

Impending changes to SEN/ALN legislation in Wales

Introduction

The current legislation for special educational needs code of practice for Wales 2004 came into force in 2002, some 17 years ago. It stems from the Education Act 1996. According to Welsh Government (2018) the system is now out of date and not effectively supporting all children in Wales with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). McKay and Neal (2009) and organisations that work directly with children and families in Wales RNIB (2015) and SNAP Cymru (2019) agree that the current legislation is no longer relevant and is failing children with ALN. This poster is a brief outline of how the changes will impact on early years practitioners.

Summary

Term SEN replaced with the term ALN

Three Overarching objectives

- A unified legislative framework.
- An integrated, collaborative process with early, timely and effective interventions.
- A fair and transparent system.

New professional roles

- Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) replaces SENCO
- Designated education clinical lead officer (DECLO)
- Early Years ALN Lead Officer (Early Years ALNLO) (WG, 2018).

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

According to Dauncey (2018) the current system of statutory statements and non-statutory plans is complex and confusing. Statements and plans will be replaced with one Individual Development Plan for all children and young people from birth to 25 years. The new system aims to be clearer. RNIB (2016a) Welcome the IDP's but claim that there is still work that needs to be done to make the system clear and consistent. It will take up to 3 years to convert all learners to IDP's (Welsh Government, 2018). The new role of ALNCO will have responsibility for developing and maintaining IDP's. The IDP's will be written in collaboration with the child, parents and professionals. This person Centred Planning approach will lead to a clear and appropriate IDP.

Collaboration

According to Craston et al. (2014) Collaboration between multi agencies, professionals and parents is seen as essential to deliver the best outcomes for the individual child. Welsh Government (2018) acknowledge the importance of collaboration and that the current system has failed to be effective therefore the ALNET has an increased focus on collaboration and has created new professional roles to support increased collaboration. Estyn (2018) state that the new Person Centred Planning approach has been a welcomed as it has encouraged collaboration.

Training

Welsh Government (2018) require all practitioners to complete relevant training. Dauncey (2016) states that it is critical to the success of the ALNET that all the workforce is trained to be competent, skilled and knowledgeable. However he questions whether it is possible to ensure all professionals are fully trained by September 2020. Estyn (2019) state that because local authorities are responsible for their own training budgets it has led to inconsistencies across Wales. According to NASUWT (2019) these inconsistencies have led to some practitioners being unable to access appropriate training.

Additional learning needs (ALN) timeline



(Source: SNAP Cymru, 2018)

Further Reading

<https://gov.wales/overview-draft-additional-learning-needs-code-consultation>

www.snapcymru.org

<http://www.assembly.wales/research%20documents/18-023/18-23-web-english.pdf>

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there is undoubtedly a need for the long-awaited reforms to ALN provision in Wales. The ALNET has the potential to be successful, however because of the issues causing confusion and inconsistencies, practitioners have not been supported and have not received adequate training. For practitioners to effectively support and uphold the rights of all children with ALN in Wales, they must receive adequate training, support from the government and local authorities and clarification on their roles and responsibilities before the start of implementation in September 2020.

