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**Exclusion from School: compounding or tackling inequality?**

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**Introduction**

Disciplinary exclusion from school is a key feature of education in the UK but also one which has given rise to increasing concerns in recent years. Exclusion from school is likely to have a detrimental impact on a child's life chances, dislocating them from their peer group, depriving them of access to the mainstream curriculum and exposing them to serious risks of under-achievement, long term unemployment and poverty. The problems created by the use of disciplinary exclusion have been clearly identified (Parsons, 2009; McCluskey, 2008; Munn and Lloyd, 2005) and its disproportionate use in relation to particular social groups has also been noted.

This paper reflects on findings from a recent study which looked at disciplinary exclusion (expulsion) from school in Wales. The study involved analysis of administrative data, key informant interviews, a survey of local authority staff across the 22 local authorities, and case studies of 'good practice' in nine alternative education settings across the country. The findings are considered in the context of known outcomes for children and young people who experience exclusion from school in the UK but also within the context of Wales as a recently devolved nation with an explicit commitment to children's rights. The analysis addresses the question of whether and to what extent, this process of exclusion compounds or tackles inequalities.

The paper firstly outlines briefly the research undertaken and contextualizes its aims and purpose within the current political and policy landscape of Wales. The methods of the study are then outlined before the draft findings are detailed, examining the issues around exclusion processes and education provision outside the school setting . Finally, some conclusions are offered along with a suggested way forward.

Key words: Exclusion; children's rights, educational inequality.

**Context of the research**

In 2011 the Welsh Government commissioned a research team from the University of Edinburgh to examine the process of exclusion from school in Wales and the delivery, planning and commissioning of education provision for children and young people educated outside the school setting. The research team was also asked to make recommendations for policy development. The research followed from issues and recommendations in the National Behaviour and Attendance Review (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008), the Review of Education Other Than At School (Welsh Assembly Government 2011) and the Behaving and Attending Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government 2011). A number of critical issues emerged from these reports as well as from recent reports from the national school inspectorate (Estyn, 2011, 2012) and voluntary organisations in Wales (Butler 2011). These issues included:

- Variation between local authorities in implementing Government guidance on school exclusion
- Significant variation between schools in the policy and practice of managing actual and potential exclusions
- Evidence of unlawful exclusion from school
- Some educational provision not being properly monitored
- Some out of school pupils not receiving an appropriate education
- Concern about the disproportionate exclusion rates for children with additional learning needs

- Concerns relating to safeguarding, child protection, behaviour management, and use of physical restraint
- Variation between authorities in the quality of the curriculum and behaviour management approaches in out of school educational provision
- Concern over the lack of reintegration back into schools after exclusion and from education out of school.

These reports form an important part of the wider context for this study, highlighting a number of weaknesses in the system.

The relationship between school exclusion and poverty is a particular issue for Wales, which has the highest proportion of children in the UK living in severe poverty (National Assembly for Wales, 2011). Concerns with exclusion are also part of wider current debate about attainment and achievement. Students excluded from school are already more likely to be disadvantaged, and as noted above, the experience of exclusion further reduces their life chances. Additional learning needs may be further compounded by missing significant periods of education through exclusion. Official statistics across the UK show that the achievement levels of excluded students are much lower than those of other students, and that they are more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system both as victims and offenders. They are less likely to go on to further or higher education and more likely to have poor or irregular employment as adults (McAra and McVie 2010). There is therefore strong impetus for an examination of the role of school exclusion in addressing inequality for children and young people.

**The political and policy background to the research**

Following a referendum in 1997, Wales established its National Assembly, and in 2006 gained law making powers. A further referendum in 2011 means that Government can now legislate without the need to consult with the UK Parliament. The country itself has a largely agricultural economy and a population of around three million people. There are two official languages; Welsh and English, with around 20% Welsh speakers. In socio-economic terms it has the highest proportion of UK children living in severe poverty; a higher proportion of 25-64 year olds with low or no

qualifications than both the OECD average and the UK overall; its mean scores for both reading and mathematics for 15 year olds are below the OECD average, and it has a higher proportion than the OECD average of young people not in education, employment or training (National Assembly for Wales, 2011). It therefore faces some significant challenges in economically difficult times.

Its political priorities are shaped by a Labour Government, led by First Minister, Carwyn Jones. He is a member of Amnesty International, Unison, Unite and the Fabian Society. He has been a Labour Party member since 1987 and played an active role in the 'Yes for Wales' campaign to extend the law-making powers of the National Assembly for Wales. He is a fluent Welsh speaker. The Government has a strong commitment to the principles of social justice, sustainability and inclusivity, and to tackling the root causes of social and economic disadvantage. There is a strong policy direction within education that emphasises social inclusion and an equally strong emphasis on the need to raise educational achievement and attainment for all children and young people in Wales.

