

**Aelodau o'r Senedd dros /
Members of the Senedd for**

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Afan Ogwr Rhondda

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

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Dyddiad | Date: 27/07/2026

Pwnc | Subject: ALN Funding

Dear Councillor Crimmings,

Thank you for your letter regarding Additional Learning Needs funding and the Welsh Government's Supplementary Budget.

We share your concern about the growing pressures facing ALN services and fully recognise the challenges experienced by local authorities, schools, families and learners across Wales. We also acknowledge the significant financial commitment Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has made in recent years to invest an additional £18.5 million in ALN services. That decision itself demonstrates that councils, like governments, must make difficult choices between competing priorities. The Welsh Government faces precisely the same challenge at a national level.

We believe therefore it is important to set out the wider context surrounding the Supplementary Budget and the decisions taken in the Senedd.

The consequentials arising from the UK Government's decision to address SEND deficits in England were not ring-fenced for Additional Learning Needs provision in Wales. As has always been the case under devolution, decisions surrounding the allocation of consequential funding are matters for the Welsh Government, which must balance competing pressures across all public services.

Indeed, this is the same action taken, in principle and in practice, by the previous Welsh Labour administration on multiple occasions, most notably recently during the Budget setting process for 2026-27 last Autumn. As you may recall, then Finance Minister Mark Drakeford allocated only £39 million out of £339 million allocated to Wales as a result of education consequential spend in England, on education spending in Wales.

At a time when NHS services are facing significant in-year financial pressures, with health spending pressures exceeding £300 million, the new Plaid Cymru Welsh Government chose to allocate a

substantial proportion of the available funding towards reducing waiting lists and supporting frontline health services. Additional funding was also directed towards commitments that will benefit children and families across Wales, including free school meals and expanded childcare provision.

These proposals built on policies and spending decisions included in the latest annual budget set by the previous Welsh Labour administration, as well as set out in Welsh Labour's 2026 Senedd manifesto, as they were for many political parties.

We recognise that local government leaders, education stakeholders and representative organisations have called for additional investment in ALN provision. Those concerns are genuine and reflect the pressures being experienced in communities across Wales. However, the question before the Welsh Government was not whether ALN requires further investment, but how best to deploy finite resources across a range of urgent priorities, including unprecedented NHS pressures. Responsible government requires difficult choices, and Ministers sought to address both challenges through the package of measures contained within the Supplementary Budget.

The Welsh Government therefore also recognised the urgent challenges facing ALN services. During negotiations on the Supplementary Budget, Ministers placed a proposal worth £120 million on the table to support the development of a more sustainable ALN system and address some of the pressures facing local authorities. This represented a substantial commitment within a very challenging financial settlement.

Regrettably, that proposal was rejected when Welsh Labour Members of the Senedd voted with Reform UK and the Welsh Conservatives, against all measures included within this progressive Supplementary Budget. In doing so, Labour Members of the Senedd representing Rhondda Cynon Taf chose to vote against a package that would have delivered:

- £145 million to reduce NHS waiting lists;
- £120 million to support children and young people with additional learning needs;
- £55 million to expand funded childcare; and
- £15 million to extend free school meals to secondary pupils most in need.

As a result of the Supplementary Budget failing to secure Senedd approval, those funding proposals cannot now proceed as proposed. It is therefore difficult to reconcile Welsh Labour's current calls for additional ALN funding with their decision to oppose a budget package that contained a significant funding offer for exactly that purpose.

We are particularly disappointed given that discussions between the Welsh Government and Labour had appeared to be constructive. Indeed, we understand that it was Welsh Labour representatives who initially proposed ALN funding over a longer period before subsequently changing their position. It appears that political considerations ultimately took precedence over securing additional support for learners, families and schools.

This course of action contrasts completely with the responsible and mature approach taken by Plaid Cymru in Opposition before the election, where we worked constructively with the then Welsh Labour administration to deliver much-needed additional funding for local government in 2026-27 – an extra £112.8m. As well as an additional £180 million for the health and social care budget.

We reject any suggestion that the Welsh Government has failed to recognise the seriousness of the ALN challenge. The Cabinet Minister for Education had already begun work on a longer-term strategic approach to strengthening ALN provision across Wales, working alongside local government and key stakeholders. While the defeat of the Supplementary Budget has prevented progress on the funding package that had been proposed, that work will continue as preparations begin for the 2027-28 Budget.

Following the election in May, the people of Wales voted for a new government with a clear mandate to deliver on its priorities. While we recognise that opposition parties have an important role to play in scrutinising government decisions, we are disappointed that Welsh Labour chose not to work constructively to support a Supplementary Budget that would have delivered additional investment for NHS waiting lists, ALN provision, childcare and free school meals.

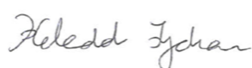
Nonetheless, we remain committed to working constructively with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and all local authorities across Wales to secure sustainable improvements for learners with additional learning needs. We hope that all parties represented in the Senedd will engage in that work in good faith and support future opportunities to strengthen ALN provision.

As Senedd Members, we will continue to engage with Ministers regarding future ALN funding and the development of a sustainable long-term funding model. We will continue to advocate for Rhondda Cynon Taf learners and schools as part of those discussions.

The challenges facing ALN services are real and urgent. Learners, families, schools and councils deserve serious solutions and long-term investment. We will continue to make that case as preparations begin for the 2027-28 Welsh Budget.

We trust this clarifies our position.

Yours sincerely / Yn gywir,



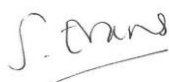
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