



Module Code: ECAD6018

Deepening Practice ALN – Part 1
Journal: Document your understanding of the Role of the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator

Student Name: Phoebe Preece

Student Number: 2200807

BA Primary Education (QTS)

AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Word Count: 1511

Targets from previous module	How I have worked on these?	An example can be seen on...
1. Proofread all writing with more care.	I have used the read aloud function to listen to my work as well as reading it.	Throughout assignment.
2. Aim to explain ideas and links so the reader can share your understanding.	I have ensured to include two – four supporting references for each point.	Through assignment but particularly on 'Why was there a need for change?' on pages 2 – 3.

The Significant Role of the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNco): A Reflective Journal

Introduction

The Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNco), a new statutory position in Wales, requires a designated individual in an educational setting to ensure the needs of all Additional Learning Needs (ALN) learners are being met (Welsh Government, 2021a). It is vital to recognise that teachers play a significant role in supporting ALN learners, however it is the ALNco's strategic responsibility to manage, deliver and identify the needs of children with ALN (Welsh Government, 2021a).

The ALN Code (2021), underpinned by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (2018), places the learner at the heart of their learning journey, aligning with Article 29 of the UNCRC (UNCRC, 2025). This highlights the ALNco's crucial purpose in education.

Why Was There a Need for Change?

The role of the ALNco has undergone significant change since the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (2018) and the Additional Learning Needs Code (2021). The need for such change in Wales was identified due to concerns with inequality and a lack of consistency for ALN pupils within the previous Special Educational Needs (SEN) system, suggesting it was simply no longer fit for purpose (Welsh Government, 2014). The Welsh Government (2014) identified limited parental involvement and uncertainty around support strategies. Thus, suggesting there was a lack of learner focussed drive in supporting their individual needs. Yet, Donaldson (2015) suggests that all learners, including those with ALN should have access to person-centred practice allowing all learners to meet the principles of the four purposes, underpinning the Curriculum.

As a result of this evaluation, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (2018) placed direct responsibility on the school and local authorities to be more transparent with the provision and learning opportunities provided (National Assembly for Wales, 2018). Therefore, the reform enhanced the strategic role of the ALNco in the integral duties to support ALN learners and foster inclusive practice

(Welsh Government, 2024). However, despite the reform's purpose to ensure equitable opportunities, questions can be raised to whether there are still challenges to the role of the ALNco in being able to truly fulfil their responsibilities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In light of the reform and the challenges they aim to address, it is important to understand the ever-changing responsibilities that define the role of the ALNco in practice.

The Responsibilities of an Effective ALNco

The Swansea Council (2023) state that the key purpose of an ALNco is to ensure all needs of ALN learners are met. The ALN code (2021) outlines an ambitious number of duties for the ALNco that includes, providing appropriate provision, developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs), providing staff with appropriate strategies to support these learners, as well as liaising with external agencies that can contribute to supporting and diagnosing learners. Essentially there is a journey to support ALN learners that is led by the ALNco. This begins with collaboration with teachers and external agencies to undergo assessments or observations, to ensure learners feel empowered in their learning (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). With appropriate communication with parents and carers, to ensure they are active contributors rather than passive recipients (Welsh Government, 2021a), an IDP can be formed with tailored interventions to support the child, vital for their development (Norwich, 2013). ALNco's then aim to empower staff through targeted training and inclusion in planning meetings; placing the learner at the centre.

An effective ALNco acts as both a leader and agent of change, going beyond statutory duties to promote inclusive practice, driving the force for ALN learners in Wales (Estyn, 2024a).

Case Study

Estyn (2018) identified a Welsh school demonstrating good practice through its collaborative and responsive approach to ALN provision. Recognising the changing needs of learners (Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data, 2021), the school use a triangulation method of assessments, including standardised tools, external agency input, and staff observations to develop tailored interventions to meet a range of different needs (Rouse, 2003). The ALNco facilitated collaboration

between the stakeholders such as an Educational Psychologist, parents and families and staff to shape IDPs and appropriate interventions. The plans are coordinated by the ALNco ensuring consistency and ongoing reviews through a multi-disciplinary approach, vital for inclusive practice (Ainscow, 2005).