The Welsh Minister for Education recently emphasized the need for a renewed focus within education that seeks to improve outcomes for all children in maths, reading and science, following the publication of PISA test scores in 2009 (Andrews 2011). Improving the attainment of children from poorer backgrounds, who are more likely to be excluded from school, was identified as a necessary measure to improve results overall. The issue of educational underachievement is equally significant for students educated other than in mainstream school. Recent attempts to improve alternative provision in England (Taylor, 2012), have drawn attention to the poor academic outcomes of such students, noting again that they are particularly likely to be identified as having special educational needs. Taylor also suggested that children living in rural areas might be particularly at risk of under-achievement, with a shortage of appropriate alternatives to mainstream schooling. These issues are all important considerations in a largely rural country.

The national Government has introduced a number of measures in a relatively short period of time in order to address these twin concerns of exclusion and under-achievement. The Guidance on Inclusion and Pupil Support (National Assembly for Wales, 2006), for example, underlines the

importance of adapting the child's learning environment to meet their needs, rather than expecting all children to fit into a rigid and uniform system. The Circular stated:

> Inclusion of pupils involves much more than the placement of a child or young person in a mainstream or a special school. It requires an inclusive curriculum and measures to improve the awareness of teaching and other staff of inclusive learning and equality issues (National Assembly for Wales, 2006, para 2.1, p.2).

The need for close interaction between learning and behaviour support policies is emphasized, and it is stated that a school's behaviour and attendance policy should be seen as an integral part of its curriculum.

In terms of a focus on children's rights, the Welsh Government has fully adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the first UK government to enshrine the Convention in its own legislation. The latter's emphasis on equality of opportunity, the right of children and young people to receive high quality education, the right to be involved in all decisions about their lives, the expectation that adults must protect the rights of children where they are unable to do so on their own behalf; - these are all issues very pertinent to school exclusion, reintegration and placement in education other than at school. The report *How Fair is Wales?* (EHRC, 2011) argued that inter-sectional analysis was essential in order to understand the complexity of inequalities, so that, for example, the socio-economic dimensions of disability and gender should be investigated, rather than considering these as binary categories. Such analysis is clearly important in relation to school exclusion where disproportionality occurs in relation to a number of dimensions including social disadvantage, learning needs and gender. This view was supported by a recent report from the Children's Commissioner for England (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012).

The study was undertaken then in a context of recent national major political change and continuing concerns within education about the aims, processes and outcomes of disciplinary exclusion from school.

**Research aims and methods**

The research had three major aims: firstly, to undertake an evaluation of the exclusion process; secondly, to undertake an evaluation of the delivery, planning and commissioning of education provision for children and young people educated outside of the school setting and thirdly, to make recommendations for policy development.

There were four main strands within the research: statistical and policy analysis, interviews with key stakeholders, survey of local authority representatives, interviews with young people, their families and a range of professionals working in education other than at school[1] ('EOTAS').

*Policy and statistical analysis*

Policy documents relevant to the process of exclusion and EOTAS were analysed. The statistical analysis examined publicly available national data on additional learning needs, exclusions, provision made for pupils on the 16th day after exclusions and EOTAS, drawing on the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). Some comparisons were able to be drawn with policy and practice relating to patterns of exclusion and alternative provision in England, Scotland and beyond.

*Interviews with key stakeholders*

To provide context and an indication of current issues, face-to-face individual interviews took place with 16 key stakeholders with a national and/or specific and relevant perspective, including, for example, members of the school inspectorate, Welsh Government and voluntary organisations.

*Survey of local authority representatives*

A telephone survey was conducted with 26 representatives from 21 of the 22 local authorities[2]. The survey questions were sent out in advance by email to the officer with responsibility for exclusion and alternative provision in each local authority. As expected, roles and responsibilities differed across local authorities and this strand of the research often involved repeated contacts

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[1] Education provided outside school is often called 'EOTAS'; Education Other Than at School ,in Wales and England
[2] Representatives from one local authority did not respond to requests to participate

and occasionally involved two separate interviews. Face to face interviews were conducted with nine local authority respondents in order to explore some issues in greater depth.

*Interviews with children, young people, their families and professionals*

The research team visited eight examples of EOTAS provision located in authorities across Wales, with additional telephone interviews with families in one further local authority. A ninth case study focused on the role of youth offending services in relation to education. The interviews gathered a range of views in settings considered to have good and/or promising practice in offering education of high quality as described above. Wales is a small but very diverse country and provision itself was equally diverse. The settings selected therefore aimed to reflect a range of dimensions including differences relating to social advantage or disadvantage, rural or urban location and provision targeted at specific groups (for example, young parents and young people with mental health issues). Fifteen parents/grandparents were interviewed, twelve face to face and three by telephone. In addition one parent who was unable to meet the research team wrote a letter to express her very positive views about the provision for her child. We interviewed 48 children and young people individually, in pairs or in small groups. Information on the different settings is given in the table below.

