

Impending Changes to Legislation in Wales September 2021 SEN to ALN transformation.



Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 Key Changes:

The introduction of the term additional learning needs (ALN) replaces the terms 'special education needs' (SEN) and 'learning difficulties and/or disabilities' (LDD) with the new term ALN. The new statutory system age range is 0 to 25 years old, therefore the new system will now include pre-school and further education. However, this will be new and maybe challenging for practitioners to understand their responsibilities. Welsh Government (2021) guidance to LA's states the Early Years ALNLO has a statutory duty to ensure there is effective delivery of training, information and clear processes in place for all practitioners supporting with ALN interventions. A unified plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP) will be replacing the variety of statutory and non-statutory plans and replacing the Statement of Special Educational Needs. Increased participation of children and young people with information and advice must be readily available for children, young people, embedding the principles of the United Nations Conventions Rights of the Child 1989 (Unicef no date) and Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. Person-Centred Planning is a fundamental principle in the Act and ALN Code embedding the UNCRC principles. Increased collaboration with more emphasis on multi-agency working, resolving challenges at the earliest opportunity and at the most local level, this is further supported by According to Guralnick (2011), assessment process should be in partnership with parents, child, early intervention services and the role of the practitioner.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system implementation timeline Welsh Government (2021)

- ❖ January 2018 Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 gained Royal Assent
- ❖ March 2018 ALN Transformation Leads in post
- ❖ December 2018 Consultation on draft ALN Code and regulations
- ❖ September 2019 Minister for Education announced how and when the ALN Act will be implemented
- ❖ 2020-2021 Implementation training on the new ALN system rolled out
- ❖ Winter 2020 Supporting guidance on the new statutory roles published
- ❖ January 2021 New statutory roles created under the ALN Act commenced
- ❖ Spring 2021 ALN Code and regulations laid before Senedd Cymru for approval
- ❖ September 2021 New ALN system goes live on a three-year phased basis



Background and changes to legislation explained: Welsh Government (2014) concluded after undertaking a review and consultation of the existing legislation, introduced over 30 years ago is no longer fit for purpose and highlighted recommendations due to cost, assessment time, working in collaboration and professional development. Welsh Government (2020) state Special Education Needs (SEN) will be replaced by Additional Learning Needs (ALN). In January December 2017, the National Assembly for Wales passed the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill and in January 2018 ,receiving Royal Assent became at Act: Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act (ALNET) 2018, the Act is a legal framework to ensure early identification of learners' needs, embedding their wishes, ensue a planning process is in place to support with barriers and to ensure all 0 to 25 year-olds reach their full potential. Existing support plans, Statements of Special Educational Needs will be replaced by Individual Development Plans (IDP) for all learners and in March 2021 the ALN Code and Regulations were passed by the Senedd, SNAP Cymru (2021). The Equality Act (2010) states practitioners have a duty to promote equal opportunity and must not discriminate against a person with a disability, practitoners are responsible for ensuring compliance with the law and practitioners implement policies within their practice. Welsh Government (2021) state full implementation of the new ALN system in 2024.

Early Intervention: The Additional Learning needs (ALN) transformation programme main aim is to ensure early identification of needs and effective interventions are in place, with a key element on training delivery to ensure there is a skilled workforce and practitioners have the skills and resources to support children and young people. Welsh Government (2020). This is supported by Allen (2011) report, one of the recommendations highlighted a need for investment in professional development within the workforce to enable practitioners to have the knowledge and skills for early identification and support with appropriate interventions, Welsh Government (2014) recommended a review of current assessments due to the long process. The new Curriculum for Wales (2020) embeds assessment and has been developed through an collaborative way of working for practitioners to identify ALN support and interventions.

ALNCO and Early Years ALN Lead Officer: Welsh Government (2021) ALNCO guidance states maintained schools in Wales 'must' have a named ALCNO of a senior level within the school/maintained setting with implementation from January 2021 and responsible to ensure all children and young people identified with a ALN are supported and have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Additional Learning Provision (ALP) in place. Practitioners supporting a child/young person should involve the ALNCO of children they have identified or emerging ALN to ensure Person-centred Planning and ALP are in place. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to have a designated officer role; Early Years ALNLO by January 2021, Welsh Government guidance (2021). The role has responsibilities to ensure there are clear pathways, processes, and resource in place to implement the new ACT, with a key focus on training for practitioners and ALNCO's in education settings and a source for expertise for practitioners working in partnership with umbrella organisations Pacey (2021). According to Feng and Sass (2013) professional knowledge and development enhances a child with education and achievement in meeting their full potential, however, this practice was not consistent across the workforce supporting children with ALN and identified a need for practitioners to have continued professional development opportunities.

Conclusion: To summarise, the new ALN Act (2018) aims to improve early identification, early assessment, improve the process time and ensure early intervention is available to support with additional needs. It also has a strong focus on workforce development to ensure practitioners have access to training and development, supporting continued professional development and to develop a skilled workforce. The training and tools, such as IDP's and PCP practice also embeds a consistent approach of working across Wales. However, this is dependant of how successful the transformational work is implemented and the roles of ALNCo's and EYLO's responsibilities are embedded in practice to support the workforce. Further challenges such as the workforces understanding of the changes from SEN to ALN and Statements to IDP's may take time to embed in practice and meet the full roll out completion date of 2024.

- Further reading/useful links:**
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018: [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act | GOV.WALES](#)
 - The Additional Learning Needs Code (2021) [the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)
 - SNAP Cymru – ALN update and resources [Home - SNAP CymruSNAP Cymru](#)

