

What is ALN (Additional Learning Needs)?

Additional Learning Needs is a new term in Wales for learning challenges and disabilities children or young people up to the age of 25 may face in education and throughout life (SNAP Cymru, 2022).

As a result of the *Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018*, the age range of which children and young people with Additional Learning Needs receive support changed from 18 years old to 25 year old. Swansea Council (2020) shares the view of SNAP Cymru (2022), but adds that there is not a direct connection between Additional Learning Needs and Disability.

What is Down Syndrome?

According to the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2022), Down Syndrome is when a person is born with an extra chromosome. Down Syndrome Education (2022) adds that a person with Down Syndrome will likely have differing levels of Additional Learning Need, resulting in delayed development in key areas.

Symptoms and Signs

The NIH (2017) explains common physical symptoms and signs of Down Syndrome include upward slanting eyes, a smaller head, ears and mouth and also decreased physical muscle tone. Alli (2021) agrees but explains there are also cognitive symptoms related to Down Syndrome. They state that children and young people with Down Syndrome find it difficult to understand, find reason in situations and also struggle with social interactions.

Identifying Down Syndrome

NHS (2021) explains that expectant mothers are offered a screening test to better understand their chances of having a child with Down Syndrome between 10 and 14 weeks of pregnancy. Mayo Clinic (2018) supports NHS (2021), but further adds that these screenings begin with blood tests which measure levels of HCG and proteins, abnormal levels may indicate a difficulty with the baby. NHS (2020) further acknowledges NHS (2021) and Mayo Clinic (2018) by adding that a nuchal translucency scan can also be performed which measures the fluid on the back of the baby's neck.

Diagnosing Down Syndrome

If abnormalities arise from these tests, this is an indicator that Down Syndrome has been identified (NHS, 2021). Therefore, NHS (2022) explains mothers are offered further tests and procedures to properly diagnose Down Syndrome if they wish to do so. This is called Amniocentesis, although it does help to diagnose other conditions and disabilities (Public Health England, 2021). This is where a small sample of amniotic fluid is taken for further testing (John Hopkins Medicine, 2023).

However, there are current controversial views on allowing screenings and diagnostics to identify conditions such as Down Syndrome. Steinbock (2015) explains that allowing such tests increases the percentage of pregnancy terminations due to the discovery of a baby carrying an extra chromosome.

Barriers

The medical model of disability suggests that the person with the Additional Learning Need or disability is the reason for the apparent barriers a person may face (Manchester Disabled People's Access Group, 2019). On the other hand, the Social Model of Disability suggests that barriers or problems are created by the environment and society in which a person with the ALN lives (Sense, 2023).

In relation to the Medical Model of Disability, it can be considered that there are cognitive barriers within education for children and young people living with Down Syndrome. For example, these children may have difficulty holding their concentration for long periods of time due to having a short attention span (Lynn, 2017).

UNICEF (2019) further explains that people's opinions on whether children and young adults should be integrated into mainstream schools and society are split. However, a third of people in Armenia still believe that children with a disability or additional learning need should be kept from society and enrol in special schools only.

In relation to the Social Model of Disability, children with Down Syndrome may face attitudinal barriers from society and the environment in which they live (SCOPE, 2018). People today still have a negative attitude towards others that live with an Additional Learning Need or disability. However, these people's opinions vary depending on their level of education, age and area or residence (UNICEF, 2019).

Support Strategy

Today, more children with Down Syndrome are enrolling into mainstream education rather than special schools (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, it is important for educators and staff to be able to provide appropriate strategies to help support all aspects of their individual needs.

An appropriate strategy to help support children with Down Syndrome in education is by creating an Individual Development Plan (IDP). SNAP Cymru (No Date) explains this is a plan that all children with Additional Learning Needs will have to ensure they receive the correct support, by outlining targets and potential outcomes for the individual child. This helps practitioners maintain a steady routine for children, so that they can understand their activities better and helps to manage introduction of new ideas without allowing the child to become overwhelmed (SCoTENS, 2008).

However, IDP's are not appropriate for every child with Down Syndrome. Some children have more challenging levels of Down Syndrome and therefore need more specifically adapted and tailored support for their needs (Down's Syndrome Association, 2021b).

By creating IDP's and tailoring them to each child's individual needs and abilities, this creates an inclusive environment for every child and specifically children with Down Syndrome who need extra support from peers and practitioners (SCoTENS, 2008).

Reference List

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents/enacted> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Alli, R. (2021) *What are the Symptoms of Down Syndrome?* Available at: <https://www.webmd.com/children/understanding-down-syndrome-symptoms> (Accessed: 6 January 2023).

CARE (2022) *Abortion and Disability: What does the Law say?* Available at: <https://care.org.uk/news/2022/07/abortion-and-disability-what-does-the-law-say> (Accessed: 16 January 2023).

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) *Facts about Down Syndrome*. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/downsyndrome.html> (Accessed: 10 December 2022).

Cuckle, P. (1999) 'Getting in and staying there; Children with Down Syndrome in mainstream schools', *Down Syndrome Research and Practice*, 6(2), pp. 95-99. Available at: <https://cdn.dseonline.app/pubs/a/reviews-100.pdf> (Accessed: 14 January 2023).