Table 1:     Interviews with children, families and professionals in EOTAS

| EOTAS | Pseudonym | Provision | Number of students | Age range | Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Carn Menyn | 14-19 Network | 80-100 | 14-17 years | Individualised education packages aiming to re-engage young people in education and training |
| 2 | Cadair Idris | Pupil referral unit | 48 | Primary | Re-integration into mainstream where possible |
| 3 | Yr Wyddfa | Pupil referral unit | 66 in 2011/12 in 6/7week blocks | 14-16 years | Planned 'rapid' reintegration to mainstream school |
| 4 | Carnedd | Pupil referral unit | Up to 85 in different centres | 14-16 years | Varies according to identified needs, reintegration aimed for |
| 5 | Cwm silyn | Pupil referral unit | 30 | 15-16 years | Preparation for college and/or work |
| 6 | Hirnant | Charity run Education centres | up to 75 in 7 different centres | 14-16 years | Individualised learning through charity's curriculum; personal and social support for young people / families |
| 7 | Cwm Coch | Pupil referral unit | 34 | 15-16 years | Offers opportunities to gain |

| | | | | | qualifications for young people unlikely to return to mainstream |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Pen y fan | Individual educational pathways | up to 110 | 14-16 years | Academic & workplace learning, and personal support for disengaged or excluded students. |

Interviews in EOTAS took place with a range of service users and practitioners including children and young people, their parents/carers, education practitioners and other professionals such as educational psychologists, social services staff, youth offending team members and voluntary sector practitioners. Questions for children, young people and families focused on their direct experience of the exclusion process; their experience of education outside the school setting; the curriculum; discipline and sanctions used; their views of the support offered; opportunities for expressing their opinions; and the availability of advocacy services.

One important aim of this aspect of the research was to consider how the different settings identified as examples of 'good practice' were experienced by the young people and their families. In the light of the notion of good practice, we asked what participants thought was 'good' about that particular EOTAS provision, as well as for any criticisms of practice. These interviews were conducted informally, drawing on a topic guide used flexibly to encourage the flow of conversation and to enable participants to initiate discussion of areas of concern to them. Interviews were recorded with the consent of those taking part and guarantees were made of anonymity. Consideration was given throughout to whether it would be feasible and effective for approaches used in one setting to be adopted in another setting.

*Participants in the research*

Overall, 156 people were involved in the formal interviews in this project. The detail on this is outlined below.

Table 2: Participants in the research

| Participants in the Research | |
|---|---|
| Key stakeholders | 16 |
| Local authority personnel | 26 |
| Children and young people | 48 |
| Parents/carers | 15 |

| Professionals working with children and young people | 51 |
| --- | --- |
| Total | 156 |

**Draft Findings**

The findings address two separate but related questions, focusing firstly on the exclusion process and secondly, on provision for young people placed in EOTAS provision (Education Other Than At School), often, but not always, because they have been excluded from school. The findings on exclusion are examined first below, followed by a discussion of the findings on EOTAS, but it is important to recognize that the two issues of exclusion and EOTAS are inextricably linked in policy and practice; the existence of EOTAS is largely due to exclusion from school, either formal disciplinary exclusion, or informal exclusion where groups such as pregnant young women are not considered suitable for school education.

*Draft Findings: Exclusion*

The findings from the study indicate some positive signs of change; rates of permanent exclusion have decreased, re-integration rates are improving, unlawful exclusion is under scrutiny, the curriculum in EOTAS is increasingly focused on opportunities for certification and success, and students and their families are generally very positive about their experience in EOTAS. However, there are still some significant areas of concern. There was found to be continued inconsistency in the application of national Government guidance on exclusion (Welsh Assembly Government 2004), giving rise to key issues about equity in outcomes for children and young people in terms of the following. These inconsistencies were evident in the following areas: variable patterns of exclusion across the country; the reasons given by schools for exclusion; the education and support provided during exclusion; use of multiple fixed term exclusion to make a case for permanent exclusion; the use of unlawful exclusion; the appeals process; re-integration rates and the use of a new process known as 'managed moves' where students with behaviour problems move school to avoid an exclusion. Parents we spoke to often felt that the exclusion process was unclear, complex and unfair. More detail on these findings is available at XXX.

Each of these findings can be brought to bear on the question of whether and to what extent exclusion from school compounds or tackles inequality. Particular attention, however, may be given to three key findings: the changing rates of different types of exclusion, the use of unlawful exclusion, and the continuing over-representation of certain groups of students in the exclusion statistics.

*The changing rates of different kinds of exclusion*

The rates of permanent exclusion (that is, where students were formally barred permanently from returning to their school following exclusion) are decreasing but the rate of shorter term exclusions has been increasing over time. In 2010-11, there were 158 permanent exclusions from primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units[3] in Wales, a decrease of 27 from 2009/10 (Welsh Government 2012b). However the number of permanent exclusions of girls increased from 32 in 2009/10 to 42 in 2010/11. There were 1,480 fixed term exclusions of six days or more, which represents a rate of 3.7 per thousand students and was a reduction overall on the previous year. There were 16,818 fixed term exclusions of five days or fewer, an increase of 82 from 2009/10. This represents a rate of 42.3 per 1000 students. It seems possible then that the decrease in permanent exclusion rates and the increase in short term exclusion rates are related and if so, would be a cause for concern. The data as currently gathered, did not allow for any analysis at the student level so it was not possible to say whether the short term exclusions were associated with a large number of students excluded once or a smaller number of students excluded repeatedly. This lack of data and lack of clarity in the data is seen as an important concern.