This study demonstrates how the ALNco bridges policy and practice, leading strategic implementation while involving all stakeholders in the learner's journey, emphasised in the ALN code (2021). Reflecting on this, I recognise the need for both vision and practical understanding in my future practice in promoting equitable approaches that meet person-centred outcomes. While this example highlights effective practice, it is also necessary to consider the wider challenges that can affect the ALNco's ability to apply such approaches consistently.

Limitations and Barriers

The Welsh Government (2023), while positive in promoting the role of the ALNco, have found limitations based on Estyn's Thematic Report (2023). The report highlights that the transition from the SEN system to the ALN reform has led to many challenges working under two legislative frameworks, further supported by Senedd Research (2024). In that, working under two different frameworks increased the complexity of being an ALNco, by increasing their significant workload (CEREBRA, 2022). Murphy, Greenway and Conn (2024) support this as they suggest ALNcos face challenges in workload and managing the different responsibilities.

This being said, it is suggested that workload has a further effect with time to complete said work, of which ALNco's do not necessarily have (Thomas et al, 2025). Without sufficient release time, ALNcos may struggle to maintain paperwork, risking inconsistency in IDP quality and learner outcomes (Estyn, 2023). This was confirmed by an ALNco, who stated in a conversation that with so many day-to-day responsibilities, that aren't necessarily mentioned within the ALN code, time is not always accessible during work hours (Hughes, 2025). These responsibilities involve being "pushed and pulled" during directed time, meaning time is less (Murphy, Greenway and Conn, 2024, p. 23).

The Welsh Government (2023) have acknowledged this barrier, and aim to rectify this by ensuring schools focus on professional learning for staff so they are better prepared for times of uncertainty, that would require input from the ALNco. In

addition to this, the Welsh Government (2023) state that schools must ensure ALNco's have a sufficient amount of directed time to fulfil their duties. The Welsh Government (2023) also state that the ALN implementation grant should underpin the support of the ALNco during this period of transition so their expectations can be a priority.

Although it is important to consider there are other challenges to the role, I would argue that time constraints, workload, and professional learning seem to be the more pressing challenges of the role.

Case Study

The ALNco in a school located in another part of Wales acknowledge the increase in diversity needing adaptation and innovative methods (Estyn, 2024b). A strategy they have used is team teaching where the ALNco works alongside another school's ALNco. The Welsh Government (2021b) suggest sharing the ALNco role in settings that cannot fulfil the expected duties. This can be considered as effective as the support is constant from both ALNco's as they share their expertise effectively to promote the quality of IDPs and provision and allow teacher's skills to be promoted, enhancing the effectiveness of support for ALN learners (Estyn, 2024b).

Professional Development: A Personal Reflection

The role of the ALNco closely aligns with the Professional Standards for Teaching (Welsh Government, 2019), with particular reference to pedagogy, collaboration, and professional learning. The theoretical perspectives explored in this assignment, reflect on the crucial role of the ALNco in promoting inclusive and equitable opportunities (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). This demonstrates the importance of tailoring effective provision or interventions for learners who need support, and empowering all learners on their progressive journeys to be the best they can be (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). But this is not all they can empower; the emphasis on the learner reflects on an ALNco's commitment to their wellbeing and rights of the child (Welsh Government, 2021a). These principles mirror the Curriculum for Wales in allowing all learners to meet the characteristics of the four purposes, and be prepared for life-long learning and opportunities (Welsh Government, 2022). Despite the crucial role of other stakeholders in the planning and preparation to meet the

needs of all learners (Welsh Government, 2021a), I would argue that the ALNco acts as a bridge in providing the best methods to support each and every learner.

Placement experiences, particularly my final placement which had a high number of ALN, diversity and disadvantaged children, have opened my eyes to the considerable role of the ALNco. Having the opportunity to observe provision and application of interventions has encouraged me to strengthen my understanding of how best to support learners. The ALNco's effectiveness is not just in compliance with policy, rather than empowering those around the learner including staff, families, and external partners; to sustain inclusive education to best support all learners. Therefore, exploring these theoretical perspectives have allowed me to see the impact of theory to practice, with the hope of being confident in supporting future learners within my own pedagogy.

