



STATUTORY CONSULTATION REPORT

**New Additional Learning
Provision – Ysgol Aberconwy**

1st February 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Conwy County Borough Council has been responding to an increasing need for additional learning provision for children and young people in Conwy.
- 1.2 At their meeting on 25th February 2020, Conwy's Cabinet resolved to carry out consultation in respect of a proposal to open new additional learning provision at Ysgol Aberconwy.
- 1.3 The proposal presented to Cabinet was to build on the existing provision available for learners with autism aged 4-11 by developing secondary age provision. It was hoped that this resource provision could provide enhanced support and provision for learners with autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties.
- 1.4 In accordance with the School Organisation Code, the Local Authority began a period of public consultation on 6th March. This consultation came to an end on 17th December, following a pause due to Covid 19 related school closures.
- 1.5 The proposal subject to the statutory consultation was as follows:

That new additional learning provision is opened for secondary age learners with autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties.

2. Background Information

2.1 Pupil number forecasts

2.11 As initially described in the Consultation Document, the number of pupils with autism in Conwy has increased over the past 4 years.

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total pupil numbers	15870	15802	15803	15777
Numbers of pupils with autism	327	380	454	456
Percentage of total population	2.1%	2.4%	2.9%	2.9%
Welsh Average	1.5%	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%

2.12 With this increase in overall numbers, there has been a simultaneous increase in pupils with autism or other complex neurodevelopmental difficulties who are experiencing difficulties in successfully accessing their mainstream education placements. Reasons for this need to be considered on an individual basis, but examples include anxiety associated with the physical school environment, social relationships within the school setting, difficulties in transitioning between home and school, and anxiety around academic demands and pressures.

2.2 Current Local Authority Provision

2.21 In response to the identified need for provision for this group of learners, the Local Authority had already established the following designated support and provision for children with autism:

- **ASD Outreach Team**

The ASD Outreach Service comprises of a team of Specialist Teaching Assistants who can provide support and advice to mainstream schools regarding autism. The Service provides support and advice for all teaching and support staff, helping to set appropriate targets/objectives and advising on appropriate environmental adjustments and specific interventions that will help learners to achieve these objectives.

- **Foundation Phase ASD Resource Class**

For children aged 4-7 who have difficulties associated with ASD which are impacting significantly on their access to a mainstream environment, there is a Specialist ASD Resource Class based at Ysgol Nant y Groes. Pupils attend the Resource Class on a full time basis, but remain registered at their home, mainstream school.

- **Key Stage 2 ASD Resource Class**

Similarly, there is a Specialist Resource Class for children aged 7-11 situated at Ysgol Ffordd Dyffryn. Pupils attend full time but remain registered at their home school. Children attending the Key Stage 2 Resource Class are offered as much supported inclusion in to mainstream lessons as is possible and appropriate for their individual needs.

2.22 The proposal subject to consultation reflected the desire to build on the existing provision with the opening of new provision for 16 learners in Ysgol Aberconwy. It was proposed that this could be the first stage in developing support and provision for this group of learners across the education continuum, from mainstream inclusion to specialist support/placements.

2.3 Pupil number forecasts and capacity at Ysgol Aberconwy

2.31 As part of the considerations when looking to establish the host school for this provision, it was considered whether Ysgol Aberconwy had the physical capacity to host this resource provision both now and in the future. The capacity of the school in September 2019 was 1241 pupils, with actual pupil numbers being 826. This meant that there were 497 unfilled pupil places in the school, leaving adequate capacity for the resource provision to be located in the school.

2.32 Current pupil forecasts for the next 5 years are as follows, and demonstrate ongoing capacity:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
800	811	848	859	867