**Figure 1: Permanent exclusion in Wales, at two-year intervals, 2001-02 to 2010-11, rate per thousand pupils**

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[3] Pupil referral units (PRUs) provide education for students deemed unsuitable for education in mainstream or special schools, often because of behavioural difficulties. A PRU is not a mainstream school or special school, but is legally both a type of school and education otherwise than at school (EOTAS).
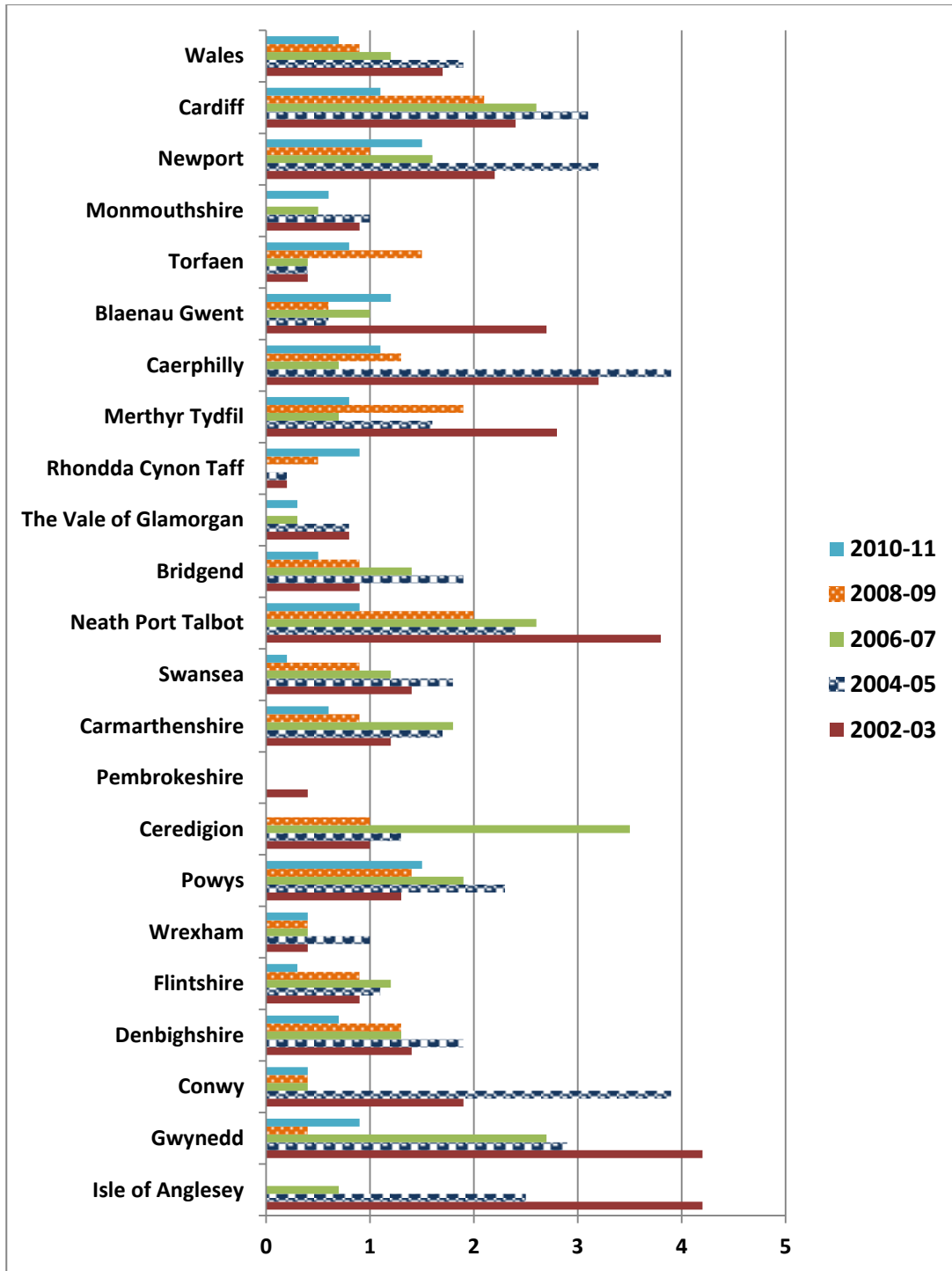
Table 3: Permanent and fixed term exclusion by local authority, 2010-11, rate per thousand pupils, within authority

|  | Permanent | 6 days or more | 5 days or fewer |
|---|---|---|---|
| Isle of Anglesey | 0 | 15.9 | 38 |
| Gwynedd | 0.9 | 1.9 | 25.8 |
| Conwy | 0.4 | 1.9 | 36.4 |
| Denbighshire | 0.7 | 0.9 | 53.2 |
| Flintshire | 0.3 | 7.5 | 50 |
| Wrexham | 0.4 | 16.8 | 147.7 |
| Powys | 1.5 | 3.2 | 43.8 |
| Ceredigion | NA | 9.5 | 27.9 |
| Pembrokeshire | NA | 0.9 | 53 |
| Carmarthenshire | 0.6 | 1.1 | 30.2 |
| Swansea | 0.2 | 6.9 | 63.4 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 0.9 | 6.6 | 50.5 |
| Bridgend | 0.5 | 3.6 | 59.3 |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 0.3 | 2.9 | 16.1 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 0.9 | 4.7 | 71.1 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0.8 | 11.7 | 94.9 |
| Caerphilly | 1.1 | 7.9 | 87 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 1.2 | 7.2 | 81.8 |
| Torfaen | 0.8 | 6.7 | 90.8 |
| Monmouthshire | 0.6 | 2.3 | 48.6 |
| Newport | 1.5 | 3.8 | 71.2 |
| Cardiff | 1.1 | 11.5 | 145 |
| **Wales** | **0.7** | **6** | **67.7** |

