



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## ROUTES FOR LEARNING

Bringing benefits for learners,  
parents, carers and practitioners

### ELEANOR PHILLIPS

During her teacher training, Eleanor Phillips was not keen to do her placement at a special school in Swansea. Fast forward 20 years and she believes it was the best thing she ever did – she loves her job and adores spending time with fantastic children who make her smile every single day.

Her knowledge and expertise in the field of additional learning needs (ALN) means she was a perfect fit to help the Welsh Government in updating its **Routes for Learning** as part of the development of Curriculum for Wales. Here she explains the process and the benefits it will bring.



### WORKING CO-CONSTRUCTIVELY TO MAKE THE MATERIALS USER-FRIENDLY

The beauty of the updated Routes for Learning materials is that they were developed co-constructively with practitioners like myself, who work with children with additional learning needs every day and recognise how different all their needs are and what they can achieve as individuals.

In developing the updated Routes for Learning materials, I worked with others in the field to revise the guidance, update the terminology, collate and moderate video examples, and generally make the materials more user-friendly for new teachers and teaching assistants.

We also delivered presentations at engagement events in order to collect much needed feedback – an experience that filled me with fear as I am not used to public speaking but this work is so important I put my nervousness to one side – but don't ask me to do it too often!

### PUTTING THEM INTO PRACTICE

In my opinion, Routes for Learning is a perfect assessment tool for teachers to use with their learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). The updated materials are much more user-friendly and accessible – a great help, especially for those new to the field.

At Ysgol Crug Glas for example, we have used Routes for Learning materials to identify, capture and reflect on individual learner progress over time. Using them in this way can help all practitioners to identify learners who may need a change in teaching strategy in order to further their learning, ultimately allowing the child access to success.



### BENEFITS FOR LEARNERS, PARENTS AND CARERS

It is always the case that if the practitioners are confident in what they are delivering, the learners will feel the benefit. Fresh ideas can be picked up from the materials, offering new and different opportunities for the learners while the development of skills will give them an increased ability to communicate and control their environment.

What is great about the updated Routes for Learning materials is the opportunity they provide to show the progress of small steps, so much better than the previous 'Working towards' statements we used. For parents and carers, hearing about these small steps taken by their children is such a boost. The new terminology is also so much better to help parents and carers understand how their child is developing – who understood 'Contingency awareness'? We now say 'Shows understanding that their action causes a specific effect' – so much better.

### LINKING WITH CURRICULUM FOR WALES

Routes for Learning was praised by Professor Graham Donaldson, a key figure in developing Curriculum for Wales. It supports the Welsh Government's aspiration to create an inclusive education system to help ensure that all young people, whatever their needs, have access to a high standard of education and reach their full potential.