2.4 Current School Provision (Ysgol Aberconwy)

- 2.41 A further driver in considering Ysgol Aberconwy as the host school for the new provision, was that the school had already set up an internal centre for pupils with autism, 'Pontio'. Information provided to families about the centre explained that their "aim is to ensure that every pupil feels supported and meets or exceeds their full potential." Staff working with pupils accessing the centre aim to raise their self-esteem and self-confidence and develop "effective personal management skills". Ultimately their goal is to use the centre as a nurturing environment which is integral to the school as a whole and an opportunity to support pupils in being able to access mainstream education successfully. This reflects the Local Authority's vision for inclusion and the motivation behind developing County wide provision, and therefore offers an opportunity to build on this existing good practice and provision.
- 2.42 Ysgol Aberconwy describes how their existing provision follows these six principles of nurture:
1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
 2. The classroom offers a safe base
 3. The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem
 4. Language is a vital means of communication
 5. All behaviour is communication
 6. The importance of transition in children's lives
- 2.43 As Pontio operated at the time of the proposal being published, a team of teachers were timetabled to teach specialist subjects. This enabled pupils to maintain links with their mainstream teachers and classroom environments, and teachers used the opportunity to build on relationships and to help to improve pupils' engagement with their education.
- 2.44 This is a model we seek to continue and develop through the formal opening of a Local Authority funded, county wide provision, with opportunities for inclusion in to mainstream classes wherever possible and appropriate, but with the

additional opportunity for specialist teachers to visit the resource so that access to as full, wide and varied curriculum as possible is maintained.

- 2.43 The school has a wider, positive approach to inclusion and nurture, which extends beyond their internal provision. The most recent Estyn report (2018) states that: “Ysgol Aberconwy’s inclusive, supportive and nurturing ethos has a significant beneficial impact on pupils’ wellbeing and personal development”.

2.5 Quality & Standards in Education

- 2.51 There is felt to be a need to develop this provision, in order to ensure that all learners with autism/associated complex neurodevelopmental difficulties have access to high quality, appropriate and inclusive education opportunities, and those experiencing difficulties accessing mainstream education are offered provision to help maximise their chances of success.
- 2.52 At present, there is some very good practice evidenced in mainstream inclusion, and excellent provision for learners with autism and learning disability in Ysgol y Gogarth. However, the need has been identified for more specialist provision for learners with autism who do not have a learning disability, but who are experiencing significant difficulty accessing the mainstream curriculum in its entirety.
- 2.53 Currently, there are increasing numbers of pupils requiring bespoke packages of support and provision to try and enable them to access positive educational experiences. This includes home tuition, 1-1 teaching, and alternative education placements. None of these options are felt to be sustainable or specifically tailored and responsive to the identified growing need, neither do they support the Local Authority’s commitment to, and vision for, an inclusive education system.
- 2.54 The Local Authority believes that this proposal will be the first step in developing high quality, specialist provision across all key stages of education, with a clear remit for inclusion in to mainstream education wherever possible, and enabling pupils to have access to a full and varied curriculum. The provision will help

support learners to develop the skills and confidence for transition out of school and on to further education opportunities in line with their aspirations and interests.

- 2.55 It will also help to ensure that Conwy learners are educated in Conwy, maintaining links to their communities and peer groups, and ensuring that they feel a valued part of the school community and by the County as a whole.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Current situation: maintaining the status quo

- 3.11 Maintaining the status quo would not be responsive to the increasing need in this area, and the recognition that other available education opportunities may not be appropriate for this group of learners, and desired outcomes for individual pupils not achieved. The Local Authority would not be responding to its duty to provide appropriate education for all learners.
- 3.12 In addition this would likely to result in expensive Out of County placements, meaning that children may have to travel long distances to receive the educational provision they required, which is not in line with the County's vision for the support of children and young people with additional learning needs.

3.2 Proposed option: Open new additional learning provision

- 3.21 Open new additional learning provision is opened for 16 (in the first instance) secondary age learners with autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties who are experiencing significant difficulty accessing the mainstream school environment.
- 3.22 The Local Authority will be able to safely meet its statutory duties in terms of the provision of appropriate education, ensure improved long term outcomes for learners, and maintain placements for Conwy children successfully and positively in Conwy schools.

3.3 Accommodation

- 3.31 The provision will be located within Ysgol Aberconwy, using suitably sized classrooms identified based on noise and traffic factors and access to an identified sensory room. The rooms will be accessible for all pupils with ease of access to appropriate toilet facilities. There will be easy access to mainstream lessons for inclusion where appropriate and identified on an individual basis.

3.4 Transport arrangements

- 3.41 Taxi transport will be offered to all learners attending the resource, with work towards independence ongoing, and where pupils are able to make their own

way to school, or on public/school transport, this will be encouraged and supported.

