

Behaviour Social Emotional Disorder (BSED)

Definition of BSED

The ALN Act 2018 (Wales) defines BESD as children or young people may demonstrate behavioural issues or emotional difficulties. A child may display disruptive, disturbing behaviour or isolate themselves and become withdrawn and lack concentration.

According to Nunns (2017) BESD may stem from how the brain processes information, which the individual then struggles to communicate and express how they feel. The child can no longer control their emotions, which may cause outbursts and interlink with behavioural issues. A contradicting study suggested BSED may stem from a child's life experiences or chaotic home lives resulting to low well-being (Broomhead, 2011).

ALN Statistics in Wales 2023

Schools in Wales census results in January 2023 reported there were 63,089 pupils had ALN and BESD had the second highest rating at 19,641 (Welsh Government, 2023). Smeets and Roelveld (2016) indicates the majority of schools rely on the medical model to identify children with ALN. The medical model is used to establish if the disorder is physical, neurological or biological and to determine if medical interventions are needed to fix or cure the diagnosis. However, Estyn (2022) highlighted children who may be presenting behavioural or emotional issues may still be recovery from the COVID pandemic, which may have had a severe impact on the results.

Legislation and UNCRC

ALN is a term used for a person who has diverse and complex needs which requires additional educational provision in place, as a child or young adult has significantly greater difficulty in learning (Welsh Government, 2018). The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 provides statutory guidance and unified legislative framework in education for meeting the additional learning needs of the individual.

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (2021) (the ALN Code) and regulations came into force to ensure those aged 0 to 25 have their needs met by receiving individual additional support tailored to their specific needs (Welsh Government 2021). Both legislations are in line with UNICEF (2019) Article 23 and article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), stating provisions are in place for those will disabilities or additional needs to ensure their right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence and an education.

The Role of the Practitioner

Practitioners who work with children all have a duty of care and may be asked to provide support to learners with ALN. Before the member of staff agrees to take on the responsibility, it is vital they receive sufficient and suitable training and be competent at the role (Welsh Government 2017). The Nutbrown Review (2012) advocates practitioners who have higher qualifications in specialist areas can have a greater impact of a child's development and learning. Therefore, a child with BSED would benefit a practitioner who has a greater understanding in their individual needs.

Practitioner's should be able to provide the right support for every child, and putting the help in place as early as possible is crucial to see the best outcomes and the most from education for a child with ALN. A delay can result into the child becoming frustrated in learning, loss of self-esteem and behavioural difficulties (Snap Cymru, no date).

This highlights the need for local authorities to invest in specific training to support BSED (Greenway, Rees and Edwards, 2021).

Process

It is important to remember all children are different. However, the first step would be to communicate with the child's setting to see if they have significant emerging concerns. If there are a signs the ALNco will make a referral to the Local Authority who will have a duty to decide if the child had ALN. If an ALN is identified and then a 'Independent Development Plan (IDP) will be prepared (Welsh Government, 2022). An IDP is a descriptive plan of a child's ALN highlighting the support they needs and their person learning outcomes and will be reviewed 12 months (Snap Cymru, no date).

Inclusivity

As the new curriculum for Wales aims to be inclusive in order for each pupil to be able to develop in the ways described in the four purposes (Welsh Government, 2022 . Adjustments need to be made for children with ALN to ensure they have the same opportunities' to learn (Douglas *et al.*, 2016). The teaching assistant's role would include providing bespoke interventions to reinforce the class activities and if needed would use smaller groups or one to one techniques to create a less busy learning environment. Some schools may have a calming down area to ensure children with BESD have a safe space to self-regulate (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). Baroness Warnock authored a landmark report recommending children with disabilities should not be excluded from mainstream schools, which inspired a duty to include children with ALN (Tes, 2019). However, 30 years later Baroness Warnock changed her view as schools have no extra staff, no specific training, resources and the buildings are not fully adequate (Roberts, 2005).

