options overall (indicating unmet need for FE from one young person).

4.29 For the three young people at ISC placements in England, two of these placements were described as the first choice and key reasons for this choice were:

- The learning programme offered was the most appropriate available for the young person’s learning and support needs.

- The physical environment and specialist provision was the best available to meet the young person’s behavioural and complex health care needs.
- There was a high ratio of staff to students on site.
- There was access to physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and speech and language therapy on site.

4.30 For two young people, it was unclear if the post-19 education placement had been their first choice of destination or not (indicating unmet need for FE from two young people). In one case, a full-time course may have been preferred, were it available. The other young person was at an ISC in England, but might have taken up a more local, residential option had this met his needs:

“He has severe epilepsy and PMLD and the college in England offered better medical care than the local Welsh residential college (which is very close to his home area).” SCH 008

4.31 To sum up, 10 young people with PMLD were accessing post-19 FE and, of these (including those for whom it was their first choice of post-school provision), four had needs and wishes in relation to FE that were unmet.

4.32 For those young people with PMLD in other post-19 placements (n=28), it was less likely for these destinations to be described as a first choice of provision (39%). For six young people with PMLD, the other post-19 destination had not been their first choice and reasons for this were as follows:

- The young person’s family would have preferred them to go to college (four mentions, indicating unmet demand for FE from four young people).
- No other options were available – it was the ‘only choice’ for the young person (two mentions).

4.33 For those four young people whose families would have preferred them to go to college, two would have chosen an ISC placement in England, one would have liked a residential placement in

Wales and the other would have chosen a local, FE college placement, had it been available. The reasons why these placements had not been possible at that time were as follows:

- The family were told that the cost of their preferred (out-of-area) option was high and was unlikely to be funded, so they decided not to pursue the application.
- The young person was not able to state consistently that he wanted to go to an ISC in England, despite the family's wish for this to happen. In this case, the English ISC turned down the application as it was not convinced that the young person really wanted to take up a place.
- The family applied for the place, but by the time the funding had been agreed it was too late to take it up. They hoped to reapply the following year.
- The preferred local FE college did not offer PMLD provision and the family did not want their daughter to travel out-of-area, or to attend a residential college away from home.

4.34 In a fairly high (39%) proportion of cases, it was unclear if the other post-19 destination had been the young person's first choice or not. Most respondents were able to provide explanations for the lack of clarity:

- No other options were offered or were available – it was the 'only choice' for the young person, so not really a first choice (six mentions). For two of these cases, the young people had lost their only parent and were both in residential care with no obvious access to day services or other activities.
- The young person was waiting for a day service place (one mention).

In four of the above six cases, school and/or family respondents mentioned FE in passing but dismissed it as an impossible option for these young people.

4.35 To sum up, of 28 young people with PMLD in other post-19 provision, four would have definitely preferred to have gone to college, indicating an unmet demand for FE from four young

people. There is some evidence from interviews that this demand may well have been higher had FE options been explored more positively with families and young people at post-school transition. As noted above, in a further six cases no other options, including FE, had been offered to the young person, yet in four of these cases teachers and families may have felt that FE was not a feasible option even if it had been offered.

**To what extent do current levels of access to post-19 education provision meet the demand of young people with complex learning difficulties and their families?**

4.36 For the 99 young people with SLD who left Year 14 in 2011, the findings presented in this chapter indicate that 72 went onto some form of part-time or full-time post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12. According to their families and/or schools, four of those **not** in post-19 education would have liked to have gone to college. Thus, for the academic year 2011/12, a total of 76 (out of 99) young people with SLD were accessing, or wanted to access, some form of post-19 education. Thus, total demand for access to post-19 education by young people with SLD living in Wales was 77%, of which 95% (72 young people) was met, and 5% (4 young people) was unmet. Twenty-three per cent of young people with SLD had no demand for post-19 FE for the academic year 2011/12.

4.37 For the 39 young people with PMLD who left Year 14 in 2011, the data presented indicated that 10 (26%) went onto some form of part-time or full-time post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12. According to their families and/or schools, four of those **not** in post-19 education would have liked to have gone to college. Thus, for the academic year 2011/12, a total of 14 (out of 39) young people with PMLD were accessing, or wanted to access, some form of post-19 education. Thus, total demand for access to post-19 education by young people with PMLD living in Wales was 36%, of which 71% was met, and 29% was unmet.

Sixty-four per cent of young people with PMLD had no demand for post-19 FE for the academic year 2011/12.

**Table 7: Demand for access to post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12**

	School leavers with SLD		School leavers with PMLD		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Met demand for access to post-19 education (in FE)	72	73	10	26	82	59
Unmet demand for access to post-19 education (not in FE)	4	4	4	10	8	6
Total demand for access to post-19 education	76	77	14	36	90	65
No demand for access to post-19 education	23	23	25	64	48	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100</b>

**To what extent does current provision meet the needs and wishes of young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales?**

4.38 Sixteen (22%) of the 72 young people with SLD who were accessing post-19 education had needs or wishes that were not met. Areas of unmet need included:

- Mainstream, vocational programmes (instead of discrete, generic, independent living skills provision)<sup>41</sup>.
- Local, residential, education options.
- More, locally provided, post-19 education options.
- Provision closer to home.
- More full-time learning opportunities (as opposed to part-time).
- Support for medical or behavioural needs.
- Suitably trained staff to meet specific communication needs.

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<sup>41</sup> Access to vocational programmes was also identified as important by young people with SLD and PMLD in our interviews with them.

4.39 Four (40%) of the 10 young people with PMLD who were accessing post-19 education had significant areas where their needs or wishes that had not been met, including lack of local provision; insufficient hours of provision per week; lack of options; lack of space for specialist equipment and lack of access to therapy.

**Table 8: The extent of met and unmet FE-related needs or wishes for the academic year 2011/12**

	Young people with SLD		Young people with PMLD		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Young people in FE for year 2011/12	72	<b>100</b>	10	<b>100</b>	82	<b>100</b>
Met FE-related needs or wishes	56	<b>78</b>	6	<b>60</b>	62	<b>76</b>
Unmet FE-related needs or wishes	16	<b>22</b>	4	<b>40</b>	20	<b>24</b>

4.40 Table 8 shows that 22% of young people with SLD and 40% of young people with PMLD, who were accessing post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12, had unmet FE-related needs or wishes.

**Proportion of demand for post-19 education by young people with complex learning difficulties and their families for the year 2011/12 that was met outside of Wales**

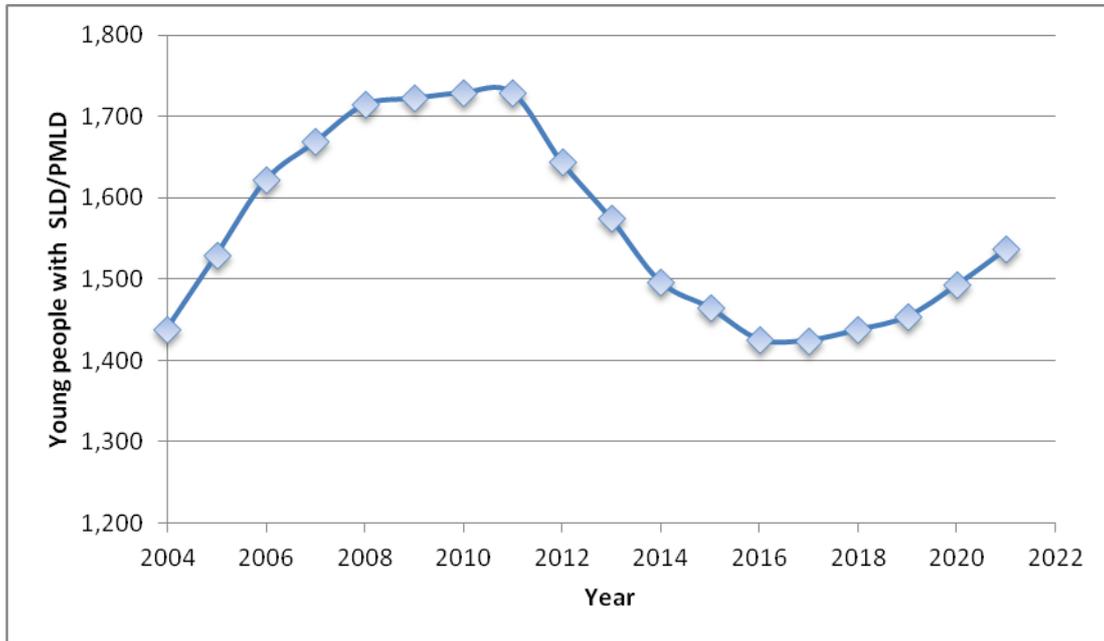
4.41 Ninety of the 138 young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD) had met and unmet demand for access to post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12. Eleven young people with complex learning difficulties (eight with SLD and three with PMLD) were attending residential courses at English ISCs for the academic year 2011/12. Thus, the proportion of demand for post-19 education that was met outside of Wales was 11 out of 90, or 12%.

## **Estimating future demand for post-19 education by young people with complex learning difficulties and their families living in Wales**

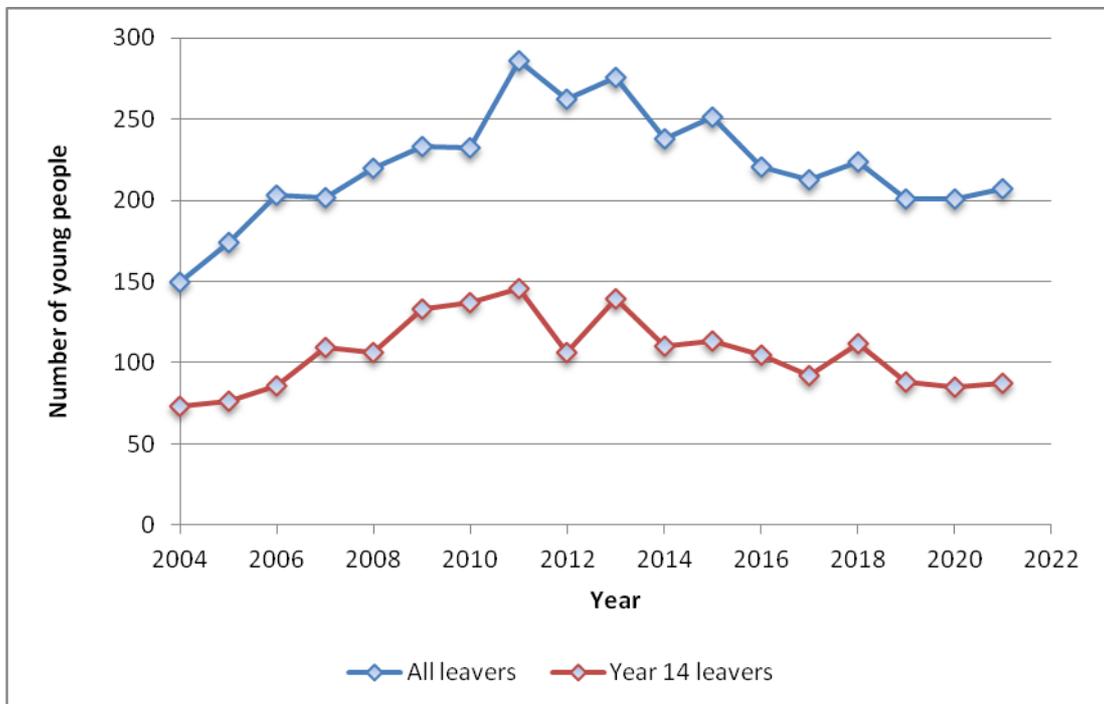
4.42 In order to estimate future demand for post-19 education, we first had to estimate the future, likely numbers of Year 14 school leavers with SLD and PMLD. The methodology we used for projecting future numbers of young people with complex learning difficulties is described in full in Appendix A.

4.43 Together with progression of year cohorts derived from 2011 PLASC and Independent Schools Census data for SLD and PMLD pupils, we were able to estimate the total number of SLD and PMLD pupils likely to be in maintained and non-maintained schools in Wales over the period 2012-2021 and likely numbers of school leavers each year. These estimates are presented in Figure 2, which has been generated using the methodology described in Appendix A. Figure 2 suggests that, in line with some trends in the general child population, numbers of young people with SLD and PMLD in Wales are likely to reduce a little in the next six to seven years and then begin to rise again into the next decade with population trends, if prevalence of SLD and PMLD remains stable over time. These estimates suggest, therefore, that total numbers of all pupils with SLD and PMLD in Years 7 to 14 will remain between 1,425 and 1,730 for the next 10 years.

**Figure 2: Total number of Year 7 to 14 pupils with SLD and PMLD in maintained and non-maintained schools in Wales with estimates of future numbers**



**Figure 3: Estimates of all school leavers (Year 11 to 14) and Year 14 only leavers with SLD and PMLD**



- 4.44 As a small, increased number of young people with SLD and PMLD pass through the school system and come to leave, the overall population figures are likely to rise over a period of 10 to 12 years, then fall back again (Figure 3). There are also likely to be young people with complex learning difficulties leaving school before Year 14 who wish to access post-19 education. Estimates given in Figure 4 suggest, therefore, that the total number of school leavers with SLD and PMLD leaving maintained and non-maintained secondary education from Year 11 to Year 14 inclusive, who may wish to seek post-19 education, is likely to be between 201 and 286 young people per year over the next decade.
- 4.45 In order to calculate the likely future demand for post-19 education from young people with complex learning difficulties, we need to make a number of assumptions:
- That the proportions of young people with SLD and those with PMLD will remain at similar levels to those evidenced in the project's cohort of young people with complex learning difficulties. That is, of 138 young people with complex learning difficulties, 99 were described as having SLD (72%) and 39 were described as having PMLD (28%).
  - That, assuming provision remains at current levels, the total demand for access to post-19 education will remain at a similar level to that suggested by the findings of this research. That is, at a level of 77% for young people with SLD, and at 36% for young people with PMLD.
- 4.46 Working on the basis of these assumptions, the table below summarises the estimated future demand for post-19 education by young people with complex learning difficulties over the next decade.

**Table 9: Estimated future demand for post-19 education by young people with SLD or PMLD leaving secondary education in Wales 2012-2021**

Total population of school leavers with SLD and PMLD between 2012 and 2021	Projected population of all school leavers with SLD	Likely demand for post-19 education from leavers with SLD	Projected population of all school leavers with PMLD	Likely demand for post-19 education from leavers with PMLD
Lowest likely population: 201	144	111	57	20
Highest likely population: 286	205	158	81	29

**Summary of chapter four: demand for post-19 education by young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales**

4.47 We collected primary data about Year 14 school leavers with SLD and PMLD directly from 26 state-maintained special schools in Wales (out of a target sample of 28). These data indicated that there were 99 Year 14 leavers with SLD and 39 with PMLD for the academic year 2010/11.

4.48 Of the Year 14 leavers with SLD, 73% went onto some form of post-19 FE, 20% progressed to another type of provision (day service, supported employment, etc) and 7% were not accessing a service or had a destination that was not known.

4.49 Of the Year 14 leavers with PMLD, 26% went onto some form of post-19 FE, 54% to another type of provision (mainly to a local authority day service) and 20% were not accessing a service or had a destination that was not known

4.50 Demand for access to post-19 education by Year 14 leavers with SLD living in Wales was 77% for 2011/12, of which 95% (n=72) was met, and 5% (n=4) was unmet. Demand for access to post-19 education by Year 14 leavers with PMLD living in Wales was 36% for 2011/12, of which 71% (n=10) was met, and 29% (n=4) was unmet.

- 4.51 Twenty-two per cent (n=16) of learners with SLD and 40% of learners with PMLD who were accessing post-19 education had FE-related unmet needs or wishes for the academic year 2011/12.
- 4.52 Drawing on a tailor-made prevalence model, and using 2011/12 estimates of demand, we estimated that future demand for access to post-19 education from secondary school leavers over the next 10 years is likely to be in the range of 111 to 158 new learners with SLD per annum, and 20 to 29 new learners with PMLD per annum.

## **5 Cost of providing post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties in Wales**

- 5.1 One of the key objectives of this research was to explore the existing cost of providing post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties. To address this objective, we sought costs data on individual learners who met the project's cohort criteria from interview respondents and from the Welsh Government.
- 5.2 This chapter describes the scope and limitations of the costs data collected. Within this context, the chapter also provides information about the average cost and range of post-19 education placements attended by those young people in the project's cohort group for whom we received costs data.

### **Scope and limitations of costs data collected in relation to post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12**

- 5.3 We received costs data from the Welsh Government, for those young people who were assessed by Welsh Government staff as meeting the project cohort criteria, and who had received either exceptional funding for FE placements, or specialist funding for ISC placements, for the academic year 2011/12.
- 5.4 We also received costs data, relating to young people who respondents felt met the project cohort criteria and who were enrolled on learning programmes for the academic year 2011/12, from three additional sources:
- Some (but not all) FE colleges were able to provide details of funding for some of their learners with complex learning difficulties, including details of exceptional funding received from Welsh Government, and in a few cases details of funding from local authorities, local health boards or other sources (including charitable funding and college central funds). Although we also asked FE colleges to quantify any

other costs borne by the college for which they received no additional funding, only three colleges provided this information.

- Almost all ISCs provided details of funding for some young people and one ISC was also able to supply details of costs which were borne by the college for supporting learners with SLD and PMLD for which it received no direct funding.
- A few local authorities provided some costs information for a small number of young people who were in their first year of a post-19 education placement. In some cases, this included details of funding received from Welsh Government and/or from the local authority itself.

