

Introduction

Legislators in Wales have envisioned to legislate to reform the existing provisions for recognising and subsequently providing for, children and young people's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Welsh Government (2004), (or how it will be currently known as Additional learning Needs(ALN) Welsh Government (2017), however, it is not yet fully endorsed by all settings (Welsh Government Social Research,2012).

What is changing? To do so, we have developed the Additional learning needs (ALN) transformation programme,(Welsh Government ,(2018c) which will transform the separate systems for special educational needs (SEN) in schools and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in further education, to create a unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with ALN(Education Act,1996 ,Welsh Government ,2004),

When the ALNET Bill is passed by parliament the plan is it will commence in September 2020. Until then, it is necessary to carry on implementing and complying with the responsibilities retained on them by the Education Act 1996(Education Act,1996).Also to continue to have respect and adhere to the SEN Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government,2004).

Why When the Bill converts into law, it will replace the current Welsh system of SEN support. Wales still operates under the Education Act 1996, using the scheme of Statement of Special Educational Needs, as the is based on a model more than 30 years ago and no longer fits the purpose. It is that scheme that will be replaced by Additional learning Needs and Education Tribunal(ALNET).

How to implement the changes and support change and carry out the new scheme, the ALN transformation programme will concentration on 5 subjects:-

1. Legislation and statutory guidance.
2. Workforce development.
3. Implementation/transition support.
4. Awareness raising.
5. Supporting policy.

(Welsh Government 2017,Welsh Government,2018)

Article 2 –Every child has these rights.

Article 3–Decisions made on behalf of the child must always be in the child's best interest.

Article 5–The child's rights to be instrumented by family and show they are looked after legally.

Article12–To demonstrate your view and adults to respect your opinion.

Article 13–To discover things and share with others thoughts in which it is easier for you.

Article16–The right to privacy.

Article 18–To be brought up by parents.(whenever possible).

Article 23–you have all the rights of the convention, if disabled special provision to be put in place for your education.

Article 24–To be entitled to a safe environment including good food and drink. Good advice on health care to keep you healthy.

Article 28–The child is entitled to a good quality education and be able to achieve the best outcomes they can in school.

Article 29– The child's education should support their abilities, individual aptitudes and capabilities. To be respectful to their environment and the people who live around them.

Article 30– To exercise your own language, beliefs and not be discriminated in implementing this right. Children's Rights Wales(2019).



ALNCO

- ❖ There is a national programme available to train Additional Learning coordinators(ALNCO)s and it will be facilitated throughout the region and locally. It is funded and is being offered to sustain the professional learning offer for ALNCOs (ERW,2018).However, to release the ALNCO from school has implications as there is no formal ALN support that the ALNCO provides in the absence of the ALNCO . Furthermore, where are the costs obtained for supply cover if the ALNCO also teaches a class.(National Assembly for Wales2017).
- ❖ SENCO is changing to ALNCO to correspond with the ALN Bill, according to Dauncey (2016) all the terminology used reduces the stigma that special education coordinator (SEN)indicates, therefore, supporting the wellbeing of the child (Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales Act) 2015. However, this change could lead to confusion within the UK.Furthermore,with the frequent use of the term ALN and ALNCO that stigma could potentially return in the future.
- ❖ In England and Scotland the term SENCO is still used therefore causing confusion, frustration and tension not only within the school environment but with parents and outside agencies (Government 2019,University of Edinburgh,2019).
- ❖ Specific attention on training has been on the overview of person-centred planning (PCP)(Estyn 2018) The Welsh Government circulated direction and best practice in person-centred practice (PCP) to ALNCOs (Welsh Government, 2015).The aims are to make sure that practitioners support pupils to achieve a better understanding of the views, goals and needs and act upon these in the planning and delivery of the support.However,only the SENCO/ALNCO has been trained in PCP and so it has not been adopted across the school.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill (ALNET Bill) What does this mean to YOU ?

Cost Implications

- ❖ The Government has assigned grants to help support local authorities and Estyn to implement the ALNET Bill throughout Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2017, Estyn,2018).However, the long term cost to sustain the Bill overshadows the initial grants and funding.
- ❖ All Staff must be sufficiently trained and sustained to achieve their roles, this is to include, a basic level of training around the awareness of ALN needs of the child (Welsh Government,2018g, Snap Cymru (2018).However, to implement this training comes at a cost and would effect the school budget as there is no funding provided (National Assembly for Wales, 2017).
- ❖ Sufficient teaching assistants /learning support staff to be made available to ALN children (Dancey2016).However, due to staff cuts and school budgets there is no extra support.

There are 10 aims of the ALN Bill

The introduction of the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
0 to 25 age range.
A unified plan.

Increased participation of children and young people.
High aspirations and improved outcomes.
A simpler and less adversarial system.
Increased collaboration.

Avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution.

Clear and consistent rights of appeal.
A mandatory Code.

Added to this, is a bilingual structure providing Welsh ALP and recognized in the IDP(Welsh Government (1993).

(Estyn,2018, National Assembly for Wales,2017, Welsh Government, 2017).

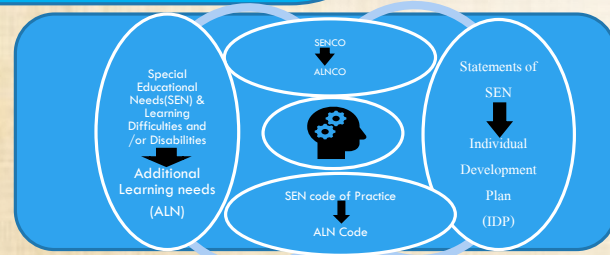
Conclusion

The ALN Act 2018(Dancey,2016) promises to be more inclusive of children's rights and reduce the stigma of children with additional needs(Children's Rights Wales,2019)Snap Cymru 2018, Welsh Government,2018a).However, let us hope that it endorses fully the ALN child's inclusion and does not revert to tokenism regarding full participation of the ALN child (Hart,1992).

It has the undertakings to potentially help develop educational support to a child's individual needs throughout their academic life (Welsh Government,2017).However, there are trepidations about funding and workforce volume actuality, to meet increased requirements brought about by this Act (National Assembly for Wales,2017).However, without it yet being fully implemented throughout Wales only time will tell if it is as successful as it appears to be on paper.However,there is no denying that with the new ALN Act hoping to be implemented in September 2020, It is an interesting and exciting time to live in Wales.

Further Reading

- Welsh Government-www.gov.wales/ALN
- National Assembly for Wales-www.assembly.wales
- Twitter- #additionallearningneeds
- SENreforms@wales.gsi.gov.uk
- Additional learning transformation programme,Welsh Government.
- Welsh Government (2017).



Increased participation of children and young people

- ❖ According to Dauncey (2016) the new ALN bill embraces inclusion of decisions about the child to involve the child throughout the process, this supports the UNCRC rights of the child Articles2,3,5,12,13,16,18,23,25,28,29,30 (Children's right Wales,2019),Welsh Govevment,2016,Government,2011 ,DoE,2002). However, consideration needs to be taken into account on the severity and complex needs of the child to fully comprehend and understand the decisions needed to be made on their behalf. Furthermore, if this is the case a person representing the child other than the parents should be instated to support the child's best interest adhering to articles 3,5&12 (Children's Rights Wales,2019,Welsh Government,2018a,DfES,2003, Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014).
- ❖ Parents to be supported, guided and included through the process and broken down into language that they can understand (Welsh Government (2018b).However, parents may find it difficult to contemplate that their child is fully involved and concerned the child is not fully equipped to deal with the decisions regarding their education(Welsh Government,2018).