Challenges and Barriers

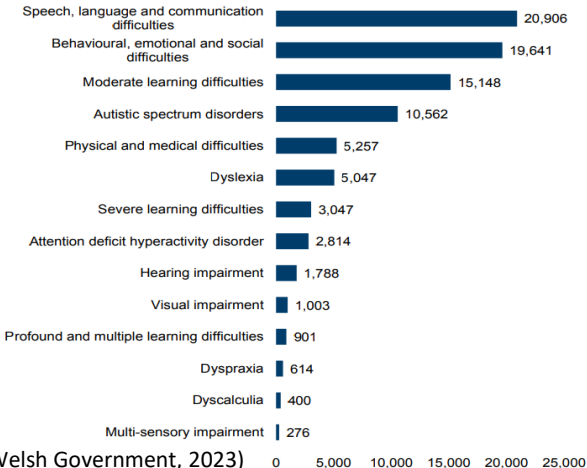
Over the last few years, the schools funding has seen a decrease, which may cause a concern for teaching staff and resources available (Adams, 2023). With a lack of funds schools may be unable to make changes to the setting to provide calming down areas and safe spaces to support BSED. Creating a positive learning environment is essential for a child struggling with emotions to self-regulate. The majority of schools are struggling to provide appropriate resources. Although changing the classroom layout and minimising resources to reduce distraction can implement a more inclusive space to learn (Greenway, Rees and Edwards, 2021). It is important for children with emotional difficulties to have visual aids, and classrooms may use a pictorial timetable for what is happening throughout the day. Simple strategies may help children with ALN cope with change and stay interested is happening and understand what is expected in the classroom (Routledge, 2023). According to Kelly (2022) animals in education can offer therapeutical support and help children BSED form a relationship, which normally may be difficult with peers.

Theorists

Pestalozzi – introduced a pedagogical philosophy to include children from poor background, low intellectual capacities or disabled in the education system (Aslanian, 2015).

Montessori - developed a pedagogy which allowed children to be independent and introduced a hands on learning approach with minimal adult intervention (Lillard, 2018).

Figure 5: Reports of additional learning needs (ALN) or special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools by type of need, 2023 [Note 1]



Welcome to our monthly Additional Learning Needs (ALN) support group. I would like to start by thanking everyone who has joined us day. A quick introduction, my name is Jade and I will be leading this meeting, along with Bronwen and Becky who will both covering other ALN disorders. Throughout the webinar, three individual posters will be shared on to the screen, if there are any concerns please do not hesitate to raise your hand.

ALN is a term used for a person who has diverse and complex needs, which requires additional educational provision, due to the child or young adult having significantly greater difficulty in learning (Welsh Government, 2018). The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 provides statutory guidance and a unified framework in education for meeting the additional learning needs of the individual.

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (2021) came into force to ensure those aged 0 to 25 have their needs met by receiving individual additional support tailored to their specific needs (Welsh Government 2021). Both legislations are in line with UNICEF (2019) Article 23 and Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), stating provisions are in place for those with disabilities or additional needs to ensure their rights to live a full and decent life, which includes education, with dignity and independence. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are statutory and came into force in September 2021 under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 to ensure children with a diagnosed ALN are receiving the correct support (Welsh Government, 2022). This is why early intervention is crucial, which will be covered in more depth throughout this webinar.

In this meeting I will be analysing 'Behaviour, Social and Emotional Difficulties, commonly known as BSED, in great lengths and we will be exploring the process and procedures for early assessment, interventions and inclusion. Throughout the webinar, there will be information shared on how practitioners can support young learners with ALN within provision.

The ALN Act 2018 (Wales) defines BSED as children or young people who may demonstrate behavioural issues or emotional difficulties and are at risk of experiencing mental health problems or disorders. A child may display disruptive, disturbing behaviour or isolate themselves and become withdrawn and lack concentration. Nunns (2017) argues BSED can stem from the way information is processed and due to the variances in the brain the child struggles to function and communication which as a result shows behavioural issues. Individuals who deviate from what society considers 'normal thinking' are categorised as neurodivergent as oppose to neurotypical (very well mind, 2023).

