

NEW ALN LEGISLATION IN WALES

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INTRODUCTION

The current Special Educational Needs (SEN) Framework will be replaced by new legislation named Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (Dauncey, 2016). Welsh Government (2018) explains that the current SEN legislation is no longer fit for purpose so until law is fully implemented, it will be used with a phased approach that benefits children with ALN experiences and outcomes.

Welsh Government (no date) states implementation of new law was delayed for one year and will now start from September 2021. The implementation phase will take place over 3 years.

SEN to ALN

The new Act replaces the terms 'special educational needs' (SEN) and with the new term 'additional learning needs' (ALN) (Estyn, 2018). Further changes suggest the ALN term will be used supporting 0-25 years compared supported offer by SEN which would only support to 16 years (SNAP Cymru, 2020). However, according to National Assembly for Wales (2015) the new ALN term is inclusive, the change would not remove negative labelling. The new changes will also replace school systems with an Individual Development Plan (IDP) (Dewis Cymru, 2020) says IPD's will be introduced to children and young people up to the age of 25, to support learning under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) However, National Assembly for Wales (2015) explains this can impact practitioner's current relationships with children due to having to follow new procedures.

Comparing two welsh local authority websites, terminology was different although ALN practise was mentioned. However, different terminology can have an implication on practitioners and in turn causes confusion (Hornby, 2015), resulting in practitioners using and following the wrong processes and procedures resulting in a court case.

SENCO TO ALNCO

Welsh Government (2017) says the SENCo is the individual with overall responsibility for ensuring the coordination of provision for all learners with SEN within the school is undertaken. However, under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) the role is being replaced by an ALNCO who's new responsibilities include developing IDP's.

Other roles of an ALCNO stated by (Swansea Council, 2019) include:

- Co-ordinating provision for children with ALN
- Liaising with parents of children with ALN and arranging review meetings
- Overseeing the records of all children with ALN
- Writing and implementing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) policy

However, these new responsibilities can cause implications for practitioners as it increases workload (Wyrd, 2020) Evans (2021) recognises the impact heavier workload and more responsibilities to ALNco, can result in added pressure and stress. Similarly, Hughes et al (2019) states managing workload effectively can be challenging for a practitioner when there are other roles and responsibilities that also need to be met required from authority regarding demands.

TRAINING AND FUNDING

Dauncey (2016) explains that practitioners will have to undertake training to ensure full understanding of new the new practice. However, Zimmerman (2006) says some practitioners might be hesitant of change due to being confident in what they already know, although new practice must happen.

One implication this might have on practitioners is funding the training process, although Welsh Government (2018b) recognises that the transition phase from the current to the new systems will have cost implications. However, a package of £20 million to support the implementation of the reforms has been made available.

NASUWT (2021) states schools do not have enough money to fund training and that training outside settings is often very expensive. This impacts practitioners have due to this is that practitioners can only afford to send one or two people out for training therefore information might be cascaded through staff wrongly (Hayes, 2000)

National Education Union (2019) also discusses the impact budget cuts has on practitioners explaining that they need to use their own money in order to meet the needs of children with ALN.

CONCLUSION

The new ALN legislation coming in 2021 will support children between the ages of 0-25 outcomes and enhance teachers with training. However, funding for training might cause some implications from practitioners. Practitioners also have more responsibilities to support children's needs by implementing the new IDP system which could create more stressful situations and add workload. However, bringing in a new law will develop framework that puts children in the centre of all decisions and create a unified system.