Down's Syndrome Association (2021a) *About Down's Syndrome*. Available at: <https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-downs-syndrome/> (Accessed: 11 December 2022).

Down's Syndrome Association (2021b) *Children, Families and Education*. Available at: <https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-downs-syndrome/life-journey/children-families-and-education/> (Accessed: 18 January 2023).

Down Syndrome Education (2022) *Development and Learning*. Available at: <https://www.down-syndrome.org/en-gb/about-down-syndrome/development/> (Accessed: 11 December 2022).

Hargreaves, S. et al. (2021) *Educational experiences of pupils with Down syndrome in the UK: A parent and educators survey*. Available at: <https://www.down-syndrome.org/en-gb/research/forum/2021/program/issues-perspectives-education/> (Accessed: 14 January 2023).

Jarvis, S. and Tidy, C. (2021) *Down's Syndrome Screening*. Available at: <https://patient.info/pregnancy/pregnancy-screening-tests/prenatal-screening-and-diagnosis-of-downs-syndrome> (Accessed: 2 January 2023).

Reference List

John Hopkins Medicine (2023) *Amniocentesis*. Available at: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/amniocentesis> (Accessed: 19 January 2023).

Lynn, M. (2017) *Activities Using Music with Down's Syndrome Children*. Available at: <https://healthfully.com/132563-activities-using-music-with-downs-syndrome-children.html> (Accessed: 7 January 2023).

Manchester Disabled People's Access Group (2019) *The Medical Model of Disability*. Available at: <http://www.mdpag.org.uk/resources/the-medical-model-of-disability/> (Accessed: 5 January 2023).

Mayo Clinic (2018) *Down Syndrome*. Available at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/down-syndrome/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20355983#:~:text=Down%20syndrome%201%20Screening%20tests%20during%20pregnancy.%20Screening,during%20pregnancy.%20If%20your%20screening%20test%20results%20are> (Accessed: 5 January 2023).

NIH (2017) *What are common symptoms of Down Syndrome?* Available at: <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/down/conditioninfo/symptoms> (Accessed: 1 January 2023).

NHS (2019) *What is Down's Syndrome?* Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/downs-syndrome/> (Accessed: 11 December 2022).

NHS (2020) *12-week Scan*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/your-pregnancy-care/12-week-scan/> (Accessed: 6 January 2023).

NHS (2021) *Screening for Down's Syndrome, Edwards' Syndrome and Patau' Syndrome*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/your-pregnancy-care/screening-for-downs-edwards-pataus-syndrome/> (Accessed: 2 January 2023).

NHS (2022) *Overview: Amniocentesis*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/amniocentesis/> (Accessed: 7 January 2023).

Public Health England (2021) *Screening in pregnancy: CVS and amniocentesis information for parents*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cvs-and-amniocentesis-diagnostic-tests-description-in-brief/nhs-fetal-anomaly-screening-programme-chorionic-villus-sampling-cvs-and-amniocentesis-information-for-parents#amniocentesis> (Accessed: 8 January 2023).

SCOPE (2018) *Disabled people still face negative attitudes*. Available at: <https://www.scope.org.uk/news-and-stories/disabled-people-still-face-negative-attitudes/> (Accessed: 16 January 2023).

Reference List

SCoTENS (2008) *Down's Syndrome – Classroom Strategies*. Available at: <https://scotens.org/teaching-pupils-with-down%E2%80%99s-syndrome/#:~:text=Down%E2%80%99s%20Syndrome%20%E2%80%93%20Classroom%20strategies%20%20Create%20an,on%20numeracy.%20...%207%20Reinforce%20positive%20behaviour.%20> (Accessed: 17 January 2023).

Sense (2023) *The Social Model of Disability*. Available at: <https://www.sense.org.uk/about-us/the-social-model-of-disability/#:~:text=The%20social%20model%20of%20disability%20is%20the%20understanding,There%20are%20physical%20barriers%20that%20disabled%20people%20face.> (Accessed: 14 January 2023).

SNAP Cymru (No Date) *Individual Development Plan (IDP)*. Available at: <https://www.snapcymru.org/get-support/idps/> (Accessed: 13 January 2023).

SNAP Cymru (2022) *What is ALN?* Available at: <https://www.snapcymru.org/get-support/what-is-aln/> (Accessed: 10 December 2022).

Steinbock, B. (2015) *Banning Abortion for Down Syndrome: Legal or Ethical Justification?* Available at: <https://www.thehastingscenter.org/banning-abortion-for-down-syndrome-legal-or-ethical-justification/#:~:text=Since%20prenatal%20tests%20for%20Down%20syndrome%20are%20done,until%20viability%2C%20which%20occurs%20in%20the%20third%20trimester.> (Accessed: 15 January 2023).

Swansea Council (2020) *What does 'Additional Learning Needs' mean?* Available at: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/whatdoesALNmean> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

UNICEF (2019) *Understanding Attitudes towards Children with Disabilities in Armenia*. Available at: [Understanding attitudes towards children with disabilities in Armenia | UNICEF](#) (Accessed: 16 January 2023).