



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Formal Consultation Document proposal
to Improve provision and build capacity
for Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
Pupils across the County Borough

Children & Young Persons Version

The Consultation Commences:
Monday 24th April 2023 and concludes
at 5pm on Tuesday 6th June 2023

Introduction:

As a council we would like to see, all children and young people have access to high quality education and training tailored to meet their needs in order to reach their full potential, extend aspirations and promote social inclusion.

Why we want to do this:

The council has seven units which support Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases (RB) in mainstream schools. This support is available in Primary and Secondary education settings which are currently full to capacity. What we would like to do is provide more spaces for pupils in primary and secondary settings so that pupils have the right support to reach their potential.

Current provision is below: The County Borough currently has 2 special schools which are:

- **Pen y Cwm Special School** which caters for complex needs.
- **The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community** for Social and Emotional Behaviour Difficulties (SEBD) consisting of 3 separate sites:
 - Primary phase (Thomas Richard Centre)
 - Secondary phase (Pontygof site Ebbw Vale)
 - Stewards House (Ebbw Vale)

There are also seven Learning Resource Bases for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Additional Learning Needs in mainstream settings across the County Borough:

Primary sector:

- Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Six Bells Campus
- Coed y Garn Primary School
- Glanhwy Primary School
- Willowtown Primary School
- Ystruth Primary School

Secondary sector:

- Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community ALN – Secondary Campus
- Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community ASD – Secondary Campus**

** Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community Secondary Campus also has a school transitional class which under this proposal will be formally recognised as a Council run resource base.

Who we are consulting with: As a Council when there are changes to the schools we have to consult on those changes. This means we also have to consult with children and young people. We will do this by engaging:

- with the Youth Forum
- Pupils
- School Councils
- Children's Grand Council
- As well as other services who work with children & young people.

There will be 4 drop-in sessions across Blaenau Gwent if you want to talk to us in person to share your views or concerns. Information can be found on our **Webpage via link** <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/consultations/proposal-to-improve-provision-and-build-capacity-for-additional-learning-needs/> for more information). What you say is important to us and we will ensure that all the information is gathered and used towards the next stage. As part of this we will also let you know if the proposal is approved

The Proposal and what it will look like

Overview: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council propose to increase the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and ASD Resource Bases across the County Borough in both primary and Secondary settings. This will take effect from September 2023 on a phased basis over the next 5 years.

In primary settings the spaces will increase from **61 to 86 places** and in Secondary settings it will increase from **62 to 80 places**.

Phase one will also include 15 spaces for Welsh-medium schools So how will this look?

- recognise the transition group established in Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community-Secondary Phase as a 6 place Learning Resource Base from September 2023
- create 6-8 places for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder at Tredegar Comprehensive School from September 2023
- create 10 places for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Additional Learning Needs at Sofrydd Primary School from September 2024/25
- create 15 places for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Additional Learning Needs at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from September 2024

We are also looking to increase places by 40 in phase 2 of the proposal which will include Faith Schools

So, what is Phase 2?

- create an Autism Spectrum Disorder and Additional Learning Needs Resource Base at Brynmawr Foundation School for 10 pupils
- create an Autism Spectrum Disorder and Additional Learning Needs Resource Base at Cwm Primary School for 10 pupils
- create, if required, an Autism Spectrum Disorder and Additional Learning Needs Resource base at a faith based primary school in Blaenau Gwent (yet to be determined) for 10 pupils
- create an Autism Spectrum Disorder and additional learning needs Resource Base at Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus for 10 pupils

What does it currently look like? There are 7 bases currently and the places within those bases are currently full and demand is increasing which are reported to the Council.

We feel by putting Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases into mainstream schools there will be no direct impact on current pupils in mainstream schools and helps to integrate those pupils.

There will be cost implications for the Council as the ALN Basis could initially have to have rooms remodelled and when open they will require teaching staff and teaching assistance. The costs will be spread out over a number of years from a capital and revenue point. For a full breakdown of costs please visit our **Webpage via link** <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/consultations/proposal-to-improve-provision-and-build-capacity-for-additional-learning-needs/>

The Council has around 24 pupils who are educated in special school placements/Resource Bases Outside the County Borough which has a financial cost to the Council. Should we not provide these extra spaces for our pupils in the County Borough then we could see these cost rising significantly over the next few years.

Why we want to do it:

Firstly, we want to improve provision for children and young people to fulfil their potential new legislation came in to place in 2018 which was followed by the new Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice which came in 2021, which means that there is more ownership for schools to meet the needs of their pupils.

Who will it affect? This proposal will affect pupils in school listed above, as they would need to create space in the building for the provision A number of options were considered, and this option was the preferred to build capacity (including Welsh Medium places & Faith Based provision) over the next 5 years and increase provision in both Primary and Secondary settings, this will address the immediate need at secondary provision and build on both Welsh Medium and Faith Based demand for places.

Benefits of the Proposal: This proposal would ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils - particularly those with the greatest level of need, to be educated locally. The proposal promotes an inclusive approach within Education, ensuring access to high quality specialist education facilities and support for pupils with ALN within the County Borough. Should nothing change, the Council will be unable to meet the needs of all learners particularly those with ASD and ALN within Blaenau Gwent.

Expected Benefits and Advantages (when compared with the status quo):

- Pupils are accessing suitable and appropriate provision within their locality.
- Pupils are accessing suitable and appropriate provision in terms of protected characteristics e.g., faith or language.
- Creation of a local solution which will address the increased demand for ALN provision.
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of local education for pupils with ALN.
- The structure will build confidence and self-esteem in pupils, parents, and staff.
- A local option for pupils transitioning from mainstream school to resources bases.
- Reduce the costs of out of county placements for pupils, whilst securing local investment within the Blaenau Gwent school estate.
- Improve access to and facilities for pupils who meet the criteria for ALN provision across the county borough.
- Increased capacity and sustainability of placement; and reduced travel time and carbon footprint for pupils

Disadvantages:

- Potential parental concerns in relation to placement in Resource Bases; and
- Pupil numbers in schools identified as potential bases may grow if there is any inward migration into the area.
- Improve access to and facilities for pupils who meet the criteria for ALN provision across the county borough.
- Increased capacity and sustainability of placement; and reduced travel time and carbon footprint for pupils

How you can have your say Consultation Questionnaire

Please provide your comments on the proposal to extend the Capacity for pupils in Resource Bases across the County Borough. You may also wish to indicate which of the following reflects your views:
This can be done in 2 ways:

- 1. Via the link provided:** <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/d1daqu>
- 2. Send by mail to Joanne Watts, Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change Education Transformation Team, Education Department, Floor 8 Anvil Court, Abertillery, NP13 1DB**

Thank you for your time and contribution to the consultation. All comments to be received no later than 5:00pm on Tuesday 6th June 2023

