



(1707507) May 2020. EAEE6002 Children with additional support needs: inclusion, advocacy and equity.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS REFORM WALES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS WITH REGARDS TO FINANCE, TRAINING, TIME AND RESOURCES

What are the Additional Learning Needs reforms?

The term (Act) Special Education Needs (SEN), Special Education Provision (SEP) is changing in Wales to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Additional Needs Provision (ANP).

In Early years settings and schools, the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) will be renamed Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) (Welsh Government, 2018).

This reform was scheduled for implementation in September 2020, however, there has been delays and LAs are not ready for the launch of the Individual Development Plans (IDPs) leaving a delay of a year (Lewis, 2019). Welsh Government (2018) say one of the 11 aims is the IDPs will improve provision at all levels enabling a learner to work to their full potential.



Previous reforms

Crutchley (2018) say many reforms have been written over the last decade. In 2014 the United Kingdom saw a reform within Children and Families which had a substantial element linked to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). Then the Code of Practice 2001 was substituted with Send Code of Practice 2015. This specified LAs needed to ensure a child and families viewpoints were listened to and both reforms prioritised safeguarding children with SEND and make certain they were protected from discrimination and prejudice.

What do the reforms consist of? (continued)

There have been fears that the IDP does not have detailed guidance on recognising the individual needs of a person. Due to this the ALN Code, which was set up, will provide a structure relaying minimum standard to be included in the IDP. this will include views of the child and family. One of the 11 aims of the reform states that during the planning process, pupils must be involved and be able to have a voice alongside parents/carers. If more information is required, individuals can visit the governments overview and frequently asked questions (Snap Cymru, 2020).

Who will be responsible for devising the IDPs?

What do the reforms consist of?

Referring to Snap Cymru (2020) every child with ALN will receive a new document (IDP), this will replace the current statement that is written for each child. The Individual Education Plans (IEP) will also change over time. The current statements remain with the individual until they leave school, regardless if they attain a place within further education. The IDPs will stay in place until the person reaches 25 if they are in further education. Snap Cymru say the changes are not going to be major; the document will have extra considerations added to it rather than removing the current system.

What does the Welsh Government wish to achieve?

Writing in 2018 Welsh Government laid out their expectations of the ALN reform for Wales, explaining how they want to enlighten the lives of children with ALN and provide positive outcomes. They insist all barriers within education for pupils with ALN will be removed and describe a system where early intervention is paramount and writing IDPs in a timely manner will ensure needs are met as quickly as possible. However, Meredith (2020) argues that children with ALN are currently being failed due to delays for assessment. Meredith states an internal audit found it was common that delays took place and

The responsibility for developing and implementation of the IDP will be the local authority (LA), but it will be early years settings and schools who must invest time and take liability for deliverance of provision. The LA will be accountable to ensure all settings are reviewed on their ALP for each child Welsh Government (2018). However, BBC News (2019) inform us that research reveals practitioners are concerned they will not get enough hours to learn and apply the new IDPs with children with ALN. The news proclaimed if practitioners do not get resources to aid learning then the likely hood is the new reform will fail.

According to Snap Cymru (2020) there will be thorough guidance for practitioners, and families will be involved to recommend what they hope will be provided for their child within the setting. A multi-agency approach will be deployed to ensure the best outcomes for every child with ALNs. However, Gibbons (2020) state that Times Educational Supplement (TES) say parents are already being blamed for over using the system which in turn leaves a financial deficit for other SEN settings as money has to be removed from these services to finance applications for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Snap Cymru (2020) say one in four EHCP applications are being denied due to finance and time restraints. This would impact schools and practitioners implementing the ALN changes as they would rely on an IDP of the child's needs to

there did not seem to be anybody to take accountability for this.

The current assessment time is intended to be 26 weeks. This seems an unrealistic time frame when the process entails a multi-agency approach, leaving an acceptance that assessment may take a bit longer. However, Meredith (2020) says there is data from DfE illustrating many assessments are taking 40 weeks, this data also showed 280 children waited for more than year to have their assessment during 2018-2019.

