**Position Statement**

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**Education**

Access to Education is crucial for people learning disabilities to enable us to live equal and meaningful lives. Education needs to be inclusive from early years right throughout adulthood. If it isn’t, then people with learning disabilities are likely to fall behind their non learning disabled peers.

Education needs to be accessible, person centred and we need to have the same opportunities as everyone else. This is critical if we are to play our part as active and equal citizens in Welsh society and meet our own well being aspirations, as outlined in key Welsh government legislation.

People with learning disabilities experience many barriers within the education system. These are both academic and social. Both can lead to social isolation and a lack of opportunity.

Our members feel we have little or no choice about the education we receive. We might have to go somewhere different away our friends. We do not always get the right support we need. These issues make it difficult for us to feel a sense of belonging and to build confidence and lifelong friendships.

Attitudinal barriers are a big problem for us too. When people treat us badly because of our learning disability, it has a bad effect on our mental wellbeing.

Negative attitudes about learning disability in education cause us to have a low sense of self-worth and to feel anxious. These feelings make it especially difficult for us to balance with our learning experience.

**We have lots of ideas about how education could be a better experience for us going forward:**

We call on Welsh Government and education providers to empower us to make our own choices about the education we receive, and to provide us with the support we need to reach our goals and strive for our aspirations.

We call on Welsh Government and education providers to invite self-advocacy ambassadors with learning disabilities to give presentations in schools. We believe this would help to challenge negative stereotype thinking.

We call on Welsh Government and education providers to provide opportunities for self-advocacy ambassadors with learning disabilities to work on a one-to-one basis with students with learning disabilities in education, to supporting them and nurture their confidence.

We call on Welsh Government and education providers to use Forum Theatre presentations in schools, to help nurture positive attitudes about learning disabilities from an early age.

We call on Welsh Government and education providers to support the training of Ambassadors with learning disabilities across Wales, and to equip them with the skills and experiences to be effective role models for students.

**NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!**

Simon Richards, Chair of the All Wales People First, National Council.

In consultation with the All Wales People National Council.