Emotional difficulties may be a mixture of feelings caused by anxiety or depression, which could include environmental factors that have an impact on a child's emotional wellbeing. The child can no longer control their emotions, which may cause outbursts and interlink with behavioural issues (Nunns 2017). It is important to note the causes of BSED are invisible and not all children will display poor behaviour, although the risks are higher.

Broomhead (2011) published a study where practitioners dealing with learners who had diagnosed BSED suggested parents lack responsibility for their child's well-being and the pupils often experience chaotic home lives too.

However, Estyn (2022) highlighted children who may be presenting behavioural or emotional issues may still be recovering from the COVID pandemic, which may have had a severe impact on the learners' well-being. Although there are many reasons why a child might show challenging behaviour. For example going through a stressful experience or a traumatic issue, such as bereavement can naturally affect an individual's behaviour.

Nonetheless, the census results in January 2023 showed a rise in ALN learners, which is a few years after the pandemic. The report showed there were 63,089 pupils with ALN and BSED had the second highest rating at 19,641 (Welsh Government, 2023).

Smeets and Roelvelde (2016) indicates the majority of schools rely on the medical model to identify children with ALN. The medical model is used to establish if the disorder is physical, neurological or biological and to determine if medical interventions are needed to fix or cure the diagnosis. According to Massoumeh and Leila (2012) the medical model has great influence for children with disabilities or those needing additional learning needs.

However, Knight and Crick (2021) contradicting study suggests the medical model focuses on diagnosis and labelling, implying every learner with a similar disorder will receive the same treatment instead of using an holistic approach and looking at their individual needs and removing barriers.

It is important to remember all children are different. However, the first step would be to communicate with the child's setting to see if they have emerging concerns. If there are signs the ALNco will make a referral to the Local Authority who will have a duty to decide if the child has ALN and then will prepare an IDP (Welsh Government, 2022).

Following the question, it highlights the importance of practitioner and parent communicating and building a relationship and collaborating with multi agencies to source appropriate advice. Multi agency collaboration with other professional services ensures families and settings receive the relevant services and access to information needed to support the child's needs (PACEY, 2017). Agencies working together and sharing information is the centre of making a difference to the lives of children and the main focus of 'Every Child Matters' agenda and the One Children's Workforce Framework (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2008). The NSPCC (2023) states having a co-ordinated approach is vital to gain a full overview of a child's situation.

Pestalozzi's pedagogic philosophy reformed the educational system in the 18th century by including those from a poor background, low intellectual capacities or practical abilities and empathized love for all children in education is the everlasting foundation (Aslanian, 2015). Montessori theory focused on independence and aimed to help children reach their full potential in an environment, which mentally stimulated the learners to want to be curious and they learn through play (Lillard, 2018).

As the new curriculum for Wales aims to be inclusive in order for each pupil to be able to develop in the ways described in the four purposes, whilst taking account for children with ALN (Welsh Government, 2022). Nonetheless, Knight and Crick (2021) stipulate the Curriculum and Assessment Act (2021) aims to be an advocate for inclusivity by providing an inclusive framework. Although contradicts the Curriculum and Assessment Act (2021) stating sections can be disapplied or modified for learners with ALN portraying there is a difference for those learners.

However, the curriculum is implemented by practitioners and teachers to provide learning opportunities for all learners in all areas of learning and to ensure inclusion for those with ALN adjustments should be made (Douglas *et al*, 2016). Assessments should include celebrating diversity and identify individual learning progress, which settings should use a wide range of methods to capture progression including non-academic areas. Yet, The Big Debate in 2006 claimed including children with BSED may have a negative impact on other pupils learning, (Peaston, 2011). However, Rui *et al* (2018) suggests the role of the teacher can influence a child's behaviour, and suggested teachers' attitude towards children with BSED or other behaviour issues, act negatively towards them and lead to peer rejection (Rui *et al*, 2023).

