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Research to establish a baseline of the special educational needs system in Wales: Annex A – Local authority case studies

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Research to establish a baseline of the SEN system in Wales:
Annex A – Local authority case studies

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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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Annex A: LA case studies

LA1

LA1 profile:

- Percentage of learners with SEN higher than average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);¹
- Percentage of learners eFSM higher than average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);
- Population below average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2016);²
- Percentage of Welsh speakers below average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2011);³
- Higher levels of deprivation than average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2014).⁴

Case study fieldwork included interviews with four LA officers (three from the education department and one from social services) and three LHB staff. Fieldwork with senior managers, SENCos and teachers was undertaken at one English-medium primary and one English-medium secondary school.⁵ Interviews were also undertaken with staff at a special school, learner referral unit and Further Education Institution.

LA1 roles and responsibilities

- Interviewees believed that roles and responsibilities are generally clear across services relating to SEN. LA officers commented that, though roles are clear, there is sometimes lack of clarity about processes, for example, lack of clarity about the criteria used by health for accepting referrals to some of its services.

¹ Data on learners with SEN and eFSM by LA are available here:

<https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170726-school-census-results-2017-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

² Population estimates by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/Local-Authority/populationestimates-by-localauthority-year> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

³ Data on Welsh speaking ability by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census>

⁴ Data on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation are available here:

<https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/150812-wimd-2014-revised-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

⁵ Welsh-medium and bilingual schools were included in other LA case studies.

- Some LA interviewees' roles in relation to SEN related to one particular area, such as strategic working, though several noted there has been a trend in recent years towards combining strategic and operational responsibilities within one role as a way of managing budget restraints.
- Interviewees outlined SEN structures at different levels (LA, multi-agency, cluster, school) which include dedicated teams, regular meetings, assessment panels, working groups, forum discussions (e.g. a SENCo forum which meets termly) and multi-agency groups. Multi-agency working operate within dedicated groups, such as a joint youth offending, education and charities intervention assessment group focused on family support, but also operate as part of established LA groups, such as a 'provision panel' that includes members from social services, the local health board (LHB) and the local special school in decisions relating to SEP. Interviewees reported that some services are delivered in partnership with a neighbouring LA and that the regional education consortium also plays an important role in supporting the LA.
- School interviewees were asked specifically about the role and responsibilities of the SENCo in their setting. A range of strategic and operational responsibilities were highlighted including: undertaking assessments, managing resources, monitoring and reviewing SEP, liaising with staff, parents and carers and external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health), training, outreach work, attending LA SEP panel meetings, and strategic work with school cluster groups.
- In two special schools, aspects of the SENCo role are shared amongst several members of staff. In the primary school, the SENCo is also the deputy head and is involved with the administration and strategic operation of SEN within the school, with delivery of SEP carried out by a deputy SENCo who is also a full-time teacher in the learning resource base (LA-funded SEP located on a school site). In the special school, all teachers were described as carrying out the role of a coordinator of needs of the learners in their classes. Administration of the continuous rolling programme of annual review meetings is carried out by a non-teaching and experienced Higher-level Teaching Assistant (HLTA).

- Interviewees in schools highlighted several key tasks undertaken by their SENCo including liaison with parents and carers, being the 'go to' person for questions about SEN and liaison with agencies outside of the school. One SENCo reported that most of their time in the role is taken up with liaison work with external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health). This SENCo considered this to be a worthwhile investment of time as they felt it resulted in good attendance by external services at review meetings and effective information sharing with the school.
- The types and levels of qualifications held by SENCos and deputy SENCos are varied and include: Postgraduate Certificates in Education (PGCEs), postgraduate diplomas in SEN and educational leadership and management, and Masters degrees. Some SENCos had undertaken other specialist training courses relating to the development of language and communication skills. All SENCos reported they are confident in carrying out the role and most had several years' experience. Interviewees in the special school indicated their staff (both teachers and support staff) have high levels of qualifications and described the school as a 'professional learning community'.
- In the FEI, the responsibilities of the SENCo are similar to those of SENCos in schools, although with some aspects of the role are delegated to learning coaches, for example, the writing of IEPs and delivery of SEP. The SENCo was completing a postgraduate qualification in specific learning difficulties at the time of the interview.

LA1 identification and assessment for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees in all schools described the process of raising concern about a learner's progress as being a collective responsibility. Classroom staff (teachers and support staff) were most frequently mentioned as being the people who raise initial concerns, but heads of year, pastoral heads, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) and parents and carers were also cited as people who can raise a concern.

- Interviewees in some schools reported that learners' needs are more likely to be identified at specific points during the academic year. These included initial entry into the school, for example, post-nursery or in Year 7, at the beginning and end of the school year, and at annual national testing time (e.g. Welsh Government National Reading and Numeracy Tests).
- A range of tools for assessment are used regularly by schools to support the identification of individual learning needs. Tools that were mentioned by school staff included GL assessment tests, screening tools such as Incerts, and the Welsh Government National Reading and Numeracy Tests. IQ level was cited by some schools as a measure of whether a child or young person should be considered as having an identified need, as was a 'red' level flagged up in GL assessment. Interviewees considered it important for assessment tools to be robust and emphasised the importance of tools for identifying academic needs as well as social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- Interviewees in schools considered that helping to investigate a potential learning need is a key part of the SENCo's role. School staff described activities that are involved in this process, such as making observations in the classroom, carrying out testing and gathering views from all professionals involved with a learner. Gaining a wide perspective on a learner's experience of school was seen by some interviewees as a key part of the process of identification.
- Some interviewees felt that the strength of relationships between school staff and learners strongly influence the effectiveness of early identification processes in schools.
- Processes for identification were generally considered effective by school staff, though some mentioned difficulty in identifying the precise nature of need for some learners. One school mentioned that the SENCo had drawn up a set of SEN characteristics for different groups but said this had proved to be of limited use for

practitioners. Differences in terms of teacher skill in assessment for learning was cited by one school as a challenge for early identification of need.

- Secondary school interviewees mentioned the challenge of receiving learners in Year 7 with unidentified learning needs. They commented that they were working more closely with cluster primary schools to ensure more in-depth information was gathered earlier on about learners in Year 5.
- FEI interviewees reported that unless a learner has a statement, they are not notified about learners with additional learning needs. As a consequence of this, all learners are reminded at enrolment about the availability of student support services and are invited to approach these if they feel they need help with their learning. One interviewee pointed out that some learners do not disclose an academic and/or social need on application because they see this as a possible barrier to being offered a place. The college said they are trying to work towards a system that supports disclosure of a need at the earliest time possible.

LA1 planning for SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Schools are continuing to use the term IEP to describe the format used for target setting and plans. School interviewees were aware there will be a change to the use of IDPs at some point in the future and indicated they are awaiting guidance on this.
- Interviewees in schools mentioned various personnel who are involved in planning. Class teachers were cited as the person who is most likely to develop plans in the primary setting, but English and maths subject teachers, members of the pastoral team, and HLTAs might also be involved, especially in the secondary school. Interviewees also indicated that external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) can be used for this purpose, particularly in shaping any targets that are related to their input.

- All interviewees reported that planning processes in all settings have become more person-centred in the last few years, with learners and parents and carers described as having more involvement in the process of planning once a learning need is identified. Platforms for this involvement include termly meetings, parent evenings and in-school discussions with learners.
- Mainstream schools said that they are using some aspect of a PCP approach in their planning. This is generally in the form of a 'one-page profile' for a learner, using the structured questions: 'what is important to', 'what is working' and 'what is not working'.
- The LA had been promoting the use of PCP and saw this as an initial stage in changing practices in relation to addressing learners' SEN. The ALN Innovation and Implementation Grant has been used for this purpose, specifically to fund training for head teachers, SENCos and schools. A working party on PCP had been established and had developed resources in conjunction with an external training provider. The special school had also been involved in developing training for PCP 'coaches' who are able to disseminate information about new practices to schools. Schools noted that they had received training and are using tools that had been highlighted to them during the training.
- The use of PCP practices was seen by most interviewees as more time-consuming than current planning arrangements, but more worthwhile in the long term. It was felt that preparation work for planning is taking longer since more people are being consulted and the consultation process itself is more in-depth, for example, more face-to-face meetings with parents and carers. However, the whole process was viewed by some as more efficient because it made it easier to identify a way forward for a child or young person.
- IEPs were seen as needing to have a limited number of SMART targets, that is, targets which are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely, are no more than three or four in number, and which are reviewed mostly on a termly basis. Targets

were seen as often needing to cover a number of areas of functioning, including academic targets as well as targets to support language development, motor development, and social and emotional development.

- The system of IEPs and regular identification of a limited number of targets was seen by all settings as generally effective. For some children and young people, however, particularly those with more complex needs, a single education plan was considered insufficient. Other types of plans were mentioned as running alongside IEPs for some learners, and these include behaviour plans, well-being plans, transition plans and health plans. Primary school interviewees mentioned that group plans sometimes operate, for example, for all the learners in an ability-based reading group.
- The FEI reported that it is developing practice around a person-centred approach. Independent learning plans are being used for the purpose of planning and assessment and learning logs for documentation of learning experiences. One-page profiles for learners are also available to relevant tutors, though these has raised issues about how best to disseminate this information, with plans in place to develop the internal system for learner information sharing.
- Most interviewees reported that funding mechanisms influenced their capacity to provide appropriate SEP. For example, some interviewees felt that nurture groups relied on consistency and key relationships that might support a young person through their school career, but reported that funding tended to depend on short-term funding streams.
- Some interviewees thought it would be useful for IDPs to be rolled out in conjunction with a software platform that would support schools and colleges in managing the IDP process. It was felt that perhaps there was potential for that platform to interface with other systems currently in place, such as SIMS.

LA1 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making relating to school action/plus SEP and FEI-based plans

- Most schools stated that forming good relationships with learners is an important way of supporting their participation in decisions about their learning. Several school interviewees described gaining learners' views as an integral part of teaching and an aspect of on-going formative assessment practices.
- The use of PCP processes in planning and review was seen by many schools as supporting increased participation by both learners and parents and carers in decision making about learning and support. One school commented that, previously, they had simply written IEP targets and then simply asked parents and learners for any feedback on these. No school mentioned this as current practice and PCP was universally seen as better at allowing schools to gain different perspectives about a learner and their learning. Several interviewees noted that learners enjoy being asked their views.
- Though the FEI used a system of phone calls (sometimes daily) to communicate with parents and carers of learners with additional needs, some interviewees questioned the appropriateness of this practice for learners who are aged 18. Parents and carers were described as very supportive to the idea of promoting independent learning in their child, though it was pointed out that parental expectation of support often exceeded what is practically available. Parent and carer views and educational views were described as sometimes divergent in terms of the needs of young people in education. For example, it was reported by interviewees working in further education that Estyn took the view in inspection that young people should be gaining experience of work and community involvement, whilst some parents and carers identify their child as 'less able' than this.
- Interviewees working in the PRU said that they sometimes experience difficulty in gaining parental agreement in SEP planning and expressed a general concern that parents and carers with whom they work often find it hard to express their views and advocate for their child.

- LA officers reported that they are planning to develop further resources to support learner and parent participation and had prepared leaflets on PCP and other resources. They indicated they are awaiting further guidance on the new ALN code of practice before finalising these resources.

LA1 SEP and review for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- For school interviewees, effective SEP was defined as children and young people achieving their potential in a setting where they are able to express themselves as individuals. Effective SEP was associated most strongly by schools with smaller and more specialised settings, for example, the learning resource bases for learners with statements and learners supported through school action plus that are located in the primary school and the special classes that operate for each year group in the secondary school and that include mostly learners for whom SEP is delivered through school action plus. These were considered centres of excellence in relation to a range of SEN by many teachers and SENCos interviewed. School staff felt that opportunities for closer and more supportive relationships are operating in these settings along with more consistent routines and greater possibility of flexible delivery of the curriculum. The head teacher in one setting, however, expressed concern that specialist classes reduce learner access to the full breadth of curriculum at an appropriate level. This interviewee believed SEP would be more appropriately organised as satellite and bespoke SEP delivered over a shorter period of time than is currently the case.
- Named interventions that are used as SEP in mainstream settings include Accelerated Reader, Read, Write Inc, MaLT for maths support, and precision teaching. One interviewee felt that there is a need for the use of more precise tools and cross-phase working (primary and secondary levels) to gauge the effectiveness of interventions, though other respondents commented that interventions and practices are evaluated on a regular basis.

- SEP for children who are looked after was described as very good in the LA, with two designated teams operating, one in the education service and one in social services. SEP was generally thought to be enhanced for children and young people who are looked after in educational settings and this group was thought to do well in terms of achievement compared to the non-SEN population. A social services interviewee believed, however, that the education service needs to be more understanding about the basis of individual needs and ensure that exclusions are not used for this group.
- Some interviewees felt that many learners with low ability and challenging behaviour are being educated in mainstream settings, but that it is difficult to provide the flexibility of curriculum that these learners need. In the PRU, the Qualified for Life curriculum is being used, but it is felt that this is limited in terms of its flexibility to appropriately differentiate the curriculum. In further education, by contrast, it was felt that it is possible to provide for learners at every level, including pre-entry level and Level 1 courses.
- Most interviewees cited reduced financial resources as presenting the greatest challenge to the delivery of SEP and review processes. Some interviewees highlighted a recent trend towards class teachers being expected to deliver more SEP for learners with SEN as an example of budget constraints. Several interviewees mentioned increasing difficulty in accessing support from external agencies, particularly services in health, though the secondary school felt that this is an area of improvement. Difficulties were cited by schools in relation to receiving written reports from health services and attendance of health professionals at meetings, particularly if a learner does not have a statement. However, some health interviewees said they always forward reports for learners on their caseload to schools.
- Health professionals mentioned that some children 'fall through the net' in terms of SEP, citing those with disabilities that are not clearly visible, such as autism, as being particularly vulnerable in this respect. Other challenges that were associated with SEP included differential skills and knowledge by class teachers, health involvement

being seen as based on diagnosis rather than actual needs, and capacity issues within health services in the face of increasing demand. Funding was mentioned by several health interviewees as the reason for longer waiting times for services and inadequate service SEP in some areas.

- Review of IEPs was described by interviewees as a 'simpler' and 'more natural' process than that of annual reviews of statements. Teacher review of IEP targets was considered as part of the on-going process of teaching and learning and as a useful exercise to gather evidence of learner achievement and reflect on learner targets.

LA1 resolving disagreements relating to SEP delivered through school action/plus and for learners with FEI-based plans

- All schools noted that the number of disagreements about learners' SEN is minimal. Issues were reported to occur most often in relation to placement and SEP and are therefore resolved before a child or young person arrives at the school. Interviewees highlighted the importance of developing good relationships with parents and carers, establishing effective channels of communication and operating an 'open door' policy to help avoid disagreements. Interviewees noted that establishing relationships that are respectful, transparent and honest, giving sufficient time to listen to parents and carers and acting on issues quickly were important practices. One school noted that it makes no distinction between disagreement and providing support for parents/carers, for example, in relation to understanding processes and priorities in schools. Many said that they proactively involve parents and carers in decision making and see this as a way of avoiding disagreements.
- LA staff noted they had provided training to LA officers and to schools on dispute resolution. Training had focused on the importance of having conversations with people and how to structure these discussions.

- One LA officer commented that, since the authority was a small one, points of contact are easy to identify, and good links exist between different services and sectors. They noted, however, that it is often difficult to involve health professionals in disagreement resolution meetings.
- In further education, interviewees reported that working with parents and carers can be challenging in some cases, particularly in cases where it is not possible to provide learners the same level of support that they had received in school. This presented a particular challenge in terms of explaining the differences in settings, curriculum and SEP to parents and carers.

