

IMPENDING CHANGES TO ALN LEGISLATION IN WALES



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

(VTCT, 2018).

Introduction

- In Wales there are currently 105,000 pupils who are identified as having SEN/ALN, that is 1 in 5 children. (Dauncey,2016).
- The purpose of the reforms is to create a more unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with additional learning needs (ALN).
- The new legislation will transform the ALN system in Wales by providing improved support to children and young people, with plans to transform expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with additional learning need (Welsh Government, 2018). However, Inger (2014) notes that legislation alone is not enough to address the differences in experience and quality of SEN provision across schools in Wales.

Role of ALNCo

- The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) is a statutory role, which is replacing the non-statutory early years Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) role that exists now (SNAP Cymru, 2020).
- Under the new legislation all maintained schools must designate a senior member of staff who has equal status to the Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher, to be the ALNCo.
- The new ALN Code provides detailed guidance of the new legal framework for professionals who work with children with ALN (SNAP Cymru, 2020). However, although finding legislation via websites has been made more accessible, Heaton (2013) notes the readers are a broad range of people, practitioners maybe confused by what they have found, regarding the law by its users, as intimidating and complex.

Implementing the changes

- £20 million funding package to support ALN learners and for developing the workforce (Welsh Government, 2020.)
- Implementation training to be rolled out early in 2021, Snap Cymru (2020) note that for the reforms to be a success, schools and partnerships with parents need to be at the heart of the implementation process.
- Estyn (2018) reports schools already building on good practice, increasing parent participation in their child's learning and needs.
- The new ALN system places an increased emphasis on a multi-agency approach working with learners and their families, planning in a person-centred way (Welsh Government, 2020).
- Estyn (2018) reports on the positive impact a multi agency approach has had on the pupil and parent, in schools that have established this process.

Costs and funding

- Welsh Government (2018) have made provisions for a 2-year funding grant to local authorities and further education institutions for the development of person-centred practice across the workforce. However, County Councils Network (2019) report that authorities already face a funding black hole of £21.5 billion over the next 5 years.
- Welsh Government, (2019) announces more time is needed for the reform, postponing the roll out of the new ALN system by a year.
- Lewis (2019) reports SNAP Cymru agree with delay of the new system due to schools not being ready in both resources and insufficient funds.
- D'Souza (2019) notes the teaching union UCAC welcomes the extra year, agreeing on the importance the new ALN system being effectively implemented.

Conclusion

- Funding is crucial to ensure training of the workforce, and in terms of expertise.
- In response, Welsh Government (2019) have invested an extra £8 million in addition to the £20 million package to support those with additional learning needs to ensure they receive high quality education and reach their full potential.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales (WG, 2019) agrees, investing now before the new law is implemented, to provide immediate support to children and young people and to increase our capacity across Wales.

Further reading:

<http://www.snapcymru.org/>

<http://www.aln.wales/>