

Research for learning

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What are practitioners and parent's experiences of referring children in the early years for ALN support services?

Additional learning needs (ALN) is used to describe children that have learning difficulties and disabilities. If a child has ALN they may find it harder to learn compared to a child, the same age. Most children will experience some challenges within their learning, for most children this can be overcome by having support from teachers and family at home. Some children have ALN due to having medical conditions or disabilities while some children have ALN without being diagnosed with a disability. ALN can affect a child's learning in many ways. This can include reading and writing, ability to understand information and directions, behaviour and their ability to communicate with others, concentration within an educational environment and their physical ability (SNAP Cymru, 2024)

Within schools there are support available. Examples of these supports are universal provision support, early intervention. Universal provision support is a type of support that is available to all children within the classroom. An example of this support is including movement breaks often to allow the child to get their concentration ability back, printed worksheets on coloured paper to ensure it looks more interesting for the child and adult support for the child. Children will benefit from adult support as they will be able to guide and support the child further. Early intervention is a type of support that a child will receive for a short amount of time in order to improve in a area where they aren't as confident. Some children with ALN thrive in school and they can attend school without the need of any support or little support in certain areas. This type of support will benefit this child due to providing support for a short period of time for the child to improve (Swansea, n.d.).

In 2022 a new additional learning needs system was released. Within this system it states that all children with ALN are entitled to have a individual learning plan (IDP) created for their individual needs. This statutory support plan will be beneficial for the children and the staff supporting the child. It will allow the staff to know where the child needs additional help and how they are able to provide this additional help to the individual plan. Each child is different therefore their learning needs are different and their IDP's will be different (Welsh Government, 2020).

Within the early year's settings, they provide opportunities for all children including children with ALN. They ensure all children are included and loved. If a child's ALN is identified within the early years it is important to refer as early as possible to ensure the child is given support early to benefit the child in the future.

Within an early years there is some funding available for the children. There is funding available for children from the age of 3 or 4 are entitled to 30 hours free childcare. This is available to all children that are entitled to this funding. This funding is only available to families within a certain criteria, therefore if a child that has ALN isn't within this criteria they would not be entitled to the funding therefore this child will not benefit. Some parents can't send a child to a nursery setting due to a cost therefore if the child has ALN they would not be able to attend a setting, and their learning and development will be delayed by the time they start school (GOV.WALES, n.d.).

Within Wales there is a scheme called flying start that offers childcare for children within the age of 2 and 3. This initiative provides opportunities and support for families within certain postcode areas within Wales. Within this scheme it provides families with funded childcare sessions, parenting support and early language support (GOV.WALES, 2024). The child is entitled to 2 and half hours funded childcare 5 days a week for 39 weeks of the year. The children will benefit from this in many ways. Their language development will improve, they will gain good social skills from interacting with other children. This also gives children the opportunity to build relationships with nursery practitioners and this will prepare the child for when they begin school (Ceredigion.gov.uk, 2025). However, Flying Start provision is not available to every child.

In addition, Covid created a delay in referral systems for those who have ALN in the early years. According to Kirsty Williams the education minister she states that covid 19 had created many challenges for all children, but it had impacted the children with ALN the most and the families and the staff that support the children. Due to covid 19 it had led to the delay in some children getting the assessment for the Additional learning needs therefore this has also put a delay on their ability to have additional support within the classroom (GOV.WALES, 2021).

So therefore this research project will consider how early years practitioners and parents feel about the services provided to children in their settings. It will also consider the support that children have within the setting.

Methodological considerations

Within this research project it will include the research methods used. The methods used within this project are questionnaires and interviews. Parents of children who have ALN will be interviewed and be given a questionnaire. The teachers/ practitioners of the setting that the child attends will also be asked to take part in the interviews and the questionnaires.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires is a qualitative and quantitative method of research. There is a wide range of different questionnaire methods, these can include computer questionnaires, telephone questionnaires, in house survey, open questions questionnaires, multiple choice questionnaires (Dudovskiy, 2019).

A multiple-choice questionnaire would consist of closed ended questions from multiple choice questions it will be a quantitative method. From the responses to this type of method the research findings will then be placed into a type of graph, for example the researcher could use a pie chart, bar chart and percentages to show their results from the questionnaire (Dudovskiy, 2019).

A computer questionnaire is a type of questionnaire that gets emailed over to individuals and it allows them to complete the questionnaire when they have time therefore, they do not feel pressured that they must complete the questionnaire straight away in front of the individual that gives the questionnaire out. But on the other hand, this can also be an issue due to on some occasions people may forget to complete the questionnaire that has been emailed over to them due to having a busy life therefore there may not be as much response to the questionnaire (Dudovskiy, 2019).

A telephone questionnaire is when researchers call specific people and ask them a range of questions regarding their research project. An advantage of this is that it can be completed in a short period of time while a disadvantage of this method is that it can cost a lot of money by phoning a wide range of individuals (Dudovskiy, 2019).