*Unlawful exclusion*

It was also clear that unlawful exclusion was still happening, despite Government efforts to reduce this. Nearly all local authority staff we interviewed acknowledged that illegal exclusion continued to some extent but most felt that this situation was improving substantially, helped by closer collaboration between local authority and schools and greater understanding in schools of relevant legislation and guidance. Most local authority staff felt that illegal exclusion could arise in different ways. It could relate to a head teacher's earnest wish to avoid a learner having an exclusion on their record. On the other hand, most noted that illegal exclusion also arose when a head teacher did not wish to have to go through the formal process of exclusion and sought an easier route, or when they did not want to admit that they had failed with a particular learner.

The views of most key stakeholders were more critical than local authority staff on this issue, with numerous examples offered of different ways in which schools continued to permit unlawful exclusion.  These included asking a parent to collect their child from school during school hours, because s/he was unsettled, needed to 'cool down' or 'could only cope with half a day' and/or suggesting that another day or two at home might be helpful.  It was felt that families did not always understand when an exclusion was unlawful.  For example, schools sometimes cited health and safety regulations as the reason for an exclusion and families were unlikely to challenge this explanation. In addition, parents in the research talked about times when they had been told that unless their child was moved, the school would have to exclude.  One commented: 'You don't want an exclusion on his school record'.  Parents were not always sure whether an exclusion had been official, but were always keen for their child to avoid an exclusion, knowing that this would have an adverse impact on finding another mainstream school prepared to take their child.

A recent Green Paper (Welsh Government, 2012e, p.20) noted that young people involved with the Youth Offending System were particularly likely to be unofficially excluded from school. The issue of internal, hidden exclusion in school was noted by a few key stakeholders.  It was felt that there were instances where 'isolation rooms' were being used in ways that compromised access to high quality education and that inappropriate use of restraint and physical intervention could also be taking place in these rooms.  Although the number of cases of unlawful is difficult to quantify, it is concerning that such exclusion is happening at all because it also denies the student and their family their legitimate right of appeal against exclusion.

*Over-representation of some groups of students in the exclusion statistics*
The inequitable nature of exclusion process is most starkly visible, perhaps, when the patterns of exclusion and disproportionality are examined together. Overall, in the UK (Riddell and McCluskey 2012, Parsons 2009), the sanction of exclusion is applied disproportionately to children and young people who have the following characteristics:
- Male
- Living in poverty

- Age 13-15 years

- Looked after by the local authority

- Have special educational needs/additional support needs

- Have family who have experienced more ill health, trauma and bereavement than the norm

- Of African-Caribbean origin

- School-aged mothers

- Have a low level of educational attainment

- Of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller heritage.

In Wales, the statistics indicated disproportionate exclusion of boys, students with additional learning needs, and in some aspects, students from ethnic minorities.  Black students had the highest rates of exclusion of five days or fewer though the numbers were small. There were three times more boys excluded from school than girls (though permanent exclusions of girls have increased, as noted earlier).  More than half of students excluded permanently, or for six days or more, and just under half of those excluded for five days or fewer, had identified additional learning needs.  Children with non-statemented special needs accounted for almost half of permanent exclusions and around 4% of fixed term exclusions.  Children with statements of special educational needs (about 3% of students in Wales), made up around 7% of permanent exclusions and 13% of fixed term exclusions.  The statistics also showed disproportionately high rates of fixed term exclusion from special schools in relation to mainstream schools.  Furthermore, there were also 1,003 exclusions from Pupil Referral Units in 2010/11. To date, the Welsh Government has not published data on exclusion that allows for examination of the relationship between exclusion and social disadvantage or other factors such as whether a child is 'looked after'. However, statistics on EOTAS do show that a considerable majority are entitled to free school meals; a common proxy measure of socio-economic disadvantage.

In view of these findings, it is interesting to look in more detail at the reasons given for exclusion by schools. From the table below, it can be seen that exclusion is rarely associated with serious incident or violence. The most common reason given for exclusion is 'defiance of staff'. This is also the case in England and Scotland where the equivalent terms are very similar: ' general or

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persistent disobedience' and 'persistent disruptive behaviour'.   The problem with such terms is that they are open to interpretation. In one sense it is easier for a school to deal with a serious incident of violence because there is less ambiguity; if a teacher has been assaulted and has a broken arm, the school leader would usually feel entirely confident about excluding the student involved.   But it is much more common for exclusion to follow on from a series of more minor incidents and infringements of the rules, often escalating in number rather than severity (McCluskey 2008).  These relatively minor reasons however, may mask serious and significant inequality in the way that schools respond to challenging behaviour, and in the ways they understand or indeed fail to understand the difficulties facing children already living with some kind of disadvantage.