5.5 To clarify, although we requested standardised information from interview respondents (via a series of self-completion costs tables), in most cases, respondents were unable to provide information in the format requested or were simply unable to provide any costs information whatsoever. Consequently, the costs data we received was incomplete and inconsistent across and between provider types.

5.6 The Welsh Government provided costs data for 78 young people who they defined as having 'complex learning difficulties' (SLD or PMLD) and who were receiving either exceptional funding for FE placements or specialist funding for ISC placements, for the academic year 2011/12. This included:

- Twenty-five young people funded at eight FE colleges using exceptional funding.
- Fifty-three young people funded at 13 specialist colleges (one FE offering specialist provision and 12 ISCs) in Wales and England using specialist funding.

5.7 Welsh Government data security restrictions meant that the exceptional funding data supplied included the total cost of this funding allocation to the Welsh Government per young person only. No identifying code for each young person was supplied so it was not possible to match this data with any of our other

records. We were unable to identify who the young people were, their date of birth, or their local authority area. In contrast, the specialist funding data supplied included: date of birth, identification code, college name, local authority, band rate, total cost of placement plus contributions to total cost from the Welsh Government, local authority and local health board. We were, thus, able to match these data against other young person records received from other sources resulting in a data match for 42 out of the 53 cases.

5.8 Not all of the costs data provided by the Welsh Government met the project's final, agreed cohort criteria. Subsequently, once the cohort criteria were applied, costs data supplied by Welsh Government which had a direct match to the project school leaver cohort of 138 young people with SLD or PMLD (of whom 82 were accessing some form of post-19 education) included:

- Twenty-five young people funded at eight FE colleges using exceptional funding.
- Twenty-nine young people funded at eight specialist colleges (one FE offering specialist provision; seven ISCs) in Wales and England using specialist funding.

### **Costs of discrete post-19 education provision at FE colleges for young people with complex learning difficulties**

5.9 The destination data collected in relation to the project cohort of 138 young people with SLD or PMLD who left secondary education in 2011, showed that 82 had gone onto some form of post-19 education. Of these, 50 were accessing discrete provision at FE colleges and three were accessing a mix of discrete provision and other post-19 options (e.g. day services). Costs associated with supporting this group of 53 learners in college were likely to include:

- Costs of the provision itself, including teaching costs and directly related learning resources. For discrete provision designed specifically for learners with LDD, this provision

attracts a NPFS SAW per learner of three times that of provision for mainstream learning programmes.

- Costs of providing additional learning support, some of which may be covered by WG exceptional funding on a learner-by-learner basis.
- Costs of transport to and from college.
- Costs of providing support for personal care needs.
- Costs of providing support for complex health care needs.
- Costs of providing access to therapies during college.

5.10 We asked each FE college if any of the learners with SLD or PMLD were in receipt of a support package from social services (including any transport contributions<sup>42</sup>) and/or the LHB and if so, whether any of this package was specifically associated with their college placement. Where this was identified, we asked for the cost of this package from social services or the LHB.

5.11 No specific calculations of infrastructure costs were made. We assumed that management and staffing, buildings and running, administration and all other costs were equally shared across all the learners in any one college and were, therefore, incorporated in the learning and support cost figures where these were supplied.

#### *Costs of the discrete FE learning provision*

5.12 All 53 FE learners were accessing discrete provision designed specifically for learners with LDD and which attracted a NPFS SAW value of three times the standard allocation per learner. According to Welsh Government data<sup>43</sup> for the 2011/12 academic year, 1,502 learners undertook 5,543 learning activities with a SAW of three. The total spend on these activities was

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<sup>42</sup> Transport contributions included coach or taxi travel paid for by the local authority, access to a free or discounted travel pass, or access to a 'travel training' intervention that might lead to the person travelling independently (rarely applicable to people with complex learning difficulties).

<sup>43</sup> Source: Personal communication, Further Education Division, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government, February 2013.

£7,874,489.62, which equates to an average of £1,420.62 per activity and an average of £5,242.67 per learner.

*Costs of providing additional learning support*

- 5.13 Not all of the 53 learners accessing discrete provision in FE colleges were likely to have needed additional learning support. For those that did, sources of funding would have included WG exceptional funding, local authority funding, charitable funding or funding from colleges' own budgets.
- 5.14 Twenty-five learners were supported by Welsh Government exceptional funding to access their learning programmes at eight FE colleges in Wales. The total funding allocated was £173,144. The average contribution per learner from the Welsh Government was £6,926 (range £2,346 to £21,560).
- 5.15 None of the 53 young people with SLD or PMLD in the 2011/12 cohort were accessing any mainstream FE provision thus, to our knowledge, none of this group were receiving any direct benefit from the WG's supplementary funding stream. In fact, most FE respondents made the point that supplementary funding was not relevant to this group and no respondents suggested that any support for these young people was resourced using the supplementary funding stream.
- 5.16 There were a small number of cases where colleges described using their own budgets, contingency funds, or student support funds to cover a range of support costs, including transport and personal support in classes.
- One college had allocated £5,489 from its student support fund to provide shared in-class support for a group of four young people for six hours, three days per week.
  - In another college the student support fund was providing for additional learning support for two days per week at a cost of £3,659 per annum for a group of learners. This was topped

up with an additional contribution from social services of support for one day per week for the same group of learners.

- The same college was also paying transport costs of £1,560 per annum for one young person, and £1,293 per annum for another young person.

5.17 We are aware that many FE colleges were also using their own budgets to 'top up' exceptional funding allocations from the Welsh Government for this group of learners. In interviews, several colleges highlighted the fact that exceptional funding is calculated on an hourly rate per support hour. Support to learners is calculated at the number of support hours per week per learner, which varies from learner to learner and from year to year. This funding formula does not cover the full costs of employing support workers or personal assistants, whose actual annual salary and on-costs (such as sick pay, holiday pay, pension, etc) are fixed. However, despite highlighting this issue, we received no costs data relating to it from the FE college staff interviewed.

*Other costs: transport to and from college, support for personal care needs, support for complex health care needs, and providing access to therapies during college*

5.18 The figures we received from the Welsh Government in relation to exceptional funding, only related to the learning support component for this group of young people. Colleges are expected to seek funding from learners' home local authorities and local health boards to cover some or all of any additional personal care, complex health care, and other support costs for individual learners. None of the FE colleges interviewed were able to provide costs data relating to these additional components of support, although we were aware that in some cases this support was being covered, either by the college itself or by the LA or LHB. Nor was this costs data available from the Welsh Government. Certainly this area of funding and cost allocation is fraught with tensions and difficulties for all the agencies

concerned and we were told of the complexities inherent in negotiations to agree and resolve joint and tripartite funding for FE discrete placements.

*Overview of the data used for estimating the costs of discrete post-19 education provision at FE colleges for young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD)*

5.19 The data used for estimating the costs of discrete post-19 education provision at FE colleges for young people with SLD and PMLD are not sufficiently robust from which to draw up an actual average total cost per learner. Respondents were simply unable (or perhaps unwilling) to source, collate and provide sufficiently detailed information on a per learner basis. Certainly there was a resource implication inherent in this task for respondents. Despite efforts from the research team to chase responses and to make costs collection materials easy and quick to complete, this area of data collection was notable for its lack of detail and consistency across all the respondent groups.

5.20 However, from the costs data we do have, it is possible to make the following statements:

- Fifty-three young people with complex learning difficulties (out of a total cohort of 138) were accessing some or all of the first year of a discrete FE learning programme for the academic year 2011/12.
- Welsh Government data indicate that the average annual cost for a learner undertaking an average of 3.7 discrete FE learning activities with a SAW of three, was £5,242.67, thus giving a total cost of £277,861.51, for 53 learners, for the academic year 2011/12.
- Twenty-five of the 53 learners were also supported by Welsh Government exceptional funding to access their learning programmes at eight FE colleges in Wales. The total funding allocated was £173,144.

- The total known costs for this group of 53 learners is, thus, estimated at £451,005, giving a mean average cost per learner of £8,509.

5.21 In addition to these known costs, there are a number of areas of significant unknown costs of meeting the learning and support needs of young people with complex learning difficulties attending discrete FE provision, which include:

- Costs of topping up fixed staffing costs not covered by Welsh Government exceptional funding (revenue costs funded by colleges).
- Costs of transport to and from college (revenue costs funded by local authorities, colleges and/or privately by families/students).
- Costs of providing support for personal care needs (infrastructure and revenue costs funded by colleges and/or local authorities).
- Costs of providing support for complex health care needs (infrastructure and revenue costs funded by colleges, local authorities and/or local health boards).
- Costs of providing access to therapies during college hours (infrastructure and revenue costs funded by colleges and/or local health boards).
- Costs for supporting young people when they are not in college if courses are less than full-time, and during college holidays (costs met by local authorities and/or privately by families/learners).

5.22 The National Audit Office review (2011) of special education for young people aged 16-25 in England was also unable to collect usable or robust data on these additional aspects of the full costs of FE provision. Very few local authorities in England could access or provide costs data on social care or health care costs for students in FE settings. The National Audit Office estimated that core costs per person per annum for these areas might be as follows:

- Transport costs - £1,000 - £3,000.

- Cost of providing care and therapy in a community or college setting - £0 - £15,000+.
- Costs of an extra two weeks per year of community day care (to cover some of the time when young people are not in college) - £0 - £1,000.

5.23 If we take the National Audit Office estimated additional costs into account for learners in FE discrete provision in Wales, this could add an additional £1,000 - £19,000 to the total cost per learner per annum, giving an estimated mean average cost of £9,509 - £27,509 per learner per year.

### **Costs of discrete post-19 education provision at ISCs for young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD)**

5.24 The destination data collected in relation to the project cohort of 138 young people with SLD or PMLD who left secondary education in July 2011 showed that 29 were accessing discrete provision at ISCs in Wales and England. This included six young people who were accessing residential, specialist provision at one FE college in Wales<sup>44</sup>.

5.25 Specialist funding is made available for ISC college residential and day placements, on a case-by-case basis, to those learners whose exceptional needs cannot be met by a local FE provider. The funding is paid directly by the Welsh Government to the independent specialist college and covers all, or part, of the yearly fee for an individual learner.

5.26 The annual fee charged by each ISC covers the costs of the education provision and learning programmes attended by the young people, additional learning support, 24-hour support for personal care (where needed), 24-hour support for complex health care needs (where needed), access to therapy (where

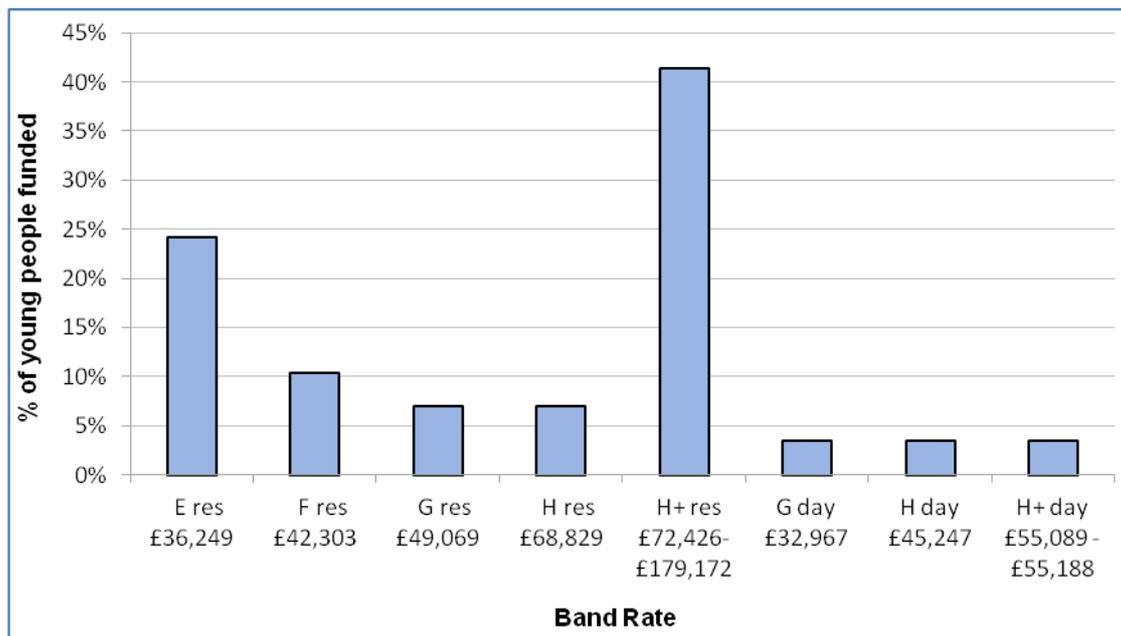
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<sup>44</sup> Residential placements at this provision are funded from the specialist funding budget and are subject to the same application procedures as ISC applications.

needed), transport whilst the young person is at college, some social activities during the evenings and at weekends, and accommodation and food during college term-time.

- 5.27 The costs data provided by the Welsh Government included the 29 young people identified as attending ISC provision, from the project cohort of 138 school leavers with SLD or PMLD. Figure 4 shows the range of residential funding that this group of 29 young people received. Seven of the 29 ISC placements were funded at the lowest band rate (E) of £36,249 per annum. Twelve placements were funded at the highest band rate (H+) which ranged from £72,426 to £179,172 per annum (mean of £106,900 per learner per annum). Three young people received specialist funding as day learners (one at band G, one at band H and one at band H+).
- 5.28 Eighteen placements were at Welsh ISCs, with a mean average cost of £67,063 (range £32,967 to £115,239). The 11 placements at English ISCs had a mean average cost of £75,038 (range £36,249 to £179,172).
- 5.29 The total funding for these 29 placements, for the academic year 2011/12, was £2,032,557, giving a mean average cost per learner of £70,088, and a range of £36,249 to £179,172.

**Figure 4: Percentage of young people with complex learning difficulties receiving specialist funding for ISC placements by band rate for the academic year 2011/12**



5.30 In 14% of cases (four placements), the Welsh Government funded the whole fee for the ISC placement. In most cases, however, placements were funded jointly with young people’s home social services department. Twenty-two (76%) of the 29 ISC placements were jointly funded by the Welsh Government and Welsh social services departments. Three placements received tripartite funding from the Welsh Government, the young person’s home social services department and local health board.

5.31 The total contribution from Welsh social services departments to the funding of these 25 placements was £737,956, and the total contribution from Welsh local health boards to the three tripartite funded placements was £58,620.

5.32 Of the seven ISCs included in the research, just two were able to provide any form of breakdown of how the annual fee of specialist funding they received for each placement was distributed across teaching, and other forms of support and residential costs. Generally, all individual funding was combined and used as a

block to provide the assistance the young person was assessed as requiring.

- 5.33 Of the two ISCs who provided more detailed cost data, this data highlighted the requirement for significant levels of personal care and therapy input among the young people enrolled on ISC residential learning programmes, often in excess of 10 to 12 hours per week.
- 5.34 Only two of the ISCs included in the research reported any additional expenditure for placements for young people with complex learning difficulties over and above the specialist funding they received from the Welsh Government (with contributions from social services departments and local health boards). One ISC provided a breakdown of the cost allocations for different elements of each young person's learning support, personal support, health care support and residential costs. The respondent at this ISC was also able to identify that, for one young person, Welsh Government specialist funding of £36,249 per annum was insufficient to cover the costs of the placement and that a total of £39,950 was in fact spent. Thus, the college identified a shortfall of £3,701 (around 10%) per annum in funding for that young person and made up the difference from its own charitable enterprise and grants. This ISC reported a similar loss for the other students with complex learning difficulties whose placements were funded by the Welsh Government.
- 5.35 The only other additional sources of funding reported by one other ISC was use of direct payments for a small number of hours (three to four hours per week for three people). However, it was unclear whether this was being used in support of college-based activity and no cost was attached to the hourly rate, making it impossible to quantify the additional cost incurred in this case.

5.36 Taking into account the additional costs incurred by the ISC referred to above, which amounted to a total of £22,206 for the six young people in the project cohort, the total cost of the 29 ISC placements taken up by young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 was £2,054,763, giving a mean average cost per learner of £70,854.

**Estimating the total cost of providing post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12**

5.37 To recap, from the project cohort of 138 young people with SLD or PMLD (as described in chapter four), 82 were accessing some form of post-19 education. This included:

- Fifty-three young people who were enrolled on some or all of the first year of a discrete FE learning programme for the academic year 2011/12.
- Twenty-nine young people enrolled on discrete day and residential learning programmes at specialist colleges (one FE offering specialist provision; eight ISCs) in Wales and England.

5.38 Using costs data supplied by the Welsh Government and by research respondents from colleges and local authorities, the estimated total cost of FE discrete provision for 53 learners with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12, was likely to have been at least £503,977, and potentially as much as £1,457,977 (from £9,509 - £27,509 per learner).

5.39 Similarly, using costs data supplied by ISCs and the Welsh Government, the total actual cost of ISC discrete provision for 29 learners with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 is calculated to have been £2,054,763 (£70,854 per learner).

5.40 Thus, the total cost of post-19 education provision for 82 young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year

2011/12 was between £2,558,740 and £3,512,740 (from £31,204 to £42,838 per learner). The estimated mean average per learner was £37,021.

