

SNAP Cymru: evidence for Children Young People and Education Committee on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill

1. SNAP Cymru provides an independent service where families and young people can access accurate, unbiased information and support about their rights and responsibilities when dealing with issues around Additional Learning Needs. We are independently audited by Community Legal Services. We are a member of TSANA and broadly support their submission. From our extensive contact with parents, young people and professionals, we welcome the opportunity to provide some additional points to inform the Scrutiny Committee.
2. SNAP Cymru welcomes the principles of this Bill - a simpler and less adversarial system that underlines the necessity of providing support and information to ensure that children, their parents and young people participate as fully as possible in decisions that affect them.
3. The definition of ALN is similar to that already in legislation and will require interpretation for ages and stages of development. The range in ages is welcome. Clarity will need to be carefully embedded into the Code of Practice.
4. The IDP process is welcome and the work done thus far to begin the transition to child centred practice is encouraging. Learning, from work done and now Ofsted reports, in England shows that practice is likely to be patchy and that the process will not, of itself, bring about harmonious working and less anxiety.
5. The avoidance and resolution of disagreement facilitated by an independent and knowledgeable service provider is welcome. Avoiding disagreement requires that families and young people can get information and explanation from an independent source thus addressing the power balance and creating a partnership of equals. Legislation could enshrine a right to such a service for all families and young people, with concerns about their ALN, within the Bill. This would ensure access to independent support and rights and responsibilities based information at the outset of concerns before a time when events become stressful.
6. Families are concerned that the current avoidance and resolution of disagreement wording leaves a gap where one LA may legally be seen to be independent of processes and decisions from another LA. Parents and young people do not see this practice as independent and want the bill to ensure that this is not able to happen.
7. Families and young people overwhelmingly report that they find communication with schools and agencies stressful, they report feeling

confused following explanations and do not feel they have been fully informed of all options, rights and responsibilities. This leads to mistrust and confrontation.

8. Where information is provided without supporting explanation and exploration the information is not always understood and families and young people may be unable to make appropriate decisions.
9. Families and young people may distrust information that is not transparent about how decisions are reached and under what financial imperatives these decisions are taken. Families are concerned that the service or agency may not give them full access to all possible avenues of support.
10. Over reliance on third sector organisations to fill gaps. The third sector comprises great knowledge and skill on both common and rare ALN. The bill needs to ensure that these services are recognised and that there is a duty to fund adequately otherwise information and support services currently taken for granted will not be available to families or professionals
11. Parents are concerned that the services necessary to underpin the support and inclusivity they want from this new Bill may become spot purchased and only available when a setting purchases such input. Families overwhelmingly want a free at the point of delivery, open access service and the Bill's wording needs to promote that this happens.
12. Training. The proposed workforce development programme is welcomed. It will be important for any legislation or guidance to recognise that training and expertise are not the same thing and that access to expertise is essential at all stages of the process and all ages.
13. Involvement of specialists. Timely assessment is pivotal to meeting need. The right to an assessment that is sufficient to identify underlying health, educational and social need within a defined timescale will support good working relationships with families and young people.