References

- Ainscow, M. (2005) 'Developing Inclusive Education Systems: What are the Levers for Change?', *Journal of Educational Change*, 6(2), pp. 1 – 16. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44838506_Developing_inclusive_education_systems_What_are_the_levers_for_change (Accessed: 7 May 2025).
- Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (2011) *Index for Inclusion Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. 3rd edn. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.
- CEREBRA (2022) *Wales: Update on the Transition from the SEN to the ALN System*. Available at: <https://cerebra.org.uk/research/wales-update-on-the-transition-from-the-sen-to-the-aln-system/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025)
- Donaldson, G. (2015) *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures.pdf> (Accessed: 2 May 2025)
- Estyn (2018) *Tracking Progress to Support Pupils' Additional Learning Needs*. Available at: <https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/tracking-progress-to-support-pupils-additional-learning-needs/> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)
- Estyn (2023) *The New Additional Learning Needs System: Progress of Schools and Local Authorities in Supporting Pupils with Additional Learning Needs*. Available at: https://estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2023-09/The%20new%20additional%20learning%20needs%20system_0.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2025)
- Estyn (2024a) *The Additional Learning Needs System: Progress of School's Settings and Local Authorities in Supporting Pupils with Additional Learning Needs*. Available at: <https://estyn.gov.wales/app/uploads/2024/12/The-additional-learning-needs-system.pdf> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)
- Estyn (2024b) *A Report on [REDACTED] Primary School*. Available at: www.estyn.gov.wales (Accessed: 5 May 2025)
- Florian, L. and Black-Hawkins, K. (2013) 'Exploring Inclusive Pedagogy', *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), pp. 813 – 828. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.501096> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)
- Hughes, A. (2025) Conversation with Alison Hughes, 2 May.
- National Assembly for Wales (2018) *Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents> (Accessed: 2 May 2025)
- Norwich, B. (2013) *Addressing Tensions and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education: Living with Uncertainty*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Rouse, M. (2003) 'Assessment and Special Educational Needs: Teachers' Dilemmas', *British Journal of Special Education*, 25(2), pp. 81 – 87. Available at: <https://nasenjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8527.t01-1-00062> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Senedd (2024) *Additional Learning Needs – Senedd to Debate a Need for More Reform*. Available at: <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/additional-learning-needs-senedd-to-debate-a-need-for-more-reform/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025)

Swansea Council (2023) *Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo)*. Available at: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/21384/Additional-Learning-Needs-Coordinator-ALNCo> (Accessed: 3 May 2025).

Thomas, H. Lane, J. Lewis, S. Duggan, B. McAlister-Wilson, S. Williams, S. (2025) *Evaluation of the Additional Learning Needs System: Survey of Practitioners and Professionals*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-additional-learning-needssystem-survey-practitioners-and-professionals> (Accessed: 5 May 2025)

UNCRC (2025) *A Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2025)

Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (2021) *How Special Education Needs Change Over Time*. Available at: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/blog/how-special-education-needs-change-over-time/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Welsh Government (2014) *Legislative Proposals for Additional Learning Needs*. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-01/140604-consultation-document-en_0.pdf (Accessed: 2 May 2025)

Welsh Government (2019) *Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/19bc948b-8a3f-41e0-944a-7bf2cadf7d18/professional-standards-for-teaching-and-leadership-interactive-pdf-for-pc.pdf> (Accessed: 5 May 2025)

Welsh Government (2021a) *The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/220622-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021%20%282%29.pdf> (Accessed: 30 April 2025).

Welsh Government (2021b) *Role of the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/4fda9222-e9e6-4266-b0d5-1f592b3e4d70/role-of-additional-learning-needs-co-ordinator.pdf?preview=true> (Accessed: 7 May 2025)

Welsh Government (2022) *Developing a Vision for Curriculum Design*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design> (Accessed: 7 May 2025)

Welsh Government (2023) *Progress of Schools and Local Authorities in Supporting Pupils with Additional Learning Needs*. Available at:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2023/10/2/1696341980/progress-schools-and-local-authorities-supporting-pupils-additional-learning-needs.pdf> (Accessed: 5 May 2025)

Welsh Government (2024) *ALNCo Task and Finish Group: Report to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/alnco-task-and-finish-group-report-minister-education-and-welsh-language-html?utm> (Accessed: 2 May 2025).