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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-722  
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Thank you for your letter of 21 December enclosing further correspondence from Ms Nicola Butterfield. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Core Welsh Government funding provided through the local government settlement is unhyposhated. An important principle of the settlement is that each authority decides how it spends these resources in conjunction with locally raised income to take account of local circumstances. All local councils are independent statutory authorities and are accountable to their communities for the decisions they make.

Local authority (LA) leaders and councillors are democratically elected by their communities to ensure their needs are appropriately represented and provided for. They are accountable for their actions and they have a responsibility to justify to their communities the decisions they make in respect of their financial resources and the services they provide. Pressures on budgets mean it is more important than ever that authorities engage with local people in making decisions about how local resources are raised, prioritised and spent. With encouragement from the Welsh Government, LAs are increasingly undertaking public consultation exercises about the provision of services.

Further information about expenditure on SEN provision in Wales can be found on the Welsh Government website at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/localgov2012/120621/?lang=en>

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Table 1 shows that in terms of budgeted expenditure on SEN provision, Neath Port Talbot had the largest percentage increase (8.6%) of LAs in Wales from 2015/16 to 2016/17.

Information on delegated school budgets in Wales including the notional SEN budget for each school can be found on the StatsWales Wales website at:

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=5488>

In light of the latest information received from the Petitioner, I have provided some specific information on what the Welsh Government is doing with regards to autism. Each LA has been provided with £40k each year for autism as part of their annual revenue support grant with LAs having discretion on how they allocate these funds.

In November 2016 we published the refreshed Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan, accompanied by a delivery plan to monitor implementation. The refreshed action plan makes a commitment to deliver a national all-age integrated autism service for Wales, backed by £6m funding. Regional Partnership Boards are responsible for the roll out of the new service which commenced in April 2016; delivery will be completed in all regions by 2019. The service creates a single point of entry across health and LAs and includes diagnostic assessment for adults and community teams to provide additional support including assistance for children with autism and their families. Roll out for Western Bay region which includes Neath Port Talbot is scheduled to commence in April 2017.

To monitor delivery of the refreshed action plan we are establishing an Implementation Advisory Group, the first meeting is planned for March and we are establishing an independent evaluation of the integrated service. We are also introducing waiting time targets of 26 weeks for both children and adults' assessment services and we will be collecting this information from March. We will produce an annual report on the delivery of the refreshed action plan each year.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill targets all learners who have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for additional learning provision. It does not differentiate between different types of additional learning need because it seeks to ensure that all needs are met equitably and comprehensively.



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