LA1 statutory assessment for special educational needs

- LA staff noted that they had recently conducted a review of entry and exit criteria for a statement. It was reported that, following this, the LA has become more stringent in accepting referrals and that further guidance had been disseminated to schools relating what should be provided for learners supported through school action and school action plus. One LA officer commented, however, that schools are feeling the impact of budget restraints and are continuing to make requests for SEP (i.e. for learners supported through school action plus). LA interviewees reported there had been a significant increase in requests for statutory assessment in the LA. This perception was supported by data on the number of requests for statements which showed a significantly higher percentage increase in requests in this LA between 2014/15 and 2016/17 compared with the Wales average. LA interviewees perceived that this was related to the introduction of the ALN transformation programme. LA officers thought that this was because parents and carers wanted to secure SEP for their child at a stage beyond school action plus before changes to the system take place. This perception may indicate that the implications of the Act may not yet be fully understood by parents/carers.
- All school interviewees reported using a graduated response to addressing identified needs, with extra support being provided first at the classroom level through individualised support or within a small group. All school interviewees noted they use

tests to gauge the impact of in-school intervention or support. The primary school SENCo noted that all learners who had been referred for statutory assessments had subsequently been issued with a statement. They noted however that, from experience of being on the assessment panel, not all requests for assessment are granted and felt that the process is driven by the quality of the paperwork. Some LA officers described the statutory assessment process as 'very bureaucratic'.

- LA staff considered identification processes to be fairly effective in schools whilst also highlighting variations in practice which they felt are driven by differences in school leadership and the skill levels of SENCos and teachers. Some LA staff felt that schools occasionally refer cases to the LA before fully exploring options for delivering enhanced SEP in the school. LA officers highlighted that a joint moderation process for IEPs had been established across schools to try and improve consistency.
- Schools and the LA noted that statutory assessment generally occurs in a timely manner and is robust as a system. Delays tend to be attributable to capacity issues within the education psychology (EP) service or else parental disagreement about the wording of statements. Several interviewees commented that the period of time between identification of need and the outcome of assessment is often too long however for learners who may require immediate support. Health professionals reported they sometimes bypass their referral system by accepting a referral directly from an EP and providing support immediately. They might also do this if there was a delay in community paediatricians referring cases that they have prior knowledge of. One health interviewee said of problems with the operation of protocols and procedures, 'we find ways of making things work'.
- Interviewees from the LHB noted that waiting times for assessment can be a challenge, though some thought that the process of triage for referrals helps with this. The assessment process itself was considered to be problematic by some health professionals who felt it tends to portray a child in a negative light that can be difficult for parents and carers to accept. However, health interviewees felt generally that

close working with educational professionals, particularly within the EP service, is effective and contributes to good outcomes.

LA1 statutory SEP

- Some interviewees felt that statementing as a system is too bureaucratic and that statements as a format are not fit for purpose. One interviewee commented that professionals are 'making a good job out of a poor template' and felt that generalised wording of statement objectives are useful for the LA, but did not necessarily help the individual child or young person.
- LA interviewees noted that the authority is small and therefore limited in terms of its SEP. For example, there is no designated SEP for learners with BESD. Out of county placements are being used for some learners with complex needs and some services to schools are being provided by professionals based in other LAs. Some thought this limited range of SEP is partly responsible for exclusions and for learner absences through the operation of part-time timetables in some educational settings. However, the small size of the authority was thought by some interviewees to be a strength in that it means the authority is not a 'faceless' one for service users, and that children and young people are generally well-known to services.
- In the special school, effectiveness of SEP was described as having different meanings at different age phases. In the Foundation Phase effectiveness was seen as related to early intervention, in Key Stage 2 it was viewed in relation to the development of independent learning, and at Key Stage 3 and 4 with the provision of life experiences.
- Specialist practices that are being promoted in the special school include person-centred practice, the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), positive behaviour support, and applied behaviour analysis (ABA). The school noted that PCP is at the heart of its SEP and is being used across all aspects of pedagogy and support. It was noted that objectives provided in learners' statements are often broad and hard to align with short term goals, but that the action planning element of PCP

aids this process. The move to PCP was seen as involving not only a change in planning formats and the structure of meetings, but also a shift in terms of culture and the recognition of different perspectives in the classroom. Interviewees felt that PCP processes ensure the voice of the learner is taken good account of when planning individual learning pathways and mapping SEP.

- The special school is operating a system of multiple plans for learners which operate in addition to the IEP. Plans include transition plans and positive behaviour support plans. Termly targets were considered too long-term for some learners, especially those who need more immediate feedback on their learning and more short-term goals.
- Schools noted that input from external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) is generally easier for learners with statements, though the primary school reported that they experience difficulties with children's health services for this group of learners too. The secondary SENCo reported spending large amounts of time liaising with external agencies and reported that several health services are visiting the school on a termly basis.

LA1 review of statutory SEP

- The process of annual review of statements was considered by mainstream schools as tangential to ongoing ordinary teaching and learning processes and formative assessment practices and so more time consuming. In the special school, review was described as a 'mammoth task' because all pupils have a statement, although it was considered more integrated with general practices and processes in the school, particularly because of the pervasive use of PCP processes within the school.
- Interviewees noted that reviews for children who are looked after are usually held separately to annual review meetings of educational statements. Reasons for this include: chairs of each meeting not wanting to amalgamate the meetings, different professionals being required in meetings, and the nature of issues discussed (e.g. it

was considered inappropriate for educational professionals to have in-depth knowledge of family issues and circumstances in the home).

- Some interviewees in the health service thought that paperwork used for the review of SEP is repetitious in its format and is not updated frequently enough, so that information about a child or young person can often be out of date. LHB interviewees also noted that the special school has a practice of notifying health professionals early on of review meeting dates and that resource would then be allocated to this.
- Health interviewees commented that quality assurance of input in the form of reports and care plans is adequately monitored, for example, by the All Wales Paediatric Network, annual governance meeting and through clinical supervision and service user satisfaction questionnaires. Some interviewees felt that monitoring of the effectiveness of SEP is less effective, however.

LA1 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making about statutory SEP and resolving disagreements

- The most frequently cited tools for supporting learner and parent participation in decision making processes about statutory SEP were poster-sized sheets headed 'what is working' and 'what is not working' which were used at annual review meetings. The special school uses these, but also other sources of information including parent questionnaires, the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) survey and evaluation forms following annual review meetings.
- The special school saw support for learner and parent participation as a key priority in terms of its provision and offers a range of communication channels for both. For example, parent groups, parent workshops, parent evenings, parent attendance at school INSET days and a range of social media and online platforms were seen as important ways of gaining parent and carer views.
- Some school staff felt that participation of learners and parents and carers in PCP sometimes requires the use of support strategies. One SENCo noted that when

learners are asked to identify a learning target they often cite the same thing, that is, 'To improve my handwriting'. One school shows parents and carers the PCP templates as a way of helping them prepare for a meeting. Thinking about the challenges of supporting learner participation, one SENCo said that they had noticed learners at Key Stage 4 were better at participating in meetings and decision making. This SENCo attributed this to individuals becoming familiar with the process through attending meetings in previous years.

- Health professionals commented that they have adopted some person-centred approaches in their service practices, but that managing differing and conflicting views of child and parent is an area of challenge.
- In terms of disagreements, interviewees were of the view that resolution processes are effective and that relatively few cases in the LA reach tribunal. LA staff commented, however, that they spend a good deal of time on tribunal cases, though the amount of time varies greatly on a case by case basis.
- Interviewees working in health services felt that they are often not notified early enough about a disagreement and sometimes are only informed once it has escalated. They noted that a forum has been established within the health board to try to reduce the escalation of disagreements. One health professional commented that they are often asked for information to be provided immediately and that this causes problems because of their caseload commitments.

LA1 working with others

- Many partner organisations were mentioned by LA officers, health professionals, schools, the FEI and EOTAS provision. These included independent and third sector organisations, the youth service, community police, Careers Wales, SNAP and independent consultancy groups. School interviewees highlighted speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and CAMHS services as key external partners.

- Interviewees working across services felt that, though points of contact are often clear, liaison and information sharing can be a challenge. Several interviewees working in education noted that forging links with professionals in health and social services is particularly challenging, for example, practitioners not always responding when contact is made, practitioners being unable to attend meetings and information not always shared. Two schools described innovative practices that they have developed to increase liaison opportunities, which include holding health-based clinics within the school setting and school staff attending clinical appointments along with parents/carers. One school SENCo explained that they devoted a large amount of their allocated time to liaison with external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) and they felt that this had resulted in increased attendance at meetings and improvement in information sharing. This SENCo noted that giving long notice periods for meetings (e.g. annual review meetings) resulted in better attendance, particularly by health professionals.
- Several interviewees mentioned that sharing a site or building helped facilitate effective practices in relation to working with others. Proximity to professionals in related teams and services was considered a factor that supports the establishment of good working relationships, facilitates communication and supports the process of planning, for example, in relation to transition.
- Health interviewees noted that they are not always aware of requests for information since these often go to the lead agency. Many health respondents reported that multi-agency working is in place and effective, citing a range of partners including other health professionals and partners in the independent sector and the third sector. However, some interviewees felt less positively about this; one health interviewee commented that 'we all work in silos' with no single co-ordinating body within the LHB.
- Health professionals reported several challenges relating to communication with partners. These include difficulties in sharing information and the use of different information and communication systems in education and health services. Some

health professionals noted that it can be difficult to access EP reports and that there are often delays in sending and receiving reports because of the use of different systems.

- Interviewees in schools felt there is variation in the effectiveness of support from external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health). Some interviewees considered that more regular contact between external agencies and individual children is more effective than, for example, termly contact and generalised forms of advice. One education professional noted that reports from external agencies can be vague and occasionally provide little clear direction for learning support assistants who are running intervention groups. One SENCo commented, however, that external agencies should be less concerned with 'trouble-shooting' and individual cases, and more involved in training for staff and capacity building in schools.
- Some interviewees reported there are challenges in referring young people to CAMHS, for example, where referrals are assigned to the educational psychologist, limited educational psychology hours means that very few learners are able to be referred. FEI interviewees reported that a lack of capacity in CAMHS has resulted in a situation where GPs have to refer young people to the college counsellor and that this has resulted in the college counselling service becoming over-subscribed.

LA1 transition

- All interviewees felt that transition arrangements, particularly in relation to primary to secondary school transition, are robust and very effective. Many practices were described to support learner transition for learners with SEN. Practices include: visits by education professionals for information sharing, for example, meetings between Portage and the primary SENCo; an enhanced programme of visits for learners with SEN transitioning from primary to secondary school, sometimes for a specific purpose (e.g. to take photos to make transition books for learners with autism).
- The special school noted that it operates discrete transition plans for learners for key stage transitions and transitions into and out of the school. These plans are

structured in a person-centred way (i.e. what is working, what is not working) and are shared across all staff involved with a learner. The school noted too that it organises its annual review meetings in a way that gives a long lead-in time to transition, that is, by prioritising meetings for learners in Y6 and in Y13/14 early on in the academic year prior to transition.

- Several interviewees felt that post-16 transition is more problematic. Some commented that there are fewer options at this stage, whilst others working in health services noted that no services are available to young people unless they have a learning disability. One school SENCo noted a lack of good communication links between schools and settings involved in post-16 education and thought that it often fell to parents and carers to relay information about their child's needs, unless the young person has a statement and/or complex needs. The secondary school noted that a head of year might go on college visits, but that there is a gap in service for 19-25-year olds in particular. FEI interviewees felt that the 'circle isn't closed', that is, that information coming from secondary schools about learners is inconsistent across all services and organisations involved with a learner. For learners with severe needs, it was reported that comprehensive information is more likely to be shared than for learners with moderate learning needs.
- Other areas of challenge that were raised in relation to transition included: problems with the expectation that young children with SEN should be able to make an immediate transition from part-time pre-school education to full-time school education, lack of option choices at key stage 3 to 4 transition, particularly options for more practical subjects, and problems with information sharing for transitions from other LAs.
- Social services reported having minimal involvement with school age transitions, but that they were more heavily involved in post-14 and post-19 transitions. A designated operational group had been established for this purpose and looks at the transition of young people to adult services at 18 years and transition to college at 19 years. The group oversees assessments of need and the passing on of information, but it was

felt that its effectiveness is limited in that adult services often focus on the content of service packages, that is, how much a package costs, rather than responding to individual needs and preparation for adulthood.

- Interviewees from the LA commented that they are working on a protocol for transition currently which sets out expectations for different services.

LA1 Welsh language

- The LA reported that it was possible to carry out assessments in Welsh, but that providing Welsh-medium SEP was more difficult. Mapping exercises had been carried out on several occasions to ascertain the demand for Welsh-medium provision and had shown each time that numbers are low.
- Schools reported they had not encountered demand for Welsh-medium provision. This is likely to reflect the fact that no Welsh-medium schools were included in the fieldwork for this case study.⁶ Interviewees in the FEI and PRU noted that they had Welsh-speaking staff but that there had been no requests for this support.
- Some health interviewees noted they offer a Welsh-medium service where this is requested and that they had some Welsh speaking staff. Other health professionals noted they had provided reports and information to some families in Welsh but that they were unable to offer some Welsh-medium services (e.g. clinical appointments or assessments) because of a lack of linguistic skills among staff. Health interviewees felt there were significant challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff generally which were exacerbated in the case of Welsh-speakers. Interviewees highlighted there were no Welsh-speaking staff in community nursing and occupational therapy, for example.

⁶ Welsh-medium and bilingual schools were included in other case studies.

LA2

LA2 background

LA2 profile:

- Percentage of pupils with SEN similar to the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);⁷
- Percentage of pupils eFSM similar to the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);
- Population below average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2016);⁸
- Percentage of Welsh speakers higher than average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2011);⁹
- Lower levels of deprivation than average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2014).¹⁰

Case study fieldwork included interviews with four LA officers (two from the education department and two from social services) and seven LHB staff. Fieldwork with senior managers, SENCos (referred to by the LA as ALNCos) and teachers was undertaken at a Welsh-medium primary and bilingual secondary school.¹¹ Interviews were also undertaken with staff at a special school, PRU and FEI.

LA2 roles and responsibilities

- Most interviewees believed that roles and responsibilities relating to SEN were clear across services. However, some interviewees in schools felt that accountability processes were not always clear. Some interviewees in schools felt it was difficult for them to monitor the actions of partner agencies and that it was sometimes unclear what they could do if an agency had not undertaken an action that had been agreed as part of a statement or review.

⁷ Data on pupils with SEN and eFSM by LA are available here: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170726-school-census-results-2017-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

⁸ Population estimates by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/Local-Authority/populationestimates-by-localauthority-year> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

⁹ Data on Welsh speaking ability by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census>

¹⁰ Data on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation are available here: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/150812-wimd-2014-revised-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

¹¹ Welsh-medium and bilingual schools were included in other LA case studies.