Figure 2 Reasons given for exclusion, percentage, 2010-11
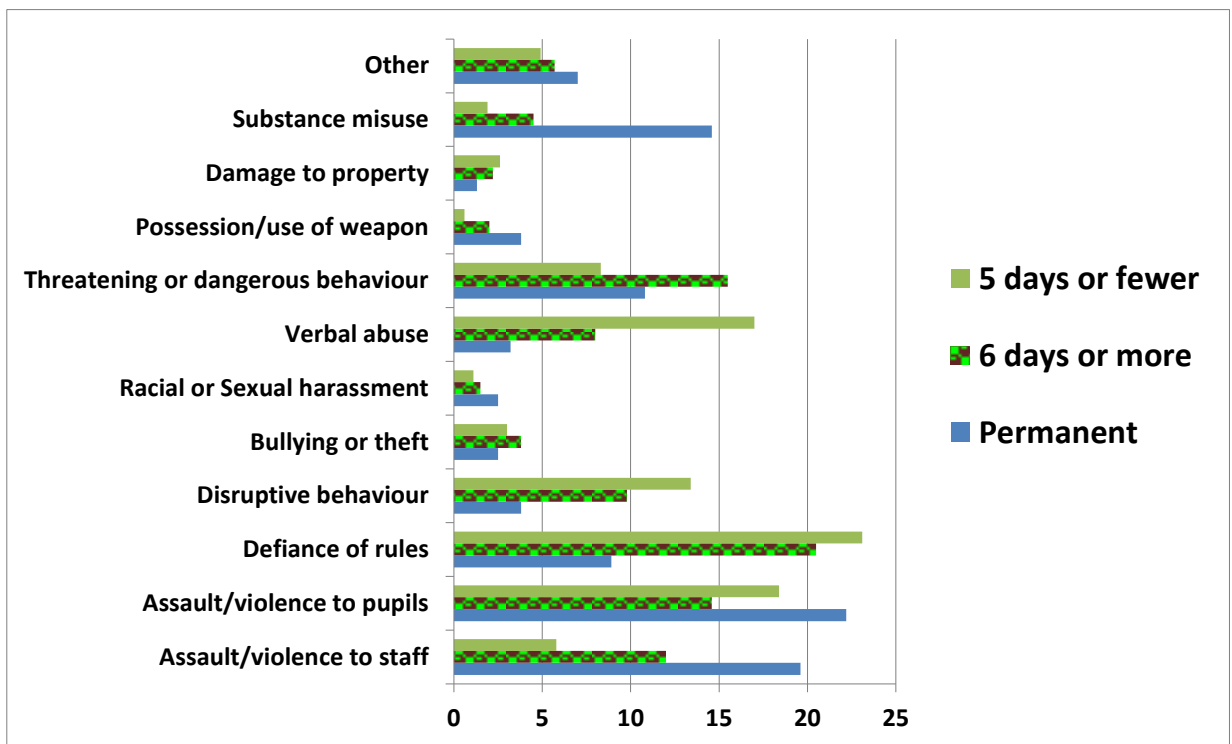


In summary then, it is clear that that the exclusion process in Wales raises serious questions about equity of outcomes for children and young people involved.  Some of the most troubled and troublesome young people in school eventually receive their education outside the school system,

in EOTAS. Often they will have been excluded, but sometimes they are referred to EOTAS before this happens. The delivery, planning and commissioning of the provision of EOTAS was the second major question of the research and is addressed below.

### *Draft Findings: EOTAS*

The findings overall reveal extensive variation, diversity and variability within EOTAS provision. The National Attendance and Behaviour Review (Welsh Assembly Government 2008) made a number of critical observations with particular reference to EOTAS, summarized in the introduction to this paper. The subsequent *Review of Education Otherwise Than at School and Action Plan* (Welsh Assembly Government 2011) made some key recommendations for improving standards in EOTAS The findings of our research identify areas where progress has been made in response to their recommendations but also confirm concerns expressed in these reports.

The most recent statistical release indicated:

- 2,577 students were recorded as being educated other than at school, with 1,026 of these receiving their main education outside of school

- The rate of students educated other than at school remains the same as 2010/11 (2.2 per 1,000 students)

- Just under 90 per cent of EOTAS students receiving their main education outside of school were recorded as having special educational needs

- Pupil referral units were the most frequently-used form of education provided to EOTAS students, accounting for almost 40 per cent of all enrolments (Welsh Government 2012).

Three quarters of students in EOTAS were boys and the largest number were 15 years old; nearly 70% were entitled to free school meals.

The overall range of provision catered variously for the following groups:

- Students of all ages primary and/or secondary

- Students with identified Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulties

- Excluded students

- KS3/4 students who are disaffected/disengaged from school

- Students who are 'vulnerable' or with mental health difficulties

- Students identified as 'school-phobic' or 'school refuser'

- Young women who are pregnant

- Young mothers.