Questionnaires as a research method has their advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of questionnaires is that it is able to reach people

quickly as they are able to be emailed to individuals, or a link is able to be put on a social media platform or a website. This will allow a wide range of people to complete the questionnaire. A disadvantage of a questionnaire is that individuals may leave some questions unanswered due to doing it in a rush or not looking at it carefully. Some individuals may find it difficult to write what they are thinking therefore they will not complete the questionnaire fully as they are unable to write what they want to say (Cleave, 2023).

Interviews

Interviews is a method that is used to get a more in-depth understanding of an individual's thoughts and understandings on a topic. Interviews contain open-ended questions therefore it allows individuals to answer the question however they like. It doesn't have limitations on the answer. Within the interview research method, it has its positive and negatives. It allows the individuals to provide in-depth information to the researcher and allows them to say exactly what they want. This type of research method can be completed with a low number of people taking part, due to the ability to be specific and state personal opinions. On the other hand, this research method has some negatives also, this type of method can be time consuming as there is a need to be able to ensure that there is enough time set aside for everyone that is being interviewed. Some individuals take it extremely seriously and will research the topic and gain a further understanding therefore their interview answers will be more detailed. This method is also time consuming for the individuals taking part as they will need to take time out of their day to take part in the interview (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2020).

When completing an interview, it is a good idea that the interview is recorded this can be a video recording or an audio recording. This can allow the interviewer to look back and listen to the answers again. It is also important that there is someone within the interviews that is taking notes of what is being said by the individual in the interview. This is essential in-case the recording doesn't work (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2020).

What is Qualitative and quantitative data?

Qualitative research is when non numerical data is collected. Types of this research method is interviews, documents, observations. This method type allows individuals to answer freely around the questions that are asked. This allows researchers to ask open-ended questions therefore the response to the questions gives the researcher a view on each individuals experiences and opinions. Most individuals will have a different answer therefore the researcher will be able to compare each response. Qualitative research has its benefits and negatives. One benefit of this method is that it allows creativity and flexibility for the participant while they answer the questions but on the other hand a negative of this method is that it can be bias from the answer, and it also test a smaller sample due to the time-consuming method (Grand Canyon University, 2023).

Quantitative data is a type of method that collects numerical data. Types of quantitative research is experiments, questionnaires, surveys. This type of method includes closed ended questions and have answers given for questions for participants to choose from for example will include yes or no questions or while have 3 or 4 options of an answer per question. Quantitative data has its benefits and negatives also. One benefit of this method is that it can be analysed quickly, and the results can be shown clearly through statistics and numbers. One negative of this method is that it is a restrictive form of study as it only shows certain things. Within this method individuals are not able to add context to their answers. This type of method needs a large scale of participants to take part (Grand Canyon University, 2023).

Triangulation

Triangulation is using more than one method of research and multiple individuals within the research project. This ensures that the results aren't biased and that it allows the researcher to gain a holistic view around the responses that has been provided from the research methods. Using triangulation allows the researcher to use more than one method of research. There is different types of triangulation some are data triangulation this is when data is collected at different times, multiple locations and a wide range of people. Methodological triangulation is a method that will involve multiple methods that will gather and analyse data.

Qualitative and quantitative data can be combined to get a fuller understanding and view around the topic (Grad Coach, 2024).

Within this research project the parents and practitioners/teachers of the settings will be given questionnaires on the support available for children with ALN and if the children are getting enough support and are developing within the setting by having support. Within the questionnaire it will have an area where it allows the parent, teachers/practitioners to write their opinion and state whether they think their child has enough support or that additional support is needed for the child to thrive within the setting. Within this research project the parents and teachers/practitioners will be interviewed and asked a range of questions about the support that is available to children with ALN and if the child/children within their setting are getting the appropriate care and support to ensure that their developmental needs are progressing within the setting. Within this research project it will include both types of data. Quantitative and qualitative because interviews and questionnaires will be used. The questionnaires will provide a specific answer while the interview will allow participants to get their opinion and thoughts across within the topic. This allows individuals to provide the researcher with their personal and professional opinion. Methodological triangulation will be used within this research project as quantitative and qualitative data will be collected from doing the questionnaire and interview. This will provide the researcher with a bigger view of the topic.

Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration is the process of looking at the effects of decisions, actions and policy. Ethical considerations involve identifying and analysing possible ethical issues that may arise from research. The main goal of ethical consideration is to make sure that all decisions made align with principles, values and standards within a setting. It is important to use ethical considerations to ensure that individuals and organisations are well informed, responsible and make justifiable decisions. By doing this it helps build trust and promote the well-being of individuals involved. When doing research, it is important that the individuals are informed and have given consent, their privacy is maintained (Qualee, 2024).

