

Mrs Cathie White
Clerk to the Committee
Committee for Employment and Learning
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Our Ref: COR/188/14

May 2014

Dear Cathie,

At the meeting on 5 February 2014, the Employment and Learning Committee considered a Departmental response regarding transport barriers faced by people with learning disabilities entering further education. It was subsequently agreed that the Committee would write to the Department requesting a breakdown of the numbers of rurally based young people with learning difficulties experiencing transport related barriers to accessing further education, by council area and constituency.

Unfortunately the Department does not hold this specific information; although the Department has provided details of all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD), living in rural areas by council area (local government district), constituency and college. This information is attached at Appendix 1.

Students in the 16-18 brackets receive transport assistance to attend college. However this ceases at 19. Anecdotal evidence gathered from colleges as part of the review of transport arrangements for SLDD, indicates that the issue of assistance with transport has been raised by some prospective students.

However in the vast majority of cases, through a combination of support provided by colleges and other external statutory bodies such as Education and Library Boards and transport schemes like the Disability Action Transport scheme (formerly the Door-2-Door Transport scheme) and Rural Community Transport Partnerships, transport issues have been resolved and students have enrolled on provision. None of the colleges reported any students who chose not to enrol, or to withdraw from provision as a result of difficulties accessing college or securing suitable transport for travel to college.

The Department acknowledges that while the number of students raising the issue of transport is relatively low, as a comparison with the overall numbers of SLDD currently enrolled, this may be an issue which requires further investigation.

Consequently the Department is examining the level of existing transport arrangements for SLDD, to establish the extent of the problem and consider the way forward.

As indicated previously, the Department will continue to keep the Committee updated on this issue.

Yours sincerely

FIONA STANLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Appendix 1

Rurally-based Young Students (aged 16-25) with Disabilities By Local Government District - 2012/13

Local Government District	Age Groups		
	16-18	19-25	16-25
Antrim	16	20	36
Ards	17	11	28
Armagh	55	19	74
Ballymena	18	15	33
Ballymoney	19	10	29
Banbridge	19	11	30
Carrickfergus	*	*	*
Castlereagh	*	*	*
Coleraine	20	6	26
Cookstown	14	12	26
Craigavon	26	13	39
Derry	15	6	21
Down	73	28	101
Dungannon	11	10	21
Fermanagh	11	29	40
Larne	8	3	11
Limavady	22	7	29
Lisburn	28	12	40
Magherafelt	33	19	52
Moyle	5	5	10
Newry & Mourne	37	25	62
Newtownabbey	6	0	6
Omagh	15	17	32
Strabane	22	16	38
Total	495	298	793

Source: Further Educational Statistical Record

Notes: Information on disability refers to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (sldd). These students receive additional learning support and funding.

Rurally-based Young Students (aged 16-25) with Disabilities By Parliamentary Constituency - 2012/13

Parliamentary Constituency	Age Groups		
	16-18	19-25	16-25
East Antrim	9	7	16
East Londonderry	52	13	65
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	20	37	57
Foyle	*	*	*
Lagan Valley	23	12	35
Mid Ulster	49	33	82
Newry And Armagh	74	32	106
North Antrim	42	28	70
North Down	*	*	*
South Antrim	28	22	50
South Down	83	37	120
Strangford	35	20	55
Upper Bann	38	17	55
West Tyrone	37	33	70
Total	495	298	793

Source: Further Educational Statistical Record

Notes: Information on disability refers to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (sldd). These students receive additional learning support and funding.

* Cells with small values have been masked to protect confidentiality of the individuals concerned due to sensitive nature of the data.

On occasions a second row of data has had to been masked to avoid the initial masked cells being determined using the totals.

Rurally-based Young Students (aged 16-25) with Disabilities By NI FE College - 2012/13

FE College	Age Groups		
	16-18	19-25	16-25
Belfast Metropolitan	22	40	62
Northern Regional	105	62	167
South Eastern Regional	119	42	161
Southern Regional	136	66	202
South West	52	62	114
North West Regional	61	26	87
Total	495	298	793

Source: Further Educational Statistical Record

Notes: Information on disability refers to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (sldd). These students receive additional learning support and funding.