3.5 Staffing

- 3.51 The staffing for the provision will be as follows/equivalent to: For every 8 pupils there will be one full time teacher, 1 Level 3/4 Teaching Assistant and 2 Level 1 Teaching Assistants.
- 3.52 A Business Case has been submitted to continue to fund the staffing requirements of the provision.
- 3.53 All posts are advertised as Welsh Desirable, with an emphasis on encouraging the use of the Welsh language in lessons and beyond. The school is proud of its Welsh tradition and heritage and is constantly developing the provision of some subjects through the medium of Welsh for those who want it. All pupils accessing the resource provision will have the same right to choose access to these subjects.

3.6 Benefits and disadvantages

- 3.61 Following consultation and the responses received, there are still no perceived disadvantages to developing this additional learning provision in response to identified increasing need.
- 3.62 The perceived benefits are that learners in Conwy identified as requiring this enhanced/specialist provision will have access to it across both Primary and Secondary education.

4. Consultation

4.1 The consultation was held between **6th March** and **17th December** (including a pause in the consultation period due to Covid 19).

4.2 Consultees

4.21 This Consultation Document was distributed, in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, to the following consultees during the statutory consultation period:

Requirements of the Organisation Code 011/2018	Distributed to:
Parents (and where possible prospective parents), carers and guardians and staff members of schools affected by the proposals.	The Head Teacher of Ysgol Aberconwy for further distribution to parents, carers, guardians and members of staff. The Head Teachers of all other Conwy Secondary Schools, Ysgol Nant y Groes and Ysgol Ffordd Dyffryn for further distribution to parents, carers, and guardians
The maintaining or proposed maintaining authority for any school likely to be affected by the proposals.	Conwy County Borough Council is presenting the proposal
Any other local authority (including those in England, where appropriate) likely to be affected - including in the case of dedicated SEN provision any authority placing or likely to place pupils with SEN in it.	Denbighshire Council - modernisingeducation@denbighshire.gov.uk Gwynedd Council - ModerneiddioAddysg@gwynedd.llyw.cymru Ynys Mon Council - ysgolionmon@anglesey.gov.uk
The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located.	Church in Wales St Asaph Diocesan Authority - rosalindwilliams@cinw.org.uk Bangor Diocesan Authority - anestgrayfrazer@churchinwales.org.uk , Roman Catholic Diocese of Wrexham - communications@rcdwxm.org.uk
The governing body of any school which is the subject of the proposals	The Governing Body Ysgol Aberconwy
The Governing Body of any other schools which the proposer considers are likely to be affected by the proposals.	The Governing Bodies of all schools in Conwy
Welsh Ministers	Schoolsmanagementdivision3@gov.wales
Constituency and Regional Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) representing the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals.	mandy.jones@assembly.wales Regional AM Mark.Isherwood@assembly.wales Regional AM Llyr.Gruffydd@assembly.wales Regional AM Michelle.Brown@assembly.wales Regional AM Janet.Finch-Saunders@Assembly.Wales Regional AM Constituency AM, Aberconwy Jack.Sargeant@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Alyn and Deeside Sian.Gwenllian@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Arfon Ken.Skates@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Clwyd South

	Darren.Millar@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Clwyd West Hannah.Blythyn@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Delyn Ann.Jones@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Vale of Clwyd Lesley.Griffiths@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Wrexham rhun.apiorwerth@assembly.wales Constituency AM, Ynys Môn robin.millar.mp@parliament.uk MP, Aberconwy Constituency david.jones.mp@parliament.uk MP, Clwyd West Constituency
Estyn	Meilyr Rowlands – Education and Training in Wales Chief Inspector ymholiadau@estyn.llyw.cymru
Teaching and staff trade unions representing teachers and other staff at any school which is the subject of the proposals.	Unions – National Education union - john.owen@neu.org.uk , NAHT - cymru@naht.org.uk NASUWT - rc-wales-cymru@mail.nasuwt.org.uk UCAC - ucac@ucac.cymru UNISON – branchsecretary@unisonconwy.co.uk GMB – mark.jones@gmb.org.uk
Regional Education Consortium	Arwyn Thomas – Chief Officer GwE arwynthomas@gwegogledd.cymru
Police and Crime Commissioner	Arfon Jones – North Wales Police Commissioner OPCC@nthwales.pnn.police.uk
Any community or town council for the area served by the school which is the subject of this proposal.	Conwy Town Council - towncouncil@conwy.gov.uk
Local Communities First Partnership	Marianne Jackson, Head of Community Development Service - marianne.jackson@conwy.gov.uk
Relevant Health Bodies with an interest.	Dr Hamilton Grantham – Consultant Community Paediatrician, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board - Hamilton.Grantham@wales.nhs.uk Sara Harvey, CAMHS - ASDinfo@WLGA.gov.uk Liz McKinney and Joy Rettie, Speech and Language Therapy Service
Other	All Social Care and Education staff

4.22 The consultation document was published on the Conwy County Borough Council website and copies were available on request from Education Services.