### **Estimating the likely future cost of providing post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties over the next 10 years**

- 5.41 In order to calculate the likely future cost of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties, we need to return to our estimates of future demand for post-19 education (given in chapter four) and the current estimated costs already calculated in this chapter.
- 5.42 In chapter four, likely future demand for access to post-19 education was estimated on the basis of 2011/12 rates, at 77% for young people with SLD, and at 36% for young people with PMLD. The projected population of all school leavers with SLD over the next 10 years was estimated to range from 144 to 205, and for all school leavers with PMLD, from 57 to 81. Setting these population projections against the estimated rates of demand for FE, suggests that future demand for access to post-19 education over the next 10 years is likely to be in the range of 111 to 158 learners with SLD per annum, and 20 to 29 learners with PMLD per annum (see Figure 6, chapter four). Summed together, this gives a lowest likely demand of 131 and a highest likely demand of 187 learners with complex learning difficulties per annum.
- 5.43 Table 10 below provides a range of estimated future costs using the mean cost per learner (£37,021), alongside the lowest (£31,204) and highest (£42,838) costs per learner estimated for the project cohort for the year 2011/12.

**Table 10: Estimated future costs of post-19 education by young people with SLD or PMLD leaving secondary education in Wales 2012-2021**

Total population of school leavers with SLD and PMLD between 2012 and 2021	Total demand for post-19 education from all school leavers with SLD and PMLD <sup>45</sup>	Total estimated cost of demand using mean estimated cost per learner of £37,021	Total estimated cost of demand using lowest estimated cost per learner of £31,204	Total estimated cost of demand using highest estimated cost per learner of £42,838
Lowest likely population: 201	131	£4,849,751	£4,087,724	£5,611,778
Highest likely population: 286	187	£6,922,927	£5,835,148	£8,010,706

5.44 Without taking into account inflation and cost increases that might be likely over future years, the table shows that total yearly costs might range from £4,849,751 to £8,010,706 up until 2021, based on the estimates and calculations using costs data provided by the Welsh Government, FE colleges, ISCs and local authorities for the academic year 2011/12.

### **Summary of chapter five: cost of providing post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties in Wales**

5.45 From the project cohort of 138 young people with SLD or PMLD, 82 were accessing some form of post-19 education. This included:

- Fifty-three young people who were enrolled on some or all of the first year of a discrete FE learning programme for the academic year 2011/12.
- Twenty-nine young people enrolled on discrete day and residential learning programmes at specialist colleges (one

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<sup>45</sup> The figure for total demand is derived from data in Table 9, chapter four. The lowest likely demand (n=131) is the sum of lowest likely demand from leavers with SLD (n=111) and from leavers with PMLD (n=20). The highest likely demand (n=187) is the sum of highest likely demand from leavers with SLD (n= 158) and from leavers with PMLD (29).

FE offering specialist provision; eight ISCs) in Wales and England.

- 5.46 The data used for estimating the costs of discrete post-19 education provision at FE colleges for young people with SLD and PMLD was not sufficiently robust from which to establish an actual average total cost per learner. However, we have estimated that the total cost of FE discrete provision for 53 learners with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12, was likely to have been at least £503,977 and potentially as much as £1,457,977 (a mean average of £9,509 - £27,509 per learner).
- 5.47 Using costs data supplied by ISCs and the Welsh Government, we calculated that the total actual cost of ISC discrete provision for 29 learners with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 was £2,054,763 (a mean average of £70,854 per learner).
- 5.48 Bearing in mind that some areas of cost were missing or have been estimated, we suggest that the total cost of post-19 education provision for 82 young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 was between £2,558,740 and £3,512,740 (from £31,204 - £42,838 per learner). The estimated mean average per learner was £37,021.

## **6 Developing post-19 education provision in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties**

6.1 We asked all respondents how access to current post-19 provision for young people with SLD and PMLD could be increased. We also asked them to identify key areas for development. Concurrently, we collected information about models for delivering post-19 education from outside of Wales. The focus groups with stakeholders also explored key messages from the research, possible alternative models and sought participants' feedback on these. This chapter brings these data sources together. It highlights five key areas for development, identified by research participants, which might feasibly help to meet the post-19 education needs and demands of young people with SLD and PMLD living in Wales. The key areas for development are listed below:

- Support FE colleges to enhance, develop and extend their current range and level of provision.
- Consider the potential for special schools to develop a role as post-19 providers.
- Develop more local, residential learning opportunities.
- Maintain and develop independent specialist day and residential options for those who need them.
- Develop and broaden the range of other post-19 opportunities available for young people with SLD and PMLD, including more access to individualised support using direct payments.

6.2 The chapter also presents a number of 'practice examples', drawn from the data collected on delivery models operating outside of Wales. These summaries illustrate how each key area of development might work in practice and are presented as boxed text in the sections that follow. The details of each model have been anonymised, but all examples are based on interviews with key informants and they aim to summarise the key messages about how each initiative worked in practice.

6.3 Within the timescale of this study, it was not possible to conduct an evaluation of the outcomes and costs of each practice example illustrated in this chapter, or to consider their effectiveness. Rather, we were limited to collecting basic data about the key features of each model and to considering its relevance to the target group. Nonetheless, the practice examples documented in this chapter highlight possibilities for developing provision for young people with SLD and PMLD and may help to provide a framework for further discussion between the Welsh Government and FE stakeholders. In the sections that follow, we present summaries of the practice examples, as boxed text.

#### **Support FE colleges to enhance, develop and extend their current range and level of provision**

6.4 Almost all respondents had suggestions about how current provision within the FE sector could be developed and extended to improve access to FE for learners with SLD and PMLD. There was, however, widespread acknowledgement of the barriers currently faced by FE colleges and of the need for funding and support to be appropriately targeted to enable the sector to respond to the challenges in meeting the needs of this group of learners. Suggested developments included:

- A wider choice of learning opportunities for young people with SLD and PMLD.
- More individualised learning programmes that are needs-led rather than provision-led.
- More inclusive learning opportunities and a wider choice of access to mainstream courses.
- More sensory-based FE for young people with PMLD.
- More access to learning opportunities in the evenings, at weekends or during holiday periods – these could be offered by independent providers using college facilities.

- Increased access for young people with SLD and PMLD to vocational courses, including mainstream, vocational courses.
- Support to FE colleges to help them develop more employment and social enterprise opportunities for young people to build on the vocational skills they have learnt in college or at school.
- Offering learning opportunities for longer than three years for those that need more time.
- Continued post-college learning opportunities, for example, through attendance at night classes, or community learning.
- More social opportunities organised by colleges.
- The development of specific physical locations within college, to store specialist equipment, to be used as drop-in-and-stay spaces for therapies, or as chill-out rooms for people with behavioural support needs.
- More one-to-one support available for young people to help them cope with the college environment.
- Clearer directives about the organisation, funding and provision of support for personal needs and for complex health care needs.
- On-going access to therapies within the FE setting.
- Improved physical access for wheelchair users.

6.5 These suggestions all confirm the need for more practical and financial support to be made available to FE colleges so they can develop more appropriate, individualised, and possibly more specialist, provision for this group of learners. This might include, for example, enhancing local colleges so they can offer more individualised independent living skills training, more access to therapies, more sensory input, more vocational training and work experience, and possibly, residential options.

“These young people are used to getting physiotherapy and hydrotherapy two to three times a week and when they go to college they get so much less sensory input and support. Even the nearest residential college can’t offer what they get at school. There’s a need to change the focus of funding to work on getting more facilities within county rather than sending them out of county.” LA 054

## Practice example 1

### Alpha College: a college-based, FE hub

Alpha College is a mainstream FE college in the South of England which has developed and enhanced its provision in order to offer specialist, post-19 education provision for up to 86 day learners with PMLD, challenging behaviour and/or autism. It supports the learning, personal care and complex health care needs of all its learners, including those with dual sensory impairment and life-limiting conditions, mostly on a one-to-one basis. The college operates as a regional hub, or centre of excellence, for learners with complex and high support needs. Young people who attend as day learners are drawn from a very wide catchment area and travel times to and from college can be up to one hour each way. The cost per learner for a place on this provision is currently £30,000 to £40,000 per annum.

The college has an active and positive partnership with the local social services department. Social services transition staff work with college staff on support planning, to ensure that young people's (social care) personal budgets can contribute towards their college needs. In England, a personal budget is the allocation of social care funding for one individual, which can be realised in different ways – e.g. through a direct payment, or via an organisation. Additionally, college staff deliver training to outside providers, which includes social services staff. The college provides training for PAs, and carries out joint work with PAs directly employed by the young person or by their family.

A key element of the curriculum is the seamless approach to college and lifelong learning and the college has set up evening and weekend activities, which young people can buy into, using their personal budgets. Each young person has an individual learning plan which is managed electronically, and is designed to ensure that input from parents and others who are close to the young person can be inputted as appropriate. The goal is that young people's learning programmes are both individually tailored to their learning needs whilst at college, and designed to help them work towards longer-term, post-college goals. Students leave college with their certificates, stating their goals and their targets.

What does this initiative require, then, to be successful? The set-up in college includes a multi-disciplinary team consisting of two nurses on site, speech and language therapy, and support assistants. The respondent felt that staff training and the quality of the staff team were the essential elements:

“It's the staff team that makes it all work. It's making them feel valued, and making sure that they are well trained, and that they get job satisfaction.” Curriculum Head of Department, Alpha College

## Practice example 2

### Orchard View: a community-based FE hub

Orchard View is a community-based, specialist education service for young people aged 19 to 25 who have a variety of complex needs, including physical, learning and health needs. It is provided by Farling City Council in partnership with Farling City College. Although this specialist education service has been running for almost 35 years, it has recently moved to new accommodation remodelled from a former primary school building. The new building includes three personal care suites, an accessible teaching kitchen, two sensory rooms, a sports hall and six classrooms, as well as plenty of outdoor space and a football pitch.

Orchard View provides learning opportunities for approximately 30 to 35 students per day, including those with PMLD, SLD, autism and challenging behaviour. Students are enrolled with Farling City College, but can take part in learning activities based at the Orchard View site. The majority of students are referred through schools or through their PAs. Social workers, community nurses and parents can also refer directly to Orchard View, and other parts of the college may refer students. The approximate cost per learner, per annum, for a place at Orchard View is £25,000.

The goal is to deliver personalised, individual learning, in collaboration with Farling City College. Orchard View staff work closely with schools and with the circles of support which are formed around each learner, to find out about each student's personal goals. An individualised curriculum is then developed for each learner which reflects their personal goals. The collaboration between Orchard View and Farling City College means that college staff have been able to learn more about delivering personalised learning through their joint work with staff and young people.

Students are assessed in a person-centred way, with a baseline assessment and a person-centred plan, in booklet form, which accompanies them through their time at Orchard View. The focus at Orchard View is on what students will do when they leave college. For most, they will have individualised services, and possibly direct payments. Parents are increasingly playing a large role in managing those services, and group services have decreased in some areas. Orchard View staff, therefore, have to be very aware of what challenges young people will face in their adult life and to design an individualised curriculum that will support young people's learning in this respect.

The service manager at Orchard View emphasised the importance of staff skills, dedication and commitment. She also said that strong leadership is also important and that senior management need to understand and promote the principles of a person-centred approach throughout the college.

## **Consider the potential for special schools to develop a role as post-19 providers**

6.6 Several head teachers and family members suggested that special schools may wish to consider the potential of developing a role as post-19 providers. The idea of an extended school leaving age was mentioned, where young people with complex learning difficulties could have the option to stay on in the familiar environment of school up to the age of 25, with continued access to specialist education, learning and personal support, and therapy. One head teacher summed up the potential of this role as follows:

“It can take up to 19 years for this cohort of young people to reach early developmental landmarks and if we were to increase the school leaving age this would be a way to keep those young people moving forward with their learning. Whether that’s a function that people think a school can continue to provide for PMLD or SLD pupils, or that they do need to leave school and move to do it, I’m not sure, but I think that’s something that parents and young people should be offered.”  
SCH 004

6.7 A variation on this theme was the concept of a tapered transition from school to post-19 destinations, whereby young people could continue in school post-19, but have a mix of school input alongside college or other input for one or two years. One head teacher also highlighted the potential for offering short breaks (residential ‘respite care’) on school premises. Another head teacher alluded to the possibility that schools might consider developing as specialist day and residential post-19 education providers:

“Ideally a post-19 PMLD residential college locally for South Wales would help families to have respite. The problem is the gradual wearing down of parents’ resilience. The school run a two week summer scheme, but the summer holidays are very challenging for families. Running the schools is much less expensive than sending children away to expensive residential provision.” SCH 031

“In residential specialist colleges the day places are expensive as they are set up to be residential colleges so there is a premium on those places. It may be cheaper and more efficient to develop options in the schools or provide a local specialist setting than using independent residential colleges, particularly for day placements.” SCH 004

- 6.8 Other respondents perceived a highly extended role for schools as community hubs for young people up to age 25, providing and supporting on-going access to employment and learning opportunities, as well as offering supported residential provision.

“Could we as special schools be extended to provide a community base for young people up to age 25? We would need to offer more work-based provision, perhaps open up a shop in the town centre, and people could live in sheltered accommodation and work in the provision whilst continuing their learning in school with input and accreditation from the local college.” SCH 028

### **Practice example 3**

#### **Berrywood School Federation: a school-based FE hub**

Berrywood School Federation represents a group of local special schools in south west England. Together they have supported the development of a purpose-built annexe for up to 26 post-19 learners with PMLD, at Berrywood School, the special school leading the initiative. The local FE college sub-contracts its PMLD provision to Berrywood School so that the other schools who are members of the federation can refer post-19 learners with PMLD to this one location. This development of this school-based hub was a direct response to a need for more local provision. The estimated cost per learner is within the range of £12,000-£36,000, depending on individuals' learning and support needs.

This school-based FE hub is able to meet all the learning and personal support needs that this group of young people may have, including complex health care and access to therapies on the school site. All learners follow accredited qualifications which are overseen by link staff at the local FE college and can be adapted to each individual's own learning targets. The learning programmes are delivered largely on the school site, with some use of community facilities such as the local swimming pool and sports complex.

In terms of monitoring and progress, there is a flexible system which is easy for all staff to use, and which reflects each individual's separate learning goals. Close links with families, and a focus on longer term outcomes, are considered essential. School and college staff work closely together and regular partnership working includes joint observations of students, joint training both on the school site and within a college training network, and a joint approach to funding calculations and applications. The respondent drew attention to the 'passionate and committed' staff group, who have high aspirations for the students.

## **Develop more local, residential learning opportunities in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties**

- 6.9 A large number of respondents highlighted a need for increased access to, and a wider choice of, residential learning opportunities in Wales, for both young people with SLD and for those with PMLD. Various suggestions were made about how this could be achieved, including supporting ISCs to develop or extend their residential provision by setting up local hubs or bases.
- 6.10 The local, residential option that was mentioned most frequently was for local FE colleges to offer supported student accommodation for young people with SLD and PMLD, either themselves, or by working together with residential provider organisations to design and offer 24 hour residential learning packages. These could include access to FE programmes at a mainstream FE college alongside structured support for independent living in a supported living environment. This type of possible arrangement was mentioned by respondents from different settings across Wales:
- “We know some people attend open days and assessments but are aware they/their parents have already chosen residential colleges. We can't offer a residential setting but that may change in the future - it seems to be a gap.” FE college 040
- “We would like to discuss with the local college about having a site where young people could try out living independently and gradually build up the time spent there, maybe trying it out first as a respite option.” LA 068
- 6.11 A similar arrangement is already in place at one FE college in south east Wales, whereby the local college runs its own residential student hostel for young disabled people. The families we interviewed whose son or daughter attended this residential provision, were all very positive about the arrangement and its benefits for the young people.

#### **Practice example 4**

##### **Orchard View's Stepping Forward project – a residential learning base, with access to specialist or FE learning activities**

The Stepping Forward project was set up by Orchard View specialist education service to offer weekly residential provision with access to specialist and/or FE learning activities. Aimed at learners with complex and additional needs, the Stepping Forward project is managed by a member of staff from Orchard View and involves the rental of a student flat within the ordinary student accommodation (hall of residence) at Farling City College. Students live in the flat from Monday to Friday. They attend FE courses either at Orchard View or, for some learners, at Farling City College.

The Stepping Forward project is a partnership arrangement between Orchard View, Farling City College and a national care provider organisation which provides the living support in the student flat. It offers a local alternative to out-of-area ISC residential provision and the overall goal is for students to improve their independent living skills, so that they will be able to support themselves more in adulthood.

As students enter the Stepping Forward arrangement, they visit first for tea, their parents visit the flat, and they gradually build up their overnight visits to five days per week. As students then progress during their time in the flat, a person-centred plan evolves. The development of the plan helps young people to consider what they want to do after they leave college, where they want to live, and with whom.

Inclusion in the FE setting for this group depends on which course they are accessing in college. However, the benefits to students are also about inclusion within the hall of residence. They get invitations to student events and sometimes go to parties with other students. There is a gym on site, which they use, along with other students. These factors are hugely important in building students' confidence and their ability to make choices. In terms of outcomes, students sometimes plan to live together after college or to move into supported living arrangements together.

The estimated cost of the residential provision at Stepping Forward is approximately £28,000 per person, per annum. In addition, the cost of access to learning activities at Orchard View or Farling City College could be up to £25,000 per person, per annum.

## **Maintain and develop independent specialist day and residential options for those who need them**

6.12 A proportion of respondents stressed the importance of maintaining specialist options for those who need them and for families and young people to have the freedom to choose a specialist, residential option. The Welsh Government has recognised that there will always be some young people who need ISC provision. Given this, it is important to have clearer information at the local level about the right to choose an ISC placement, and for the menu of options available to young people and families (the 'local offer') to include ISC provision.

