

Impending changes to SEN/ALN legislation in Wales

Introduction : This Poster will be discussing the impending changes proposed for the new ALN Act and the implications these changes may have on practitioners. Wales is currently in the process of reforming its SEND legislation, moving from Special Educational Needs (SEN) to Additional Educational Needs (ALN) to create a unified support system student aged 0-25 (Welsh.Gov.2019). According to the Welsh government, they continue to work towards the successful implementation of the Additional Educational Needs and Education (Wales) Act 2018, which are supported to increase the target and overcome learning barriers to deliver the desired outcomes for children with various disabilities.

In Wales, about 22% of all students in schools have SEN and their academic performance is poor compared to the rest of the students (GOV.Wales,2020). The new education system aims to implement new strategies and improve skills in identifying the needs of each student to help overcome barriers and create a flexible system in success (Farrell, and Ainscow, 2002). The new system will be slowly phased in with major changes for local authorities, schools. This in turn means that SENCO will be known as ALNCO. School / Early Years Action, School / Early Years Action Plus and Statements will disappear, and each child diagnosed with ALN will eventually receive a new permanent document called an Individual Development Plan (IDP). This should not be confused with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), this will also be phased out. It is important to note that although the term has changed from Special Educational Needs to Additional Learning Needs, the definition will remain the same. Once the Bill becomes law in September 2021, it will change the way assessments are made for learning support needs (Gov.Wales.2020a).

What is the common goal? A child or young person has **SEN** if they have learning difficulties or disabilities, they must have a special educational benefit under the **Equality Act 2010** and be considered as part of SEN planning and review. According to **Art. 25 of the Children and Families Act 2014**, local authorities have a duty to ensure integration between education and training, health and social services if this would promote well-being and improve the quality of services for children and young people with disabilities and people with SEN (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). This requires the full cooperation of all local authorities to ensure the best development for children in need.

What will change?

IDPs

It will change the way learning support needs are assessed. Existing support plans: statements, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Learning Support Plans will all be replaced by a new plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP will highlight a learner's support needs and will be a legal document. It will be available to learners aged 0–16 and for those in college, up to the age of 25. An IDP will focus on what the learner needs in order to reach their educational potential. The type of support outlined and the detail within the plan will depend on the extent of the learner's needs. For example, it might specify regular support with a Teacher of the Deaf (Snap Cymru, 2014).

0 – 25 age range

The existing law on the SEN code just covers people aged 0-16 as two separate ALN pieces of legislation (learning difficulties and disabilities, LDD) (Dauncey, 2016). The new ALN law will apply to students from 0-25, including both SEN and LDD, to ensure an ease of transition from school to higher education (Welsh Government, 2017; DfE, 2014) to support ALN students. ALNCO and the school will be responsible for IDP and they will check that everything is working regularly and that it is working as intended (Dauncey, 2018). However, there are questions from parents as to whether ALNCO will have time to complete the IDP because it already exists the fight against IEP (SNAP Cymru, 2016). Lack of adequate funds causes limited access to training among teachers and practitioners by the state, which makes it difficult to make decisions on disability. The new reform is to support parents, improve relations with teachers and strive to improve early intervention.

Conclusion: With the new legislation changes to the ALN Welsh Government aim to support the children with poor disability. However, this is going to take time for the practitioner implementing these changes with support and relevant training to enable to achieve the best outcome for the child. In my opinion this transition period will delay the change over process for the future of many children

A bilingual system: The Welsh Government will be implementing a bilingual system for supporting children with ALN across Wales. This support will be ongoing to a series of strategic duties and aim that towards a bilingual ALN system. This will be decided by the local authority if the arrangements are sufficiently of ALP made in Welsh. However, local authorities should review the ALP strategies including those under School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 for strategic education plan. This plan will be beneficial for learners with ALN (Estyn, 2018).