

SEN to ALN Reform Changes in Wales

Introduction

According to Welsh Government (No date) 2016 statistics show one in five children have Special Educational Needs. Dauncey (2018) states the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2004 needed to be updated as it is not fit for purpose. Welsh Government began reviewing the SEN current framework to identify improvements which needed to be made to be relevant of the needs of the children of today. The new Additional Learning Needs Framework will be phased into practice over three year to enable practitioners and Local Educational Authorities time to gain the necessary training needed for the new framework. Welsh Government (2018) claims changes needed to be made to modernize the old SEN system to create a unified, transparent, collaborative and cohesive system, where children with Additional Learning Needs will gain a swifter and detailed programme of support from all agencies involved by using the new style IDP's.

Role of the Alenco

Welsh Government (2018) have made changes to the role of the Alenco as it is now mandatory to have an Alenco in a setting. As stated by Welsh Government (2020) training all Alencos's will participate in advanced skills development through the Additional Learning Needs transformation Programme. This will ensure Alenco's have clear understanding of the changes which are pertinent to their role and are confident to implement the changes within their setting. In addition to this, the Alenco will have to work cooperatively with multiple agencies to ensure a smooth transition of changing the old style IEP's to the new style IDP's. Furthermore, Dewi Cymru (2018) maintains an Alenco is an advocate for a child with Additional Learning Needs as they help children look at options available to them, actively listens and supports decisions made by the child ensuring the child knows their rights and helps the child to express their feelings and opinions.

Changes involving IEP's to IDP's

Under the new Additional Learning Needs Framework, IEP's, IBP's and PEP's will be replaced by the new Individual Development Plan.

Welsh government have moved away from the educational sector being the lead, to having joint partnership between health and social services. The IDP will take a person centred approach and will include a one page profile and a action plan stating what strategies work well for the child and strategies which do not. Additionally, it will include the opinions, views and needs of the child. This upholds the rights of the child as stated by Unicef (No date), the UNCRC article 12 includes the child's right to express their thoughts and feelings and have their views respected. Welsh Government (2020) have created a national form for the IDP as this will create consistency across all agencies and counties in Wales. The IDP will be available to all agencies at any time. It will be reviewed annually unless changes occur before that date.



Changes from SEN to ALN

Welsh Government (2018) implementation of The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) gained Royal Assent in 2018 enabling legislative changes to be made to the old SEN Code of Practice. The change in the name of the Code of Practice is more inclusive as it encompasses more children under the umbrella of Additional Needs. Equity is achieved as children with some additional needs are as valued as children who have severe additional needs. Furthermore, the old style SEN school system was separate from the LDD in further education. However, under the new ALN system, these will now be combined to create a 0-25 age range to ensure a smooth transition to overcome previous barriers of loss of information between settings. Also, it is now mandatory to have an Alenco in a setting.

Conclusion

The current SEN Code of Practice reformation is overdue and much needed. The implementation of the new ALN Code of Practice will bring a simpler, bilingual, more transparent process of assessing, tracking and inclusiveness. It will reduce the timescales for identification and enables a shorter time before support is provided. All of the above changes will improve support given to children with additional learning needs.