

ALN Reform

Currently, provision for SEN children is governed by the Educational Act,(1996) and is based on a model that is more than 30 years old and no longer 'fit for purpose' (Welsh Government, 2017:2). The Welsh Government have developed the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation programme which will be introduced to support all children with additional learning needs of compulsory school age or below and to support young people with ALN who are in school or further education (Welsh Government, 2018). The Additional learning needs (ALN) and Educational bill was passed by the Welsh Assembly in December 2017 and in January 2018, the legislation received royal assent, becoming the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (Estyn, 2018). The act will be implemented over a three year period which is expected to commence in September 2020 (Snap Cymru, 2019).

Why the change?

The new Additional learning needs transformation programme replaces a model that was developed almost thirty years ago and is out dated (Welsh Government, 2017). The new model aims to provide a modern approach to multi-agency working which is hoped will be of benefit to the child or young person with ALN, supporting them on their journey through education and their life choices (Dauncey, 2016). The ALN transformation programme (2017) adheres to allow a flexible and responsive approach to planning, suggesting professionals will be confident and skilled in identifying the needs of children whilst deploying strategies to help learners overcome any barriers to learning.

What this means for practitioners

The term 'Additional Learning Needs' replaces 'Special Education Needs ' (SEN) which will result in the SENCo becoming the ALNCo. All Maintained schools will be required to have a designated ALNCo.(Welsh Government, 2016). The ALNCo's position will replace the existing non-statutory SENCo role. All practitioners working with children with ALN will have to adapt their practice. Following a readiness survey provided by the ALN transformation lead as part of the regional implementation plan, it was identified that workforce development was a key area that needed development (Swansea Council, 2019). The survey suggested there was a need for embedding person centred practices (PCP) in all educational settings, clarifying and developing the role of the ALNCo and improving mainstream schools understanding of key areas of ALN (Swansea Council, 2019). PCP's are a central aspect of the new ALN, aimed at developing the core skills of practitioners working with children with an ALN (Welsh Government, 2017).

An end to statementing

The IDP will be given to all children with an ALN, replacing the statementing process. Currently, the local authority has the power to issue statements for children with an ALN whose needs are sufficiently serious (Dauncey, 2016). Receiving a statement means that the local authority are legally responsible for making provisions for children's individual needs. This has seen parents view statements as the best way to secure intervention. However, the system of statementing has resulted in confrontation between the local authority and parents. The previous minister of education, Huw Lewis described the process as 'complex, bewildering and adversarial' (Welsh Government, 2014:2). The new IDP's will not only include the information that is normally found on the statement, it was also include

- the child's and the child's parents/carers wishes, views and feelings
- signature of parent/carers
- intended outcomes
- key events
- reasons for decisions being made (Welsh Assembly, 2017:9).

Implementing the new ALN.

Some settings have already began to implement the new ALN however, until the new ALN programme comes into place, Educational settings should show regard for the requirements and responsibilities connected with the legislative frameworks currently in place (Welsh Government, 2017). Concerns have been raised by some families who have been told by their local authorities that they are no longer writing statements for children in the area as they are being replaced by the individual development plan. Whilst this may be true, local authorities, by law, are expected to provide statutory assessments and provide statements for children with learning difficulties who require SEN provision (Snap Cymru, 2019).