- Interviewees in schools were clear about the roles and responsibilities of the LA and other partners while LA interviewees felt there was clarity around the roles of education and social services departments and the work of external partners. Interviewees from the LA felt there was a lack of clarity in relation to who is responsible for funding SEP related to out-of-county placements. This tended to be raised for children who are looked after by the LA, specifically in cases where a sudden change in a foster placement results in a child moving to another LA. Social services and LHB staff reported they were less clear about disagreement resolution and tribunal processes compared with other aspects of the SEN system. However, these interviewees also commented they were not often directly involved in these processes.
- Interviewees described structures at different levels (school, cluster, LA, multi-agency) which helped provide clarity on roles and responsibilities. These included: regular internal school staff meetings relating to SEN, school cluster SENCo meetings, regular meetings between schools and LA staff, the LA moderation panel (a multi-agency panel focused on assessment, provision and review relating to statements and school action plus contracts), and other local and regional multi-agency meetings (e.g. between social services and education or between LAs and LHBs).
- Interviewees at the primary and secondary schools were asked about the responsibilities of their SENCo. In one of the schools, the SENCo was a member of the SMT and also had a full-time teaching role but did not have specific SEN qualifications. This SENCo's responsibilities were mainly strategic in nature and included planning and evaluating interventions, liaising with the LA and partners and contributing to assessments and reviews. This SENCo reported not always being confident in completing paperwork relating to assessments and reviews and would like to have a 'SENCo mentor' to turn to for advice occasionally. In the other school, the SENCo had 15 hours per week of teaching commitments and was the school's LAC officer and deputy safeguarding officer. The SENCo held SEN-specific qualifications and their role included a wide range of strategic and operational

responsibilities, including managing timetables, training, assessments, planning, delivering and reviewing provision, transition activities, liaison with parents/carers and external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) and resolving disagreements. The SENCo was confident in most aspects of the role.

- The formal roles and responsibilities were considered to be clear in the PRU. Due to the volume of children requiring SEP, the PRU representative reported providing strategic support to mainstream schools to avoid some children being referred to the PRU. Key workers and class teachers were reported to write plans, e.g. Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP), IEP, literacy plan, learner support plan and inclusion plan, which the SENCo collated.
- Internal roles and responsibilities were considered to be clear in the FEI, and the roles of schools and the LA education team were reportedly well understood by FEI staff. However, the roles and responsibilities of the FEI's external partners in health and LA social services were considered to be less clear.

LA2 identification and assessment for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Overall, most interviewees felt that identification and school-based assessment processes were effective. Interviewees in schools described their internal processes for assessing learners' needs and making decisions on learners supported through school action and school action plus. Interviewees described their decision-making processes and a variety of tools they used for undertaking assessments. Schools reported that they regularly sought the advice and support of LA staff (usually EPs or curriculum and inclusion teachers) in making school-based assessments.
- In the primary school, staff noted that initial concerns about learners would usually be raised by class teachers and referred to the SENCo. This would usually lead to a meeting involving the SENCo, class teacher and a TA to discuss any concerns and plan any differentiated provision. The learner would then be monitored in class and

the SENCo would request advice from external professionals such as EPs or SLTs if they felt this was needed.

- In the secondary school, interviewees noted they were usually aware of learners' SEN through information provided by primary schools during transition. However, they reported that initial concern would typically be raised by a class teacher, registration teacher or TA and referred to the SENCo, who would then review the learner's notes and assign a TA to observe the learner in a lesson before discussing what action to take (e.g. meeting parents/carers, seeking advice).
- LA education and school staff reported that planning meetings were held twice a year between LA EPs and the SENCo in each school to discuss and make decisions about learners (e.g. which would require consultations with specialist staff). They also noted there was more regular informal contact between them, which meant that most cases were known to the EP service at an early stage. SENCo and special school staff also commented that requests could be made by email or phone if needed and that the LA was very responsive when contacted. The LA and schools noted that challenges tended to relate to a lack of capacity (too few EPs and curriculum & inclusion teachers in particular) rather than processes or systems.
- Interviewees in schools noted that early identification during the foundation phase could be challenging because children were developing quickly.
- Interviewees working through the medium of Welsh commented there was a lack of contemporary, age-appropriate assessment tools for use through the medium of Welsh (particularly for older learners). This was contrasted with the wider range of English-language assessment tools available.
- Interviewees in schools reported using the national reading and numeracy test results as an early identification tool for targeting school-based provision including differentiated learning and targeted interventions (e.g. small group work focused on reading or numeracy skills).

- LA and school interviewees described taking a graduated response following the identification of initial concern, with schools usually discussing cases with LA staff and monitoring learners' progress for a period. Interviewees gave examples of taking a graduated response through observation, in-school discussions, differentiated learning and monitoring before involving LA staff if required. Interviewees indicated that less complex cases may not involve LA advice at all.
- Interviewees highlighted some challenges relating to initial identification and school-based assessment. Both schools and LA interviewees noted that meeting parental expectations of the speed at which processes can be undertaken could be a challenge. Interviewees noted that some parents/carers expect provision to be put in place quickly once concern is raised but that these expectations could sometimes conflict with the need for schools and EPs to take a graduated response and monitor how learners respond to differentiated learning for a period, before making decisions.
- Some LHB interviewees highlighted the challenge of identifying speech, language and communication (SLC) needs during the early years. LHB staff noted that this is an area where the SLT service was looking to develop better links with providers and health visitors and to develop clearer criteria. LHB staff felt that early identification of SLC needs was more effective in Flying Start areas as there was more scheduled engagement with parents/carers to explain the support and why it could help.
- Most interviewees from the LA, LHB and local special school reported that identification of needs during the early years was effective. Interviewees described processes for identifying needs, with health visitors, social workers and nurseries able to refer cases to community paediatricians, the LA portage service (a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with SEN) or the local child development centre (a joint facility run by the LA and LHB for children with SEN). Interviewees also highlighted the important role of an early years multi-agency panel which discussed cases referred by members or other practitioners. Health interviewees reported that some parents/carers could be reluctant to accept referrals

for assessments or additional support during the early years and that this occasionally led to support being provided later than it should be.

- Most health interviewees noted that their services were occasionally contacted by schools for advice on identification and school-based assessment. Most LHB interviewees (e.g. OT, SLT and CAMHS) noted that their services had single points of access (e.g. a helpline) that they encouraged learners, parents/carers or school staff to use. The CAMHS service described delivering monthly sessions in secondary schools which could provide opportunities for learners and schools staff to seek their advice on early identification and referral.
- The PRU reported all learners have an IEP and a broad-spectrum of baseline assessments including emotional and behavioural assessments are used for each learner. It was reported that many learners arrived at the PRU with provision arranged through school action plus.
- In addition to information provided by schools (see transition section, page 156), FEI interviewees noted that they used an entry questionnaire to ask learners for information on any SEN/LDD as well as any enhanced provision they had received in school. Interviewees noted that this helped identify SEN/LDD but that the process relied on learners self-reporting SEN/LDD, which some learners preferred not to do. Interviewees noted that, for those learners whose SEN/LDD was not known to the FEI, concerns were often raised by tutors to the learning support team shortly after the autumn half-term, when their first assignments had been submitted.

LA2 planning for SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees in schools felt their processes for planning in-school SEP for learners supported through school action and school action plus were effective. Interviewees noted that all learners had IEPs and that these were updated annually. Schools described holding regular internal discussions between SENCOs and SEN teachers and LSAs as well as processes for discussing learners needs in general staff meetings. Schools staff also emphasised the importance of informal discussions

between the SENCo and other school staff about monitoring learners and planning provision.

- LA and school interviewees reported that twice yearly planning meetings between LA staff and SENCo in each school were effective in providing an opportunity to discuss and plan provision, drawing on the advice of LA staff. Interviewees in schools and the LA noted that 'school action plus contracts' were used with some learners to outline enhanced provision the LA will provide for some learners supported through school action plus. LA interviewees explained that school action plus contracts were usually put in place for learners who were referred to the LA moderation panel but where the panel decided a statutory assessment was not necessary.
- The LA noted they were planning to pilot IDPs (based on a template piloted in another LA) for Year 2 and Year 6 learners without statements and that IEPs would be included within the IDP template for these learners during this piloting phase.¹² LA interviewees noted that they planned to use IDPs instead of school action plus contracts for Year 6 learners. None of the schools visited were using IDPs, but all noted they had started using one-page profiles for some learners alongside their current SEN documentation. School interviewees noted that all learners had IEPs. The secondary school had started using one-page profiles with Year 7 and 8 learners with SEP via school action and school action plus, while the primary school was trialling them with Year 4 and 5 learners. The FEI also reported that they intended to trial IDPs during 2018/19 at one campus.
- Some health interviewees referred to examples of provision that was jointly delivered between the LHB, LA and schools. Health interviewees highlighted that the SLT service provides schools with 'pre-referral training' to help teachers and TAs understand what support the SLT service will provide. LHB staff also noted that SLTs usually attend twice yearly planning meetings at schools.

¹² The mandatory IDP requirements, which will be set out in the new ALN Code for Wales, have not yet been published. This may vary from the IDP that was developed and piloted as part of a Welsh Government action research study (See Section 1.7).

- Classes in the PRU were grouped in terms of need, to ensure 'workable groups', e.g. hyperactivity, high functioning and most likely to return to mainstream school, ASD, and high level of anxious learners including ASD. The behaviour and reward models were the same for all classes. Along with academic progression data, self-esteem and improvement in behaviour/empathy are also recorded.
- In the FEI, support for learners with SEN was planned and provided through the learner support service. This service included SEN coordinators and learning support staff for learners on mainstream courses as well as staff focused on delivering independent living skills (ILS) courses, mainly for learners making the transition from special schools. Interviewees noted that some staff at the FEI could carry out rapid screening assessments and were able to screen for SEN/LDD but could not conduct diagnostic assessments (e.g. for autism or ADHD).

LA2 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making relating to school action/plus provision

- Interviewees in schools noted that parents and carers had fairly limited involvement in decision making processes relating to provision delivered through school action/plus. Parents and carers were not usually invited to IEP reviews although they were invited to speak to the SENCo and discuss the IEP during parents' evenings. LA and school staff commented that processes for communicating with parents/carers and learners to ensure their views were taken into account were effective.
- Secondary school interviewees noted they had started using PCP as part of annual reviews for learners on school action plus contracts (i.e. with learners receiving enhanced support through school action plus from the LA). Learners were invited to attend these reviews and were asked whether they would like a parent/carer to attend. One SENCo noted that: 'PCP is a useful process. It's good to involve the pupil but it's more intensive. The pupil is more central to the whole process. It's more personal when they're involved in setting targets and it gives them more ownership'.

- For the PRU, the IEP is written in dialogue with the parent and learner, and mostly written by the learner. IEP and IBPs are also discussed with the learner. However, the PRU reported difficulties in the logistics of bringing everyone together with some children travelling long distances, sometimes from other counties. The process has been made as accessible as possible with a questionnaire used, e.g. how do you think things are going? What can we do? Reviews have been informed by these responses, which were usually prepared before or during the meeting. Learners have also written about their school experience using 'my story', which provides an holistic assessment of need.

LA2 SEP and review for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees in schools felt that SEP delivered through school action/plus was fairly effective although they also commented that there was a lack of capacity to enable all learners to reach their potential. Some interviewees noted that this meant that enhanced provision for those without statements was not put in place in a timely way.
- Schools described their in-school capacity to deliver provision and the type of interventions they delivered. In the primary school, a small team of TAs delivered targeted interventions with learners in small groups as well as one-to-one sessions with some learners. The school noted they had occasionally applied for further enhanced SEP for plans through school action plus from the LA, usually delivered by peripatetic TAs or inclusion teachers. The school felt this provision was effective but that there was a lack of capacity within the LA to deliver enough support. Secondary school interviewees described SEP delivered through school action/plus as delivered by the SENCo, TAs, learning coaches and a teacher specialising in dyslexia who delivered various targeted interventions in the school's SEN 'hub'. The secondary SENCo noted that they would attend training and brief all staff in team meetings and CPD sessions.
- Primary school interviewees noted that provision delivered through school action/plus was reviewed by TAs who maintained a daily diary of pupil progress which was

regularly discussed with the SENCo. Secondary school interviewees described weekly SEN team discussions (TAs, SEN teacher, SENCo and other staff as required) to discuss learner progress and update school information management systems with any changes to learners' needs. Primary and secondary school interviewees reported that formal meetings were held between the SENCo and TAs on a termly basis to review pupil progress. School interviewees reported that all IEPs were reviewed annually.

- Secondary school interviewees were using PCP as part of annual reviews of learners' school action plus contracts (i.e. with learners receiving enhanced school action plus support from the LA). The secondary SENCo felt that the PCP review process was more effective in terms of involving parents/carers and learners and was more personal, leading to greater 'buy-in' from learners and parents/carers who were invited to attend. However, interviewees also noted that the process was more time consuming than previous review arrangements and had concerns about their capacity to conduct PCP reviews with all learners with SEN. Some interviewees felt that training more teachers to be able to conduct PCP reviews was essential if all learners with SEN were to have PCP reviews.
- Interviewees in the LA also highlighted a lack of capacity in the LA to deliver enhanced SEP, particularly for those without statutory plans. Interviewees in schools and the LA commented that there was a lack of provision for children with autism as a result of an increase in demand for this type of provision. Interviewees reported that there had been a reduction in LA staff which was related to funding pressures and an increase in the percentage of local education budgets delegated to schools. Schools and LA interviewees noted that this could lead to a 'vicious circle' whereby some schools opted out of centralised services resulting in a reduction in central LA budgets for SEN services, a reduced service available to schools and subsequently further schools being likely to opt-out of the service as a result of dissatisfaction with the reduced service.

- Interviewees from the LA noted they collected a lot of evidence on the progress of individual learners but need to do more in terms of evaluating overall progress of all children with SEN. LA interviewees noted they were looking to establish a robust monitoring process for learners using LA learning resource bases and outreach provision. LA interviewees noted that they needed to better define what their services were trying to achieve at a strategic level and what data could be used to measure if the provision is successful.
- LA social services staff noted that they used to attend annual IEP review meetings for learners from Year 9 onwards but that they were no longer able to do so due to a lack of capacity. Commenting on IEP reviews they had previously attended, LA social services staff felt these reviews were not effective in taking the views of parents/carers and learners into account. However, LA social services staff also noted that PCP training had had an impact on the inclusion of parents/carers in review meetings. LA social services staff noted that they often worked to help learners with SEN overcome barriers to learning, particularly in post-16 settings (e.g. overcoming anxiety about getting public transport to college).
- The progress of learners attending the PRU would be reviewed every six weeks, with some returning to school between 12-18 weeks. Interviewees reported that reintegration to mainstream used to be high, with most learners achieving successful reintegration, but had fallen significantly due to the specialist level of support required, with mainstream schools no longer able to support reintegration. However, 'reintegration with mainstream school' is one of the PRU's performance measures. The only specific annual reviews to take place were for those with statements.
- Interviewees felt that the provision delivered by the FEI learning support and ILS teams was effective. However, one interviewee reported there were a lack of SLTs, dyslexia specialists, EPs and visual impairment teachers available, noting that the college often had to buy-in external provision from the private or third sectors. Interviewees felt that review processes at the FEI were effective and noted that staff had started to use PCP review processes for learners on pre-vocational courses.