"There is a role for specialist residential colleges which this local authority won't fund. Our experience with other young people is that they have blossomed after having the opportunity to move away to a residential college for a period of time." SCH 014

"Some young people really do benefit from going to a specialist college. Sometimes it's not appropriate for young people to stay with the family as they do much better in college and this could save the local authority money in the long run." LA 053

6.13 Some ISCs in Wales are exploring ways of broadening their provision to provide learning opportunities to other groups of young people, whilst maintaining their specialist focus.

"We feel we meet the needs of the students we take but we are developing shorter programmes of one to two years for those who need independent living skills but are not our current students." ISC 073

"We are hoping to add more programmes that keep a balance of indoor and outdoor activities and interest both males and females. In their third year there will be the option to attend courses at local FE colleges." ISC 080

6.14 ISCs within Wales, and in bordering English counties, may also wish to consider developing as local hubs, whereby the specialist skills, facilities and social opportunities they provide could be made available to local schools, FEs and young people attending other provision. The quotations below give a flavour of some of the possibilities that ISCs may wish to consider:

“We maintain links with FE colleges and are often helping them to cater for students like ours. For example, we have helped them to organise disability sports. We also have a service level agreement for CPD. FE staff come here or we go there to train them. I think this will increase and we can pass on our knowledge and expertise.” ISC 076

“The social aspects of residential college are so valuable. I’d like him to have those opportunities in the future. But there are no night classes or anything like that available once he leaves college”. FAM 098

“Transition out of college can be as problematic as transition in. They have a wonderful time here for three years, then go back to their home area where there is no provision available. An ideal package would be two to three days of supported employment, plus a local college placement to continue their studies, plus a supported residential placement. But this rarely happens and it’s a postcode lottery. Could we fill some of these gaps? Could we offer some sort of domiciliary care to students who live nearby? For example, if students could go back to supported residential placement in their home area, then could we provide some out-of-hours independent living support in the evenings and at weekends?” ISC 076

### **Practice example 5**

#### **Valleytop ISC and Westshire FE College Partnership: a residential learning base for learners with access to a local FE college**

Valleytop ISC in the north of England offers specialist residential post-19 education to young people with ‘very challenging behaviour and complex needs’. The ISC is working together with nearby Westshire FE College to set up a specialist, residential learning base to provide 24-hour support for FE learners with challenging behaviour and complex needs.

This initiative, which is still at the planning stage, will involve the ISC purchasing a house near Westshire College, to accommodate five to six learners, with 24-hour support being provided by care staff from Valleytop ISC. Learners would live in the residential base, but could access a learning programme provided by Westshire College. The overall goal is to provide learning opportunities, and accreditation, for young people who would be gaining independent living skills concurrently, through their living arrangements. An additional benefit of this initiative is that Valleytop ISC may also provide training to teaching staff and learning support staff at Westshire FE College.

The initiative is not yet up and running and has met with some opposition from the local authority, due to the proposed cost of places (which was not disclosed by the respondent).

**Develop and broaden the range of other post-19 opportunities available for young people with SLD and PMLD, including more access to individualised support using direct payments**

6.15 Several respondents raised the issue that post-19 education is not necessarily the most appropriate or desirable option for all young people with complex learning difficulties and may not, in any case, be their first choice. The destination data showed that where young people were not in FE, their post-19 choices were mainly limited to local authority day service provision, as too few other options are available. As the quotation below sums up, in some areas, many young people with SLD or PMLD were only able to access day service provision for older people:

“It’s a real sadness that on leaving school, quite a few young people with PMLD will go directly into older adult services where no education options are offered.” SCH 014

6.16 Respondents highlighted that the local post-19 offer, or menu of choices available to young people and families, should include services which are age appropriate for 19-25 year olds. Many respondents highlighted the lack of work-based opportunities and insufficient support to enable young people and families to access direct payments and self-directed support. A few families asked for more structured daytime opportunities for young people who want to use direct payments. Families appreciated the flexibility of direct payments, but found the lack of local options and activities frustrating as the quotation below demonstrates:

“He ran out of places to go, especially in bad weather.” FAM 088

6.17 Several people suggested the development of community bases, for young people using direct payments for individualised support. Two such existing centres, one in north and one in south Wales, have sensory learning facilities, work-based learning opportunities and other resources (such as a hydrotherapy pool at the south Wales centre). Young people can use direct

payments to access the facilities at the centre and to learn new skills.

### **Practice example 6**

#### **Marianne's individual budget**

Marianne is a young woman of 17 who loves music, art and people. She does not use speech (to any great extent) and no-one is sure what she understands. She has developed some physical difficulties and has physiotherapy every day. Marianne currently has an individual budget managed by her mother, which she uses to fund her own timetable of day time activities using ordinary community resources, including access to FE. There is also active support in managing this individual budget from other specialists, including the teacher and teaching assistant from Marianne's former school. An individual budget is similar to a personal budget, but has funding streams from different sources, including in this case social care and education.

The assessment of what Marianne needs is person-centred, and is based on a deep understanding of her interests and personality. Marianne has a circle of support, whose members have in-depth personal knowledge about her. The circle of support has worked with Marianne and her mother to develop her person-centred plan which is quite clearly built on learning opportunities, rather than on strict 'targets'. Marianne's current timetable includes singing lessons, one session a week painting models in a local shop, an evening at Girl Guides, and a session in the local FE college in which she participates in a health and social care course. Marianne's mother used to work as a lecturer in a further education college, understands the FE system and what it can offer. With this knowledge she was able to 'broker' an appropriate FE learning opportunity for her daughter.

Marianne's mother reports that Marianne is 'blissfully happy'. She loves the music and singing, and is considering developing the plaster model painting into a microenterprise. The personal assistants who support her are hand-picked, and the family have total confidence in the way they work. Marianne is not working towards any particular qualifications: the outcome is to set a pattern of activities that suits Marianne, and is fulfilling. That will then, hopefully, continue into adulthood.

What does it take, to make this sort of individual package happen? Clearly, Marianne has had immense support from her parents, who understand the system and are prepared to argue her case. However, her mother maintained that other parents could easily be trained to carry out the same kind of role as she herself is doing. The other factors which facilitate Marianne's programme are her circle of support, and having a support broker, who is independent and also acts as an advocate for her. The support broker's role is to assist the individual (and family) in setting up their own support, particularly by finding community-based options to develop their own personal support plan. As her mother said:

"I was acutely aware that at 16, I wouldn't have wanted my mum to plan my life for me. So the other role of the support broker was to act as an advocate for Marianne, to make sure it was her wishes, and not her mum and dad's wishes." Marianne's mother

Marianne's package costs £26,626 per annum, which includes eight hours a week of direct payment funding at £10.94 per hour, with two nights' overnight stay of £84 per month. In addition, she has funding from the local authority special educational needs budget for 26 hours per week at £9.90 per hour, and, transport and additional funding from the English Education Funding Agency for activities, amounting to £275 per week during term time. The director of social services has agreed that this saves the local authority about £100,000 per annum, and there are plans for her funding to continue as she moves into adult services.

## **Key, common features of the six practice examples**

6.18 There are some common features across all of the practice examples described in this chapter which it would be prudent to consider in any new developments concerning post-19 education for young people with SLD and PMLD.

### *Multi-agency working*

6.19 All the practice examples depend on active and positive multi-agency working between a range of partners, including schools, FE colleges, ISCs, local authorities and health providers. Success in each of these initiatives appears to depend on these partnerships being 'active', where there is real joint working between partners, to achieve specific, concrete objectives, rather than one partner simply funding the other.

### *Partnerships with families*

6.20 Partnership working with parents and families is central to these models of delivering post-19 education. Marianne's individual budget, in particular, depends on very active and expert parental support. However, respondents from the other initiatives also mentioned the importance of working closely with parents and others involved in the young person's life.

### *A focus on post-college outcomes and progression*

6.21 It is interesting to note that none of the case examples described in this chapter appeared to be bound by college targets or qualifications. Rather, the initiatives seem able to focus on finding out what would really make a difference to students when they leave college. Colleges generally endorsed individual curricula, based on students' goals. They were able to do that, for instance by students following accreditation routes which allowed a good deal of freedom to establish personal goals.

6.22 Respondents commented on the importance of lifelong learning and the need to consider how best to support young people's progression post-college. There was concern that for many young people with SLD and PMLD, the skills learnt at college may be quickly lost, if no continued opportunities for learning and practice are available. Creative ideas for inclusion were considered important. These included attention to the wider living arrangements and home support which is available to the young people, enabling them to learn independent living skills within a 24-hour curriculum approach and to be better prepared for life after the post-19 education placement ends.

*The importance of staff skills, experience and commitment*

6.23 It should also be noted that all the practice examples emanated from colleges, projects or individuals who were experienced in providing education for students with learning difficulties in general. Therefore, the extension of provision towards those with more complex needs is built on a solid grounding of knowledge and skills, in relation to individualised planning and entry level or pre-entry level support. If one factor emerges strongly from all the practice examples, it is the importance of staff skills, experience and commitment. This highlights the importance of investing in staff training and development as a building block for developing local FE provision for students with complex learning difficulties.

*Individualised curriculum and assessment*

6.24 As we saw in chapter three, the provision of an individualised curriculum is an essential component of post-19 education for most young people with complex learning difficulties. The English government has begun a move towards funding new programmes of study rather than individual qualifications, as recommended in reviews by both Ofsted (2011) and Wolf(2011). Although this reform has not yet been implemented, it is hoped that it will allow

for a much more flexible approach to planning a personalised curriculum.

6.25 All of the practice examples documented in chapter six, were working with young people, families and other professionals to deliver individualised learning opportunities. Person-centred approaches to assessment and goal setting were a key feature in most of the examples, and there was a strong link between FE provision and the wider, life goals of individual students. The practice examples highlight the importance of developing holistic individual learning plans that encompass educational, social and vocational goals and outcomes.

### **Summary of chapter six: developing post-19 education provision in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties**

6.26 Interviews and focus group work with families, young people and professionals identified five key areas whereby post-19 education provision might feasibly be developed and increased:

- Support FE colleges to enhance, develop and extend their current range and level of provision.
- Consider the potential for special schools to develop a role as post-19 providers.
- Develop more local, residential learning opportunities in Wales.
- Maintain and develop independent specialist day and residential options for those who need them.
- Develop and broaden the range of other post-19 opportunities available for young people with SLD and PMLD, including more access to individualised support using direct payments.

6.27 The research also investigated a range of options and models, which exist outside of Wales, for delivering a wider choice of local, post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties. These included:

- College-based FE hubs - where a FE college develops as a regional provider of specialist education.

- School-based FE hubs - whereby local special schools work in partnership with FE colleges, or ISCs, to deliver school-based, specialist post-19 education to young people from the surrounding local area.
- Community-based FE hubs - where a FE college and local authority work in partnership to jointly provide specialist education for young people living in the surrounding local area, in a purpose-built, community-based building.
- Residential learning bases - for young people attending local FE provision, to enable them to receive a 24-hour learning experience through learning support at home and through access to learning programmes in college.
- Personalised, individual packages - which include access to FE, other daytime activities and all supported living costs, through the use of direct payments or individual budgets.

6.28 Despite the differences between the models, they all have the following key features in common, which it would be prudent to consider in any new developments concerning post-19 education for young people with SLD and PMLD in Wales:

- Active, multi-agency working.
- Partnerships with families.
- A focus on post-college outcomes and progression.
- The importance of staff skills, experience and commitment.
- The ability to offer an individualised curriculum which can meet young people's wider life goals, as well as educational targets and qualifications.

## **7 Conclusions: responses to the research questions**

- 7.1 This report has presented the findings of a study which aimed to identify levels of need and provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales and to assess how best unmet need can be provided for.
- 7.2 In order to deliver evidence in relation to this aim, we collected detailed information from post-19 education providers, special schools, local authorities, family members, and young people with SLD and PMLD. Focusing on the post-19 education destinations for the academic year 2011/12 of a cohort of 138 school leavers with SLD and PMLD, we investigated the provision available, young people's access to this, the support available and the costs of the provision to the agencies involved. We also collected case study material from outside of Wales relating to other models and packages of post-19 education provision.
- 7.3 In this chapter, we revisit the main research questions and provide responses to each one with evidence from the research reported in earlier chapters.

### **Existing provision of post-19 education**

*What post-19 education provision is currently available for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales?*

- 7.4 For the year 2011/12, there were 20 FE colleges<sup>46</sup> in Wales, of which 15 were offering post-19 education provision to young people with complex learning difficulties. Of the 14 colleges that took part in the research, 12 were offering learning programmes that could potentially be accessed by young people with SLD, and 11 colleges had some provision available for young people with PMLD. For the academic year 2012/13, two colleges were

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<sup>46</sup> Two colleges have since merged into one FEI, however at the time of the research they were still operating as two separate providers.

planning to expand their provision to include learners with SLD and one was planning to run a programme suitable for learners with PMLD. Each FE college typically enrolled six to 12 new students with SLD and/or PMLD per year. The amount of direct contact time varied greatly between programmes with some offering less than one day per week of provision, whilst others offered up to five days per week. The academic year in FE colleges ran from 32 to 36 weeks. Individual colleges approached the provision of an individualised curriculum in different ways: some felt able to offer a personalised approach led by the needs and interests of young people, whilst others felt more constrained by a curriculum which is structured in order to work through the learning stages required for accreditation, and which requires learners to be taught in groups of around six to eight. Although non-accredited learning activities are funded by the NPFS, they do draw down less funding.

- 7.5 For the year 2011/12 there were five ISCs in Wales, of which four were offering post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties. Of the three Welsh ISCs that took part in the research, all offered learning programmes to young people with SLD, but just one offered provision to young people with PMLD. Some young people with complex learning difficulties from Wales accessed ISC provision in England. The academic year in the Welsh ISCs ran for 38 weeks but one college offered residential placements which were 52 weeks long. ISCs offered day and residential learning programmes and these ran from five to seven days a week. Each ISC in Wales typically enrolled 12 to 30 new students with SLD and/or PMLD per year. All ISCs interviewed had the flexibility to offer an individualised curriculum. Accredited and non-accredited learning activities are fully funded through annual fees, although all ISCs reported use of qualifications to accredit learning where appropriate.

7.6 For the academic year 2011/12, learning support was available to students with SLD at 12 of the 14 FE colleges and at all seven ISCs included in the research. For young people with PMLD, learning support was available at 11 FE colleges and at four of the seven ISCs included in the study, just one of which was in Wales. Support for personal needs was available to students with SLD at 11 FE colleges and all seven ISCs, and for students with PMLD at 10 FE colleges and four ISCs (just one of which was in Wales). Regarding support for complex health care needs, this was available at six FE colleges and four of the ISCs included in the research (none of these ISCs were in Wales). Young people could continue to access therapies at eight FE colleges and at all the ISCs included in the research.

*What are the challenges to accessing and providing post-19 education to young people with SLD and PMLD?*

7.7 This research highlighted a number of significant practical, organisational and financial challenges which restricted (a) access to existing post-19 provision by young people with SLD and PMLD; and (b) the ability of FEIs to provide suitable and appropriate provision to meet the needs of these young people.

7.8 Not all FE colleges or ISCs were able to accept applications from all young people with SLD or PMLD, particularly those who had complex health care needs, challenging behaviour, or specialist communication needs.

7.9 Three out of the 14 FE colleges and two out of the three ISCs interviewed in Wales were not able to accept applications from young people with PMLD for the year 2011/12 (although one FE college was planning to do so for 2012/13). For ISCs this was due to their mission 'to specialise' and thus, by definition, they were not able to provide post-19 education to all young people with complex learning difficulties.

- 7.10 Some FE colleges are unable to offer access to the support for complex health care needs and on-going access to therapies that this group of learners often need. This may mean that families and young people are not able to consider their local college as a viable option for post-19 education.
- 7.11 For most FE college provision, full-time learning programmes were not equivalent in time to a full-time day in school and typically involved 16-25 hours of direct contact time per week. Many courses aimed at young people with SLD and PMLD were also part-time and ranged from as little as two hours up to 12 hours per week. The lack of time that young people are actually in college can make life very difficult for families and may lead them to suggest their son or daughter opts for another post-19 option (e.g. ISC or day service) rather than take up a place at the local FE college.
- 7.12 The research confirmed that there is a lack of choice of learning programmes overall for young people with SLD. This includes very limited opportunities to access mainstream provision (other than as part of a discrete programme) and a lack of vocational courses or opportunities to access supported employment or to continue work experience placements that had been started at special school. Respondents also highlighted a lack of local, residential educational options for this group of learners.
- 7.13 For young people with PMLD, the research highlighted that some FE colleges found it difficult to offer the level of individualised curriculum and learning support needed by this group within the current funding system. There is a distinct lack of sensory learning environments available at FE colleges for this group and the accessibility of college and classroom environments can be problematic for people using wheelchairs. There is a lack of access to on-going therapy and in some cases, lack of space for using and storing specialist equipment. Very complex multi-

agency and administrative arrangements are needed to establish the funding and infrastructure for meeting the personal care and complex health care needs of this group. In some colleges, becoming involved in this level of complexity and risk may be viewed as 'a step too far' by senior management.

