Reforming SEN to ALN

Introduction

By September 2021, in Wales the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 will be phased into schools, settings and colleges. There are 11 aims of the new Act by Welsh Government (2018), one of these being the age range is increasing to 25 from 16. Alongside this, by 2022, the New Curriculum in Wales reform is set to replace the Foundation Phase Curriculum following Donaldson's (2015) Successful Futures. It is suggested by Camau Project (2018, cited in Conn and Hutt, 2020) that the New Curriculum will allow children and young people with greater challenges to receive the best outcome, as its focus is a generalised staged approach ensuring all learners reach their full potential. The 2018 Act will ensure a more inclusive form of education which balances equity of access to the curriculum for all learners, as raised by Conn and Hutt (2020).

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Individual Development Plans (IDP)

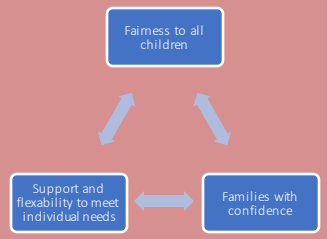
As part of the new unified plan from Welsh Government's (2018) white bill, Individual Development Plans will now replace allSEN statements. This needing to take a person-centered approach to gathering and presenting information which helps to identify their ALN and determines their ALP as reported by Estyn (2018). IDP's are viewed by Snap Cymru (2019) to be a favourable format whilst addressing Additional Learning Needs as this is a more responsive approach.

Implications which may arise during the transitioning period are:

1. *The IDP's are too simple and lack specification, (Snap Cymru, No Date).*
2. *There is no 'needs-led approach', (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2019).*
3. *Potential to be difficult to manage and resource, which may result in it becoming costly, (Ware, 2014).*

Regardless of whether a child or young person in Wales currently has a SEN Statement, the WG (2018) bill states that everyone in Wales with special needs will be entitled to an IDP. However, this then contrasts England's current situation, as research from Spivak*et al*. (2014) found only children with complex needs will receive a EHCP under their SEND Code of Practice.

The Welsh Government (2018) new legislation for IDP's hopes to provide:



Source: Dennis (2021)

SENCo to ALNCo

Under the new legislation, the SENCo of a setting will now be renamed as ALNCo and developed further into ensuring children with additional learning needs and disabilities are cared for with the correct support, (Senedd Wales, 2017). There are many new roles and responsibilities which will be required by the ALNCo to carry out daily, this including having responsibility for coordinating additi onal learning provision (ALP) for those with additional learning needs (ALN) as stated in the Welsh Government's (2020) Integrated Impact Assessment. The impact of the role the ALNCo leads will be greatly acknowledged as the new regulations intend to create a system that will provide early, timely and effective interventions to help children and young people with ALN, as laid out by the Welsh Government (2018).

Implications from SENCo to ALNCo are:

1. Must be a qualified teacher to lead the role of ALNCo, (Welsh Government, 2021).
2. Heavier workload & timely training, (Williams, 2020).

However, the Welsh Government (2021) inform, it is vital to remember, the designation of the ALNCo should not remove the responsibility of a whole approach from other staff members, as it equally important that the learner's needs are identified and provided for in a way which is inclusive through a shared role. In agreeance with this is Asaf-Wossen (2018) as she suggests that schools need to rely less on their SENCo, this way it will encourage staff to carry out indpendent research and deal with the matter before reaching for the person in charge.

Funding

IWA Wales (2017) express their concerns that funding is a vital area which needs to be in place in order for the new legislation to work. The Welsh Government (2019) are set to provide a £20m package which will be used in order to implement the new transformation programme across Wales. Most of this funding will be used to establish the workforce, ensuring knowledge, skills and training are at the level they need to be in order to implement it effectively into practice (Welsh Government, 2019).

Implications to costs are:

1. Raised expectations, (Alun Davies, AM, 2017)
2. Additional Costs to the statutory IDP, (Sennedd Cymru, 2017).

There will be ALN Transformational Grants available to support those in partnership in ensuring the right support to those who need it, for example, local authorities and Estyn as stated by Snap Cymru (2018). However, the Welsh Government are expecting local authorities to have their own arrangements. For example, delivering, monitoring and reviewing of the ALN duty they provide as, Snap Cymru (No Date) state that 85% of funding will be going into schools and settings, leaving only 15% for additional duty providers.

Source: Welsh Government (2018)

Further information regarding the new Act can be found at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-12/draft-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales_0.pdf

Conclusion

The new Act in Wales will have a significant impact on the proposed regulations, one of these being that the standards will be raised for all learners with ALN in Wales regardless of their background to receive the best additional learning provision which meets their needs as stated by the Welsh Government (2020). As well as the Welsh Government (2018) now supporting young people beyond 16. However, there is a long way to go before rolling this out into practice. This is because the Act has already been pushed back a year due to insufficient time to get it right as Williams (2019) raised this concern. This decision was supported by Ingred (2019, cited in BBC 2019), as she believes that getting the principal right is essential in implementing this across Wales. However, she did go onto label this process as 'Chaos', should the process continue getting delayed.