In most local authorities there was some combination of 'Home' tuition which includes individual and group tuition, which despite the term, is not usually at home, but often in libraries or community centres and the use of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) which may be in one building or a range of buildings, for one age group or a range of ages. In addition, most local authorities organised individual alternative curriculum programmes which often involved work-based learning providers or voluntary organisations. Alongside this local authorities have what are called '14-19 networks' ( so called because they support students aged 14-19 years old) which often help plan support, work experience or college placements for disaffected or disengaged students in the later years of compulsory schooling.

However the picture is further complicated as a result of the different use of terminology within and between authorities, because of changes in registration of provision and because of varying practice in where and how young people are enrolled.  The term 'PRU', for example, may refer to a portfolio of provision in different places or alternatively to something much more like a small school in one building with a clearly identifiable population.  Confusingly, the term 'EOTAS' in some authorities was confusingly understood to be synonymous with 'home tuition'. It is difficult to establish from the statistics how many hours education are received by students being educated other than at school, as they may have multiple placements.  However interview data indicated that while some authorities had made significant progress in guaranteeing the legally required 25 hours per week, a majority were still working on this.  Some were still offering very limited hours, particularly of home/individual tuition which could be as little as 2 hours a day.

As noted earlier, most local authorities provide 'home' or 'individual' or 'group' tuition.  It is worth noting that different terms occur in different sets of official statistics and in different local authority

areas, and refer to a wide range of on-site and off-site provision. Increasingly, 'home', 'individual' or 'group' tuition is offered only to students in hospital, or who are ill at home or on advice of Community Adolescent Mental Health Services, rather than to students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Where 'individual tuition' is provided for excluded students, it is often offered only in a limited number of subjects and for fewer hours than the recommended 25 hours per week. The range of provision is shown in the table below.

Figure 3        Provision for students permanently excluded from school, percentage over time
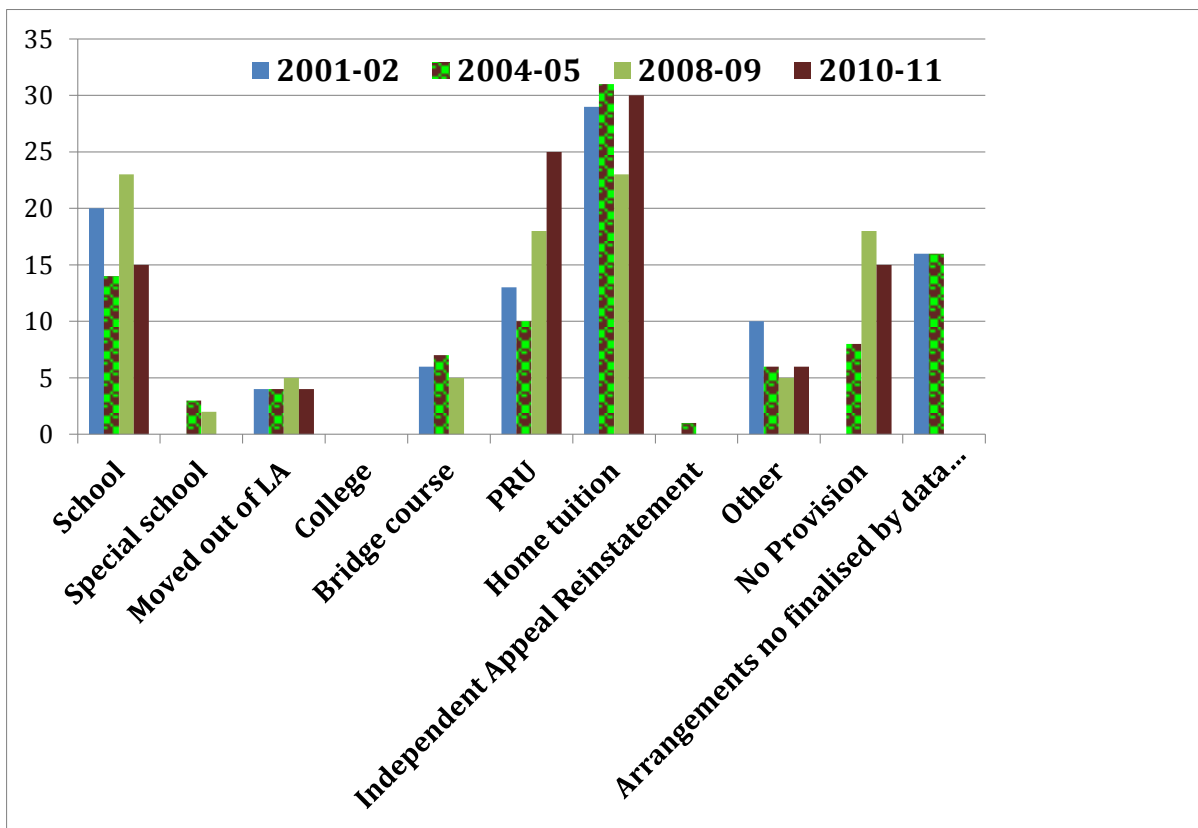


In summary, then it is clear, then, that EOTAS provision is very diverse in Wales. Within that, the range of PRU provision also varies significantly across and between local authorities, described variously by those we interviewed as both a strength and a weakness. In the best of practice, this diversity gave professionals the opportunities to provide flexible and imaginative education taking full account of the wishes and needs of the student and her/his family and clearly focused on

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progress and achievement. However in some provision, this variation led to inappropriate and poorly developed curricula, lack of emphasis on pastoral support, few opportunities for success, little focus on a return to mainstream school and in the most disturbing examples, included physical restraint and the use of isolation as punishment. It should be noted that most of the young people and families we spoke to were fulsome in their praise of the academic and pastoral experience within EOTAS and frequently compared this with previous experience, both in other EOTAS provision and with their earlier experience of mainstream schools.

