

Reforms to SEN/ALN Legislation of Wales

Introduction to the Reforms

The Welsh Government are making some significant changes to legislation regarding the special needs (SEN) education system. With the Education Tribunal Act passed in January 2018 the new system is to be rolled out from September 2020. SNAP Cymru (2020). The aim of the transformation, is positive experiences and outcomes for learners with ALN. Ensuring they are supported in education to overcome barriers and reach their full potential. To deliver this the legislative statutory guidance framework contains eleven aims that settings need to implement in their practice Welsh Government (2018). The reform also includes a professional development plan for the workforce.

Welsh Language

Donaldson (2015) recognised the need for the Welsh language to be strengthened in the education system. Therefore, the Welsh language is to become compulsory in education. When the new reformed curriculum is enforced by 2022. However, with an emphasis on the Welsh language's increasing role in workplace settings, and to the education workforce's professional development Donaldson (2017) agrees there will be implications. Hence the need to extend practitioner's abilities in Welsh language, Lovell (2019) agrees that this is crucial development for English-medium education settings. The government acknowledges that Welsh is not only a subject, and the successful achievement of it becoming a second language, it needs to be taught in a profound manner And points out, there will be challenges to consider. Firstly Welsh needs to be the ethos of schools and not just integrated into learning. By normalising bilingualism, schools can strive to ensure the incidental use of the Welsh language by practitioners and children Secondly all schools will need to work together to ensure there is continuity of Welsh language from Early Years, through to secondary and further education. Hence the shortage of practitioners who have the expertise and confidence in this sector to teach and assess Welsh as a second language, particularly in primary Therefore Collaboration between settings is vital to continue the hard momentum and hard work put in at primary level and ensure it is not lost when children reach secondary school. To succeed the Welsh Government (2017a) have a vision to have one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

Increased Collaboration

The new system encourages improved collaboration and information sharing between agencies. Notably this is seen as essential practice for all professionals to ensure needs are identified early, and adequate support is put in place, thus building foundations to achieve the positive outcomes for ALN children through to Adulthood. Welsh Government (2019). Effective collaboration between health and education professionals directly link to the success of the IDPS to enable improved transitions through education. However, as Gasper (2010, p.92) agrees, there are factors to consider. Firstly finding mutually convenient times for all professionals, parents and child to meet. The need of clear routes of communication between the practitioner in educational settings, health and other agencies in order to share information and improve coordinated working. Understanding the professional language and protocols from other sectors. Possibly a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of practitioners in a larger and more diverse workforce, The danger of professionals referring or passing responsibility over too much in order to be perceived as taking effective action in a situation. Problems may occur when Authorities such as health authority and local councils have different boundaries. pressures from unsuccessful or disappointing attempts at multi-agency working having an adverse effect on staff morale Staff resistance to change both within the educational setting and among multiagency practitioners. However, Every Child Matters (2003) encourages external multi agency partnerships with practitioners and recognises education settings as being a valuable resource to help them fulfil their remit in relation to this huge agenda.

Converting to one unified development plan

A single unified Individual development plan (IDP) will replace all others including the statement. It will also extend to support learners into further education to the age of 25. Unlike the statement that stops at the age of 16 when a child leaves school Welsh Government (2019c). SNAP Cymru (2020) states that it will give statutory protection to those with Additional Learning needs in Wales and under the new code of practice will include detailed structure and minimum standards verifying concerns regarding the plan being over-simplified and not as specific as it should be. The IDP will be designed with a common format which will be developed through using a person-centred planning approach. And all IDPs will include an Action Plan, and the evidence for the actions. and will be rolled out over the next 3 years However, Estyn (2018, p.20) point out, that the assessment and tracking of individual children would need to be strong enough. If the system in a setting is weak, the information held may not be updated as often as it should or evaluate progress in the most important areas for each child. Resulting in, a setting not having enough understanding of a child's needs and progress. Hence hindering the practitioner's ability to plan and implement appropriate strategies to support the learner.

Conclusion

To conclude the practitioner will have a duty to implement the new reforms during practice Welsh Government (2019) have funded local authorities to deliver training and development the workforce over the next two years. This brings many changes and challenges ahead