LA2 resolving disagreements relating to provision delivered through school action/plus and for learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees in schools and the LA emphasised that they sought to resolve disagreements informally and that this was usually effective. School and LA interviewees noted that disagreements were usually avoided through involving parents/carers and children in planning and review processes and that PCP could be a useful tool for facilitating their involvement. School interviewees reported they encountered few disagreements relating to provision delivered through school action/plus arrangements and that these usually related to decisions around statutory assessment, which would be referred to the LA.
- LA social services staff noted they spent a significant amount of their time liaising with parents or carers who had concerns about their child's provision. LA social services staff noted that some parents/carers required a significant amount of support in understanding decisions relating to their child, particularly if parents/carers had SEN themselves.
- Interviewees felt that processes for resolving disagreements in relation to FEI-based plans were fairly effective. Interviewees noted that parents/carers occasionally contacted the college to raise concerns about their child's provision, and that these were usually resolved through an informal meeting with all relevant partners (typically parents/carers, external agencies, tutors, learning support team). Interviewees noted that challenges sometimes occurred in FE, where the specific requirements of a course (set by an external accreditation body) may conflict with particular SEN/LDD. One interviewee referred to a requirement to do 'touch typing' on a business studies course as an example where an awarding body may not waive a requirement despite the FEI wanting to do so. Interviewees reported that they had observed a trend towards the FEI receiving more complaints about the way the college supports learners with mental health issues. Interviewees noted that this could occasionally lead to a lack of clarity about whether the FEI or LHB is responsible for providing and funding support.

LA2 statutory assessment for special educational needs

- Interviewees generally felt that statutory assessment and review processes were effective. LA interviewees and schools felt processes for making decisions on whether to conduct a statutory assessment as well as conducting the assessment itself were clear and effective. These included an LA 'moderation pack' of information and guidance for schools explaining the process of making referrals to the panel as well as standardised LA referral forms requesting evidence from schools on what differentiated provision has been put in place and what services have been involved with the learner. Schools noted that, while processes could be bureaucratic, the documentation was comprehensive with regular discussions taking place with EPs prior to, and during, the process should advice be required.
- Interviewees from the LA, special school and some from the LHB described their involvement in the LA's multi-agency moderation panel (a multi-agency panel focused on assessment, provision and review relating to SEN) and felt it to be effective, fair and consistent. The panel includes representatives from LA education (EP, statementing officer and a curriculum and inclusion teacher), LA social services, special school headteacher, mainstream head teachers and SENCos (schools rotate membership), SNAP Cymru, and the LHB (community paediatrician and SLT). All interviewees felt the membership of the moderation panel was appropriate. LA staff noted that children who are looked after are prioritised in moderation panel meetings. One LHB staff member noted that: 'I've been hugely impressed' by the moderation panel. It discusses complex cases and fulfils its role well.'
- Some LHB staff noted their involvement in statutory assessment processes tended to be limited to writing reports that were considered by the moderation panel. However, some noted that they would sit on the panel if they had significant involvement in a learner's case. All LHB staff felt their involvement was sufficient and came at appropriate times. Some thought that there would be required to attend more meetings in future and were concerned about their capacity to do so.

- Interviewees from schools felt that statutory assessment processes were fair and comprehensive although they had not been directly involved in moderation panel meetings. Some interviewees in schools felt the process was very time consuming and bureaucratic and some felt that documentation could be unclear in terms of the level of detail required from schools. One interviewee noted that there were variations in the type of evidence submitted by schools as there was no guidance on what screening or diagnostic tools should be used by schools to gather supporting evidence.
- The main challenge raised by interviewees relating to statutory assessment was the timeliness of assessments being completed. Interviewees noted that parents/carers' expectations of the time taken to undertake assessments often did not reflect what was possible. LA and LHB staff noted there could be delays in getting reports from the LHB completed on time within the current system. Health interviewees reported that delays were usually the result of families missing appointments with LHB practitioners and long waiting times for re-arranging appointments. However, LHB staff noted that they did not always receive requests for information quickly enough, with some noting that that LA staff sometimes only sent information to community paediatricians, which could result in other LHB staff receiving information late. LA interviewees also cited staff shortages and reductions in the size of their teams as factors affecting the timeliness of assessments.

LA2 statutory provision for special educational needs

- Interviewees in schools noted that they were trialling one-page profiles (schools planned to use one-page profiles across the whole school in future). All learners in the special school had statements and a one-page profile. School interviewees found one-page profiles useful and noted these were used in staff meetings. The primary school SENCo had attended IDP training organised by the LA.
- Most interviewees considered statutory SEP to be effective whilst highlighting challenges in terms of capacity and funding. Most school, LA and LHB interviewees felt that SEP was put in place in a timely way for those with statements. One LHB

interviewee noted that 'In my experience, provision usually goes beyond what is written in the statement.' However, LA and school interviewees also commented there was a lack of LA outreach provision due to a reduction in capacity. Some interviewees reported that they were aware of cases where schools did not have the capacity to deliver provision that had been agreed at the LA moderation panel. Some interviewees felt that this could increase the likelihood of exclusions and referrals to social services and/or the special school.

- In the early years, interviewees reported that the child development centre, jointly managed by the LA and LHB, was an effective facility for pre-school children with neurodevelopmental problems, long term physical illness and disabilities. Interviewees from the LHB, LA and special school felt the co-location of teachers and classroom support staff with community paediatricians, therapists, nurses and psychologists was an effective model of provision.
- Most interviewees in schools felt that statutory SEP was effective although some interviewees highlighted gaps (e.g. training for using braille, specialist autism provision, behavioural specialists). Both the primary and secondary school had some staff (TAs or teachers) who were employed directly by the LA to support learners with complex needs.
- All interviewees felt that provision in the local special school was very effective, with many commenting that the breadth of vocational opportunities available were a particular strength in the LA. However, most interviewees also highlighted that there was a lack of special school places available because of recent increases in demand. Interviewees attributed this to significant increases in the intake of pupils aged five to the special school as well as an increase in the number of pupils transferring to the special school at the start of Year 9.

LA2 statutory reviews

- LA interviewees noted that annual reviews of statements and 'school action plus contracts' are conducted by the LA's multi-agency moderation panel. LA interviewees

noted that if individual review cases are considered 'straightforward' (e.g. if no changes are being proposed or if no queries are arising) then the panel may not discuss it. However, if there are changes proposed to SEP or queries arising then it is discussed by the moderation panel.

- Primary school interviewees noted the progress of learners with statements was reviewed weekly, with formal, termly meetings between the SENCo and TAs. Secondary and special school interviewees noted they had started undertaking using PCP as part of reviews for some learners with statements. In the secondary school, this was for Year 7 and 8 learners with statements only. In the special school, PCP was being used as part of reviews for all Year 9 learners and around a quarter of all learners. School interviewees felt that using a PCP approach to reviews was more effective than previous review arrangements in terms of involving parents/carers and learners in decisions. Interviewees also felt it was more personal and generated a shared set of goals, leading to greater 'buy-in' from learners and parents/carers. One school senior manager commented that 'Everyone responds better to PCP; the quality of the conversation is better when the pupil is in the room and people are more likely to act on the outputs of the meeting. Greater weight is given to the actions.'
- School interviewees also noted that the using PCP as part of the review process was more time consuming than previous review arrangements and had concerns about their capacity to use PCP in all reviews. In the special school, they estimated that reviews using PCP would take around 4-5 hours, compared with around 1 hour for a statutory review. The special school had included a weekly 30-minute 'PCP session' during which learners and practitioners could focus on reflecting on and recording learners' progress (e.g. what was working well and improvements needed). One of the perceived benefits of this approach was a reduction in the amount of work required to gather evidence for annual reviews.
- School interviewees felt that appropriate people were involved in statutory reviews and described how they would usually involve the SENCo, LA representatives and

other professionals who had been involved with the learner (e.g. SLT, OT).

Interviewees noted that learners attended review meetings and that parents/carers were invited. School interviewees noted that statutory reviews would typically involve more detailed discussion (than reviews of IEPs) and include more detailed recommendations as well as strategies and 'safe places' for learners to go if they were having difficulties.

- Most LHB staff felt their involvement in reviews was appropriate and noted they did not usually need to attend review meetings but would usually send a report. Some LHB staff noted they did not always receive feedback from review meetings and that this was a weakness in the current system. Some LHB staff noted that they were not always told about review meetings as invitations would be sent via community paediatricians, who did not always pass on the information to them (or passed it on too late). In some cases, LHB staff noted they had established direct links with the LA in order to receive invitations and reports directly.
- The LA has established a 'PCP steering group', including representatives of LA social service and education departments. The LA has created a PCP training plan for schools including initial and refresher training delivered by an EP and social worker. This training was initially focused on SENCOs but has also been delivered to other professions – SLT, community paediatricians, OTs and staff involved in 'team around the family' services. There are PCP champions in each school cluster and PCP is a standing item on the agenda of termly school cluster SENCOs forums. The primary and secondary SENCOs had attended PCP training delivered by the LA.
- LA interviewees felt that statutory review processes were fairly effective but considered that moving to IDPs would be likely to make the process more 'streamlined' and less bureaucratic as they felt there would be less report writing involved. LA interviewees noted the quality of evidence submitted by schools to support reviews varied significantly and was sometimes insufficiently detailed for panel members to make decisions (e.g. not enough information on interventions or

the outcomes of interventions). LA interviewees noted the quality of information from schools using PCP was much higher.

- LA social services staff noted that statutory review processes for statements of SEN were effective. They noted they were exploring how annual reviews of social services plans and PEPs for children who are looked after by the LA could be joined up more effectively with annual reviews of statements. Some school interviewees were unclear whether review processes for PEPs and IDPs would remain separate or be merged.

LA2 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making about statutory provision and resolving disagreements

- LA staff commented that schools were good at communicating with parents/carers and learners to ensure their views were taken into account when decisions were being made about statutory provision. Primary schools found one-page profiles useful for annual reviews of statements and that this improved the process of taking pupil voice into account.
- LA staff noted that learners' views were represented indirectly in moderation panel meetings (which are involved in assessment and reviews for statements and school action plus contracts); it was reported that EP reports include learners' views and that the practitioner who knows the child best were asked to represent the learner's views during the discussion. LA interviewees reported that the outcomes of moderation panel discussions are always communicated back to learners, either verbally or in a letter. However, LA staff also acknowledged that the process of taking account of learners' views during moderation panel discussions was not always documented sufficiently.
- LHB staff noted it could be difficult for parents/carers to understand the processes involved in statutory assessment, especially if they themselves had SEN. Some LHB staff noted that they were occasionally asked to attend meetings with LA staff and

parents/carers. Some interviewees felt they were occasionally perceived to be in a 'mediation role' if parents/carers and the LA were in disagreement.

- The PRU interviewee reported that a lot of time is spent dealing with resolution. The PRU invite parents early during the engagement with a learner to discuss any issues they may have which aims to avoid future disagreements arising. Other services have also been involved in any dialogue with parents.
- LA interviewees highlighted that the majority of disagreements reaching the tribunal stage related to parents/carers requesting a place for their child at a local independent school. LA social services staff noted they encountered few complaints from parents and carers relating to statutory SEP. School staff noted they had not been involved in any formal disagreements relating to statutory provision. Some school interviewees commented that disagreements relating to statements would tend to be referred directly to the LA, rather than the school. School interviewees did not indicate that disagreements relating to provision supported through school action and school action plus had arisen in their settings.

LA2 Working with others

- Interviewees in schools felt there were generally good relationships between cluster schools and that SENCo cluster forums had helped improve communication and consistency in working practices. The primary school SENCo highlighted the development of a consistent 'transition package' as an example.
- Interviewees in schools felt working relationships with the LA, special school and PRU were good and that they were offered effective support. Secondary interviewees noted that Careers Wales attended annual reviews for learners from Years 9 upwards and were provided with copies of IEPs and notes on learners in order to enable them to write LSPs.

- Interviewees in the LA felt there to be effective working relationships internally between education and social services. Interviewees reported this was facilitated through education representatives attending social services meetings (e.g. LAC panels) and social services representatives attending SEN moderation panels. LA interviewees also reported effective working relationships with the LHB, specifically highlighting community paediatricians, SLT and OT in this regard. One LHB interviewee noted that: 'We're investing in relationships all the time and try to gently influence how schools or services deliver things. [to promote good practice]'
- LA, school and LHB interviewees felt there was clarity, in terms of there being single points of contact for agencies they worked with. For example, LA and LHB interviewees noted they shared information with schools on the SLTs, EPs and school nurses working in each school cluster. LA social services interviewees noted they had effective working relationships with Careers Wales and the special school as well as LA education and school staff.
- Interviewees reported that school cluster SENCo forum meetings were effective as opportunities to develop multi-agency working relationships, although some questioned whether attendance was being monitored to ensure all schools were benefitting. Some interviewees also highlighted the importance of LA PCP training being provided across different services as a way of sharing good practice and understanding the roles and responsibilities of different organisations.
- Interviewees in schools felt there was effective partnership working between the special and mainstream schools as well as the local FEI. This included special school staff co-delivering sessions at mainstream schools and co-developing courses to be delivered at the FEI.
- LA social services staff noted they had effective processes in place for sharing information electronically with LHB staff. However, LA education and LHB interviewees noted that sharing information electronically between education and health was a challenge. This was attributed to education and health services using

different ICT systems. LA interviewees noted that this could lead to slight delays in processing information as paper copies of documents from health had to be transferred and manually inputted onto education systems.

- Most LHB staff commented that co-ordination of different health services working with the same learners was a challenge. LHB staff noted they were able to see which other services were working with a child but that there was no single person with overall responsibility. However, other LHB staff felt it would be difficult for an individual to co-ordinate services.
- Interviewees in LAs, LHBs, schools and FEIs felt there were 'grey areas' where it was unclear who should be responsible for delivering and funding provision. For example, some LHB interviewees noted that they were delivering education provision that schools should be responsible for, while some FEI interviewees were providing support that they felt the LHB should be responsible for. Some interviewees highlighted the importance of multi-agency panels in helping to resolve and clarify some of these issues.
- The PRU representative reported positive multi-agency working with agencies such as Careers Wales and youth justice who work with learners. This effectiveness was attributed to a desire to network, as opposed to an agreed strategy. However, it was reported that there can be a risk of a duplication of services delivered, for example several agencies delivering counselling.
- Interviewees generally felt that multi-agency working between FEIs and other organisations were less well developed than those between schools, LAs and LHBs. One FEI interviewee felt there was a need for a shared IT system or process to enable schools/LAs to hold and transfer IDPs and one-page profiles to FEIs. One FEI interviewee felt that this was a key challenge for the FE sector as they worked regionally with the potential for different systems in different LAs. One FEI interviewee noted that a regional board focused on 14-19 was useful for multi-agency working between schools, LAs and the FEI as well as transition planning. FEI

interviewees described regular liaison with CAMHS services but noted that it could be difficult for the FEI to keep track of all the agencies involved with learners.

LA2 transition

- Interviewees in the LA, the special school and the LHB noted that transition from the early years to statutory education worked well, emphasising the important role of the child development centre and portage service.
- Interviewees in the primary school were less positive about the transition into school, noting they received little information from early years providers about the needs of learners transitioning in. The only exceptions highlighted were some children who had received SLT support through the Flying Start programme.
- Interviewees in schools and the LA felt the transition from primary to secondary school was fairly effective although they also noted the effectiveness of transition varied depending on the schools involved. Interviewees at the special school also noted that transitions into the school were generally effective but varied depending on the school of origin.
- Interviewees at the special school felt transition was effective when it was well planned at specific transition points (e.g. at the start of Year 2, 6 and 9) but that in-year transitions were more challenging as they were often related to sudden changes in a learner's life.
- All interviewees described various processes for ensuring effective transition including ensuring meetings between primary and secondary SENCo took place early enough. Transition meetings between primary and secondary or special schools were highlighted as an important process for ensuring key documents (e.g. statements, review reports) were shared and discussions about learners' needs took place. Challenges highlighted by schools included plans not being provided by schools, variations in the level of detail in plans (e.g. no detail on number of hours of interventions). Interviewees in schools and the LA noted that one-page profiles were

very useful as part of the transition process. One senior manager commented that 'There is good engagement and frequent conversations with some SENCOs when learners transfer in and very limited contact in other cases, with documents sent at a late stage of the term before transition.'