7.14 Transport to and from college can be difficult to source and fund. Individual local authorities and individual colleges each have different arrangements for funding and providing transport to young people with complex learning difficulties. Decisions about funding for transport are often made late and there appears to be very little clarity or information about the choices available, if any. Currently there is lack of equity within and between geographical areas of Wales, where some young people are able to access transport and others are not. In areas of Wales where transport and/or supported transport to and from FE colleges is not available, or may be withdrawn, young people with complex learning difficulties may be unwilling to consider local FE options or be unable to take up places on courses they have been offered, even if the provision, support and funding for the courses are in place.

7.15 The current funding system for supporting learners with SLD and PMLD to take up FE and ISC placements is characterised by its complexity, uncertainty, fragility and lack of agreed timescales for decision making. Many FE colleges are relying on the discretionary exceptional funding system to support the learning and support needs of some learners with SLD and PMLD, despite the expectation from Welsh Government that LDD provision should be largely funded through colleges' core budgets. Application-based bids for exceptional and specialist funding are often not agreed or made available until after the start of term, the associated burden of risk and stress that this entails being shouldered by colleges, families and young people.

Understandably, many families are not prepared to accept this level of risk, stress and uncertainty and may opt for other post-19 options, or, may be persuaded to do so by other professionals (e.g. transition workers, head teachers, etc).

- 7.16 Young people's right to a choice of provision from within a local offer of post-19 education options may be significantly limited by a lack of robust, comparable, transparent and objective information about the range of choices available. This includes a lack of outcome data for all pre-entry level provision, a lack of published Estyn inspection reports for some colleges, and, where Estyn reports are available, a lack of detail about the quality of FE discrete provision. Budgetary restrictions and policies about what type of placements to fund at the local level may also mean that the choices available to families are restricted from the outset.

### **Demand for post-19 education**

*What is the current demand (met and unmet) for access to post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living within Wales?*

*To what extent does current provision of post-19 education meet the needs and wishes of young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD) living in Wales?*

- 7.17 For the 99 young people with SLD who left Year 14 in 2011, 72 (73%) went onto some form of part-time or full-time post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12. According to their families and/or schools, four (4%) of those not in post-19 education would have liked to have gone to college, one to an ISC in England and three to their local FE colleges. Thus, total demand for access to post-19 education by all young people with SLD living in Wales was 77% for 2011/12, of which 95% was met, and 5% was unmet.

- 7.18 However, many of those young people with SLD who had taken up post-19 education had needs and wishes that were not met. In

13 cases, parents and head teachers interviewed felt that the current post-19 FE placement was not the young person's first choice. Areas of unmet need included:

- Lack of access to mainstream, vocational programmes (instead of discrete, generic, independent living skills provision)<sup>47</sup>.
- Insufficient local, residential, options.
- Lack of any other post-19 education options locally.
- Lack of options closer to home.
- Lack of full-time learning opportunities.

7.19 Even for those with SLD where the post-19 education placement was their first choice, in three cases, there were still significant areas of unmet need (medical or behavioural needs could not be met locally; the learner wanted full-time not part-time provision; college could not meet the young person's communication needs). Consequently, 22% (n=16) of young people with SLD in FE had needs and wishes in relation to post-19 education that had not been met.

7.20 For the 39 young people with PMLD who left Year 14 of school in 2011, 10 (26%) went onto some form of part-time or full-time post-19 education for the academic year 2011/12. Half of the school leavers with PMLD (n=19) were attending local authority or voluntary sector day services, two were receiving individualised support using direct payments, and seven were at home without day activities. For one young person, the post-19 destination was not known.

7.21 According to their families and/or schools, four (10%) of those not in post-19 education would have liked to have gone to college. Two young people would have liked an ISC placement in England, and another two were said to have wanted an ISC

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<sup>47</sup> Access to vocational programmes was also identified as important by young people with SLD and PMLD in our interviews with them.

placement in Wales. Thus, total demand for access to post-19 education by all young people with PMLD living in Wales was 36% for 2011/12, of which 71% was met, and 29% was unmet.

- 7.22 In addition, four young people with PMLD in FE highlighted significant areas where their needs and wishes had not been met, including: lack of local provision; insufficient hours of provision per week; lack of options; lack of space for specialist equipment and therapy. Thus in total, 40% (n=4) of all young people with PMLD in FE had needs and wishes in relation to post-19 education that had not been met for the academic year 2011/12.
- 7.23 We were also asked to respond to the question of the extent to which current provision meets the needs and demands of young people living in Wales who wish to attend college locally in Wales. The findings presented in chapter four illustrate that five young people with SLD and three young people with PMLD had wanted to attend a local FE college, or an ISC in Wales. For all of these eight young people, their wish for local or Wales-based provision had not been met because their chosen college had not been able to provide the level of behavioural input and/or complex health care support required.
- 7.24 From the above findings, it is clear therefore that out of the cohort of 138 young people, there was met and unmet demand for access to FE from 76 young people with SLD and 14 young people with PMLD, giving a total of 90 who were accessing, or wished to access, post-19 education for the year 2011/12. The mapping data collected from FE colleges and ISCs indicated there were at least 124 FE places and up to 109 ISC places in Wales potentially available to young people with SLD and PMLD (aged between 16 and 25) for the academic year 2011/12. Clearly, however, only a proportion of these places would have been available to the project's target group (Year 14 leavers with SLD/PMLD) as most learning programmes were open to young

people of all ages and also to some young people with mild or moderate learning difficulties. Moreover, this research has highlighted that access to and take-up of potential FE and ISC places by young people with SLD and PMLD was hampered by significant practical, organisational and financial challenges for providers, families and young people. Nonetheless, if solutions to these challenges are found, in theory, there appears to be sufficient provision available nationally within Wales to meet current demand. However the extent to which this provision can be delivered locally to all young people who require it, is unclear.

*What proportion of demand is currently met outside of Wales?*

7.25 Of the 82 young people with complex learning difficulties in post-19 education placements for the year 2011/12, eight learners with SLD and three with PMLD were attending residential courses at English ISCs, hence indicating that 12% of demand for access to post-19 education from these groups of young people for that year was met from outside Wales<sup>48</sup>.

*What is the future estimated demand?*

7.26 Drawing on a tailor-made prevalence model, and using 2011/12 estimates of demand, we estimated that future demand for access to post-19 education from secondary school leavers over the next 10 years is likely to be in the range of 111 to 158 new learners with SLD per annum, and 20 to 29 new learners with PMLD per annum.

*What do young people with SLD and PMLD want from post-19 education and how would they like that education delivered?*

7.27 The research findings confirmed that young people and family members wanted the following things from post-19 education:

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<sup>48</sup> Calculated on the basis of total (100%) of met and unmet demand being n=90 (76 young people with SLD and 14 young people with PMLD accessing or wanting to access a post-19 FE placement), thus  $11/90 = 12\%$ .

- More choice of post-19 education provider options – not just one option, which is not in itself a choice if no other alternatives are available.
- The chance to learn a range of practical, interpersonal and communication skills that will help them in the future.
- Access to the option of a 24-hour, residential curriculum if this is desired.
- A wider range of learning programmes to choose from at college, including access to vocational and mainstream programmes.
- Opportunities to learn alongside and socialise with their disabled and non-disabled peers.
- Access to good support for learning, personal care, complex health care and behavioural needs.
- Access to therapies on college premises if needed.
- An individualised, personalised learning plan which is focused on wider life goals beyond college.
- Access to reliable, supported transport.

7.28 In terms of modes of delivery, families and young people did not highlight any one approach more than any others, but talked broadly of the need for a wider offer of education options from more than just one provider.

## **Costs**

*What is the existing cost of providing post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties?*

7.29 From the project cohort of 138 young people with SLD or PMLD, 82 were accessing some form of post-19 education. This included:

- Fifty-three young people who were enrolled on some or all of the first year of a discrete FE learning programme for the academic year 2011/12.
- Twenty-nine young people enrolled on discrete day and residential learning programmes at specialist colleges (one FE offering specialist provision; eight ISCs) in Wales and England.

- 7.30 The data used for estimating the costs of discrete post-19 education provision at FE colleges for young people with SLD and PMLD was not sufficiently robust from which to establish an actual average total cost per learner. However, using costs data supplied by the Welsh Government, by research respondents, and with reference to additional (missing) costs on the basis of National Audit Office (2011) calculations, we have estimated that the total cost of FE discrete provision for 53 learners with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12, was likely to have been at least £503,977 and potentially as much as £1,457,977 (a mean average of £9,509 - £27,509 per learner).
- 7.31 It is important to highlight that the estimated costs for FE discrete provision include only the costs of the education provision, an estimated element for transport, an estimate for the costs of providing care and therapy in a community or college setting, and an estimate of two weeks per year of community day care to cover some of the time when young people are not in college. They do not include any other element of costs for accommodation, residential provision, or support to young people during evenings, weekends, overnight, or other times when they are not attending college.
- 7.32 The data used to calculate the costs of discrete, post-19 education provision at ISC colleges were more robust. Information about the actual costs of specialist day and residential placements were available for all of the 29 young people with SLD or PMLD from the project's cohort who were attending ISCs in Wales and England for the academic year 2011/12. Using costs data supplied by ISCs and the Welsh Government, we calculated that the total actual cost of ISC discrete provision for 29 learners with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 was £2,054,763 (a mean average of £70,854 per learner).

7.33 The actual costs for ISC discrete provision covered the costs of the education provision and learning programmes attended by the young people, additional learning support, 24 hour support for personal care (where needed), 24 hour support for complex health care needs (where needed), access to therapy (where needed), some social activities during the evenings and at weekends, and accommodation, food and transport during college term time.

7.34 Bearing in mind the above caveats, and the fact that many cost elements were missing or have been estimated, we suggest that the total cost of post-19 education provision for 82 young people with complex learning difficulties for the academic year 2011/12 was between £2,558,740 and £3,512,740 (from £31,204 - £42,838 per learner). And the estimated mean average per learner was £37,021.

*How can value for money be achieved in the provision of post-19 education which meets the needs of young people with complex learning difficulties?*

7.35 In order to assess how value for money can be achieved in the provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties, two key areas of information are needed:

- Transparent, consistent and comparable data about actual costs of provision.
- Robust and comparable data on learning programme outcomes.

7.36 The findings of this research have clearly shown that information about costs, outcomes and post-college destinations is rarely available and where it is, it is not comparable or consistent across provider settings. This limits the ability to demonstrate value for money and to assess the quality and relative benefits of different types of post-19 education provision for young people with complex learning difficulties.

7.37 Such data are needed by Welsh Government and local authorities as the basis for informing funding decisions for different placement types. Currently, this level of outcome and destination data is not available, but plans for collecting it are being piloted as part of the proposals for reform of the legislative framework for SEN (Welsh Government, 2012b). The proposals include an intention to improve the quality-assurance processes relating to children and young people with additional learning needs by introducing a mapping system which would track outcomes of pupils with additional learning needs and resources allocated to meet their needs. At present, this system only covers the school system. However, local authorities and FE colleges are working together to trial the extension of the system to the FE sector. It is unclear whether the proposals will also include the ISC sector. It will be important to ensure that the implementation of this quality-assurance system allows for the individual goals and outcomes of learners with SLD and PMLD to be recorded and tracked.

### **Developing post-19 education provision in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties**

*How can access to existing post-19 provision for young people with complex learning difficulties be increased?*

7.38 Interviews and focus group work identified five key areas whereby post-19 education provision for young people with complex learning difficulties might feasibly be developed and increased:

- Support FE colleges to enhance, develop and extend their current range and level of provision.
- Consider the potential for special schools to develop a role as post-19 providers.
- Develop more local, residential learning opportunities in Wales.
- Maintain, and where appropriate, develop independent specialist day and residential options for those who need them.

- Develop and broaden the range of other post-19 opportunities available for young people with SLD and PMLD, including more access to individualised support using direct payments.

*What other options/models exist for delivering post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties?*

7.39 The research investigated a range of options and models that exist outside of Wales for delivering a wider choice of local, post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties.

These include:

- College-based FE hubs - where a FE college develops as a regional provider of specialist education.
- School-based FE hubs - whereby local special schools work in partnership with FE colleges, or ISCs, to deliver school-based, specialist post-19 education to young people from the surrounding local area.
- Community-based FE hubs - where a FE college and local authority work in partnership to jointly provide specialist education for young people living in the surrounding local area, in a purpose-built, community-based building.
- Residential learning bases - for young people attending local FE provision, to enable them to receive a 24-hour learning experience through learning support at home and through access to learning programmes in college.
- Personalised, individual packages - which include access to FE, other daytime activities and all supported living costs, through the use of direct payments or individual budgets.

7.40 The models have a number of key features in common, which it would be prudent to consider in any new developments concerning post-19 education for young people with SLD and PMLD in Wales:

- Active, multi-agency working.
- Partnerships with families.
- A focus on post-college outcomes and progression.
- The importance of staff skills, experience and commitment.

- The ability to offer an individualised curriculum which can meet young people's wider life goals, as well as educational targets and qualifications.

*How might these alternative options/models (a) meet the demand/needs of young people and families; and (b) deliver positive outcomes for young people?*

7.41 Within the timescale of this study, it was not possible to conduct an evaluation of the outcomes and costs of each of the options/models listed above, or to assess their effectiveness. Rather we were limited to collecting basic data about the key features of each model and to considering its relevance to the target group. Nonetheless, taking into account the wider findings of this study, it seems very likely that the five key areas for development outlined in chapter six, along with their corresponding practice examples, could provide numerous avenues by which the needs and demand for post-19 education highlighted by young people in this study could be met. They may also help to resolve many of the significant practical, financial and structural challenges highlighted by professionals and other stakeholders.

*What are the cost implications and feasibility of adopting any of these approaches in Wales?*

7.42 Whilst the study has identified a number of models of support and learning that may inform future policy and practice, few providers of these practice examples were able to provide systematic accounts of the costs of these services. Although we requested standardised information on costs from each initiative, in most cases, respondents were not able to provide information in the format requested and some respondents were unable to provide any information about costs. It was not possible, therefore, to compare average costs per person across and between initiatives as data was not available on a like-for-like basis:

- Some initiatives included day FE only, with hours of attendance which varied from one to three days per week.
- Some initiatives included travel costs, some did not.
- Some initiatives included 24-hour residential support (on a five or seven day a week basis) plus access to FE (with types of access to FE options varying in nature and quantity of attendance).

7.43 All we can feasibly say is that the costs of these other FE initiatives ranged from £12,000 per person per annum (for day attendance at local, specialist, school-based FE on a part-time basis) up to £52,000 per person per annum (for five days per week 24-hour residential provision with access to specialist or FE learning activities).

**Table 11: Overview of approximate costs for the practice examples described in chapter six**

Practice example	Type of provision	Approximate cost per person per annum
Alpha College	College-based FE hub	£30,000-£40,000 (day provision)
Orchard View	Community-based FE hub	£25,000 (day provision)
Berrywood School Federation	School-based FE hub	£12,000-£36,000 (day provision)
Orchard View's Stepping Forward project	Residential learning base	Up to £52,000 (five days a week, 24 hour provision)
Valleytop ISC and Westshire FE College Partnership	Residential learning base	Not known
Marianne's Individual Budget	Personalised individual package	£26,626 (seven days a week, 24 hour provision)

## 8 Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: The Welsh Government should lead a cross-sector debate to clarify definitions relating to young people ‘with complex learning difficulties’**

8.1 For the purposes of this research, we were given a working definition of young people ‘with complex learning difficulties’ by the Welsh Government which encompassed the categories of SLD and PMLD as defined by guidance for returns to the PLASC. The framing and use in practice of this definition was a challenge throughout the research and interpretation of the definition was inconsistent across all groups of respondents. The proposed legislative changes (Welsh Government, 2012b), will give a statutory footing to the concept of additional needs (AN) and propose a move away from impairment-specific definitions of need, to definitions that focus on levels of need for support. However, new definitions will not necessarily mean clearer understanding. The experience of this research has identified the need for cross-sector debate and greater understanding about who this group of young people represents, what their needs are and how these needs are best met. It will be important for the Welsh Government to ensure there is agreement about the new definitions and their impact on the young people involved, in advance of the implementation of the new legislative framework.

### **Recommendation 2: Local authorities, as future funders and commissioners of post-19 education, should ensure that they are aware of the problems inherent in the current system of exceptional and specialist funding, and should put in place arrangements to address these as a matter of urgency**

8.2 The Welsh Government (2012b) has proposed that local authorities take responsibility for the assessment, commissioning and funding of specialist FE placements, and responsibility for the management of exceptional funding provision. This provides an opportunity for addressing some of the structural barriers inherent in the current system which restrict access to post-19 education

provision for young people with SLD and PMLD. The additional proposal (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010a), that the timing of assessments for specialist residential funding should be brought forward from the final to the penultimate year of compulsory schooling, is welcomed. This could be strengthened through guidance to local authorities on the minimum timeframe for making decisions about the type of support and specialist placement that they intend to offer an individual young person. It is important for local authorities, as future commissioners and funders of post-19 education, to be fully aware of the problems inherent in the current system, and the (negative) impact of these on providers, young people and families. New assessment, commissioning and funding arrangements at local authority level will need to ensure that local solutions adequately address these problems as a matter of urgency.

**Recommendation 3: The Welsh Government, local authorities and Careers Wales should establish systems for recording the post-19 destinations of young people with SLD and PMLD**

8.3 Currently, post-19 destination data are not collected in Wales for young people leaving school at the end of Year 14. Nor are data published to indicate how many young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD) in Wales go onto post-19 education, or what sort of placement choice they make. Consideration should be given to extending the Careers Wales pupil destination survey to include Year 14 school leavers and also to publishing data on the impairment status of school leavers. In addition, Careers Wales should consider collecting data on the number of young people who are unable to access their chosen post-school destination. The Welsh Government should work with local authorities to establish systems for recording post-19 education placement choices at a local, and all-Wales level. Monitoring of these data should help to highlight any inequality of access to post-19 education choices between local

areas and may also highlight the extent to which demand is being met.

