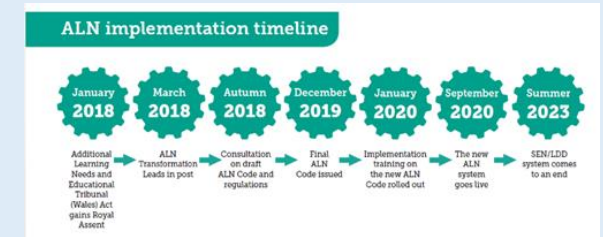


The impending changes of the SEN/ALN legislation in Wales on early years Practitioners.

What is the new legislation and why has it changed?

The additional learning needs and education tribunal Act (2018) is set to change the current Special educational needs (SEN) legislation within Wales, with the aim of supporting all individuals' needs from the age of 0 – 25 years old. According to the Welsh Government (2018) and the national assembly for Wales (2018) the current SEN legislation is outdated and no longer fit for purpose. Therefore, the Welsh Government suggests that this new legislation must be implemented in a phased approach within early years settings until it becomes fully implemented in 2023 (Welsh Government, 2021). This can be seen on the image from ERWales (2021) which shows a brief plan on how it will be implemented. Snap Cymru (2021) adds that in order to ensure consistent and successful implementation of the new legislation, the Welsh Government have stated that they will support settings to prepare for the impending changes and develop multiagency working. Contract (2017) and the National Deaf Children's society Cymru (2018) add that settings and practitioners must remain aware that the current SEN systems, such as Education Act (1996) and Learning and Skills Act (2000) will still apply until the new legislation is fully implemented. Below are some of the key changes from the implementation of this legislation on children, settings, practitioner's, and families.



ERWales (2021)

SEN/ SENCO to ALN/ALNCO

The legislation aims to set out a new definition of Additional learning needs (ALN), which aims to include everyone who is considered to have 'special educational needs (SEN)', however a major factor of the ALN and education tribunal Act is that it covers everyone between the ages of 0-25 years old rather than only primary school ages as suggested by SnapCymru (2019). Legislation (2018) defines an individual who has ALN as an individual aged between 0-25 years old that is diagnosed and has a learning difficulty/disability.

Implications -

- Gernsbacher (2016) and Bunning et al (2017) suggest that people may misunderstand the meaning of ALN.
- Other countries in the United Kingdom still use the term SEN which could lead to further confusion when the new legislation is fully enforced as authors may still write about SEN rather than ALN Chaney (2012).
- Curran et al (2018) suggests that there will be a heavier workload on ALNCO's meaning that they will face more pressure as they have to adjust paperwork to the new name. These implications raise multiple concerns about early years' practitioner's health and wellbeing as Welsh Government (2015) suggests that they will face more pressure as the new legislation is being implemented.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An individual education plan (IEP) is a tool in which early years practitioners can implement an educational plan for a child. Autism (2021) suggests that an IEP includes multiple strategies which are used to help children learn and for early years practitioners to review their progress. It is an individual document which is specific to the child. It is set out to include what should be taught, how it should be taught and how often. For example, a child with autism may suffer from social interaction and therefore one of the points on the plan might be to encourage the child to work with a partner at least two times a day.

SendSurvey (2018) suggests that there is no standard format for an IEP but often includes short term targets and additional support that has been implemented to support the child. The document is something that should be available to all involved in the child in question life, including any multiagency workers who work with the child and the child themselves. As the new legislation aims to help people with Aln between the ages of 0-25 years old, an IEP can help young adults as they transition from early years settings as it is something they can work on themselves with their families or careers. DfES (2014) states that it is vital parents are involved in creating and implementing an IEP as they are encouraged to continue some of the targets at home. However, the Welsh Government (2018) contradicts this as they state that parents often disagree with the plan as they may not always understand why some targets may need to be done.

Training and Funding

Dauncey (2018) suggests that the overall cost of creating and implementing this new legislation is estimated to be £7.2 million over a four-year period with the majority of the money going to implementing new systems into early years settings. This is because according to Welsh Government (2020) the act requires early years settings to designate an ALNCO, DECLO, and an EYALNO. This can be a timely process as the chosen staff will have to go on courses to ensure they are fully qualified for their new role. This in turn could cause more and more implications for early years settings. One of these may be staffing issues.

For example, if an early year setting has to send three members of staff away to get qualified for their new roles, this may leave that setting short of staff and could lead to problems whilst trying to ensure the correct staff to child ratio. There is also a cause for concern with only training up one member of staff for each role because if they manage to build a close bond with a child with additional learning needs, they may be the only person in which the child feels comfortable with and therefore may refuse to take part in any activities throughout the day.

Conclusion -

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, the new legislation will bring an integrated system which will bring a need to increase the training of early years practitioners. It will support and benefit early years practitioners, children and adults with additional learning needs and their families. However, it will cause more stress, pressure and the high possibility of miscommunication by working with the new legislation. This will ultimately effect children and adults who have an additional learning need as early years practitioners may not be working to their full potential and therefore, some of these implications should be looked at before the implementation of this legislation in 2023.

Additional Reading -

- SnapCymru (2021) How the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act will be implemented. Available at: <https://www.snapcymru.org/how-the-additional-learning-needs-education-tribunal-alnet-act-will-be-implemented/> Last accessed: 19th February 2021
- Welsh Government (2018) The additional learning needs and education tribunal Act. Available: <https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act> Last accessed: 19th February 2021
- Welsh Government (2021) Written Statement: Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. Available from: <https://gov.wales/written-statement-implementation-additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act-2018-0> Last accessed: 19th February 2021