- Most interviewees reported that transition to FE was less effective than processes for younger learners. LA social services staff noted that they attended statutory annual reviews for learners from Year 9 onwards and that this assisted the process of transition for learners they were involved with.
- LA and school interviewees felt the effectiveness of transition for learners moving to the area from other LAs varied, depending on the school learners were transferring from. Some interviewees reported that transition was more challenging when learners were moving in from LAs outside Wales, as it was more difficult to obtain information about the learners from these LAs and schools. This was emphasised by interviewees in the special school, particularly in relation to children who are looked after by the LA who move into the area.
- LA social services staff noted that transition to adulthood used to be difficult but had improved in recent years as they now worked more closely with LA education and school staff, particularly the special school. LA social services staff felt that raising aspirations among schools, learners and parents/carers was important in helping learners develop skills to live independent lives. Some LHB interviewees noted that transition to adulthood within health services was not as effective as it could be because 'different services transition at different times' and there were not always formal transition pathways and protocols.
- The FEI covering the LA has one transition officer and interviewees reported that transition was very effective for those entering pre-vocational courses (entry level 12-month courses offering a taste of different vocational pathways to learners unsure which FE course they would like to follow). FEI representatives reported that they

held transition meetings for all learners entering these courses and that they were invited to attend statutory annual review meetings at schools.

- For learners entering other mainstream courses, FEI interviewees felt that transition processes were not as effective as they should be. Interviewees noted that they received learning and skills plans (LSPs) from Careers Wales and that these were helpful in supporting transition. However, interviewees reported that schools did not always send the FEI information such as statements of SEN, IEPs or annual review reports and that this meant FEI staff had to spend time contacting the school to receive this information or collecting information from the learner and/or their parent/carer. One interviewee noted that other LAs had more systematic processes for passing the details of all learners with SEN to the FEI during the summer term annually. The FEI reported that this helped facilitate a more effective transition process for learners.

LA2 Welsh language

- All interviewees noted that they asked learners and parents/carers about their preferred language of communication and offered services in this language where possible. LA interviewees noted that all referral forms asked for families' preferred language and that this was taken into account when engaging with families.
- Interviewees felt services could meet the Welsh-language needs of families effectively in the early years and in schools, but challenges were highlighted in terms of the capacity to provide specialist provision through the medium of Welsh.
- Interviewees in schools noted they could meet the Welsh-language needs of learners internally (e.g. school-based assessment, provision, review) but that there was often a shortage of Welsh-speaking specialist staff in external agencies. Some interviewees in schools commented they had been unable to have access to a Welsh speaking EP through the LA, for example. This meant that some learners in Welsh-medium schools were not able to receive support through the medium of Welsh. Interviewees in schools also noted that recruitment could be challenging, citing a shortage of Welsh-speaking TAs and inclusion teachers.

- LA and LHB interviewees noted they try to ensure all SEP is available in Welsh, although they noted that this was not always possible due to a lack of Welsh language skills in the workforce. Low demand for some services was also reported by LA and LHB interviewees who indicated that this could lead to a lack of critical mass for some services (e.g. Welsh-medium SLT classes). Interviewees in schools and LHBs felt that there were shortages of specialist staff who could speak Welsh, citing SLTs, EPs, CAMHS practitioners and community paediatricians as examples.
- The PRU reported placing learners according to their Welsh language requirements, as some Welsh speaking members of staff are able to meet learners' needs.
- Interviewees in the FEI noted that they were able to offer Welsh-speaking services to learners where this was the preferred language of the learner. However, they also noted that it could be challenging to recruit Welsh-speaking learning support staff.

LA3

LA3 background

LA3 profile:

- Percentage of pupils with SEN lower than the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);¹³
- Percentage of pupils eFSM lower than the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);
- Population below average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2016);¹⁴
- Percentage of Welsh speakers lower than average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2011);¹⁵
- Lower levels of deprivation than average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2014).¹⁶

Case study fieldwork included interviews with four LA officers (three from the education department and one from social services) and four LHB staff. Fieldwork with senior managers, SENCos and teachers was undertaken at one English-medium primary and one English-medium secondary school.¹⁷ Interviews were also undertaken with staff at a special school, PRU and FEI.

LA3 roles and responsibilities

- Interviewees working in education agreed that roles and responsibilities in relation to SEN in their setting were clear. Some emphasised the importance of flexibility in terms of support roles, however, noting that learners required different amounts of support at different times and that it was important to ensure that the right level and type of support was available at the right time.

¹³ Data on pupils with SEN and eFSM by LA are available here: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170726-school-census-results-2017-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

¹⁴ Population estimates by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/Local-Authority/populationestimates-by-localauthority-year> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

¹⁵ Data on Welsh speaking ability by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census>

¹⁶ Data on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation are available here: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/150812-wimd-2014-revised-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

¹⁷ Welsh-medium and bilingual schools were included in other LA case studies.

- It was felt that the clarity of roles in health and social services was mixed. Some services were reported to have clear roles and single points of contact, whilst some services were thought to be much less clear in terms of who is who within a service or team, their roles and responsibilities, and points of contact.
- The LA was currently going through a review of its SEP, particularly in relation to statutory provision it was reported that the LA was proposing a major reorganisation. It was reported that there was an imbalance at present in terms of learners' needs and the provision that was available, with a surfeit of provision for learners with moderate learning needs and a deficit of provision for learners with needs relating to speech and language and autism, as well as certain groups with social and emotional needs (e.g. children in the early years, girls with BESD). The LA reported it was seeking to develop the inclusivity of its provision and wanted to be able to accommodate more learners with SEN within local mainstream schools whilst providing specialised provision on a more flexible and integrated basis.
- SENCOs reported that they carried out a range of activities as part of their role. These included: undertaking assessments, managing resources, delivering, monitoring and reviewing provision, liaising with staff, parents and carers and external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health), attending the LA provision panel meetings, coordinating provision for children who are looked after by the LA, and strategic work with school cluster groups. In the secondary school, the SENCO was also an assistant head teacher with further responsibilities related to this position and many SEN activities were delegated to teachers and TAs within the SEN team. Staff felt that the limited time available for the SENCO was a challenge and meant that the role in this setting was limited to oversight of SEN rather than day-to-day operation of SEP. In the special school, the SENCO role was associated with carrying out assessments and administrative tasks in relation to documentation and review meetings. A very important aspect of this role was assessing the nature of need for learners on entry to the school in order to set comprehensive learning targets and develop a bespoke curriculum.

- In the primary school, the SENCo was described as very supportive and always available for advice. The experience the SENCo had in relation to SEN was regarded by interviewees as an asset and supporting identification of need, negotiation of SEN processes and procedure, and the development of individualised and effective IEPs. The fact that the SENCo had a teaching role within the nursery provision of the school was considered an advantage since higher staffing ratios made release time for SEN duties more possible.
- SENCos reported holding a range of relevant qualification including a national award for SEN and a masters in SEN. The SENCo in the primary school had no specific SEN-related qualification but did have many years of experience of SEN teaching and a nursery nurse qualification in addition to qualified teacher status. The NNEB training was thought to be particularly relevant to working with learners with SEN and was reported to develop knowledge and understanding of child development. PRU staff had a range of specialisms in relation to SEN and it was reported that only experienced practitioners are employed in this setting.
- In the FEI, it was reported that responsibilities in relation to SEN were shared across a number of roles. In each of the FEI campuses there is a coordinator for learning and skills who has oversight of transitions, allocated support, liaised with learners, parents and carers, and carried out assessments for exam arrangements. Strategic aspects of the role are carried out by a SEN manager, whilst planning and provision in the resource base for learners with more complex needs is carried out by the teacher in charge.
- LA interviewees reported that roles and responsibilities were clear and that good relationships existed between senior officers within and across services. The authority is a small one and communication within the LA is supported by a small number of personnel and co-location of officers within education and social services on the same site. It was reported that the team that oversees SEN in the authority will be expanded in preparation for the implementation of new ALN legislation.

LA3 identification and assessment for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees in health felt that early identification of need was an area for improvement in the LA. Though Flying Start was seen as contributing to positive change in this area, it was felt that early intervention is paramount, that many young children are identified 'too late' and that monitoring needs to take place from birth.
- Similar processes of identification existed across settings, namely, the raising of an initial concern followed by information gathering, focused assessments carried out internally or by an external agency, and consultation with learners and their parents and carers if appropriate. In school settings, the identification of an individual learning need could be made by any member of staff, for example, a class teacher, TA, head of year, learning coach or member of the pastoral support team. Parents and carers were also mentioned as someone who could raise concerns, as were health visitors in the case of younger children.
- In the primary school, the location of Flying Start on the same site was felt to support the process of identification. Teachers' half termly reviews of pupil progress were seen as a further opportunity to identify needs and decisions about support for a learner were taken by the SENCo in consultation with the class teacher in this setting.
- In the secondary setting, the process of identification was felt to be an area of significant improvement in recent years. Interviewees felt that a change at senior management level had meant an improvement in systems for sharing information about learners as well as more articulation of SEN as the responsibility of all teachers. The SENCo noted that, previously, they had received regular emails from subject teachers requesting assistance with a learner but were now receiving fewer such requests. They felt this signified a greater sense of accountability on the part of teachers, but also more precision in the process of identification of need.

- In the secondary setting, it was reported that specialist subject teachers usually raised concerns about academic learning, whilst support staff tended to identify other types of need. The work of the SEN team was seen as a way of having ‘eyes everywhere’ since support staff worked in different classes and settings within the school and held good knowledge about learners, particularly in relation to their personal, social and emotional experiences. It was noted that, historically, identification of need in the school had been focused on literacy difficulties, but now had a wider focus.
- Interviewees in the PRU described their initial involvement with a learner as being assessment-focused. They described carrying out comprehensive and wide-ranging assessment that sometimes identified an underlying SEN. Interviewees felt that learners often mask their difficulties at school, although the frequent school changes of learners referred to the service was also seen as the reason behind general lack of understanding and knowledge of their learning needs.
- Tools that were being used to assess needs in schools included foundation phase baseline assessments, Marie Clay-type observations, the Boxall Profile, and the British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) for primary phase learners. For secondary learners, Year 7 information sharing for transition was seen as a critical time for the identification of learner needs, although TA observations of learners in the initial term following entry were also seen as an important way of raising concerns. It was reported that the TA team regularly discussed concerns about individual learners at team meetings and made decisions at this point about whether to raise a concern with the SENCo.
- In the FEI, identification of learner needs was described as part of the transition process. For learners with more complex needs and those who had a statement in school, it was felt that the process of information sharing was effective. Some schools were described as excellent at sharing high quality and comprehensive information about a learner’s needs. Some schools, however, were described as

poor in this respect. It was noted that needs in relation to academic difficulty were much more likely to be passed on than needs in relation to challenging behaviour.

- An area of challenge for the FEI was reported to be the late identification of learning needs for some learners. For some learners, it was noted that a need might first be disclosed at enrolment and this was said to be the case for learners who had 'slipped through the net' at school.
- Interviewees at the FEI noted they carried out assessments on entry for learners with an identified need. These include the Wales Essential Skills Test (WEST) and cognitive abilities tests. Several staff in the college hold the AMBDA qualification and are able to carry out cognitive assessments.
- Interviewees working in SLT reported that they had developed a tool-kit and website to support the identification of needs relating to speech and language and provide information to schools and families. It was reported that training for teachers had also been provided by this service and it was felt that this had a positive impact on the quality of referrals to the team. The development of these resources was seen as the reason why requests for statutory assessment have reduced.
- One interviewee in education noted that continuing professional development can result in increased identification of an area of need, citing recent staff attendance at a training on pathological demand avoidance (PDA) leading to identification of this condition as a potential area of difficulty for a number of learners.

LA3 planning for SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees in school settings in the LA noted they continued to use IEPs in line with the existing Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004), although the terminology IEP and IDP was used interchangeably by interviewees. Interviewees felt generally confident in using IEPs and agreed they provided a good focus in terms of educational support and were not too time

consuming to develop. One interviewee felt, however, that IEPs were limited in terms of supporting the holistic development of a learner, noting that two or three targets for learning were often not sufficient and that learning was more integrated as a process than the identification of discrete targets allowed. Other systems were cited as playing an important role in planning processes, for example, the use of pupil passports with learners with autism which set out important environmental conditions for teachers to consider.

- In mainstream school settings, parents and carers were thought to be supportive of the use of IEPs for planning since this meant they were involved from the outset. The development of plans was described by mainstream schools as a process carried out by teachers, however, sometimes in consultation with support staff and/or the SENCo, but with parents/carers being informed after targets have been written.
- Interviewees from the secondary school reported that they were using the whole school model, 'Achievement for All', to organise provision and planning. This focused on four elements, namely leadership, pedagogy, parental engagement and outcomes, and was reported to emphasise careful tracking of learner progress, high quality teaching and learning, and structured conversations with parents and carers. This initiative was seen by the SENCo as particularly suited to supporting the needs of those who are most challenged in terms of their learning and as ensuring the delivery of effective inclusive education.
- FEI interviewees reported that individual learning plans were used for all learners in their setting and the same system was used for planning for learners with SEN. Interviewees noted that plans were placed online, and all staff involved with a learner had good access to information about learners with whom they are currently working.
- The LA noted they were starting to move towards a system of person-centred practice and were promoting PCP tools for this purpose. A cluster group of school practitioners had been convened for this purpose and was reported to be developing a planning pro forma for schools.

LA3 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making relating to school action/plus provision and FEI-based plans

- LA officers expressed a belief that practice in relation to children's rights and children's voices needed to be developed within the authority. They felt that some schools had high quality practices in relation to engaging children and young people, particularly those that offered specialised SEP, but that this was not consistent across the region.
- Primary school interviewees said that the school was consulting with children, but on an informal basis only. Children were not invited to meetings and did not input directly to the process of target setting for IEPs.
- A secondary school interviewee pointed out that listening to learners was an important part of the Achievement for All model used in the school. They described consulting with young people, parents and carers as an ongoing part of provision. Conversations with learners and their parents and carers were described as needing to be structured and use a clear framework for developing an open dialogue, something that was seen as consistent with the PCP framework of 'what is important to' and 'what is important for'.
- For interviewees in the PRU, an important part of provision was seen as engaging young people in conversations about their experiences and learning. Young people were described as engaging in discussions about plans, and also in multi-agency meetings about their needs. PCP processes were seen as a way of rationalising existing practices in terms of learner participation in plans, though some young people were described as requiring support for low self-esteem before they were able to participate in decision making. Interviewees said they sought to engage parents and carers in the process of planning and review, but needed to work sensitively in this area since parents and carers may have had negative experiences of school.

- Interviewees working in the FEI reported that young people were generally involved in planning, although they noted that involving all learners in target setting was a challenge because of the high numbers allocated to personal tutors. The college reported that parents and carers often attended initial meetings in college for learners with SEN, but that formal contact following this was on an ad hoc basis.
- Some health interviewees expressed support for PCP processes and saw these as something they promote in their work with children, schools and families.