Joint agency responsibilities

According to Frost and Robinson (2016) in 2011 the Allen Report and the Munro Review concluded it was paramount that education systems and health services focused on inclusive early intervention, especially when working with a child with ALN. SEN schools have inspections made by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) but currently mainstream schools delivering an education to children with ALN, only have inspections by Estyn. Are there provisions in place for all schools to have CIW involvement? According to Nutbrown, Clough and Selbie, (2008) children's rights as outlined by UNCRC referring to the 4 P's: Prevention; illness and neglect,

successfully amend a curriculum accordingly. Even though DfE have revealed there will be an additional £780 million allocated for ALN services, educators envisage this will still not be sufficient. According to Javanetti (2020), campaigners are concerned this will disadvantage children with ALN.



Provision; with reference to children with ALN, Protection; abuse and exploitation and Participation; having a say in what may affect them. In 1998 the National Childcare Strategy (NCS) was launched by the Labour government, one of their core aims was to invest in early intervention by offering quality and affordable childcare for all children up to age 14. It also led to multi agency partnerships being developed with highly skilled work force being the key to early intervention, to work alongside families, children, communities, care and education.

Practitioners views

Furthermore to Wavehill (2019) stating practitioners are already apprehensive about the future assessment criteria and their role in supporting children with ALN, Meredith (2020) argues practitioners are frightened that if LA assessments can take so long, how are they meant to implement the reform. They already feel under pressure and are worried they will disadvantage children with ALN and not advantage them as the new reform is expected to do.

If an IDP is not produced in an acceptable timescale, a child may not receive the bespoke learning experience, which goes against everything the ALN reforms concede as essential (Parakh, 2017).

According to Donaldson (2015) training for practitioners to implement new curricula is essential to instil confidence and skill. However, Meredith (2020) say there is no evidence of large-scale training and if only a handful of practitioners are privileged to receive training, they will be relied on to pass their knowledge onto other educators. This in turn can have implications as their own ideas and understanding may differ leaving an inconsistent approach throughout the profession.

Referring to Lewis (2018) according to NASUWT teachers union, parents/carers are additionally concerned, and practitioners are unable to restore confidence. Practitioners feel without substantial funding and training, they will not be equipped to implement the huge changes, to a child with ALNs detriment. Nevertheless, Lewis (2018) says Kirsty Williams, education minister for Wales, says the one-year delay will allow changes to run smoothly, and believes the reforms will concentrate more on the child's needs and be simpler to employ than current strategies.

Conclusion/ Welsh governments commitments

In addition to Kirsty William's response to the situation, the Welsh Government (2018) inform us an Early Years expert group had been set up to eliminate early concerns that educators might have. The group did make a few recommendations, they felt there needed to be a focus on how multi-agency will work and concise information needs to be given on which areas the reform would concentrate on. From these recommendations the government concluded £2.1 million will be available to improve the effectiveness of multi-agency involvement and even though the reform will apply to all ALN children from 0-25, an emphasis on the early years will be paramount. They also reassure that the ALN transformation programme will bring together skills development for educators alongside advice and accessible specialist support. They maintain this is of utmost importance as approximately 23 percent of mainstream learners have ALN and are currently underperforming. They assure practitioners that the new system will reduce barriers to learning by seeing the whole child and the stage of their knowledge rather than what they have achieved by age. To supplement this, they say an ALN implementation guide and interactive materials are available, outlining how the roll-out will be facilitated.

Conclusion/discussion points

- Do we need more information on implementation, especially regarding IDPs?
- How are practitioners going to manage?
- Will we be notified of how the allocated money will be distributed?
- Will different LA work consistently?
- Will anyone get training, if so who and when?
- Will this be overload with the new ALN reform and new curriculum being rolled out a year apart?
- As both will be rolled out in phases, will this leave some children advantaged/disadvantaged?

