

Impending Changes to SEN/ALN

Legislation in Wales

Introduction

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 is set to replace the existing legislation relating to Special Educational Needs (SEN), this new act aims to make provision for a new statutory framework for children and young people from the ages of 0-25 with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (Welsh Government, 2018a). Wales are determined to provide a fully inclusive education system for all learners, an inclusive system that ensures all learners are able to reach their full potential and provided with individualised support (Welsh Government, 2018b). SNAP Cymru (2021) note that the new system will have significant changes for local authorities, schools and further education facilities, due to the nature of it, it will be gradually introduced and guidance explaining the details will also be provided. Welsh Parliament (2021) add that these changes to the systems are long overdue as the existing legislation and guidance is not fit for purpose.

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

The new ALN system is set to replace existing support plans, such as Statements of SEN and Individual Education Plans (IEP), with an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which will be available for any person 0-25 years of age within Wales who has an ALN (Welsh Government, 2020). Although there will be prominent changes, the legal enforcement will remain the same (Gwynedd Council, 2021). SNAP Cymru (no date) suggest that the introduction of IDP's will ensure that the access and updating of documents will be easier and ensure a person centred planning approach is adopted. Children are entitled to their own opinion and views in particularly when the decision relates to them individually.

Increased Collaboration

Welsh Government (2018a) state that the new ALN system will support and promote strong collaboration, any professional who works with children, young people and their families within the educational sector or health and social sector, will have a big part to play in providing and delivering efficient and effective support and care for learners with ALN. Welsh Government (2018b) add that collaboration and information sharing between various agencies are essential in the early identification of needs and also in ensuring that the correct level of individualised support is provided to enable people 0-25 years old to achieve the very best outcomes.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) to Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo)

In Wales, most maintained schools have a SENCo which is a non-statutory role, unlike this ALNCo is a statutory role which will replace the non-statutory role of SENCo (Welsh Government, 2020). In line with section 60 of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act all mainstream maintained schools must have a designated ALNCo (Welsh Government, 2018b). ERW (2020) note that all ALNCo's in Wales have a crucial role to play in preparing schools in order to efficiently deliver their statutory duties and responsibilities under the ALN Act 2018.



ALN Implementation Timeline

The image to the left outlines the timeline that the Welsh Government aim to stick to in order to successfully implement the new Additional Learning Needs system.

Conclusion

Existing legislation and policies are no longer fit for purpose and new legislation is long overdue. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act is set to have many positive influences on children with additional learning needs and practitioners, appropriate and effective training opportunities are going to be provided for a range of practitioners as well as providing detailed guidance to ensure the new system is implemented correctly. The new system will have significant impact on settings and authorities, however this should become a positive impact as the individual and developmental needs of all children with ALN should be met.