LA3 SEP and review for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Some interviewees noted that the effectiveness of SEP was determined by the appropriateness of its delivery. Provision was seen as needing to be responsive and flexible to individual needs, and that good knowledge of a learner is crucial in this. One interviewee who worked as a TA pointed out that this kind of responsive support involved moment by moment judgements on the part of the practitioner and that this was not something they felt could be written down or necessarily planned for.
- In the primary school, effectiveness of provision was described in terms of enabling all children to access a differentiated or alternative curriculum. Staff training was seen as key to this, and staff absences were noted as an area of challenge to the delivery of consistent support. Updating staff skills and knowledge in the face of changing needs was seen as a further challenge.
- For interviewees in the PRU and in the FEI, effectiveness was associated with different outcomes, ranging from the attainment of qualifications and achievement of employability to increased learner confidence and self-esteem. For some interviewees, these areas of achievement were of equal importance. The FEI said they had recently introduced a system for measuring soft outcomes through self-evaluation on one site to measure level of confidence and learner engagement, time management and personal organisation. The FEI considered that this had been successful and reported it would be extended to other campuses.

- One interviewee in the secondary school described the re-organisation of support structures in recent years. TAs were no longer allocated to specific departments in this setting since it was felt that support needed to be used more flexibly than this. Some TAs had subject specialisms, which was also described as important within a secondary setting, but others in the support team worked flexibly across subjects and groups, providing support that was adaptive to changing individual needs. This was described as an empowering way of working for TAs since it ensured that their work is more focused and effective.
- School interviewees described a range of SEP delivered through school action/plus arrangements including in-class support, small group work, maths catch-up and the 'Rapid Readers' reading scheme, along with the delivery of interventions such as play therapy and ELSA sessions. School interviewees felt that finding space within its premises to deliver a range of interventions and small group work could be a challenge.
- In the secondary school and FEI, support was being deployed for the whole class rather than on a one-to-one basis. This was seen as a more useful and flexible way to meet changing needs and less stigmatising for learners. Support needs and strategies were described in both settings as communicated through online systems that were constantly updated, although the use of these by teachers and lecturers was described as inconsistent.
- It was reported by secondary school interviewees that the SENCo held regular meetings with TAs to discuss individual learners and their experiences in different lessons. Sharing what is good practice for a particular learner across teaching staff was described as an important part of coordinating SEP since the same learner could respond differently to specific teaching styles.

- The LA reported they had made available enhanced funding for learners who receive SEP via school action plus as a way of reducing the need to request needlessly a statement of special educational needs for a learner.
- It was reported by schools that support from external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) had decreased in recent years. SLT and physiotherapy services were described as effective, but providing small amounts of input, whilst input from specialist teacher teams, the ethnic minority achievement service and CAMHS was described as minimal or non-existent. CAMHS referral was seen as ineffective since waiting times were reported to be up to 12 months. In the primary school, the high rate of exclusions in the previous year was attributed to lack of capacity within the PRU. PRU interviewees noted that part of their provision was outreach support to mainstream schools, including training and the running of intervention groups.
- For interviewees in health, barriers in relation to provision were cited as: work force capacity, funding for specialised equipment, lack of commitment to SEP by school SMTs, a high turnover of support staff in schools, and lack of adequate information sharing systems.
- Interviewees reported that IEPs for provision delivered through school action/plus arrangements were reviewed on a twice-yearly basis for learners in the secondary setting and once a term for learners in the primary school. IEP review was not felt to be time-consuming and was thought to be something that teachers felt ownership of. It was reported that TAs in the secondary school generally carried out IEP reviews but found the accessibility of online systems frustrating since only teachers had access to information about learners.
- In the FEI, an area of challenge in terms of review was the operation of dual systems, one for lecturers to review learner progress in relation to courses and a separate system for the SEN team to review support for learning. Interviewees described some lecturers as less engaged with review of SEP and some as lacking skills and

knowledge in terms of providing feedback about learner achievement and continuing need.

LA3 resolving disagreements relating to provision delivered through school action/plus and for learners with FEI-based plans

- Schools reported they experienced little conflict with parents/carers in terms of their SEP and that disagreements generally arose out of parental frustration with systems operating outside of the school, for example, lengthy waiting times for assessment by external agencies , and the turning down of requests for enhanced support by the LA. Interviewees in schools were agreed that good communication with parents/carers was important for avoiding disagreements and for early resolution of concerns.
- Primary school interviewees described operating an open-door policy where parents/carers could approach teachers at the beginning or end of the school day. In the secondary school, interviewees said that parents and carers were seen as integral to the education provided by the school and listed a number of communication platforms, including texting, phone calls and drop in visits to the school.
- Primary school interviewees reported that a family liaison worker provided a range of services for families including making appointments, making referrals for parenting classes and making referrals to social services.
- Disagreements were described as time-consuming by the FEI and often focused on learner progression. Interviewees commented that some learners enrolled on Level 1 courses 'year after year', but said that practice aims are concerned with progression and saw this a source of conflict with parents and carers.
- Schools reported that enhanced funding provided by the LA for provision via school action plus was often equated with a percentage of TA hours by parents/carers. They felt this could set up an expectation the child will be provided with TA support as a

matter of course and that this could then be the basis of a disagreement with the school.

LA3 statutory assessment for special educational needs

- The process of statutory assessment was thought to be comprehensive in that it gathered the views of all stakeholders, including learners, parents and carers, school personnel and external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health). However, interviewees across school settings and in health and social services agreed that challenges existed in terms of the time frame, both the length of time taken for an assessment, which was described by one interviewee as ‘inordinately long’, and the amount of time needed to complete paperwork. Interviewees felt that the system needed improving particularly in relation to its ability to respond in a timely way to learners’ needs. All agencies were described as slow in carrying out assessments because of capacity issues within teams and health interviewees pinpointed administrative support in preparing reports as a further issue.
- Interviewees working in children’s health services felt the integrated system for referral operating within the LHB was effective. It was noted that this system provided a single-entry point for a range of needs and accepted referrals from different personnel, including teachers. Referral meetings were convened weekly and discussion focused on identifying the primary cause of concern and the most appropriate service for delivering assessment and support. The system was described as a ‘complete partnership’ of services and stakeholders, with reports for parents/carers and other professionals generated as part of the write up of discussions.
- In the special school, the SENCo role was focused on assessing the nature of need for learners on entry to the school. Learners were placed in the school for BESD-related needs, but were described as almost always having further, underlying needs, often related to dyslexia, but also to autism and social communication difficulties and motor difficulties. The SENCo role was described as one of reviewing existing paperwork on a learner, liaising with the prior setting and carrying out literacy

and cognitive ability tests, if appropriate, as part of a lengthy process of assessment. This information gathering was seen as part of a comprehensive approach to developing a bespoke curriculum for individual learners, with aims, outcomes and strategies for support clearly identified. The school felt that, as a result of this work, they were very effective in terms of developing a holistic educational approach to the development of learners. Involvement of external agencies in this process of assessment was seen as an area of challenge since it can take a long time for referrals to be responded to, for example, waiting times for EP assessment stand currently run at six months. It was noted that statutory assessments took precedence in the authority and this means that other learners constantly move down the waiting list.

LA3 statutory provision for special educational needs

- The special school reported that learning plans were updated regularly, usually every term, but more frequently if new information about a learner emerged, for example, in relation to medication. Teachers reported that they normally developed learning plans for their tutor group, although the overall process was coordinated by the SENCo who arranged a meeting once a term to discuss the whole group with form teachers. External agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) tended not to be involved in this process and only provided reports for learners on entry to the school.
- The special school noted that the LA had developed a PCP-based template for planning and review, but described this as essentially a one-page profile that did not go far enough as a format for planning and review of specialised provision to cover a range of needs. The school had adapted the template by extending the section for learner voice and adding another for the role and duties of the key worker. Special school interviewees agreed that PCP-based plans are better than statements at focusing on current rather than historical needs and help all stakeholders recognise what is working well for a learner.
- School settings noted that they often prioritise statement objectives, making decisions about this at review meetings and consulting with parents and carers for

this purpose. It was reported that decisions were made according to what is seen as an important area of need currently and as a way of focusing statement objectives, which were described as sometimes 'too broad and vague'.

- In the learning base located in the secondary school, where all learners had a statement of SEN, a system of personalised provision mapping had been developed. This was in response to the limited number of targets available within an IEP and subsequent challenge of covering all areas of learning need for young people in the base. Their needs were described as wide-ranging and difficult to reduce to three or four targets. Personalised mapping was seen as a way of providing a more comprehensive overview since maps included details of progress made so far, important information about learner dispositions and a range of targets to cover academic and developmental needs. The system included more 'small-steps' targets than would normally be used with an IEP and could be used for the purpose of short-term review and weekly feedback, something that was felt to be important to learners in the base. These individualised provision maps were being operated alongside IEPs in the base to ensure compliance with policy guidance.
- Across settings, interviewees reported that external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) had minimal input in the delivery of statutory provision. This was attributed in each case to the lack of capacity in teams, particularly in children's health services. The special school reported that it had its own social worker and, therefore, good contact with social services for learners living in the case study area. A school counsellor provided input to the school twice weekly, but this was described as a resource that needed to be on a full-time basis.
- Health interviewees felt that they had an important role as trainers for SEP. Facilitating understanding and knowledge in relation to development of children and young people with SEN was seen as a strength of children's health service provision. It was noted that care pathways had been mapped out by expert groups based in health for this purpose and these made reference to current research evidence.

- Special school interviewees described fostering links with voluntary organisations as a way of developing provision, for example, with Drug Aid and ASH Wales. It was also noted that, in this setting, offering alternative curricular activities was an important part of provision. Alternative activities included: life skills groups, social skills groups, work skills education, Duke of Edinburgh awards, outdoor education, music therapy, reflexology, horse riding and equine therapy, trampolining and gymnastics. For learners who found coming to school difficult, a nurture space is also available.
- Special school interviewees said that they were using a primary model of combining learners in terms of need rather than age and using one teacher to deliver the curriculum in Key Stage 3 as well as in Key Stage 2. Precision teaching was reportedly being used to deliver literacy and numeracy learning along with differentiated work, small group work and opportunities for social and emotional support built in to the school day. This approach to provision was seen as effective.

LA3 review of statutory provision

- Interviewees agreed that annual review meetings provided a good opportunity for bringing together different perspectives on a learner and for planning provision collectively. It was noted that most external agencies attended reviews regularly, for example, social services and LA officers, and those who could not attend would send a report. Interviewees working in health reported they are not generally given enough notice of meeting dates, which results in their non-attendance. They reported they did not always receive copies of annual review documentation following a review and saw the lack of a shared communication system across health and education as a barrier in this respect.
- Special school interviewees reported that reviews for children who are looked after by the LA occurred more frequently than once a year and were not held at the same time as annual review meetings. Reviews for children who are looked after by the LA were sometimes held in the school, but school staff also travelled to other LAs for review meetings. One interviewee noted that personal education plans (PEPs) were

updated termly and that this was often too frequent for a learner, with targets simply being repeated.

- Health interviewees stated that monitoring of service provision was carried out in relation to whether treatment aims are met and the management of caseloads. Staff training needs were also regularly monitored. A forum was also operating within the LHB to look at quality issues and ensure standards were met.

LA3 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making about statutory provision and resolving disagreements

- It was felt by school interviewees that the statutory assessment process was effective in gaining the views of children and young people, with some services, for example, educational psychology, gathering young people's perspectives as part of the assessment pro forma. Existing relationships in schools were also thought to support the gaining of learners' perspectives, with SENCos being described as particularly well-placed to know a learner and understand the nature of any difficulty. The SENCo in the secondary school pointed out that listening to learners was an important part of the 'Achievement for All' model used in the school and described consulting with young people, parents and carers as something that happens at least termly.
- For health interviewees, children were seen as at the centre of provision, with aims described as always agreed with children, young people and families.
- The primary school reported that it was using some aspects of PCP for annual review meetings and was consulting with children, though this was something that happened before meetings and children did not input directly to target setting. Interviewees felt that PCP practices made the process of target setting more streamlined and forced staff to be more creative in producing SMART targets (i.e. targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-limited) that were valuable for learning which takes place both at school and home. Interviewees were not sure that PCP processes served to empower parents/carers since, in their experience, parents/carers who were engaged with making decisions about their child's education seem already empowered.

- The special school reported that it always invited learners and parents and carers to review meetings, but that attendance was dependent on the mood of the learner on the day of the review, and on the distance of travel to the school for parents and carers. It was reported that a high percentage of learners in the school were out of county and the distance from home to school was seen as an important issue in this respect. Interviewees thought that the ability of parents/carers to engage with review processes was mixed. Parents and carers were described as not always able and willing to participate in decision making, and as sometimes requiring support, for example, by having the review process explained. The school noted that they sought to empower parents/carers by referring them to parent advocacy groups. A reliance on written information for reviews was seen as problematic for parents/carers who experience difficulty with reading.
- The SENCo in the special school reported that they had a number of meetings with learners to prepare for annual review meetings and saw this as a way of empowering learners to participate in decision making processes. Special school interviewees felt that gathering learner views needed to be done sensitively, however, since young people sometimes disclosed information that parents and carers did not have prior knowledge of.
- Resolving disagreements in relation to statutory provision was described by LA officers as taking up 'a huge amount of time'. The system of tribunal appeal was seen as promoting adversarial engagement and that conflict was most often in relation to placement or aspects of provision such as medical input.
- Health interviewees believed that effective partnerships with parents/carers helped to avoid disagreements and said that they prioritised meetings with parents/carers and used a consultation approach in their work with families.

LA3 working with others

- Health interviewees thought that a barrier to service delivery was the demand on resources and felt that health professionals needed to develop new ways of working in response to this demand. More joined up working with teachers was seen as an area for improvement, including having a say in how funding is used in schools.
- School interviewees described engaging with children's services as an area of challenge. Children and young people were described as sometimes receiving support outside of school, but with little liaison and information sharing by some services with schools. This was mentioned with particular reference to CAMHS. Some health interviewees reported that they always provided treatment reports, but noted that it could be difficult to keep up to date with changes in personnel and protocols and that this could be a source of frustration for parents/carers and schools.
- Interviewees from the primary school reported that support from external agencies, such as the EP service, speech and language therapy service and physiotherapy service, was often contingent on whether families were engaging with the service and/or attending appointments regularly. In children's health services, it was reported that if a family missed an appointment twice then they would be automatically discharged, with any re-referral usually taking a long time. The school expressed frustration about this system, which they felt they had no control over and were not consulted about.
- It was noted that children who are looked after by the LA tend to be prioritised in terms of services and tend to access services more quickly.
- Interviewees from the PRU noted that they worked with a large number of services and organisations and felt that shared pro forma would support this work, for example, in the form of an IDP with shared aims and priorities. This was seen as a way of ensuring continuity across settings and services, something that was seen as important because of the frequent school moves and changes of life circumstances for the population of learners with whom they work.

- Multi-agency working was viewed as an area of priority for PRU staff. They described the learners they were working with as often being in 'fight or flight' mode and not able to focus on learning tasks. They saw health-related input as key for these learners, but noted that social care and CAMHS had only some involvement with the provision, though learners were known to these services.
- Interviewees from the FEI reported that mental health needs of learners were an area of priority for the college, but that more involvement was needed from CAMHS. A challenge was identified in terms of learners who have mental health needs, but who did not have academic needs and who did not have a statement whilst at school. These learners were reported to often be known to health services and may have considerable needs within the college, but FEIs noted that there was no mechanism currently for information to be shared between health and the FEI. Across settings, there was recognition that a lack of capacity in health services, particularly CAMHS, was the reason for lack of involvement.
- LA officers felt that the small size of the authority meant that it could be overlooked by health and social care services and other agencies working within a larger regional footprint.

