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Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AC/AM
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister for Wales



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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The National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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During First Minister's questions on 2 December you asked what plans the Assembly Government has to enhance the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning & Skills powers with regard to obtaining data of deaf children in schools throughout Wales. I am sorry for the delay.

At this time, we do not have immediate plans to extend its powers with regard to obtaining further data for deaf children in schools throughout Wales. This is because we have in part already undertaken or intends to undertake over the next few years policies which will improve its collection and publication of data relating to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including those with Hearing Impairments.

To date, we have used powers under the Education Act 1996 by making subordinate legislation obliging Local Education Authorities (LEA's) and/or governing bodies of schools to collect data and publish information about matters relating to the provision of education for pupils with SEN.

More recently, we have made regulations in Wales to improve data collection and ensure more meaningful and relevant information is provided on pupils with SEN, namely the Education (Information about Individual Pupils)(Wales) Regulations 2007 and our Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data collection already gathers such information, and its coverage extends further than England's SEN Information Act 2008. In using PLASC, schools can record up to two types of SEN for each pupil, defining one as the primary need and the other as a secondary need. This ensures that pupils with hearing impairments, which maybe regarded as their secondary need, are included in the overall data. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that the types of SEN are accurately recorded.

Following the former Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (ELLS) Committee's review of SEN and reform of the current statutory assessment and statementing framework in Wales we conducted a preliminary consultation on potential options for change. We consulted parents, carers, relevant professionals and the voluntary sector throughout

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Wales. As a result of this preliminary consultation, we have proposed a number of pilot projects designed to test a range of alternatives to the current statutory assessment framework in Wales. One of the pilot schemes aims to develop a comprehensive framework for the evaluation and monitoring of educational provision for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This pilot will focus on assessment, data collection and the development of improved outcome measures for pupils with SEN.

Following the pilot programme, we expect to introduce legislation which will be subject to formal consultation, evidence based and, importantly, carry the confidence of key stakeholders throughout Wales.

I very much support the Minister for CELLS' belief that this is an opportunity for local authorities to take forward, in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and other key stakeholders including voluntary organisations, a pilot programme that will ultimately result in an innovative and much improved system whereby pupils with ALN will have their needs met and receive a first class education.

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