4.3 Consultation with children and young people

4.31 Pupils currently attending resource provision for autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties described the following when consulted with:

What works well?	What can we improve?
<i>"I feel less stressed and staff have helped me with my anxiety. I have more laughs. I am coming in every day. I like mixing with other pupils"</i>	<i>"The windows, it's cold in class but I'm allowed to wear a coat"</i>
<i>"I did gardening"</i>	<i>"I don't know yet"</i>
<i>"It's better than being home schooled, I feel I'm learning more. I have friends - at home I didn't have any"</i>	<i>"Nothing really, it's perfect as it is"</i>
<i>"The teachers and friends, it's good"</i>	<i>"No idea"</i>
<i>"I love DT"</i>	<i>"Get some more cool things for the room"</i>
<i>"I feel like I want to stay here"</i>	<i>"Nothing"</i>
<i>"I like the laptops and the Ipads and the food is lovely"</i>	<i>"I want to be treated as an adult"</i>
<i>"I feel safe from the bullies, I don't have any issues"</i>	<i>"More computers so I can play Minecraft education in school"</i>

4.32 Pupils with autism attending Ysgol Aberconwy mainstream lessons were also asked for their views on the benefits and challenges of the mainstream environment from their perspective.

What works well?	What is not working?
<i>"Staff listen and are understanding"</i>	<i>"A lot of change for pupils with ASD to manage during the schools day – supply teachers, seating plan, movement around the school etc"</i>
<i>"The support that is available through Hafan and Pontio"</i>	<i>"Big crowds in secondary school"</i>
<i>"The school works with and supports individual needs"</i>	<i>"Noise levels – can be very loud and intimidating in different areas of the school"</i>
<i>"The systems are fair with everyone"</i>	<i>"Having to work with lots of different adults and personalities can be challenging"</i>
<i>"Good knowledge of children and their individual circumstances"</i>	<i>"Big crowds/lots of people"</i>
<i>"Good support in Pontio and Hafan"</i>	<i>"The work can be hard"</i>
<i>"Offer of quiet time"</i>	<i>"There is a lot of work to do"</i>

<i>“Help with the work”</i>	<i>“Noisy”</i>
<i>“Staff listen”</i>	<i>“Changes in teacher, TA and the seating plan can be very stressful”</i>
<i>“We have help with our feelings, to understand our feelings”</i>	
<i>“Pontio prepares me for change”</i>	
<i>“Offer of Pontio registration, Pontio distaw, and Pontio lunch club”</i>	

4.33 The School Council were also consulted with and gave the following response:

“The provision would provide pupils with a more supportive and tailored classroom experience. This is really good, as it is allowing the students to still have a school experience but just in a way that’s more suited to their way of learning. It’s great that Aberconwy has opened its doors to students across Conwy, as it gives any students that require it the opportunity to make use of the support here”.

4.34 All of the above information will be used to help inform the development of specialist and mainstream support and provision.

4.4 Other Consultation Responses

4.41 The Local Authority received 6 consultation responses, including the statutory response from Estyn.

4.42 The following is a summary of issues raised and feedback given in the response and during the drop-in sessions.

4.43 “Are you in favour of the proposal to open new additional learning provision at Ysgol Aberconwy?”

Yes	No
6	0

4.44 All of the consultation responses responded in favour of the proposal, with narrative accompanying the responses including:

“Having no current additional provision for this age range undermines the support provided earlier, children of this age require the support in a mainstream school to enable them to reach their full potential”.

“I think it is a much needed resource for a growing area of need within the county and would be beneficial for many neuro diverse and ASD pupils”.

“I spent many years working with vulnerable young people. Having an educational centre that can support these young people with their individual needs will have a positive impact on the young person and their families. When these needs are not met, it can lead to negative outcomes in later life such as drug/ alcohol use, relationship breakdowns, homelessness, social isolation etc. Addressing their needs and early intervention could have a significant positive impact on their future lives”.