LA3 transition

- A range of transition arrangements and support strategies for learners with SEN were described as being in place across settings. These included: enhanced visits and taster days, staff accompanied visits, handover meetings between education and health professionals, initial meetings with learners and their parents and carers, a phased start to full-time education.
- Interviewees across services felt that transition was an area of strength for all age phases. In the primary school, it was felt that the co-location of the health visitor team and the LA nursery supported good transition. In the secondary school, interviewees noted that transition was highlighted by Estyn inspection as an area of strength with

key processes identified as enhanced transition visits for SEN learners and vulnerable learners, and information sharing for professionals at school cluster meetings. Cluster meetings were felt to support the sharing of important pieces of information about children and families and were used to identify important services and points of contact. FEI interviewees reported that they sought to attend annual review meetings of potential applicants and regularly received excellent information about learners from some settings, though some school settings were described as poor in this respect.

- Transition into the special school was described as an important area of support. Interviewees commented that learners coming into the school were often non-attenders who had not been in a school setting for some time. The school had an enhanced nurture provision which interviewees felt was particularly suited to the needs of these learners on entry. Within this provision, hours in school would be gradually increased to full-time and the learner's assigned class teacher would first build a relationship with the learner in this setting.
- Transition for children and young people from out of county was described as much more problematic in terms of information sharing, with significant variations in the quality and timeliness of information sharing from different schools and LAs.
- Careers Wales were described as an important mediator in transition for learners going into further education. Interviewees noted that Careers Wales acted as a communication channel between the FEI and health services in the absence of formal links and arrangements. One interviewee in health noted that involvement of children's health services in transition from school to tertiary education was an area of weakness, however, and a particular concern for parents and carers.
- Transition out of the FEI was thought to be an area of challenge since the college was usually not informed about learner applications, for example, for University or further college placements.

LA3 Welsh language

- LA and health interviewees noted that they asked learners and parents/carers what their preferred language was when engaging in services. Some health interviewees noted that their clinical guidelines stated that assessment should be provided in the primary language of the child/family and that this need was identified at referral.
- Interviewees reported that there was some capacity within teams for conducting assessments and delivering SEP through the medium of Welsh, but reported that demand for this in the case study area was low. However, it is important to note that no Welsh-medium schools were included in the fieldwork sample in this case study area (Welsh-medium, dual-stream and bilingual schools were included in other case study areas – LA2 and LA4).
- Health interviewees indicated that demand for Welsh language services was low, with few requests received for assessment and provision through the medium of Welsh. Health interviewees noted that the LHB had limited capacity in terms of staff with Welsh language skills in the workforce but that they had identified staff with Welsh language skills so that demand could be met if families requested services in Welsh. Interviewees in the LHB mentioned the availability of a Welsh-speaking health visitor, one SLT and some OT staff. One interviewee noted that, compared to the English language there were gaps in the evidence base relating to the development of Welsh language skills.

LA4

LA4 Background

LA4 profile:

- Percentage of pupils with SEN higher than the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);¹⁸
- Percentage of pupils eFSM similar to the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2017b);
- Population above average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2016);¹⁹
- Percentage of Welsh speakers lower than average for Wales' LAs (ONS, 2011);²⁰
- Levels of deprivation similar to the average for Wales' LAs (Welsh Government, 2014).²¹

Case study fieldwork included interviews with six LA officers (four from the education department and two from social services) and five LHB staff. Fieldwork with senior managers, SENCOs and teachers was undertaken at one English-medium primary and one Welsh-medium secondary school. Interviews were also undertaken with staff at a special school, pupil referral unit and Further Education Institution.

LA4 roles and responsibilities

- Interviewees in schools and the LA believed that roles and responsibilities in relation to SEN were clear. Some noted, however, that the issue of funding was not clear, and that confusion existed in particular about the funding for support from health services.
- It was felt that the clarity of roles was supported in the LA by the operation of both an education provision panel and a social services panel that had responsibilities in

¹⁸ Data on pupils with SEN and eFSM by LA are available here: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170726-school-census-results-2017-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

¹⁹ Population estimates by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/Local-Authority/populationestimates-by-localauthority-year> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

²⁰ Data on Welsh speaking ability by LA are available here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census>

²¹ Data on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation are available here: <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/150812-wimd-2014-revised-en.pdf> (Accessed 12th June 2018)

relation to assessment, provision, review and out of county placements. Several respondents across services, including those in health, social services and schools, said they were regular members of these panels and saw them as a forum for keeping up to date on SEN developments within the authority.

- A stated aim for the LA was to deliver SEP within mainstream settings, with funding delegated to schools for this purpose. Several centrally-funded specialist learning bases were located and managed within mainstream school settings and were cited by a number of interviewees as constituting an important SEN structure within the authority. These bases provide for learners with a range of needs including those related to moderate learning difficulty, speech and language difficulty, autism, hearing impairment, mobility issues and global delay, and were operating in both primary and secondary phases. Bases have a higher teacher to learner ratio, higher resourcing in terms of teaching assistant support and more regular input from across services, for example, from the speech and language therapy service. In addition to specialist bases, the LA had two special schools and plans to build one more special school. It was stated that the LA had a high level of out of county placements.
- The team responsible for children who are looked after by the LA sat within the education service, but was not part of the SEN service, although they noted they work closely with education.
- School interviewees were asked specifically about the role and responsibilities of the SENCo in their setting. In all school settings (primary, secondary, special) the SENCo was part of the senior management team and had both strategic and operational responsibilities including assessment, monitoring of SEP, staff training and deployment of resources, organising annual reviews, liaison work with families and external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health), transition work and attendance at panel meetings of LA bodies. In the primary and secondary settings, the SENCo was a qualified teacher, whilst in the special school, the SENCo was not a qualified teacher. The role of the SENCo in the special school was focused on coordinating annual review and multi-agency meetings, carrying out family

engagement work and overseeing training, for staff in the school and for staff in mainstream schools through SENCo forums. The coordination of annual reviews was seen as taking up a large proportion of time in the special school because all learners have a statement.

- SEP in the FEI was organised in relation to a specialist learning base for learners with complex needs who had a statement of special educational needs whilst at school. In addition to this base, a structure of student learning support operates for learners with SEN in relation to both academic learning and social-emotional related needs.
- School SENCos reported that they feel confident in their role because of the length of time they have been carrying out this responsibility and the experience they had gained from this.
- All settings noted the responsibility for SEN was seen as a shared one and that staff work as a team to address the range of learners' needs. In all settings, it was also noted that several staff within the setting held a qualification in relation to SEN in addition to SEN-relevant qualification held by the SENCo. In the primary setting, the presence of a specialist learning base was seen as partly the reason why a high proportion of teachers have SEN experience and training, though some teachers working in mainstream classrooms have SEN-related qualifications and experience. In the special school, a number of members of staff, including support staff, hold Masters degrees in SEN-relevant subjects. The head teachers in both primary and special school settings said they prioritise staff training and were paying for this in some cases, for example, training in British Sign Language (BSL), Makaton, PECs and Thrive²².
- Several school settings noted that hierarchies in terms of senior and middle management levels were in place, but that a distributed leadership approach to roles

²² Thrive is a charity run by parents to support disabled children and their families.

and responsibilities was being promoted and saw this as relevant to the delivery of SEP.

LA4 Identification and assessment for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Health professionals commented that schools, therapy services and community health services work closely and effectively to support early identification of special educational need at the pre-school level. It was noted that screening tools such as WellComm for speech and language development were being used widely for this purpose. Recent funding provided by the Welsh Government had been used to streamline systems around this, particularly for those with a neurodevelopment-based need. Health professionals expressed their belief that teams were well trained in relation to early identification and 'know what to look for'.
- Interviewees in the primary school commented that class teachers most commonly raise a concern about a learner, though the process of decision making in relation to identification of SEN was described as a team decision. The high level of expertise around SEN that exists in the school was seen as relevant in this respect. Involvement of the SENCo was mainly to observe learners where a concern was raised, to compile appropriate documentation (usually in the form of notes of observations and conversations), to implement assessment if deemed appropriate, and to coordinate decision making on next steps in support.
- Tools used for assessment include Speech Links and Boxall Profile. It was noted that some of these were time-consuming to deliver, but yield important information that makes them worthwhile in the long run.
- In the secondary school, Year 7 learners were screened routinely at entry using cognitive ability tests for spelling, reading and writing. Data passed on from the primary school was also seen as useful in identifying any individual learning needs and the national reading and numeracy tests were used as further screening. Results from these combined sources of information about learners' abilities identify those

who were achieving below a threshold (usually a grade score) and give rise to groupings for interventions. Groups were organised on the basis of how often an intervention was delivered, for example, weekly or more often, or on a one-to-one basis.

- The effectiveness of recording SEN as hard data (i.e. scores) was questioned by some interviewees. It was felt that, for example, that some areas of development, such as well-being and learning confidence, are critical to learner achievement, but require descriptive narratives of progress to convey important 'soft' outcomes.
- Health interviewees commented that though funding had been provided to the multidisciplinary therapy team within the children's health service, resourcing issues continue to be a barrier to taking on referrals for assessment and support. It was felt that children with complex needs were generally well catered for, but children and young people who do not come into this category were likely to receive less or no support. However, one health interviewee who worked in the speech and language therapy service thought that this latter group was supported within schools and that health provision was a repetition of support. This interviewee mentioned that expectations also need to be managed in terms of the impact of support delivered by health services.
- In the FEI, the process of identification of a learning need was thought to be straightforward for learners who had a learning and skills plan. For these learners, information from schools, social services, health services and Careers Wales was described as comprehensive and useful. Interviewees expressed their belief that some learners 'slip through the net' at school and arrive at college with additional needs, but no clear information about them. A system of assessment for academic and social needs was being carried out by the college for learners at entry.

LA4 Planning for SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Schools noted they continue to work according to guidance in the current Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004), though expressed their awareness that this system would soon be changing. IEPs were being used across settings, although IDPs were mentioned. Interviewees agreed that the use of IEPs was an effective system that allows flexibility and focus in terms of educational provision and comprehensive coverage of learners' needs.
- A range of plans were being used in school settings alongside IEPs. These include play plans in early years settings, 'reactive' plans for behaviour, healthcare plans and short-term pastoral support plans for learners at risk of exclusion.
- LA officers reported that a programme of PCP training had been provided for key personnel in the last five years. All interviewees in school settings reported that they were using one-page profiles for learners with IEPs and these were viewed positively by some and as supporting consultation with learners, parents and carers about what was important and the raising of concerns.

LA4 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making relating to school action/plus provision and FEI-based plans

- All settings expressed a strong commitment to consulting with learners, their parents, carers and other stakeholders. Some schools and the FEI said that they had been consulting with children, young people and parents and carers for some time and had developed support strategies for this purpose. In the PRU, where learners generally do not have statements but do have a high level of additional needs, interviewees felt that listening to learners was an important way of providing positive behaviour support and ensured the success of a placement.

- A variety of platforms were cited by schools as providing opportunities for parent and carer participation in decision making. These included parent evenings, home-school communication books and one-off meetings arranged to discuss a specific issue. Parent and carer attendance at meetings was described as generally very good and schools said they made efforts to ensure that meetings were held at a time that was convenient for parents and carers, especially those who work.
- Children and young people were described as generally involved in target setting especially around review time, which was stated as occurring termly or twice annually in settings. In the PRU, reviews for learners generally take place on a more regular basis (every 6 weeks), combine review of all aspects of provision and use the model of what was working well currently. IEPs were described as negotiated, with learners consulted about what they want to learn and achieve.
- Supporting parents and carers to understand the educational reasons for some decisions or approaches being used in a setting was described by some as a challenge for parent participation in decision making. This was said to be particularly the case for parents and carers who themselves have a learning difficulty or who had had negative experiences at school when they were young. Informal meetings with parents and carers were thought to be more suitable in such circumstances.
- Interviewees in health said that they prioritise person-centred practices and try to put children and families at the heart of decisions about provision. This was something that was seen as part of current health policy and guidance and an established way of working within health. Some interviewees, however, felt that despite this agenda of participation, day to day operation of the service meant that they might have less contact with children, particularly once they had moved out of the pre-school setting. One interviewee described using service user questionnaires, including a child-friendly questionnaire, but said that these had had a poor return rate.

LA4 SEP and review for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees within education felt that special education provision within the LA was largely effective in delivering good outcomes for children and young people. School staff provided evidence of the positive impact of their provision for learners with SEN in the form of attainment scores, low absence rates and minimal or no exclusions. Some settings felt that effectiveness should be indicated by the level of learner well-being and willingness to come to school. For FEI interviewees, effectiveness was determined by what a learner wants to achieve educationally, which was described as different for different learners. One FEI interviewee commented that simply completing a course and having a 'next step' to go on to could be a significant achievement for some learners.
- Several interviewees mentioned the importance of a commitment to inclusion by all staff as underpinning the successful delivery of SEP. SEP was seen as needing to take different forms, however, including in-class adaptation and accommodation as well as withdrawal sessions, for example, for literacy and numeracy support, and designated groups for specific needs, for example, 'Talkabout' groups for learners with speech and language needs and nurture spaces for learners with high levels of anxiety and emotional difficulties. The practice of 'two-way inclusion' was described by one interviewee as involving non-SEN learners joining SEN learners in specialist learning bases for specific activities, or alternatively base learners joining a whole school activity. LA officers expressed concern about teaching assistants being used to deliver SEN interventions since they believed this does not necessarily lead to good learner outcomes.
- In the PRU, provision was evaluated every year as a way of ensuring that the curriculum on offer links learning with the objectives set with individual children and young people. Provision was thought to be effective for primary age children if they were able to re-join mainstream education, though interviewees reported that schools were often reluctant to take back learners once they have joined the PRU.

- There was agreement amongst education and social services interviewees that a challenge to the delivery of SEP at present was lack of capacity in children's services, particularly children's health services. Many interviewees noted that some services were stretched and unable to offer support to some learners in schools, with CAMHS described as particularly difficult to access as a service.
- Though health interviewees thought they have positive working relationships with schools, they agreed that capacity within health services was a barrier to referral to children's health services and felt that this was especially the case for children who did not have a clearly diagnosed condition. Some interviewees expressed their concern about lack of psychology support and speech and language therapy support and saw this as a result of funding constraints. Temporary and short-term employment contracts for staff were also cited as underpinning difficulty in service provision.
- It was noted by an interviewee working in the health service that referrals to the psychology team supporting children with behaviour and learning difficulties were accepted from social services, CAMHS and child health services only, and not from schools. Given that this was a tertiary service, it was felt this referral arrangement was an appropriate one, but could be a source of frustration for schools and parents and carers. It was also noted that referrals outstrip capacity in terms of team resource.
- Some health interviewees saw their role as supporting educational practitioners to deliver support for children and young people, for example, through the delivery of training packages and by developing teacher understanding and knowledge in relation to child development and the nature of learning difficulties. This was seen as a way of reducing the number of referrals to health, but also as a way of building capacity within schools.
- Post-16 education was seen as challenged in terms of SEP by interviewees in schools. It was felt that the provision of an appropriate and attainable curriculum for

learners in Key Stage 4 who were challenged in terms of their learning was an area of difficulty. It was thought that more vocational pathways would be useful as would greater availability of personal assistance for work placements.