**Recommendation 4: The Welsh Government and local authorities should establish systems for monitoring, recording and analysing the costs and outcomes of individual post-19 placements in order to assess value for money and to ensure placements adequately meet the needs of young people**

- 8.4 The research identified that basic monitoring data about the costs, outcomes and post-college destinations for young people with complex learning difficulties are rarely available and, where they are available, they are not comparable or consistent across provider settings. The new local commissioning and funding arrangements will need to establish systems for monitoring, recording and analysing the costs and outcomes of individual post-19 placements in order to assess value for money and to ensure placements adequately meet the needs of young people.
- 8.5 Individualised and person-centred goal-setting is central to ensuring learning programmes meet the needs of individual young people. The proposal (Welsh Government, 2012b) to implement Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for all young people with additional needs from age 0 to 25 is a significant step forward as is the recommendation that section 140 assessments should include consideration of the aspirations of the individual. These proposals acknowledge the importance of post-19 education and training which enables young people to move towards the wider goals they have set themselves in life.
- 8.6 As part of its proposals for reform of the legislative framework for SEN, local authorities and FEIs are currently extending the system for tracking costs and outcomes to young people in FE. (Welsh Government, 2012b). It will be important to ensure that the implementation of this quality-assurance system is flexible enough to allow for a person-centred approach to tracking and recording the individual goals and outcomes of learners with SLD

and PMLD. The Welsh Government should also consider how the proposed tracking system might be extended to the ISC sector.

**Recommendation 5: The Welsh Government and local authorities should establish systems for monitoring, recording and analysing the post-college outcomes and destinations of young people with complex learning difficulties**

8.7 The research identified that very little information is available about post-college outcomes and the destinations of young people in the short, medium and longer term. Such data is important in assessing the relative benefits and value for money of different types of post-19 education placements for individual young people. In order to support young people's post-college learning and progression, more emphasis is needed on the exit strategy identified at the start of any learning programme and recorded in a young person's IEP or IDP. This will ensure that reviews concentrate on movement towards the next stage of transition into adulthood and allow for the development of potential pathways necessary to support the young person in future environments. For young people with complex learning difficulties, planning for the future should start as early as possible to improve outcomes and co-ordination.

**Recommendation 6: All local authorities in Wales should clarify the post-19 education options available to young people with complex learning difficulties**

8.8 The research identified that few, if any, local authorities were able to clearly state the post-19 education choices on offer to young people with complex learning difficulties, or to articulate this to families and young people. This was exacerbated by a lack of clear, consistent and comparable data about the costs and outcomes of different types of placements.

8.9 The Welsh Government proposals (Welsh Government, 2012b), to reform the statutory framework for children and young people with SEN, include the intention to develop Provision Pathways to

define minimum standards for service provision relating to each level of need. It will be important that these pathways capture all types of provision choices that are potentially available to ensure transparency and equality of opportunity to all young people with SLD and PMLD in Wales.

**Recommendation 7: Further work is needed to strengthen the costs base for calculating the actual costs of FE and ISC provision in order to make informed and adequately comparative judgements about value for money**

8.10 The research highlighted some of the problems and complexities inherent in trying to collect and analyse costs data relating to individual post-19 education placements. Adequate and comparable data on the costs of different types of provision are an essential component of decision making in relation to individual post-19 placements by local authorities and the Welsh Government. Currently, the costs base for decision making is very limited. Virtually no data are available to determine the full costs of supporting a young person with complex learning difficulties who is living at home and attending a local FE college. Without access to these data it is impossible to compare the true cost difference between FE placements and ISC placements for this group of young people, let alone to conduct a cost:benefit assessment.

**Recommendation 8: The Welsh Government should provide adequate resources and practical support to enable FE colleges to extend, develop and enhance their current range and level of provision for learners with SLD and PMLD as well as those with other additional learning needs**

8.11 The Welsh Government has a policy commitment to local, inclusive education for all young people (National Assembly for Wales, 2006). However, the research identified a number of areas where resources and support are needed to enable the FE sector to extend, develop and enhance its current post-19

provision to increase access to young people with complex learning difficulties. These include:

- Curriculum development – to develop a wider choice of learning opportunities and inclusive pathways that enable young people to access more mainstream, vocational and sensory programmes.
- Development of individualised learning programmes that are needs-led rather than provision-led.
- Staff development and training opportunities which encompass the specialist teaching and support approaches appropriate for engaging with learners with SLD and PMLD.
- Better engagement between the FE sector and health and social care trained professionals - attending training alongside professionals from health and social care could be one way for college staff to develop inter-disciplinary networks as the foundation for developing packages of education and support for this group of young people.
- Improvements to the physical environment of FE colleges to enable them to accommodate wheelchair users, those with complex health care needs and young people with a range of other needs such as need for regular physiotherapy or behavioural support.
- Considering ways to extend hours of provision so that more full-time options and after-hours learning opportunities are available to learners with SLD and PMLD.

8.12 We welcome the introduction of the 'Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools and Further Education' (UPOSS FE<sup>49</sup>) scheme which commenced in September 2012. The UPOSS FE scheme aims to increase access to FE for learners with complex needs by making funding available to special schools, local authorities, FE colleges and ISCs in order to build local capacity and support

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<sup>49</sup> Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools and Further Education (UPOSS FE) is a Welsh Government scheme established to improve transition arrangements by promoting collaboration between local authorities and FE colleges on a regional basis. It aims to improve capacity in FE by increasing local choice for learners aged 16-25 with complex learning difficulties.

staff training and development. The emphasis on sharing learning and expertise between the specialist education sector (special schools and ISCs) and the FE sector has much to commend it. Nonetheless, significant additional resources may be needed to deliver the level of support needed to enable young people with SLD and PMLD to access locally provided learning programmes.

**Recommendation 9: The Welsh Government should issue clear guidance to local authorities about the organisation, funding and provision of transport to and from FE colleges, in the light of the extension of IDPs to age 25 for young people with complex learning difficulties**

8.13 Access to transport is critical to increasing access to local provision and the current postcode lottery is unacceptable. Currently, there is no expectation for local authorities to fund transport for learners with additional needs beyond the age of 19. The proposal for IDPs to extend until the age of 25 for some young people provides an opportunity to resolve this issue; if there is an expectation that young people with SLD and PMLD should be able to continue their education to age 25, then funding for travel should be made available by local authorities to support this.

**Recommendation 10: The Welsh Government should issue clear guidance about the organisation, funding and provision of support for personal care needs, complex health care needs and on-going access to therapies in FE settings**

8.14 The research confirmed that access to support for personal care needs, complex health care needs and therapies (such as physiotherapy and speech and language therapy) was complex to source and fund, and presented huge administrative and organisational challenges for post-19 providers. The research highlighted the difficulties experienced by providers and families in seeking and providing support for personal care and complex health care needs in FE settings.

- 8.15 Currently, there is no obligation for local health boards, or local authorities, to meet the personal care and health care needs for those young people who have secured an appropriate post-19 education placement, unless they have a 'continuing need for NHS health care', as defined by the adult continuing health care guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b). Consequently a number of young people requiring personal care and health-related support are unable to access further education.
- 8.16 The new local commissioning and funding arrangements for post-19 exceptional and specialist funding may support better integration of independence and social care goals with educational goals. The proposed legislative reforms of the statutory framework for children and young people with SEN (Welsh Government, 2012b) aim to extend the remit of the current guidance on continuing care for children and young people (Welsh Government, 2012d) up to age 25.
- 8.17 Nonetheless, NHS funding and input into the transition process needs to be reviewed, to ensure that health for independence and well-being is provided in the right place at the right time. Young people's needs for health care and therapy must be included as part of an integrated and on-going person-centred plan, or IDP in the proposed legislation (Welsh Government, 2012b). For people with PMLD in particular, the goals of education are likely to be broad and focus on the development of sensory, motor, social and communication skills, which can require a high level of integration of health care, medical input, social care and effective teaching approaches, which is currently difficult to achieve in many further education settings. Clear guidance from the Welsh Government to local authorities in their new commissioning role will be needed to ensure that access to post-19 education is a right for all young people including those with the most complex support needs.

8.18 The Welsh Government proposals for reform of the legislative framework for SEN are underpinned by a duty on relevant bodies to collaborate in respect of provision for children and young people aged 0 to 25 with the highest levels of need (Welsh Government, 2012b). This duty will be operationalised through multi-agency Support Panels, and representatives from health, education, social care and third sector agencies **may** be required by law to attend these panels to agree specialist service provision and any placement. This research highlights the importance of making inter-agency collaboration a statutory requirement for this group of learners.

**Recommendation 11: The Welsh Government, local authorities and the education sector as a whole should continue to maintain, and where appropriate, develop, specialist day and residential FE options for those who need them**

8.19 The research has highlighted that the ISC sector has a huge amount of specialist knowledge and resources to offer, not least from its experience in providing individualised curricula to young people with SLD and PMLD. The Welsh Government (2012b) has stated that some young people do, and will continue to, benefit from an ISC placement. Moreover, given the geography of Wales, access to local post-19 education options may actually be best served by ISCs in Wales or even just across the border in England. With the proposal to localise funding and commissioning of post-19 education placements, there will be a need (for Estyn or the Welsh Government) to monitor the effect of individual local authority decision making on the 'financial health' of ISCs to ensure that this is a choice that continues to be available to those who need it and want it.

8.20 In terms of development of ISC provision, it is well established that there are issues of continuity of support and loss of skills when young people return to their local areas from ISCs. Calls for joint working between ISCs and young people's home local

authorities need to be reiterated and reinforced by clear directives from the Welsh Government.

8.21 There may also be a need for cross-sector discussion about the appropriateness of land-based vocational learning programmes at rural ISCs for young people with limited mobility or those who may be returning to town or city localities. Similarly, the continued emphasis on specialisation, and restriction of placements to certain groups of young people, may not be sustainable if it means that the opportunity to access a 24-hour learning environment is not available to some young people who would benefit from it.

**Recommendation 12: The Welsh Government and local authorities should work with stakeholders to develop and broaden the range of post-19 education opportunities available for young people with complex learning difficulties, including more access to individualised support using direct payments**

8.22 The research confirmed that a range of other options and models exist, mostly outside of Wales at present, for delivering a wider choice of local, post-19 education to young people with complex learning difficulties. Respondents taking part in this research also identified a number of potential ways that Welsh providers might develop post-19 FE. These suggestions, and consultation with other stakeholders during focus groups, confirmed that the following delivery models could feasibly be considered for the Welsh context:

- College-based FE hubs.
- School-based FE hubs.
- Community-based FE hubs.
- Residential learning bases.
- Personalised, individual packages through the use of direct payments.

8.23 The Welsh Government proposes to assess the potential for central post-16 provision in a small number of specialist centres

across Wales, using funding from within the existing post-16 budget (Welsh Government, 2012b). There may also be potential for the proposed changes to the funding system for post-16 additional learning needs (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010a; Welsh Government, 2012b) to enable new and existing local provision to be developed. These proposals provide opportunities to consider the views of families, young people and other stakeholders presented in this report about how they would like to see post-19 FE developed in Wales. The Welsh Government should ensure that a range and choice of post-19 education options are available for young people with complex learning difficulties, including more access to individualised support using direct payments.

**Recommendation 13: The Welsh Government should lead or commission solution-focused, cross-sector consultation work to reach agreement about how current structural barriers can be best overcome to increase access to post-19 FE for young people with SLD and PMLD**

- 8.24 The research has highlighted the structural barriers that currently restrict access to post-19 education for many young people with SLD and PMLD and explored how some of these barriers might be overcome. The research has recommended a number of key actions, in order to meet current and future levels of need and demand for post-19 FE by young people with complex learning difficulties.
- 8.25 There is now a need for further work to identify potential solutions and 'next steps' for action, in consultation with young people, families, FE providers, local authorities and other key stakeholders such as Careers Wales and voluntary sector organisations. The Welsh Government should lead, or commission, cross-sector, solution-focused consultation work to discuss and agree the changes and reasonable adjustments to

current FE provision that are achievable in the short, medium and longer term.

### **Concluding thoughts**

- 8.26 The focus of this research was to explore levels of need and provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties. In commissioning the research, the Welsh Government took it as axiomatic that access to further education for young people with SLD and PMLD is both a need and a right. Certainly young people's right to local, inclusive education is supported in policy and the proposed reform of the statutory framework for children and young people with special educational needs will enact legislation to enshrine this right to the age of 25 for some young people.
- 8.27 The research clarified that a large proportion of young people with PMLD, including those with complex health care needs, were not accessing further education provision. Whilst 77% of young people with SLD were accessing or wanted to access FE, only 36% of those with PMLD did so, indicating a much lower demand for FE provision from people with PMLD. The data indicated that most young people with PMLD were in local authority or voluntary sector day services, but that for very many young people this had not been their first choice of post-school destination.
- 8.28 What, then, would be the first choice of post-19 provision for this group of young people and their families? Families in particular raised the issue of age-appropriate, local provision for their sons and daughters with PMLD. They expressed a desire for individualised packages with a range of daytime options built in, including access to FE and the option of 24 hour supported living environment with opportunities for community-based and home-based learning. Families also highlighted the importance of a whole-life approach to post-19 provision, education or otherwise,

and stressed that continuity of support for complex health care needs, therapy and communication input were essential components for any post-19 option. Depending on the local provision available, further education in a FE or ISC setting may not necessarily be the best way to help this group of young people be as independent as possible, to develop and maintain their communication and to have a good quality of life.

8.29 In conclusion, if the Welsh Government wishes to ensure that access to post-19 education up to the age of 25 is a right for **all** young people with additional needs, then the importance of a well-resourced FE sector which can respond to the individual needs of young people and their families, is paramount. With an inclusion agenda that actively addresses barriers to access, further education has the potential to become a truly universal route for ensuring the continued development of young people's progression to adult life.

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## Appendix A Research design and methodology

A.1 The research was conducted between March and September 2012 and was designed to explore the post-19 destinations of young people with complex learning difficulties who left school in 2011, the nature of the support available and the costs of the post-19 education provision to the various agencies involved. The main aim of the research was to identify levels of need and provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales. The study was designed to collect and interrogate data in response to this aim and involved the following phases:

- Interviews with relevant staff working in schools, FE colleges, ISCs and local authorities.
- Collection of costs data from colleges, local authorities and the Welsh Government.
- Interviews with families.
- Interviews with young people with complex learning difficulties.
- Review of other models of FE provision.
- Consultation work, via focus groups, with stakeholders from across the sector, to feedback initial findings and discuss potential recommendations for Welsh Government.

### Interviews with professionals at schools, FE colleges, ISCs and local authorities

A.2 The focus of our interviews with professionals at schools, FE colleges, ISCs and local authorities were those young people with complex learning difficulties who reached the end of secondary education in Wales in July 2011 and were in their first year of a post-19 placement or elsewhere. The rationale for selecting this specific cohort was as follows:

- The focus of the research was **post-19** education, hence a need to pinpoint young people aged 19+.
- The main entry point to FE for young people aged 19+ was most likely to be when they left school at the end of Year 14.

- PLASC statistics showed that almost all of those pupils with SLD and PMLD who stayed on at school until Year 14 were enrolled within the state-maintained, special school sector.

A.3 Specifically, data were collected in order to establish:

- How many 2011 school leavers aged 19+ with complex learning difficulties, applied for post-19 further education?
- How many of these applications were successful and how many were not successful?
- How many of the successful applications were taken up in post-19 education provision (a) within county; (b) out-of-county; (c) outside of Wales?
- How many of the courses are (a) residential; (b) non-residential?
- What courses were the young people studying and for how long?
- What personal support and learning support was provided to each young person?
- What was the average cost and range per year, per person, for each course/educational placement?
- What benefits and outcomes were achieved for young people as a result of this provision?

A.4 Prior to making contact with agencies, written endorsement was obtained for the study from the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) and ADSS Cymru. All participants were provided with information and consent materials at least one week before the interview, explaining the purpose of the research and their rights under the Data Protection Act.

A.5 In addition, we provided briefing information in advance to enable participants to consider what data they needed to obtain before speaking to a researcher. All interviews were conducted using a structured interview schedule and a standardised pro-forma for collection of any cost data to enable key data to be collected and recorded efficiently. All participant research materials, including interview schedules, were translated into Welsh and the option of

conducting the interview in Welsh was offered to all participants. Interviews were audio-recorded, with consent, and at the end of the interview all participants were asked if they were interested in receiving information about taking part in a focus group at a later date.