“This is a very positive and progressive proposal to meet the currently challenges we face in supporting young people with ASD. The plan builds upon the existing well founded and developed knowledge, skills and expertise with the LEA. Formalising the work the school has done with Pontio would seem both progressive and positive. Several young people and their families have commented to myself and colleagues about how this approach is both supportive and inclusive”.

4.45 Estyn Response

4.46 The full response from Estyn can be found in the accompanying Consultation Responses. In summary, the response concludes: *“It is Estyn’s view that the proposal to establish a new additional learning provision for secondary age pupils across Conwy with autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties at Ysgol Aberconwy school is likely to have a positive impact on the standard of education provision in the area.”*

4.47 While the overall response from Estyn was positive, they did raise the following for further comment and consideration:

4.48 **Welsh Medium Provision**

4.49 *“However, the proposal does not include a timeframe to ensure equality for Welsh first language pupils with autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties. In addition, the proposal makes no reference to ensuring that any staff at the centre can speak and work through the medium of Welsh. The proposer does not state whether the proposal will support the targets set out in the Council’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan”.*

3.28 The Local Authority is not yet able to set specific time frames in respect of further developing ASD provision, however, it has been identified as a strategic priority, and will continue to be worked on over the course of the following year. Planning will be driven and determined by ongoing review and evaluation of need in accordance with the draft ALN code and the authority’s duty to keep additional learning provision (ALP) under review, including an emphasis on Welsh Medium ALP. Time scales therefore, will be responsive to identification of need, equitable provision, rigorous review of historical data and projected need. The initial period following the formal opening of the provision at Ysgol Aberconwy will enable the authority to consider its impact and work on and learn from areas of development to help inform the introduction/development of Welsh Medium provision. It also gives sufficient time to informally consult with Conwy’s Welsh Medium Secondary Schools in respect of accommodation, inclusion and curricular opportunities. In the interim, enhanced support is being offered for identified learners within their home schools and their educational progress, wellbeing and social inclusion being monitored closely with both themselves and their families.

3.29 As described above, all posts associated with the provision have been advertised as Welsh Desirable/Essential, and the provision will be subject to the school’s underlying principles and targets in respect of the development of areas of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh. All staff will also be supported and encouraged in the development of their Welsh language skills in line with the authority’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

3.30 **Outcomes, Provision, Leadership and Management**

3.31 *“The proposer has not considered sufficiently the impact of the proposals on the quality of outcomes, provision and leadership and management at Ysgol Aberconwy or whether the proposal could have an impact on any of the other schools likely to be affected”.*

3.32 The Local Authority continues to consider that the impact of opening new additional learning provision within a mainstream school will only have a positive impact on outcomes for learners, the authority’s wider offer of provision, and the leadership and management at Ysgol Aberconwy. There has been no identified negative impact on these areas in other Conwy schools hosting additional learning provision; however, this is something that the authority will now consider in greater detail in its review of all additional learning provision, in order to ensure that greater detail in respect of the impact on outcomes and leadership and management can be reported on regularly.

3.33 **Building Adaptations**

3.34 *“The proposer has not included details of any adaptations to the current building at Ysgol Aberconwy that may be required. It is not clear how the proposer will ensure that any disruption to current learners is minimised”.*

3.35 Existing rooms within the school building have been identified which were not being used as classrooms due to capacity within pupil numbers. Therefore, no adaptations to the building are required and there will be no disruption to current learners.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 There are no equality implications associated with the proposal and the provision will be fully accessible to all identified protected groups. As described above, fully Welsh Medium provision is also being considered simultaneously for development and in the interim, alternative enhanced support in place.

5. Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

- 5.11 The consultation responses have all been in favour of proceeding with the formal opening of the proposed provision.

5.2 Recommendations

- 5.21 The recommendation following this period of statutory consultation is to proceed with the proposal to formally open new additional learning provision in Ysgol Aberconwy for secondary age learners with autism and associated neurodevelopmental difficulties is agreed.

- 5.22 In accordance with the School Organisation Code:

- The Local Authority will publish the proposal by way of a statutory notice.
- The statutory notice will be published on 22nd February 2021 providing a 28 day notice period for objections.
- The statutory notice will be published on a school day and with 15 school days (not including the day of publication) within this notice period.
- The Objection Period will end on 22nd March 2021 and an Objections Report produced and shared with the Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.