- Interviewees in the FEI felt that they were able to provide appropriate courses for learners with a range of needs and described fourteen levels of courses, covering pre-entry to entry level, Level 1, 2 and 3. Entry level tests were used to assess appropriate levels for learners, including a college-devised screening for learners with low ability. Information from schools about these learners was described as inadequate since it was focused on GCSE attainment and at too high a level for this group.
- Learners with complex needs were taught within a discrete base that focused on academic work, but also life skills and work skills. Funding for non-academic learning was seen as a challenge since no direct funding was available and areas of learning needed to fit in with existing courses, for example, cooking skills developed in technology courses. This was described as time-consuming and college said they need to encourage learners to choose academic courses that allowed greater coverage of life skills and independent living.
- A range of provision for different areas of need was seen as important in the FEI. The mental health needs of learners were seen as particularly challenging, though ensuring access to education was seen as an important way of addressing mental health issues. Interviewees commented that support from health was scarce or non-existent and that the college had recently developed its own provision for this area of need by appointing a mental health nurse in addition to the college nurse. The college also use a college counselling service which offers an initial four sessions for young people who were referred. They described as adequate in terms of capacity because the college used it on a pay by need basis.
- For looked after children with SEN, it was felt that provision was adequate, but not sufficiently comprehensive. Provision for children who are looked after by the LA was

funded by the Pupil Deprivation Grant and supported children of school age only, that is, not children in pre-school or young people at post-16. One interviewee said that these were key transition points and commented, 'education needs to play a longer game for looked after children'. Support for pre-school children was seen as important for addressing attachment issues and play-based learning, whilst support for post-16 was seen as an important way of supporting apprenticeship schemes. The LAC team operating within the education service was described as having skills in all these areas and more able than schools to provide one-to-one support.

- Review processes for SEP were thought by some interviewees to be strong, particularly in terms of review of learner achievement. The use of aspects of PCP in all settings, notably one-page profiles and the structure 'what is important for' and 'what is important to' a learner, was seen as adding to the effectiveness of the system of review. It was noted, however, that discussions in review meetings were not always focused on learner needs and specific actions.
- Some settings commented that review processes for learners with SEN were built in to processes of review that were used with all learners. In the primary school, for example, all learners participate in individual progress meetings and these were used to review IEP targets if appropriate. School interviewees also described informal formative assessment practices that were part of ongoing teaching and learning activity and were seen as having an important role in tracking learner progress and achievement.
- Processes for quality assurance of provision from health services include caseload audits, supervision groups, outcome measures and the operation of standards for report writing. LA officers expressed uncertainty that SEP in educational settings was always based on the best evidence available and had some concern about the effectiveness of support for learners with SEN delivered by general teaching assistants rather than specialist TAs.

LA4 resolving disagreements relating to provision delivered through school action/plus and for learners with FEI-based plans

- Interviewees agreed that schools need to be proactive in avoiding disagreements by ensuring good communication practices with parents and carers are in place. One school emphasised the importance of adopting a listening attitude with parents and carers and said that they try to build good relationships with them, always assuring parents and carers that someone will respond to their query and inviting them into school for an informal chat once a concern was raised. Settings agreed that acting quickly after a concern was raised and inviting parents and carers to a face-to-face meeting usually resolves an issue.
- In the FEI, disagreements were said to be time-consuming, but that family discussion was used for the purpose of conflict resolution.
- Interviewees in health and social services said that, generally, they were not involved in disagreements about educational support and that families usually approached the education service if there was an issue. It was noted that effective systems were in place within the health service to deal with concerns about specific issues with health service provision.

LA4 statutory assessment for special educational needs

- All interviewees noted that the statutory assessment process was a lengthy one and bureaucratic in terms of paperwork. Though the assessment process itself was seen as robust, the amount of time involved in preparing reports, the number of reports required and the lack of involvement of children's health services in some cases were seen as challenges within the system. Waiting time for assessment by children's health services was cited as up to 18 months and this was seen as a barrier to making referrals since learners usually require immediate support.
- LA officers noted, however, that the authority issues a relatively large number of statements of special educational need and that this number had more than doubled

in the last two to three years. It was noted that there had been an increase particularly in requests for statemented provision for learners with autism and social communication associated difficulties.

- Most referrals for statutory assessment in the LA were made at pre-school level using a network of district nurses, community paediatricians and educational practitioners that was thought to be working effectively for this purpose. The LA does not offer any provision outside of school or pre-school settings and LA officers described the process of identification as a straightforward one. A provision panel was held weekly or twice weekly, and includes representatives from education, health and social services, a representative from SNAP as well as school personnel and parents and carers.
- One LA officer noted that there appears to be a correlation between identification of SEN and social disadvantage and said that Flying Start was seeking to use some of its resources to address this issue.
- In the special school, all learners have needs identified prior to entry, though interviewees noted that it was seldom the case that a learner had a single area of need. Learners may be given a placement at the school based on one need, but then were identified with further needs. Common amongst these further needs were autism, ADHD and additional medical needs.
- The interviewee from social services commented that identification of a learning need for looked after children who were placed out of county could be a slow process. Need in relation to this group of children often centred on social communication difficulties.

LA4 statutory provision for special educational needs

- An aim of the authority was to provide inclusive and locally available SEP and funds had been delegated to schools for this purpose. Specialist learning bases which were located in and managed by mainstream schools operate at a number of sites within

the authority. These were seen as a suitable placement for learners with a range of needs and a way of broadening out what was available in terms of SEP.

- However, it was felt that maintaining the right balance of SEP to meet current demands in terms of needs was an on-going challenge for the authority and that suitable SEP for some learners was sometimes limited or non-existent. Plans for a new special school were in place and it was hoped that this will offer a range of support, including family support and respite care, areas that were thought to be under-resourced at present.
- Looked after children were prioritised in terms of need at placement panels, though a number of children and young people within this category were currently in out of county placements.
- In the special school, IEPs were being used in conjunction with individual behaviour plans (IBPs) to include academic targets as well as targets focused on well-being, behaviour and digital competency. Together these were seen as contributing to a bespoke learning pathway at the individual level, though school improvement plans and school action plans were also described as shaping SEP. All learners in the school have a statement of special educational needs and the school noted that every effort was made to align plans with statement objectives, although it was noted that these could be broad and difficult to align with shorter-term goals or learning objectives that were not National Curriculum-based.
- Many interviewees noted that support from children's health and social services was limited, with CAMHS most frequently mentioned in this respect, though other services mentioned included SLT and OT. Some schools said they were forming new relationships with other types of organisations as a way of drawing on external support, for example, Barnardo's, local counselling services, and with local church and community groups, though some of these organisations were also described as experiencing capacity issues.

LA4 Review of statutory SEP

- Interviewees in schools thought that statements were often inconsistent in terms of learner objectives and saw this as a challenge in relation to annual reviews. It was noted that statements were also often delayed in terms of LA amendment following a review meeting. LA officers commented that it was very difficult to gain agreement from schools and parents and carers to cease a statement, even where there was agreement that all statement objectives have been met.
- Interviewees in mainstream settings reported that external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) were always invited to annual review meetings for learners with SEN, but often do not attend. Health interviewees agreed that the current level of attendance at review meetings was not satisfactory but attributed this to capacity issues within the team. They noted that a report was always produced if a health practitioner was unable to attend an annual review meeting. The special school said that they carry out a large amount of liaison work with external partners in health and social services and saw this as underpinning their success in gaining the participation of external agencies in review meetings.
- LA officers commented that documentation arising from review meetings and forwarded by schools was variable in terms of quality with no evidence that it results in a more effective review process for parents/carers and learners or helps to avoid disagreements.

LA4 involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making about statutory SEP and resolving disagreements

- Interviewees noted that all schools in the LA had had PCP training and were using PCP processes as part of annual review meetings. All interviewees in schools reported that they were using one-page profiles. These were viewed positively by some and seen as supporting consultation with learners, parents and carers about what was important and the raising of concerns. However, one school commented that PCP as a process concerns more than one-page profiles and was a whole belief system about cultures of collaborative practices across stakeholders. The secondary

school felt that a PCP approach to planning was time consuming because it involved more in-depth consultation with a range of people and was, therefore, only using PCP with some learners.

- Parent and carer attendance at meetings to discuss SEP and at annual review meetings of statements was described as very good. Schools said they made efforts to ensure that meetings were held at a time that was convenient for parents and carers, especially those who work.
- Learners were regularly invited to annual review meetings, although it was reported by interviewees in the primary school that some learners can feel anxious about participating and would not then be involved. This was said to be particularly the case for learners on the autism spectrum.
- In the special school, decision making in relation to planning was seen as a strength of the school and a key process in the delivery of good outcomes for learners. The school described a number of processes that were in place to support learner engagement and participation in decision making. Interviewees in this setting said that these processes were in tune with PCP as an approach, but that they had been working in this way for some time, with one interviewee commenting, 'We were PCP before it came out'. It was felt that professional expertise was required in relation to engaging learners in decision making processes since this was seen as partly dependent on a learner's understanding of what was being asked of them, as well as their disposition at the time of being asked.
- LA officer interviewees noted that there had been a marked increase in the number of disagreements at the LA level. These were described as usually related to statutory assessment and placement or SEP issues, for example, placement for learners with autism and provision of applied behaviour analysis (ABA). The LA operates a graduated response to the resolving of disagreements, using a home-school liaison officer as the first point of contact, followed by meetings with heads of SEN and/or SNAP. The first stage of dispute resolution was sufficient in most cases,

but officers noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of tribunal cases in the authority. Tribunal cases were described as taking up large amounts of time in terms of workload for LA officers.

LA4 working with others

- Though interviewees agreed they had good working relationships with practitioners across education, health and social services, many noted that a major barrier to working with others was capacity issues within teams, particularly in children's health services. Schools reported that referrals to health were often lengthy in terms of waiting times and sometimes resulted in no take-up. Mainstream schools said they always invited external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) to review meetings for learners with SEN, but said that few attend, though the special school reported more success in this respect. CAMHS was particularly cited as a service that was difficult to access by schools, the PRU and the FEI. Referral forms for CAMHS were described as time-consuming and it was noted that the referral criteria could be narrow and focused only on some categories of need. The PRU noted, however, that in recent years the vast majority of their referrals to CAMHS were shown not to have mental health related issues and felt, therefore, that alternative forms of SEP were important, for example, in the form of expanded educational provision.
- Interviewees in the PRU questioned whether it was possible for health professionals to contribute to educational outcomes on an individual learner basis since roles in health were not aligned with educational roles. Interviewees expressed a belief that strategic working was a better role for health professionals, citing joint working on the development of well-being protocol in the region.
- Mainstream schools reported minimal on-going input from children's health services, for example, from the OT service and SLT service. Input from the EP service was described as more consistent, although it was noted by one school setting that there had been a recent reduction in hours available to them. The special school described more regular input from external agencies, for example, weekly input from the EP

service and twice weekly SLT input. The school noted that it had developed its own in-house communication and behaviour teams, with staff training for these funded by the school. The school also noted that they held health clinics in the school as a way of supporting multi-agency working.

- Transition points were cited by many interviewees as a time of working across agencies, with transition work and work on other issues described as good with FEIs, Careers Wales, social services and EWOs, and for cross-phase primary and secondary working.
- The FEI reported that social services did not provide support for young people, for example a social worker, who do not have diagnosed condition. They described learners on Level 1 courses as often coming into this category even though they regularly have the most need in terms of support.
- The FEI described working with a wide range of third sector and voluntary agencies, including organisations focused on young carers, domestic violence, homelessness and tenancy support, Samaritans, Time to Change, and public protection and anti-radicalisation support groups. These links were seen as important ones for learners with additional needs and as a way of enhancing what the college can offer in terms of SEP. Links with employability services was also seen as important in this respect.
- Health interviewees reported that they were involved with a wide range of services, schools, colleges and third sector organisations. It was felt that the effectiveness of collaborative working was affected by differences in the priorities between services and by the fact that teams were not co-located. Sharing information was not always consistent and operational issues exist in relation to the confidentiality of information. Forging good multi-agency relationships was considered as important as service delivery by health interviewees, but interviewees noted that this required an investment of time that was not always available.

- LA officers provided examples of developments within multi-agency working in the authority. These include regular meetings between heads of inclusion and the LHB, strategic group meetings for cross-border working, working groups with FEIs, and multi-agency forums for health and education. Multi-agency forums focus on different issues, for example, developing systems for sharing information which was an area viewed by some as presenting a challenge in terms of multi-agency working at present.

LA4 transition

- A range of transition arrangements were described in relation to all school stages, that is, pre-school to primary, primary to secondary, post-secondary pathways. A particular strength of the LA was thought to be transition to post-16 education, something that interviewees noted had recently been confirmed by Estyn inspection, though transition was generally thought to be effective at all transition points.
- Transition into school was thought to be supported by the location of the Flying Start team on the same site as the primary school and by the management of this team by the primary school head teacher. Parents and carers were invited into the school to meet class teachers before the child started school. Transitions within and out of the school were supported with enhanced visits for learners to new classrooms or placements and by information sharing meetings involving practitioners. The primary school had a specialist learning base on its site and transition for learners in this base was reportedly organised flexibly to suit individual needs. For some children, a phased start to school was used, whilst for others, particularly those who have autism, an immediate full-time start to school was preferred. Interviewees in primary settings noted that, because transition between foundation phase and key stage 2 had been identified as an area of challenge for some learners, the school had introduced foundation phase pedagogy to Years 3 and 4. This was considered by interviewees to be consistent with proposals for the new curriculum for Wales.
- Similar transition arrangements to the primary school were in place in the secondary and special schools. Enhanced learner visits, close liaison between professionals

across settings, clear systems for information exchange, meetings with parents and carers and the use of taster days and sessions were seen as effective practices that support transitions.

- The special school described their arrangements with the FEI that involved learners from the school attending the college for a morning a week during Years 11 and 12. This was considered to be an effective way of supporting learners with social transition.
- The effectiveness of transition was considered to be partly dependent on the quality of relationships between key individuals. Interviewees felt that where existing relationships with professionals, services and schools were good, then this supported transition work for learners and helped ensure success.
- The LA noted they held a transition panel for learners with statements transitioning from primary to secondary school. This was used to discuss individual cases and to ensure that statements were updated and current, in terms of learners' needs.
- Health interviewees noted that services tend to withdraw as young people transfer to adult services. In addition, some felt it was not always clear which services were available to adults. A practitioner working in the post-18 health service for people with learning disabilities commented that many service users did not appear to know about this service and that, additionally, professionals found it hard to gather information about potential referrals. This practitioner also noted that their service was often only notified about individuals as they turn 18. Some health interviewees felt that transition arrangements were good for children and young people with complex needs across all stages of education, but less effective for those with more moderate needs. A challenge for this group was reported to be the practitioners' understanding of SEN, particularly in secondary school settings.

- For health interviewees, further challenges to support for transition include poor communication between services and with organisations, capacity issues in teams and gaps in health service provision for adult users.

LA4 Welsh language

- The LA reported that it was possible to offer some SEP in Welsh, for example, EP assessment, specialist base provision in the secondary phase and outreach support to Welsh-medium schools. Officers noted that offering SEP through the medium of Welsh was an ongoing challenge, but felt that what was currently offered meets existing demand. LA interviewees reported that they contributed to their local Welsh in education strategic plan in terms of identifying demand for Welsh-medium SEP and that they liaised closely with Welsh-medium schools in assessing this demand.
- The secondary school noted that they were able to offer all aspects of in-school SEP and support through the medium of Welsh and that some specialist SEP was available in Welsh through a learning resource base on site. School interviewees noted that a fully bilingual service was available for mobility, counselling and social services. They also noted that transition to FEIs was usually supported by Welsh-speaking FE staff. However, the SENCo also reported there were some gaps in Welsh-medium SEP including services that were only available through the medium of English (e.g. visual impairment officer, specific learning difficulties officer, PRU/EOTAS services). In addition, school interviewees noted that some services offered a limited Welsh-language service and as a consequence were not always available in Welsh (e.g. SLT and EP). Interviewees in the secondary school reported there were a shortage of Welsh-language screening and more specialist assessment tools.