

IMPENDING CHANGES TO SEN/ALN LEGISLATION IN WALES

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 is set to replace the current Special Educational Needs (SEN) framework. Although the act was set to go live in September 2020 Williams (2021) has announced that the new system will be implemented from the beginning of September 2021. This is because of the impact that covid has had on schools and settings.

What are the changes to the legislation?

SEN----->ALN Special Educational Needs will now be referred to as Additional Learning Needs.
SENCo ----->ALNCo Special Educational Needs Co Ordinator will become Additional Learning Needs Co Ordinator.
IEP----->IDP Individual Education Pland, Early years Action plans/Action plan plus and statements will be replaced by Individual Development Plans (Snap Cymru 2021). The transformation of the Special Education Needs framework aims to creat a unified system that will support learners with ALN from the ages of 0-25 (Welsh Government 2018a).



(Source: Welsh Government 2020)

What are Individual Development Plans (IDP)

IDP's are set to replace Statements of special educational needs and individual education plans (IEP's) .Schools will put an IDP in place for each child that they have determined has ALN, schools make the decision of whether a child has ALN where required however schools can refer such decisions to the local authority if deciding the nature of the learners ALN or deciding what additional learning provision (ALP) is required for the learner is beyond the school's capability (Welsh Government 2018b). This change will happen gradually, All newly identified ALN learners will be supported by the new system of an IDP as of September 2021 and learners already in the SEN system will transition to the new system over a three years (Welsh Parliament 2021). Williams (2021) states that any learner already supported by the current SEN provision will not be included in the first year of implementation and neither will learners in any form of post-16 education.

The Role of an ALNCo

Although SENCo is a non-statutory role a vast majority of education settings have access to a SENCo, however under the new ALN Act 2018 the Welsh Government intend to replace the existing SENCo with ALNCo and this role will be a statutory role (Welsh Government 2018c). ALNCo's are vital to supporting schools deliver their statutory responsibilities under the ALN Act 2018, they have the opportunity to embed systems and practice through leading the education setting in the effective delivery of the ALN system (ERW Wales, No Date).As of January 2021, all maintained mainstream schools are required to designate a person or people as a ALNCo to take responsibility for the coordination of learners with ALN (Welsh Government 2021).The ALNCo is responsible for ensuring that all learners with ALN within their setting are having their individual needs met however they are not expected to be directly involved with the day to day supporting of each learner with ALN and although most of the ALNCo's duties and responsibilities can, not be performed until the ALN system is implemented they can however begin to work with the senior leadership team to ensure their setting is meeting their responsibilities under the Act (Welsh Government 2021).

Further Reading

Draft additional learning needs co-ordinator Wales Regulations- <https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-co-ordinator-wales-regulations-2020>
Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme FAQ's- <https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-transformation-programme-frequently-asked-questions>

Issues and Concerns

There are concerns that the reform will require sufficient funding, resources and time and will increas the workload of schools and professionals (Duff 2017). Equally, these were issues that were noted in the feedback of the draft code along with concerns over the definitian and identification of ALN (Welsh Parliament 2021). Agreeably Duff (2017) argued that the definition ALN focuses mainly on educational and learning needs. Although there are concerns and issues the general feedback has been positive. Notably, the Welsh Government have allocated £20 million for the transformation of the ALN act. There are however concerns that there may be an additional delay in the implemantation of the Act due to the impact Covid19 has had on the education sector (HCB Solicitors 2020).