

Impending changes to ALN legislates in Wales and how they affect the practitioner.

Introduction

Welsh Government (2015) decided to change the current Special educational needs legislation to Additional learning needs bill as it deemed the old bill as “outdated” Welsh Government (2015). Welsh government (2015) stated this as it led to children with Additional learning needs not getting support quickly and effectivity or no getting any support at all. So, the new Additional learning needs Bill (Welsh government 2018) states this new bill will be more effective and efficient in supporting children with an additional learning need and accessing funding to support schools and setting, so the child receives a high quality education (UNICEF 2021).

Funding and time frames

Although, Welsh Government (2018) intend to in acted this Bill to all schools by “September 2020” Welsh government (2018). The new Bill will now not be in acted until, “September 2021 due to Covid-19”. Also, Welsh Government (2021) have stated , that the Bill will be introduced over a “three years” process. This will implement, on the practitioner as they may become, confused on when their classroom will be using the new system. Also, according to Moss (2019) teachers, change year groups, that they are working with each academic year. So, this will led to an confusion if the teacher move from the old system to the new or vis visa. Welsh Government (2019), states this is so more training can be provided to practitioners. However, Lewis (2020) states that school funding is low, across Wales and providing new training for the staff may stretch the budget too far, so other areas will need their funding cut. This will affect the practitioner, as the school may provide training to some members of staff, then those staff member will feedback to their colleagues, this is not beneficial to practitioners as everyone draws attention to different areas in training sessions, this may be next steps for the individual in particular or next steps for the individuals classroom. So, all staff should gain access to the new training to ensure, the school or setting has an holistic approach and support all staff understanding of the new Additional learning needs bill. However, the Dauncey (2021) explains that the Welsh Government intend to have “20 million pounds” to support the move from the old system to the new system. However, the Welsh government (2021) does not state what they money or where that money will go and what it will be used for. Additionally, according to Gait (2014) training is often provided, during twilight session when the staff are tired. However, according to EYSTEN (2013) teaching assistants are not paid for twilight session, so this will led to teaching assistants not coming or not putting their full potential into the session because, they are not paid for them compared to teachers.

The new Additional learning needs bill in Wales have similarities, to the Special educational needs code of practice in England as they both support learning from aged “0-25”, Department of education (2015) and the Welsh government (2018). However, Weale (2018) states that this system is not delivering to a high standard in England due to budget cuts from local authorities and having the same legislation for a wide age band. Also, when the SEND code of practice was implemented in classroom across England according to Hellawell (2015) the legislation put too much responsibility on the classroom teacher and added to their already heavy work load. This has contributed to the “6,000” teachers taking sick leave or leaving the profession due to stress, Asthana (2018).

Introduction to the term ALN

Welsh Government (2020) states, that the new Additional learning needs bill is more inclusive then the previous Special education needs and the SEN Code of practice used in England, as it allows the practitioner to refer more child for an “education, health care plan” , then previously able to As, Welsh Government (2020) states, in England the Education health care plan is restricted to the most complicated additional learning needs. This will support, the practitioners work as they will be able to access more help for all the children not just a few.

Also, Welsh Government (2015) stats the SEN Code of practice was too complicated for practitioners and settings to follow, which led to miss information and corners being cut. The implications of this on the practitioner, is if they moved from classroom each year or to different setting they may have needed time to get a clear idea of what is required under the SEN code of practice, which may have led to indications and observations being missed. Additionally, the implication of the introduction of the term additional learning needs instead of special educational needs, is the opportunities for training are different depending on which council the practitioner works under. This is evident by, Conwy (2021) council advising online training to understanding the new Additional learning needs bill which goes into detail about Estyn (Conwy 2020) expectations. This is compared to, Powys council who’s website do not contain any training opportunities only a definition of Additional learning needs. This is an implication, for the practitioner as if they are moving from council to council then they may want more training specially for that council and their processes for supporting children with an additional learning need. Additionally, if a practitioner is coming from a different country the they will need training from the council to understand the new Additional learning needs bill.

The main difference between the SENCO and the ALNCO is the AINCO will need to be a senior member of staff within the leadership team, whereas the SENCO needed to be a teacher in a maintain setting or a level 3 practitioner within a private nursery (Tes no date and university of Birmingham 2021). The implications of this, on the practitioner is if they are training to be a teacher as they wanted to progress to be an SENCO, then they may not able to be an ALNCO because they are not within the leadership team, this may discourage the practitioner from progressing in their setting.

Additionally, other teacher attitude may be a barrier to the new wording of ALNCO from SENCO as some teachers may not feel the need to change the phases. This may lead, to tension with the leadership team as some members of the leadership may support the change, this in turn will lead to a break down of communication throughout the setting, which will lead to the children not being supported, Morin (2021).

Bilingual system

Welsh government (2018), states the new bill will focus on promoting the Welsh language more within the setting. This links to, Welsh Government (2017) initiative of “one million Welsh speakers” by 2050. As, the aim of this is to increase the number of household who speak Welsh in Wales as, Meller (2021) explains it is demanded to be faded out, and replaced with English. However, BBC News (2020) explains that there results, from research concluded that the whole of Wales will be speaking Welsh as their first language “within 300 years” due to the Government initiatives. Also, Welsh government (2018) have introduced that all IDP’S will be in Welsh and English.

However, iwa (2013) states that “37%” of practitioner do not speak Welsh. So, by the Welsh government (2018) implementing a bilingual system, then some practitioner may have to leave the profession or learn a new language, as they will not be able to communicate with their peers and support the child’s IDP’s. Although, some practitioners may decide to learn Welsh, to support them in their job. Aspinall (2016) states, that learning a new language will take time, Aspinall (2016) states for someone who speaks English fluently and has no learning difficulties it will take “1,040 hours” to learn Welsh fluently. However, this does not take into account slang phrases, that may be used in Welsh, which some parents may use when taking to the practitioner or any regional accounts which Harries (2018) states, there is a subtle difference between the north and south of Wales in certain words or phrases. This may not be viable, due to the New Additional learning needs Bill change in date, Welsh Government (2020) as the school may not have the funding to provide extra training for the members of staff to learn Welsh as well as, providing training on the new Additional learning needs bill (wrightwick 2019).

Although, Safford (2012) argues that children with an additional learning need will need extra support when in a bilingual setting. This is due, to the child who may speak Welsh as their home language, so may struggle in English Medium due to this. However, the practitioner will need to be fluent in both languages to support the child with an Additional learning need. Due, to the fact they will need to be able to switch quickly between Welsh and English when speaking to other professional involved with the child and the child with the additional learning need.

Additional websites, for support implementing the ALN bill.

<https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-transformation-programme>

<https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/in-the-classroom/special-educational-needs.html>

<https://parentpartnership.pembinsic.lunionservice.wales/role-of-the-alnco-and-professionals/>

Conclusion-

Although the new Additional learning needs bill will take time to implement, following research this bill will improve the services provided to children within Wales, and allow the practitioner to access the best support for the children, within a improved timeframe and no longer have to sit and wait long period of times to access support and funding for the child.