### **Interviews with professionals from schools**

A.6 We contacted the head teachers of all special and mainstream schools (32) listed on the Welsh Government's website<sup>50</sup> as offering post-16 provision to young people with complex learning difficulties. Four schools explained they did not offer education provision to the target group of young people, giving an adjusted target sample of 28 schools. Interviews were completed at 26 of these schools and involved a total of 28 professionals (see Table 10 below) as some interviews included more than one person. Interviews with school staff were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face (participants' choice), and lasted 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews focused on the experience of school staff in supporting those young people with complex learning difficulties who left Year 14 of secondary education in July 2011 and covered the following topic areas:

- Number of 2011 leavers with complex learning difficulties who wanted to take up post-19 education.
- Number who made applications for post-19 education.
- Number that were successful.
- Destinations of all 2011 leavers with complex learning difficulties.
- Experiences, perceptions and views of special school staff on the post-19 transition process.
- What other forms of post-19 education, if any, school staff would like to see developed in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/about/reference/schooladdress/?lang=en>

## **Interviews with professionals from FE colleges (in Wales) and ISCs (in Wales and England)**

- A.7 We worked closely with Colegau Cymru to identify FE college staff to take part in the research. Colegau Cymru contacted all FE college principals on behalf of the project to inform them that the research was taking place and to seek their endorsement for college staff to take part. We then contacted all named LLDD (learners with learning difficulties/disabilities) leads provided by Colegau Cymru. LLDD leads at 14 FE colleges in Wales were subsequently interviewed by telephone or in person. At one FE college, we conducted three separate interviews at each of the college's three main sites. At another college we conducted two interviews with staff in (a) the main college itself, and (b) the residential hostel owned and run by that college. In all, 17 interviews were conducted with 22 participants as some interviews involved more than one person.
- A.8 Similarly, we worked with Natspec (the Association of National Specialist Colleges) to identify a sample of English ISCs which were most likely to have Welsh school leavers with complex learning difficulties in their first year of FE provision. The sample was subsequently refined on receiving information about out-of-Wales placements for the target group from the Welsh Government. We contacted all five ISCs in Wales, and a sample of six ISCs in England with the highest number of target group placements. Of the Welsh ISCs, one declined to take part and one felt their provision was not aimed at the target group of young people and declined to take part. Interviews were conducted with staff at the remaining three Welsh ISCs. Of the English ISCs, one declined to take part and one felt their provision was not aimed at the target group of young people. Interviews were conducted with staff at the remaining four ISCs. Seven interviews were conducted with ISCs in Wales and England and 10 participants were involved in total.

A.9 Our interviews with staff at the 14 FE colleges and seven ISCs in Wales and England were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face (participants' choice), and lasted 45 to 60 minutes. They focused on the college's experience of supporting young people with complex learning difficulties who were in their first year of post-19 FE provision and covered the following topics:

- Number of applications received from young people with complex learning difficulties for 2011/12 academic year and the number that were accepted.
- Nature of provision – length and type of course; residential or day placement.
- Nature of additional learning and personal support to students with complex learning difficulties provided by college and other agencies.
- Nature of any further costs or inputs not funded by WG, local authorities or other statutory agencies.
- Details of the main outcomes of the provision the college provides for young people with complex learning difficulties.
- Experiences, perceptions and views of staff on these issues and the challenges they face in supporting students with complex learning difficulties.
- Other forms of post-19 education they would like to see in Wales for young people with complex learning difficulties.

### **Interviews with professionals at local authorities**

A.10 As part of our formal endorsement from ADSS Cymru they circulated information about the research to all social services departments in Wales. Named transition leads in adult learning disability or adult community services in each local authority area (22) were then contacted and of these, 15 staff representing 15 local authorities, consented to take part in an interview. Fourteen interviews were conducted in total, as one participant represented two local authorities and a joint interview of two people was undertaken at one local authority.

A.11 Interviews were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face (participants' choice), lasted 45 to 60 minutes and covered the following topics and question areas:

- How many young people with complex learning difficulties left Year 14 of secondary education in the local authority area during or at the end of the academic year 2010/11?
- What were their post-19 destinations and was this their first choice of provision?
- For post-19 education destinations, what costs were borne by the local authority?
- What options for post-19 education are generally available to young people with complex learning difficulties?
- What support are young people entitled to from social services and/or education to support their access to post-19 education?
- What are the outcomes of the different types of provision for young people with complex learning difficulties?
- What other forms of post-19 education, if any, local authority staff would like to see made available to young people with complex learning difficulties?

A.12 To summarise, a total of 67 separate interviews were conducted with 75 individual participants representing 26 schools, 14 FE colleges, seven ISCs and 15 local authorities. The tables below provide more detail.

**Table 12: Overview of interviews conducted with schools, colleges and local authorities**

Type of organisation interviewed	Number of organisations contacted	No provision for target group	Number of organisations interviewed	Number of interviews completed
Schools	32	4	26	26
FE colleges	18	1	14	17
ISCs Wales and England	11	1	7	10
Local authorities	22	n/a	15	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>67</b>

**Table 13: Professional roles of interview respondents**

Type of organisation interviewed	Professional role of respondent	Interviews completed
Schools = 26	Head teacher	16
	Assistant/deputy head teacher	8
	Transition lead/head of leavers department	4
FE colleges = 14	Learning support lead	19
	Head of faculty/school/department	3
ISCs Wales and England = 7	Principal/assistant principal	5
	Admissions lead	4
	Financial lead	1
Local authorities = 15	Transition lead	6
	Senior social worker or team leader	4
	Service manager	5
<b>Total number of professionals interviewed</b>		<b>75</b>

**Young person case data**

A.13 The focus of the interviews with professionals was young people with complex learning difficulties, who reached the end of secondary education in Wales in July 2011, and were in their first year of a post-19 placement or elsewhere. From school respondents, we collected anonymised data on the post-school destinations of individual young people with SLD or PMLD who had left in July 2011. From FE colleges and ISCs, we collected anonymised data on individual young people who were in their first year of a post-19 educational placement. From local authority respondents, we asked about the destinations of individual young people who had left school in July 2011. The anonymised data collected included the young person's initials, gender, date of birth, home local authority and post-19 destination. For those young people whose destination was recorded as post-19 FE, more specific details about the costs and funding of their placement was collected where possible.

A.14 Each young person for whom we collected data was allocated a case code which included their initials (as two letters), their gender (M or F) and their date of birth (as a six digit figure) – for example RZM010203. This code concealed the exact identity of individual young people, but enabled us to ensure that duplicate records were identified, linked and any discrepancies noted or explored as necessary.

### **Collection of costs data from providers, local authorities and the Welsh Government**

A.15 The purpose of the costs data collection phase, was to identify the cost elements associated with each of the main types of post-19 FE provision for young people with complex learning difficulties living in Wales. We sought costs data from the following sources:

- FE colleges and ISCs – details of funding per learner with complex learning difficulties, including details of any funding received from Welsh Government, local authorities or local health boards, from other sources (including charitable funding and college central funds), and for details of any other costs not covered from funding sources which were borne by the college.
- Local authorities – costs information for those young people who were in their first year of a post-19 education placement only. This included requesting details of any funding received from Welsh Government and/or from the local authority itself. We also asked for details of any financial contributions from the young person or family and about any other costs or areas of support that the local authority funded for each learner.
- Welsh Government – data relating to all young people with complex learning difficulties (SLD or PMLD), supported by Welsh Government exceptional or specialist funding, who left school in July 2011 and were in their first year of a post-19 education placement as a day or residential learner at a FE college or ISC.

A.16 Costs data were collected directly from respondents using a set of costs tables with explanatory notes. These were designed to be completed during interviews, but in reality most of the respondents who completed them did so after the interview and returned them by email or registered post. Welsh Government supplied their data in spreadsheets via the secure data transfer system DEWI.

### **Interviews with families**

A.17 At the end of the interviews with school staff, participants were asked if they would pass on information about the research to families of those young people for whom case data had been collected during the interview. All but two of the schools interviewed agreed to do this and a total of 111 information packs were posted, by schools, on behalf of the project, to families across Wales. Twenty seven families returned consent forms directly to the project team. Our target quota for family interviews was 20 so we were unable to interview all 27 families who came forward. However, to ensure that the sample of families included representation from the main regions of Wales and a broad range of different post-19 destinations, we subsequently conducted 21 interviews with family members.

A.18 Interviews were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face (participants' choice), lasted 30 to 60 minutes and covered the following questions and topic areas:

- Families' experiences of supporting their son or daughter during transition to post-19 education (or other post-19 destination).
- Barriers families and young people with complex learning difficulties may experience in accessing post-19 education provision which meets their needs.
- Where families and young people go to get relevant practical information about post-19 education options and the extent to which the information is useful.

- How families support young people with complex needs to secure an appropriate post-19 educational placement.
- What families and young people want from post-19 education.
- Families' expectations of what the main outcomes of post-19 education would be for the young person.

A.19 The geographical location of families, number of schools represented, and nature of post-19 destinations secured by their son or daughter are summarised in the tables below.

**Table 14: Geographical location of families interviewed and number of schools represented**

Geographical location <sup>51</sup>	Schools represented	Families interviewed
North Wales	4	8
South West and Mid Wales	4	4
Central South Wales	2	7
South East Wales	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>

**Table 15: Post-19 destinations secured by young people in families interviewed**

Post-19 destination	Families interviewed
FE college (day enrolment)	5
FE college (residential enrolment)	4
ISC college Wales (day enrolment)	3
ISC college Wales (residential enrolment)	1
ISC college England (residential enrolment)	1
FE and other post-19 destination	1
Other post-19 destination (day service or social enterprise)	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

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<sup>51</sup> Areas of Wales reflect the new Education Consortia groupings see [http://www.adew.org.uk/about\\_adew.html](http://www.adew.org.uk/about_adew.html)

## **Interviews with young people with complex learning difficulties**

A.20 The purpose of the interviews with young people was to understand more about their experiences of current post-19 education provision and to what extent their aspirations had been supported within the curriculum.

A.21 There are particular legal and ethical procedures involved when seeking to involve children or vulnerable adults in research. The Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (Department of Health, 2005) and the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 both set out the specific responsibilities of the people and organisations accountable for the proper conduct of research that involves health and social care agencies, children, and/or adults who may lack capacity to consent to taking part in research. The MCA 2005 includes safeguards for the conduct of research involving those who may not be able to consent (sections 30 to 34), which involve certain methodological considerations and the requirement to seek approval from an 'appropriate body' (such as the Research Ethics Committee for Wales) for the research to take place.

A.22 In order to identify young people with complex learning difficulties who might be interested in taking part in an interview, we worked in close collaboration with another research study that was in progress at Cardiff University Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities (WCLD). This study was part of an evaluation of the European Union funded, SEN Regional Transition to Employment (Real Opportunities) Project. WCLD staff already held ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee for Wales for the Real Opportunities research. In June 2012, they obtained an amendment to this to include consent procedures for contacting young people to be involved in the research reported here.

- A.23 The research team at Cardiff University WCLD approached transition key workers in nine locations (based in secondary schools) across Wales to identify young people with complex learning difficulties who were in their last year at school or who had left school in July 2011. Once a young person had been identified by the transition key worker, the relevant consent was obtained. Parents were sent an information leaflet about the study and a form that explained the interview process and which asked parents and young people if they were willing to take part. If there was doubt about whether a young person had capacity to consent, the transition key worker was asked to determine the student's understanding of what she or he had been told about the interview. Where the young person could not show an understanding, the transition key worker, or a class teacher, signed an evidence declaration saying that the named student did not have capacity to consent to the proposed interview. In this case, formal advice was sought, usually from a family member, about the young person's involvement.
- A.24 Significant preparation in advance of each interview was undertaken to ensure that each interview schedule was personalised to the individual young person. This included sourcing photographs and pictures relating to their friends at school or college, the staff who worked with them and the educational setting itself. The questionnaire was designed for young people who had receptive language and who could make basic choices. A separate questionnaire with a few additional questions was devised for college students and these covered why they were attending their present college and whether they had been offered other options.
- A.25 The young people did not need to be able to say much to participate. All that was required was the ability to point and make use of the photographs and pictures. In all cases, we had

photographs and pictures of people who were important to them, including, in all but two cases, photos of their transition key workers. This helped young people to tell us about their friends and be reminded of who might have helped them plan their next steps. In addition, we had a folder of pictures showing possible leisure activities they might enjoy, relevant college buildings in the local area and photographs of different types of work they might consider.

A.26 On the day of each interview, young people were asked if they would like to meet the interviewer and answer some questions. It was made clear that they did not have to answer all of the questions and that the interview could be stopped at any point. All the young people agreed to participate and all but one seemed to enjoy being involved. Four of the young people had someone sitting with them, usually a teaching assistant.

A.27 A total of 10 young people, aged between 18 and 20 years, took part in an interview. As noted above, we were dependent on transition key workers and school staff to nominate and support learners to consider our request for an interview and to take part in the interview. In some places, it appeared that some young people with complex learning difficulties had been 'screened out' and deemed 'unable to participate' by school staff. However, this was not always apparent until the actual interview. Subsequently, the group of 10 young people interviewed included seven with SLD, one with PMLD and two who, when interviewed, appeared to have moderate learning difficulties rather than SLD or PMLD. The results below relate only to the **eight** students who had either SLD or PMLD.

A.28 All eight young people were in their final year of secondary education and one was in his first year of a FE college placement. Topics covered in the interviews included:

- How the young person wished to communicate.
- Name of current education provision.
- What they liked/disliked about it.
- Who their friends were and what activities they liked to do with them.
- Any other provision accessed outside of the education placement.
- Favourite things about school or college.
- Whether they were learning things that would help them to get a job.
- What they would like to do when they left school or college.
- Their experience of support from their transition key worker and/or Careers Wales adviser.

**Table 16: Geographical region of eight young people included in the research and number of schools represented**

Geographical region	Schools/colleges represented	Young people interviewed
South West and Mid Wales	3	5
Central South Wales	1	1
South East Wales	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

A.29 Given the range of cognitive abilities of the young people interviewed, it is not surprising that there was variation in the extent to which they were able to answer the questions. Four young people completed the interview and three answered over two-thirds of the questions. The remaining young person was able to respond to about half of the questions. The findings from the interviews with young people are presented, in full, in Appendix A and are drawn on, as relevant, at specific points in the rest of the report.

### **Review of other models of further education provision**

A.30 In addition to primary data collected from service providers, families and young people in Wales, we also conducted a review of models adopted outside of Wales for delivering post-19

education to young people with complex learning difficulties. The purpose of the review was to explore what other delivery models exist to meet demand, and to document these as options for discussion and consideration by the Welsh Government and other stakeholders.

A.31 Our search strategy included a systematic search of key online bibliographic databases<sup>52</sup>, calls for evidence via national on-line forums, free text searches using Google, and following up leads using networks and contacts. This led to a 'shortlist' of 14 FE initiatives from outside of Wales, all of which were aimed at young people with SLD or PMLD. Of these, seven were purposively sampled<sup>53</sup> for follow-up work, including a telephone or face-to-face interview and costs data collection where possible to obtain the following data:

- Overview of the initiative.
- The target learner group it was aimed at.
- How the initiative was set up.
- The partnerships involved.
- Nature of the assessment, curriculum and expected outcomes for young people.
- Levels of inclusion for learners.
- Costs of the provision, if available.

### **Focus groups with stakeholders from across the sector, to feedback initial findings and discuss potential recommendations for the Welsh Government**

A.32 We worked with the Welsh Government and Scope Cymru to organise focus groups in three regions of Wales (north and mid, south east and south west). Participants were recruited through

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<sup>52</sup> International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), which includes ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts and British Periodicals, Social Care Online (via Social Care Institute for Excellence and including former CareData), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) via Web of Science, ZETOC.

<sup>53</sup> The sampling process involved consideration of delivery practices and processes as suggested in the invitation to tender document (Welsh Government, 2012a), including local provision, 'hub and spoke' models, third party agreements, and the role that special schools might play in facilitating the delivery of post-19 education.

key networks and contacts, including professionals and family members who had already taken part in an interview. A total of 21 stakeholders took part in three focus groups in Cardiff, Carmarthen and Colwyn Bay.

A.33 The purpose of the focus groups was to:

- Provide feedback to stakeholders on the summary findings.
- Present and discuss case studies of other FE initiatives aimed at young people with SLD and PMLD being delivered outside Wales.
- Contribute to the development of recommendations in response to the research findings.

### **Data inputting and analysis**

#### *Analysis of interview material*

A.34 Interviews with professionals and families were audio recorded (with consent) and anonymised data from interviews were entered into two databases. Data entered were saved securely and backed up to a cloud server. The data could then be downloaded from the tools as Excel files for qualitative and quantitative analysis.

#### *Interview codes*

A.35 Each interview was given an anonymous, unique code number. This ensured that interview data could be discussed by the research team and presented in the report whilst maintaining the anonymity of the institution or respondent. In chapters three, four and five, data from interviews is attributed to these linked codes to help the reader understand the provenance of the material. The codes used are listed below. Please note, numbering is not necessarily consecutive:

- SCH 001 to SCH 031 special schools interviewed.
- FE 033 to FE 049 FE colleges interviewed.
- ISC 073 to ISC 130 independent specialist colleges interviewed.

- LA 050 to LA 069 local authorities interviewed.
- FAM 082 to FAM 104 families interviewed.
- YP 106 to YP 115 young people interviewed.

*Population projection and estimating future demand*

- A.36 Estimates of future numbers of young people with SLD and PMLD were based on the PLASC data provided to us by the Welsh Government. The data supplied consisted of numbers of pupils with PMLD or SLD, in Years 7 to 14 in maintained schools, for each year from 2004 to 2011. In addition, the Welsh Government supplied data from the Independent Schools Census for each year from 2004 to 2011, relating to numbers of statemented pupils aged 16 and over who were attending non-maintained schools in Wales. Data from non-maintained schools are not collected by year group so statistics only give a total number of statemented pupils with SLD and PMLD, aged 16 and over, per academic year<sup>54</sup>.
- A.37 Firstly, we used the PLASC and Independent School Census data from 2010/11 to project forward, year-on-year, in order to estimate the total number of likely Year 14 leavers from 2012-2018. For example, Year 13 pupils in 2011 became Year 14 leavers for 2012, Year 8 pupils in 2011 became Year 14 leavers in 2017 and Year 7 pupils in 2011 were projected forward as Year 14 leavers for 2018.
- A.38 Secondly, we estimated the future numbers of Year 7 pupils who would become Year 14 leavers in July 2018 and every July thereafter until 2021. To do this, a prevalence model was applied to age estimates of Wales' general population, by age, to derive likely numbers of young people with SLD and PMLD feeding into Year 7 in future years. Estimates of prevalence of SLD at Year 7

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<sup>54</sup> Figures from the Independent Schools Census indicate a total of 12 statemented pupils with SLD and one statemented pupil with PMLD aged 16 and over were attending non-maintained schools for the academic year 2010/11.

