

Implications of Changes to Additional Learning Needs Legislations in Wales for Early Years Practitioners

Special Educational Needs to Additional Learning Needs.

Firstly, I would like to discuss the change from SEN to ALN; The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 maintains that they are and have already in some area's stopped using the system Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) and introduced the system for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) thus to make a 'clear break from existing systems' and to also eliminate the stigma that is associated with the SEN/LDD terms.

However, research paper from the Welsh Assembly Government (2015) suggests that only half of young people consulted on the change from SEN to ALN supported this change as the issue was raised that they did not believe that by changing the terminology that this would remove negative labelling and also suggested that actual provision was more important than terminology.

Furthermore, Four, fifths of people who participated in the research paper believe that the terminology 'Additional Learning Needs' is more inclusive than 'Special Educational Needs.'

Dauncey (2016) also indicates that by introducing a new system it will benefit children and young people to support them through their educational journey by having a 'modern approach to multi- agency working'.

There could however become challenging barriers for Early Years Practitioners to contribute to the multi-agency working when working with children between the age range 0-3 years as it has been noted in the Additional Learning Needs Transformation programme- Frequently asked questions (no date) that the ALN Act does not reference Early Years directly, this could become confusing for Early Years Practitioners to be able to follow and understand the Act as it is not clear on their specific age range.

Timescale

Secondly, I would like to discuss the timescale of the implementation process for the New ALN system;



(SNAP Cymru, 2020)

Implementation period to run over the course of three years starting from September 2020 to August 2023 (Welsh Government, 2018).

During the first year of the implementation period, newly identified ALN learners will be supported under the new system IDP (Individual development plan), The first two years from September 2020 will also see learners who have a Statement of SEN be transferred onto the new system.

And the third year will see learners who have SEN/ALN supported under School Action/ School Action Plus transferred to the new IDP's.

In order to help the implementation of the Code the Government has produced Eliesha Cymru, they have developed a package of training materials that are there to help the implementation of the ALN code.

The implications for Early Years practitioners is that during this timeframe the SEN and ALN systems will be working parallel to each other which may cause some confusion and also the workload on the schools and local authorities to ensure the children who need IDP's all get them in this timeframe (Duff, 2019).

Statement of Special Educational Needs to Individual Development Plan

Thirdly, I would like to discuss the change from Statements of SEN to IDP's.

As part of the new ALN System they will be introducing IDP'S (individual development plan) to replace the existing Statement of SEN.

IDP's will be given to all children with ALN, as-aposed to the current system that decides who gains access to a statement of SEN on the severity and complexity of the child's needs. The IDP also replaces IEP's (Individual education plans) for learners on School Action/Action Plus.

However, by doing this Duff (2019) raises concerns that by removing School Action/ Action Plus this will be putting more strain on our already strained schools as the assessments will be done by the schools and teachers, Duff (2019) also raises the concern that this could be a barrier in creating relationships between practitioners and the families of the children. This, if the school do decide to refuse an IDP for a child this could cause friction in the teacher/ parent relationship.

However, if the school do refuse an IDP, parents could go to the local authority and ask for the decision to be reconsidered. If the local authority refuse then the parents will need to appeal to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW).

Further

reading: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWP7Yjtjfis>
<https://senedresearch.blog/2019/03/27/the-draft-aln-code/>

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