

Consultation – Proposed Additional Learning Needs LCO Committee – The National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) Order 2007

RNIB Cymru is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this LCO for the committee. We believe that it will ensure people with additional learning needs will have increased opportunities to meet their full learning potential. However, we are concerned that the drafting of the bill might lead pupils with sight loss to be excluded.

Is the definition of disability in the proposed Order appropriate? If not, how should the definition be re-drafted and why?

RNIB Cymru is extremely concerned that the definition of disability does not include people with a sensory disability. This would mean people with sensory loss, for instance, sight and hearing, are excluded from the scope of the competency order. The order should be rewritten to explicitly include sensory loss.

Are the terms of the proposed Order drafted appropriately, too narrowly or too broadly? If necessary, how should the proposed Order be re-drafted and why?

We understand that travel arrangements for attending education is already a devolved matter and as such should be included in the bill. This power is important as it ensures that people can access education and the National Assembly for Wales should continue to have competence in this area.

Transport has for a long time been a major obstacle for people who are blind and partially sighted trying to access educational provision. Research undertaken by MORI on behalf of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (the official Government Advisory body on transport issues) showed that transport is the most important issue for disabled people trying to go about their daily lives in their local communities. Pavement and road maintenance are of particular concern. This research is backed up by **RNIB's Shaping the Future Report**, which shows that nine in ten primary-aged children and over eight in ten of those

of secondary school-aged encountered difficulties when out and about. The street environment causes problems for nine in ten primary and seven in ten secondary school children and young people. Lack of self-confidence in travelling was an issue for two out of three primary and over one in three secondary school pupils. Despite these statistics fewer than three in ten pupils in mainstream schools had been given mobility and independence education.

All possible effort should be made to allow pupils with special educational needs to participate in mainstream education, including school transport. To be included successfully must mean that an individual's experiences success in all levels of school life, both academic and social. It means inclusion in extra-curricular activities and school clubs as well as physical access to buildings and accessible information. **RNIB's Shaping the Future Report** suggests that although pupils with significant sight loss may experience academic inclusion, many of them remain socially isolated from their peers in mainstream provision. This issue needs addressing urgently and could be helped through inclusion on mainstream transport as this provides a valuable social opportunity for pupils.

If you would like any further information or a presentation to the committee, please let me know on 029 2044 9577 or email kate.hughes@rnib.org.uk.