

The Implications of Changes to Additional Learning Needs Legislation for Early Years

Practitioners in Wales

Introduction

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 replaces the current Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice in Wales. These changes came into place as the Welsh Government recognised that the current system based on a model over 30 years old had become outdated and no longer fit for purpose. The new Act aims to remove inconsistencies and unfairness Dauncey (2016). It is expected the ALN system will be fully implemented over a three-year period from September 2020 to August 2023. up until then all existing SEN legislation will apply until the implementation period has concluded. According to ERW (2018) the new ALNET Act does not replace any duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Increased Collaboration

This is one of the most important aims of the Act and seeks to ensure that local authorities and health bodies work together in the best interests of the learner. Where necessary, IDPs will include additional learning provision (ALP) agreed by health, social services and other services as well as education. IDPs will contain an action plan that is clear about which agency is responsible for delivering the individual element. Welsh Government (2016).

According to Welsh Government the Act requires that learners' views should always be considered as part of the planning process, along with those of their parents/carers. It is imperative that children and young people see the planning process as something which is done with them rather than to them.

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Individual development plans (IDPs) will replace statements of special educational needs (SEN) and individual education plans (IEPs) for learners. Welsh Government (2018). The draft ALN Code proposes that a school must prepare an IDP promptly, and in any event within 35 schools days. The equivalent period in the case of a local authority is 12 weeks. The Act requires that the views, wishes and feelings of children, their parents and young people are considered at all stages of the IDP process. Welsh Government (2020). According to Welsh Government (2018) The Act creates a single statutory plan to replace the existing variety of statutory and non-statutory SEN or LDD plans for learners in schools and further education. According to Dauncey (2017) there will be the same type of plan for all learners with ALN regardless of their severity

Other Significant Changes

ALNCo will replace SENCo

All Early Years Provisions under the new Act will have to have in place a designated ALNCo. This is crucial in ensuring consistency and high standards are met. The ALNCo position will replace the existing non-statutory SENCo role, which the Welsh Government says is currently interpreted differently across settings and local authorities Duancey (2017).

Age Range

The new Act will cover ages from birth to 25. The aim is to improved transition between early year's education providers, schools and post-16 education however there be no right to an education up to the age of 25. According to Welsh Government This is will replace the two separate systems currently operating to support children and young people of compulsory school age who have SEN, and young people in further education who have Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities (LDD).

Training

Money will be invested in educating the current workforce ensuring that all practitioners working with learners with ALN will have the skills needed to do so. There will be a training package provided incorporating three levels; core skills development, advanced skills development and specialist skills development Welsh Government (2018).

Terminology

The Act replaces the existing terms, Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD), with the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN). According to ERW (2018) the new definition ALN now includes learners whose learning disability or difficulty arises from a medical condition.

Additional learning needs (ALN) timeline



Snap Cymru (2018)

Further Reading

www.snapcymru.org

www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-transformation-programme-introduction

www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act