Yes Bronwen. Practitioners who work with children all have a duty of care and may be asked to provide support to learners with ALN. Before the member of staff agrees to take on the responsibility, it is vital they receive sufficient and suitable training to be competent in the role (Welsh Government 2017). The Nutbrown Review (2012) argues practitioners with higher qualifications and have training on supporting well-being have a greater impact on development outcomes. Therefore practitioner's should be able to provide the right support for every child, and putting the help in place as early as possible is crucial to see the best outcomes and the most from education for a child with ALN. A delay can result into the child becoming frustrated in learning, loss of self-esteem and behavioural difficulties (Snap Cymru, no date).

According to Skipp and Hopwood (2019) to help with the risk of poor school performance and exclusion, the local authorities in Wales have increased the number of teaching assistants to provide extra support to manage pupil behaviour and anxiety issues by implementing coping strategies. The teaching assistant's role would include providing bespoke interventions to reinforce the class activities and if needed would use smaller groups or one to one techniques to create a less busy learning environment. Some schools may have a calming down area to ensure children with BESD have a safe space to self-regulate. Providing relaxation tools including sensory interventions to help overcome their over-reactive or under-reactive behaviour (Maich et al, 2019).

However, this method cannot be applied to every school, due to the lack of space or funding constraints to make further changes. Over the last few years, the schools funding has seen a decrease, which may cause a concern for teaching staff and resources available (Adams, 2023).

Baroness Warnock authored a landmark report recommending children with disabilities should not be excluded from mainstream schools, which inspired a duty to include children with ALN and closure or a large amount of special schools (Tes, 2019). However, 30 years later Baroness Warnock changed her view as schools have no extra staff, no specific training, resources and the buildings are not fully adequate (Roberts, 2005).

The majority of schools and settings have limited resources, although small changes in the learning environment can reduce distraction and implement a more inclusive space to learn (Greenway, Rees and Edwards, 2021). Creating a positive classroom culture with established clear rules on how children should behave. Also provide instructions on what is happening next, such as a visual timetable or constant verbal communication explaining the child is moving on to the next activity (Routledge, 2023).

Simple strategies may help children with ALN cope with change and stay interested in what is happening and understand what is expected in the classroom. Support animals in settings can offer therapeutic, educational, social and emotional support, as children behave differently and mostly empathise and maintain self-control (Kelly, 2022). A study published narrative therapy may be an effective strategy to use to support BSED. The approach includes activities for children to express their emotions, through playing with toys, storytelling and being creative to change problematic narratives into positive outcomes. Children learn to manage emotions, the ability to self-regulate and learn how to effectively communicate and solve problems (Zarra-Nezhad et al 2023).

Another issue raised in a research project stating the assistants working with ALN including BSED have a challenging role and are often the least educationally skilled and the salary does not reflect on the severity of the role (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). However, access to specialists can be limited (Woodcock and Woolfson, 2019).

To conclude, children with ALN are individuals that face challenges in everyday life. There are interventions that can support these children and help them to overcome these challenges. Early intervention is key as it is more likely to be effective when the child is younger and earlier on in life. Children with ALN have unique qualities that deserve to be celebrated and with the right support in place can thrive in life.

After analysing the three types of ALN, it highlights a change is needed. Investment is required to ensure teaching assistants gain the specific training needed to have the sufficient knowledge on how to support children with BSED (Greenway, Rees and Edwards, 2021). Although with reductions in spending on teaching assistants could reduce the ability for out of class interventions, which limits the children with BSED ability to receive individual support (Welsh Government, 2020). Estyn's guidance states all staff should have regular opportunities to learn strategies and methods to support learners with BSED to help with consistency and a shared ethos of inclusion (Estyn, 2022).

On behalf of our ALN team I would like to thank you all for listening this evening. I hope you have found this Webinar useful, do you have any questions?

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