Within a research project it is important to gain consent or assent before beginning the research that involves participants. Consent can be given by individuals that have reached the age of 18 that are able to legally give consent while assent is when individuals aren't able to give legal consent to take part in the research. If the child can't legally give consent, they will need an adult/guardian to give consent and the assent of the topic (Uaf.edu, 2019).

When doing research project, it is important to gain the consent of individuals that is participating within the gathering of information. It is important that the consent is gained at the beginning of the research project. It is important that the individuals taking part in the study understand as well as they can what the study is about and what is involved within the study. It is also important that participants are made aware of the potential sharing of the information that they have provided the researcher. According to Bera if the researcher is a member, they may include a declaration of membership in the information sheets and the consent from that the participant will receive at the beginning of the research. This will make the participant aware that they need to follow the Bera guidance and as part of the code of conduct (BERA, 2024).

It is important that researchers aim to be open and honest with their participants and other stakeholders within the research project. Researchers need to recognise the rights of the participants to be able to withdraw from the research project. The participant doesn't need to have a reason to withdraw its their own

choice, and they have the right to withdraw at any time that they like if they want to (BERA, 2024).

When completing research project, it is important that the researcher has looked at the possible risk that the participant could be exposed to during the research project. Once this is identified the researcher will need to identify ways to reduce the risk of the participant being exposed to the risk within the research project. Researchers have a responsibility to protect participants from any harm. It is important that the risks to the participants safety and well-being are discussed while the participant is giving their consent to take part within the research project. Some aspects of interviews or questionnaires can be sensitive or can bring up personal issues for some participants. For example, there may be a question that asks if the individual is male or female, but the participant may not want to identify themselves as one of these (University of Sunderland, 2023).

When doing a research project there can be many different risks to researchers, participants and the university. One risk can be psychological. This can be many different things, it can cause an effect on an individual's anxiety, depression, guilt, loss of self-esteem. This can be related to the individual as some things that are being discussed could make the individual feel anxious and bring back some memories. This can have an impact on the researcher as they may feel some guilt for the individual being distressed and upset. Social and economic risks can impact the relationships between other individuals that are at a disadvantage to the subject. It can include labelling a subject by making it look like it will have negative consequences. This would have an impact on the researcher and the university as it will look like the research project hasn't been created and thought about clearly. Legal risks will have an impact on the researcher and the university if there is a violation of the law (Uoregon.edu, 2025).

When it comes to storing data, it is important that the researcher explains what they are doing with the information and why they are doing it. It is oimportant that the researcher chooses the appropriate way for them to store their data. If the researcher is using interviews as a research method, it is important that they use a secure device to record the interview, but it is important that it is practical and something that can be used. For example, this can be a dedicated audio recorder or

a phone to record the interview, but it is important to ensure that the recording has been backed up in-case something happens to the phone or the audio recorder. Before beginning the recording, it is important that the researcher has gained the consent of the participant to record the interview. It is important that the researcher explains the importance of not mentioning names or any specific information that can identify the individual that is being spoken about within the interview. This is an important factor to maintain confidentiality within a setting. When storing the recording it is encouraged to transfer it to a secure area and then delete it from the original device (Teperek, 2015).

Within the Data Protection Act 2018 it states that any personal data provided must be used for specific reason and used within an adequate and relevant way but only the information that is necessary. Under the act it states that everyone has the right to be informed about how their data is being used (Government of UK, 2018).

Incentives and compensation are something that often gets used within a research project. Individuals may get some compensation for having to take some time away from work to take part in the research project. Some individuals may use incentives within their research project, doing this it may speed up the research process and boost the amount of people who are taking part within the research. Some people may see the payment as a fee for the service and taking part in the research. Some people may feel like they must take part in the research project from the researcher using incentives, they may feel like they are agreeing to something that they do not want to agree to. Some people may argue that the use of incentives can change the relationship between the researcher and the participant and that they may not be fully trusted. Individuals who are less financially stable may participate in research projects that offer incentives due to being a cash bribe involved if they take part. This may make a difference to the results that the researcher gains as the individual is only taking part in the research project for the money aspect and not for getting results or gaining something in the future from the research (Central University Research Ethics Committee, 2020).

Within this research project it is important that the researcher ensures that the confidentiality of individuals taking part is met throughout the whole research project. It is also important to ensure that the participant is aware what is being done with the

information that they are providing is used for and where and how it will be stored. It is important that the consent of everyone taking part is noted and signed. It is important that the researcher explains that the information that they collect will be shared with others that is helping within the research project to evaluate the data and create charts to show the results of the data that is collected, also there will be other people within the interview process to take notes and record the interview. It is important that the researcher explains that the participants can stop taking part within the project at any time that they like due to personal reasons. It isn't necessary that they explain why they want to stop taking part with the project. An incentive can be provided for the individuals who are taking part as a way of speeding up the process and the amount of people who are taking part in the research project. A compensation could also be considered for the individuals that are having to take time out of work to complete the interviews with the researcher as this can be time consuming for the participant and the researcher.

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Appendix

I have not used any AI systems.