

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act (2018)

INTRODUCTION

The Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme (2018) states that The Additional Learning Needs act is being introduced to ensure there is a fully inclusive education system in Wales, as 23% of learners in mainstream schools in Wales have Special Educational Needs and these children currently don't progress as much academically as the rest of the population. Additionally, the new legislation will emphasise the importance of early identification and effective intervention strategies to ensure desired outcomes are delivered. (Welsh Government, 2018). The term Additional Learning Needs (ALN) was introduced to replace the terms Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Learning difficulties / disabilities (LDD) which the Welsh government (2018) states were introduced more than 30 years ago and are no longer 'fit for purpose'.

Role of ALNCo.

Snap Cymru (2021) state that one of the main changes in the additional learning needs reform is the change of Special Educational Needs to Additional Learning Needs. Additionally, this means that Special education needs coordinators (SENCOs) will now be known as Additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCo).

The new role of the additional learning needs coordinator is to ensure all the children and young people with additional learning needs have their needs identified and provided for (Snap Cymru, 2021). However, Welsh Government (2021) states that the additional learning needs coordinator must be highly qualified and additionally should have expertise in person centred practice in addition to dealing with a broad spectrum of Additional learning needs.

Sennedd Wales (2020) acknowledged the cost to upskilling and training for the additional learning needs coordinator and found that the costs for the masters programme were expected to be £9,255,320.

Implications:

- ALNCo must now be part of senior management.
- ALNCo must have time away from teaching.
- Cost of training and up-skilling.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

An individual development plan sets out the young person's learning needs and what is required to support them (Welsh Government, 2014). An individual development plan will be put in place for any child the school decides has additional learning needs, the school can then refer their decisions to the local authority (Welsh Government, 2018). The individual development plan is an easy and accessible plan with can easily be updated to meet the children and young people's changing needs, ensuring children are progressing to their full potential (Snap Cymru, 2021).

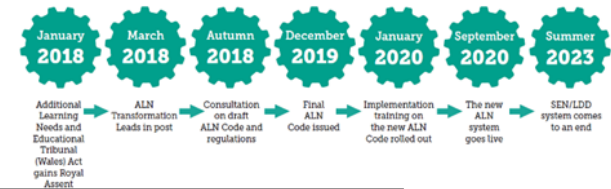
However, although the new individual development plans are easy and accessible, the Welsh Governments research into Individual Development Plans found that practitioners found the workload of IDPs a challenge, they stated that practitioners find the process more time consuming than the original individual education plans, although they did find it worthwhile, they were still concerned about the role of the special educational needs coordinator and how they could manage the process with larger numbers of children and young people in schools, additionally just under half of the practitioners who took part felt the process was worthwhile, whilst many were concerned it was a more time consuming process.

Budgets

The National Assembly for Wales (2017) states that in 2017 the education minister announced plans for a £20 million pound investment for the additional learning needs and education tribunal Wales act (2018).

The Welsh Government (2018) states that a large part of the funding provided by the 20-million-pound package will be used to develop the workforce to ensure all practitioners and partners are prepared for the change, this will include equipping practitioners with the correct skills to ensure the new act meets the learners needs. However, UCU (no date) state that the implementation and support of the bill will not be covered by the welsh government funding.

ALN implementation timeline



Welsh Government (2018)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that the new additional learning needs and education tribunal Wales act had both its benefits and implications. Some of the main implications have been recognised by the Welsh Government already which I have discussed. UCU (No Date) discusses key concerns being funding, role of the additional learning needs coordinator, duties on governing bodies and assessment and IDP template.

However, there has been a number of in-depth implementation plans carried out by the Welsh Government which acknowledge the implications which aim to be improved through the 3-year implementation scheme which will ensure a successful outcome within schools.