(age 11) of 3.80 per 1,000 for girls and 6.00 per 1,000 for boys were taken from Emerson et al (2010). These were supplemented by prevalence of PMLD at Year 7 (age 11) of 1.17 people per 1,000 (Emerson, 2009)<sup>55</sup>. The projection also included an estimated annual increase of 4.9% in PMLD prevalence rates due to increased survival rates of infants born with PMLD<sup>56</sup>.

A.39 Finally, it was important to take into account likely variations in the number of future Year 14 leavers as a result of mortality, families leaving the local area, or young people leaving school before Year 14. We know that young people with SLD and PMLD are likely to stay on at school into later years due to family preferences and young people's on-going needs for intensive support. Also, reductions in year cohort numbers were much larger in Years 11 to 14, as pupils became eligible to leave school, compared to Years 7 to 10. Allocating all changes in numbers to leavers was regarded as a reasonable strategy, but could lead to slightly inflated numbers. Therefore, we used the 2004 to 2011 PLASC data to estimate how many young people might leave the school system prior to Year 14 in any one academic year. Changes in numbers as cohorts moved between Years 7 and 10 were regarded as being due to in- and out-migration and mortality. In Years 11 to 14 reductions in numbers between years were regarded as being due to young people leaving school. These annual changes were averaged over the period 2004 to 2011 and used to adjust yearly cohort sizes over time. In this way, an estimate of the total number of young people with SLD and PMLD in school, and numbers for Year 11 to 14 leavers, in the 10 years from 2012-2021, could be made.

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<sup>55</sup> All prevalence figures relate to pupils with Statements of SEN or School Action Plus status only.

<sup>56</sup> Personal communication Eric Emerson, December 2012.

## **Appendix B Findings from interviews with young people**

- B.1 A total of eight young men and women with complex learning difficulties, aged 18 to 20, took part in an interview. The most common age was 19 years. All the young people were in their final year of secondary education. Interviews with young people focused on what they wanted from post-19 education and their hopes for the future. Topics covered in the interviews included:
- How the young person wished to communicate.
  - Name of current educational provision.
  - What they liked/disliked about it.
  - Who their friends were and the sorts of activities they shared.
  - Any other provision accessed outside of the education placement.
  - Favourite things about school or college.
  - Whether they were learning things that would help them to get a job.
  - What they would like to do when they leave school or college.
  - Their experience of support from their transition key worker and/or Careers Wales adviser.
- B.2 All of the young people interviewed were asked if they were happy in their current educational setting. Five of them replied positively, one said that school was okay and two said they were not happy/sad. However, it was not always possible to find out why those that were not happy did not like being there. One simply said it was 'boring'. Another said, 'I'd rather be sleeping'.
- B.3 However, all of the young people said they had friends at school and three of them said this was the best thing about being at school. Two people did not answer the question. Other things students said they liked about school were:
- Cooking (n=2).
  - Sport (n=1).
  - Swimming (n=1).

- The computer (n=1).
- The teachers (n=1).

B.4 Some of these things also featured in responses from the young people when they were asked to say what they enjoyed doing with friends. They had a variety of pictures of activities to look at to help them and sometimes things that they did with family members also were picked. The range of activities people mentioned was quite wide including, painting and drawing, chatting to friends, playing pool, going to the pub with dad, going to the cinema or gym, eating out, swimming, shopping, watching and playing football or tennis as well as listening to, and playing music.

B.5 We were interested to know if any of the young people went anywhere else during the daytime apart from school. Sometimes, students were on a college link course and five of the eight had been preparing to go to college by attending the local further education college one day a week, in one case for three years. Some of the places that young people went during the week were associated with work experience opportunities: one young man mentioned 'Shaw Trust' and another said 'gardening'. However, others mentioned places they went from school such as swimming, out for a coffee or drama club. Another said he went to a short breaks facility that he named.

B.6 When asked if the students were learning things that would help them in the future, five of them thought they did, and two thought that what they were learning was sometimes helpful for the future but one person did not answer. Seven young people who could respond to the question about what it is that is helpful, said: cooking (4), money (2), cleaning (2), shopping (1), (preparing for) college (1), reading (1), writing (1), numbers (1), painting and decorating (1), plumbing (1), recycling (1), signing (1), sharing with others (1), helping others (1). With the vocational/practical

activities it was not always clear when it was work experience or a school-based activity. For example, one person indicated he had done gardening as work experience but apparently this was something that school organised as a learning experience. In some cases, students could not recall what they had done for work experience even with photo prompts but in these cases, someone from the school usually told us what the activity had been. It was not always clear where this activity had taken place and certainly, in two instances, school staff said the experience had taken place in school rather than outside. The list of work experiences mentioned by either the young people or their supporters included:

- Charity shop work.
- Car valeting.
- Work in a care home for older people.
- Gardening.
- Work at a garden centre.
- Work on a farm.

Two of the young people had done more than one type of work experience.

B.7 In terms of the young people's satisfaction with their learning, we asked whether there were other things they wanted to learn and five of them replied that they did. If this was the case, they tended to have a clear idea of what that would be. For instance, some wanted a vocational course such as car mechanics while others wanted to improve their skills in reading, number work or telling the time. Another wanted to learn about cooking, cars and formula one racing while two others said there was nothing. Only one young person did not answer this question.

### **About the transition key worker**

B.8 All of the young people knew who their transition key worker was even though in two cases, we did not have a photo and they

would not have seen the worker that day. In some instances, the transition key worker introduced the researcher to the students so this was particularly helpful for these questions. In all cases, the young people remembered that the transition key worker had talked to them and all but one said the worker had helped them this year. The young person who said 'No' was consistent in saying the transition key worker had not been helpful when asked again later. Six young people said the transition key worker was helpful, one said s/he was okay.

B.9 In terms of things that the transition key worker had done with each of the students, we asked them to say whether they had help with each of the things shown in the table below.

**Table 17: Activities undertaken by young people with support from their transition key workers**

Possible Activity with TKW	Yes	No	No answer
Helped me plan next steps	7	1	0
Helped me with my work	5	2	1
Helped me fill in forms	5	2	1
Took me out	3	3	2
Visited college with me	6	1	1

B.10 We then asked about other things that young people would like to talk about with the transition key worker. The responses to the various options given are shown in the table below.

**Table 18: Discussion topics that young people would have liked to cover with their transition key worker**

Possible Activity with TKW	Yes	No	No answer
Relationships	7		1
Housing	1	5 (1 already sorted out)	2
Health	1	2	5
Things to do in spare time	4	3	1
Help you might need in future	2 (IT for 1)	4	2
Transport (getting around)	3	3	(2 not clear)
Anything else?	1*	0	5

\*The one young man who said he wanted help with another aspect of his life said he wanted help to get a job.

B.11 When asked what their plans were for after school, most could answer this question but one recorded answer came from the supporter rather than the young person. This person said the student would be going to a day centre rather than saying what she would prefer to do. Of the remaining seven, six gave clear answers with two saying they did not want to leave but would rather stay where they were. Five said they wanted to go to college but two of these gave the impression that, although they were going to college, they would rather find a job. One person clearly stated that he wanted to go to college and then get a job.

B.12 We were interested to know if the young people wanted to work and also what they would like to do for a job, if they could choose. All the young people thought they would like a job. Two said they did not know what they would do for a job. Some gave several possible areas of interest and thus indicated that they did not have any definite plans. Only one student had real ambitions to work and even he had several ideas including running his own business. In one case, the interviewer had the impression that the young person had never really thought about work before. One factor that seemed to have a bearing on the answers given was work experience, particularly, if it had been positive. The other

factor that influenced response was the use of photographs showing people doing different types of work. The full list of ideas that were generated is below:

- Gardening.
- Cleaning cars/car valeting.
- Kitchen work/chef/cook.
- Helping/looking after people.
- Work in a game shop.
- Cafe or restaurant work.
- Office work.
- Work in a gym.
- Work with domestic animals.
- Plumber.
- Mechanic.
- Run my own business.

### **Other plans**

B.13 Six of the young people had something more to say about things they wanted to do in the future. One of the students was very glad to be able to go to college with friends and he was going to look after them there. He also said he wanted to learn to cook. Another student had an ambition to be able to cook his own dinner, have his own website and open a club house. Two others had aspirations for leisure activities that they wanted to pursue; one demonstrated his artistic abilities by drawing a picture of himself at the end of the questionnaire indicating he wanted to be able to draw (in future) and the other wanted to play football. Finally, one student mentioned a desire to get some qualifications at college.

### **Conclusions**

B.14 The group of young people interviewed had mixed cognitive abilities but all results reported relate to those who had SLD or PMLD. Nonetheless, nearly all were able to respond appropriately to the majority of questions. The responses from the students

demonstrate that they have a wide range of interests, highly value their friendships with their peers in school and most have a clear idea of what they will do next year. All but one of the young people said the assistance they had received from the transition key worker was helpful and most were able to say what this help had comprised.

- B.15 However, there were three other areas where several students said they would like support from transition key workers: with relationships, leisure opportunities and transport. These are things that any young person of this age might think about but given the significant isolation that many disabled young people experience, the need to help them with these aspects of life is more pressing. For example, many of these young people are unlikely to be able to travel independently without support and they may experience significant problems keeping in touch with friends or engaging in hobbies or interests once their education is finished.
- B.16 Some of the young people made it clear that they would like a girlfriend or boyfriend but, during these interviews, it was not possible to tell whether they had much of an idea of what a positive relationship might be like.

## Appendix C Provision of post-19 education for young people with complex learning difficulties: mapping data for the academic year 2011/12

**Table 19: Overview of FE college provision potentially available to target group for 2011/12 at colleges interviewed**

FE college (and area of Wales)	Provision for students with SLD and/or PMLD?	Length of learning programme	Days per week	Accreditation level	Accreditation type	Number of places available 2011/12
FE 033 (North)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	1-2 years 32 weeks	4	Pre-E E1-3	Agored Cymru ASDAN	6
FE 034 (North)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes Two programmes	2-4 years 34 weeks	2-5	Pre-E E1	AQA Agored Cymru	23 over two programmes
FE 035 (North)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme (Learners with SLD and PMLD could also access other courses within the Independent Living Skills programme)	1 year 36 weeks	1	Pre-E	Not accredited	5  (Additional places available on broader ILS programme)
FE 036 (North)	SLD – yes PMLD – no One programme	1 year (Length unavailable)	3	Pre-E E1	ASDAN	Data not available
FE 037 (South West & Mid)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	3 years 36 weeks	5	E1-3	Edexcel BTEC City & Guilds Agored Cymru	8
FE 039 (South West & Mid)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	1 year 36 weeks	3-4	Pre-E E1-3	Agored Cymru ADSAN Edexcel City & Guilds John Muir Award	6

<b>FE college (and area of Wales)</b>	<b>Provision for students with SLD and/or PMLD?</b>	<b>Length of learning programme</b>	<b>Days per week</b>	<b>Accreditation level</b>	<b>Accreditation type</b>	<b>Number of places available 2011/12</b>
FE 040 (South West & Mid)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes Two programmes	3 years 35 weeks per year	1-4	Data not available	Data not available	12 over two programmes
FE 042 (South West & Mid)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	1 year 36 weeks per year	5	Pre-E E1-3	College accreditation	8
FE 043 (Central South)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	1 year 36 weeks per year	5	E1-2	Data not available	10
FE 044 (Central South)	SLD – no (yes for 2012/13) PMLD – no (yes for 2012/13)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
FE 045 (Central South)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes Four programmes	1-3 years 36 weeks per year	4	Pre-E E1-3	OCR	32 over four programmes
FE 046 (Central South)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	1 year 36 weeks per year	4	Pre-E	ASDAN OCN	8
FE 047 (South East)	SLD – yes PMLD – yes One programme	1-3 years 34 weeks per year	5	Pre-E E1-2	Agored Cymru ASDAN City & Guilds	6
FE 049 (South East)	SLD – no (yes for 2012/13) PMLD – no	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

**Table 20: Overview of ISC provision for 2011/12 at colleges interviewed**

<b>Independent Specialist College</b>	<b>Learning programmes offered</b>	<b>Length of learning programme</b>	<b>Days per week</b>	<b>Accreditation level</b>	<b>Accreditation type</b>	<b>Number of places available 2011/12</b>
ISC 073 Wales	Farm, garden and woodland management. Candle work, pottery, woodwork, retail. ICT, personal development and citizenship and independent living skills	3 years 38 weeks per year	7 for residential learners	Pre-E E1-2 (ILS not accredited)	OCN City & Guilds	12
ISC 074 Wales	Independent learning pathway which can include: essential skills, creativity, music, life skills, work-related learning, sensory work, recreation and leisure	2-3 years 38 weeks per year	7 for residential learners 5 for day learners	Pre-E E1-3 Level 1 upwards	Agored Cymru ASDAN WJEC Edexcel	57 residential places  10 day places
ISC 080 Wales	Generic programme aimed at increasing independence and employability	3 years 38 weeks per year	7 for residential learners	Pre-E E1-2	Edexcel Other qualifications as relevant	30
ISC 076 England	Large range of vocational courses underpinned by core modules of English, Maths, ICT, independent living skills and personal development	3 years 38 weeks per year	7 for residential learners	Pre-E E1-2	Edexcel City & Guilds NPTC Agored Cymru OCR and others.	70-75
ISC 077 England	Three programmes: Communication and sensory lifestyles programme Work related and vocational learning programme Learning for living programme	2-3 years 38 weeks per year	7 for residential learners 5 for day learners	Pre-E E1-3 Level 1 upwards	City & Guilds AQA ASDAN Ascentis John Muir Award	Up to 100 over the three programmes
ISC 081 England	All do literacy and numeracy, IT training and braille, if appropriate. Vocational and academic activities	2 -3yrs 36 weeks per year	5	E1-E3	A suite of accreditation options	90 (can accommodate more)

Independent Specialist College	Learning programmes offered	Length of learning programme	Days per week	Accreditation level	Accreditation type	Number of places available 2011/12
ISC 130 England	Lifestyle and choices Independent living skills, Enrichment such as music and dance, crafts and horticulture. Functional skills, IT skills, sport and leisure, community participation and transition planning	2-3 years 37 weeks per year	2-5	Pre-E E1	OCR BTEC ASDAN	Variable each year

**Table 21: Overview of types of support available for 2011/12 at FE colleges interviewed**

FE college (and area)	Support for learning needs?		Support for personal needs?		Support for complex health care needs?	On-going access to therapies?
	Learners with SLD	Learners with PMLD	Learners with SLD	Learners with PMLD		
FE 033 (North)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funding and provision unclear	Yes Funding and provision unclear	Yes If funded and provided by LHB	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 034 (North)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Yes If funded and provided by LHB	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 035 (North)	Yes Provided by college LA funding for some specialist equipment	Yes Provided by college LA funding for some specialist equipment	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Yes If funded and provided by LA	No	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 036 (North)	Yes Provided by college	No	No	No	No	No No space or therapy rooms to accommodate this
FE 037 (South West & Mid)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Data not available	Data not available

FE college (and area)	Support for learning needs?		Support for personal needs?		Support for complex health care needs?	On-going access to therapies?
	Learners with SLD	Learners with PMLD	Learners with SLD	Learners with PMLD		
FE 039 (South West & Mid)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Yes – have nurse on-site funded and provided by LHB	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 040 (South West & Mid)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Yes If funded and provided by LHB	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 042 (South West & Mid)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Yes If funded and provided by LHB	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 043 (Central South)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	No	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 044 (Central South)	No (Yes for 2012/13)	No (Yes for 2012/13)	No (Yes for 2012/13)	No (Yes for 2012/13)	No (Yes for 2012/13)	Unclear
FE 045 (Central South)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	Yes	Yes If funded and provided by LHB/LA
FE 046 (Central South)	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes for lower level of need Funded by LA and provided by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	No	Data not available
FE 047 (South East)	Yes Funded by college	Yes Funded by college	Yes If funded and provided by LA	No	No	No
FE 049 (South East)	No (Yes for 2012/13)	No	No (Yes for 2012/13)	No	No	No

**Table 22: Overview of types of support available for 2011/12 at ISCs interviewed**

Independent Specialist College	Support for learning needs?		Support for personal needs?		Support for complex health care needs?	On-going access to therapies?
	Learners with SLD	Learners with PMLD	Learners with SLD	Learners with PMLD		
ISC 073 Wales	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	No	Yes Provided by college	No	No	Yes Provided by college and from local LA and LHB.
ISC 074 Wales	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	No	Yes Provided by college
ISC 080 Wales	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	No	Yes Provided by college	No	No	Yes Provided by college's local LA or LHB.
ISC 076 England	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college
ISC 077 England	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college
ISC 081 England	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	No	Yes Provided by college	No	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college
ISC 130 England	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Support and equipment provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college	Yes Provided by college