**Conclusion**

This paper has examined the findings from a recent study of disciplinary exclusion in Wales, looking at both exclusion process itself and the education provided outside mainstream schooling. Overall, it seems that some progress is being made; rates of permanent exclusion have decreased, re-integration rates are improving, unlawful exclusion is under scrutiny, the curriculum in EOTAS is increasingly focused on opportunities for certification and success, and students and their families are generally very positive about their experience in EOTAS.  However, major concerns still remain. There was clear evidence in this research of wide variation across local authorities in the kinds of provision made for students facing exclusion. There continue to be disproportionately high rates of exclusion for certain groups including boys, children living in poverty and those with additional learning needs; and despite some significant progress, there are still very low levels of achievement overall for excluded young people.  These issues confirm that exclusion from school compounds inequality even when it seeks to address or tackle it.

The issue about excessively punitive behaviour management systems and the continuing use of physical restraint and forced isolation must also give serious cause for concern, especially in a context where there have been wider concerns about child abuse and the national inspectorate had recently been called upon to undertake an 'Investigation into the Handling and Management of Allegations of Professional Abuse and Arrangements for Safeguarding and Protecting Children' in one local authority (Estyn 2011).

It was noted earlier that the Welsh Minister for Education has been keen for a renewed focus on improving educational outcomes for children and on efforts to reduce exclusion from school, identified as a necessary part of improving results overall (Andrews 2011). This shows an understanding of the need for exclusion, inclusion and achievement to be considered in relationship to each other rather than in competition with each other. Wales has introduced a range of legislation, policies and national guidance in the short time since its devolution and perhaps it is inevitable that there will be a lack of coherence in this at times and that not all of it will be successfully embedded in practice as yet. The final recommendations from our research call for Welsh Government to continue to recognise the negative impact of exclusion from school on individual lives and on the lives of communities; to emphasise the use of exclusion from school as a sanction of last resort; and in the longer term move away from the use of exclusion as a disciplinary sanction altogether. If these recommendations are taken forward, and in a way that aligns with a respect for children's rights, we suggest that this could see Wales lead the way in the UK in terms of tackling a longstanding inequality in education.

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Appendix

## Table 2: Special educational needs and exclusions, 2010-11

| | Permanent exclusions | | Exclusions of 6 days or more | | Exclusions of 5 days or fewer | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | %[1] | Number | %[2] | Number | %[3] |
| **SEN no statement** | 74 | 46.8 | 586 | 40 | 6,383 | 38 |
| **SEN statement** | 11 | 7 | 195 | 13.2 | 1,766 | 10.5 |
| **No SEN** | 73 | 46.2 | 699 | 47.2 | 8,669 | 51.6 |
| **Total** | **158** | **100** | **1,480** | **100** | **16,818** | **100** |

Source:  Welsh Government, 2012b
1. Percentage of all permanently excluded
2. Percentage of all excluded for 6 or more days
3. Percentage of all excluded for 5 or fewer days

## Table 3: Gender and exclusions, 2010-11, rate per 1000

| Gender | Permanent exclusions | | Exclusions of 6 days or more | | Exclusions of 5 days or fewer | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Rate/1000 | Number | Rate/1000 | Number | Rate/1000 |
| **Boys** | 116 | 0.6 | 1,119 | 5.5 | 12,817 | 63.2 |
| **Girls** | 42 | 0.2 | 361 | 1.9 | 4,001 | 20.6 |
| **Total** | 158 | 0.4 | 1,480 | 3.7 | 16,818 | 42.3 |

Welsh Government, 2012b

## Table 4: Ethnicity and exclusions, 2010-11

| | Permanent exclusions | | Exclusions of 6 days or more | | Exclusions of 5 days or fewer | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Rate/1000 | Number | Rate/1000 | Number | Rate/1000 |
| **White** | 137 | 0.4 | 1,357 | 3.7 | 15,347 | 41.4 |
| **Mixed** | 7 | 0.9 | 38 | 4.7 | 411 | 51.2 |
| **Asian** | 6 | 0.8 | 12 | 1.6 | 124 | 16.4 |
| **Black** | 0 | 0 | 12 | 4.7 | 178 | 69.1 |
| **Total[1]** | 158 | 0.4 | 1,480 | 3.7 | 16,818 | 42.3 |

Source:  Welsh Government, 2012b
1. Note that 'Any Other' and 'Not Known' are not included due to low numbers