

ALN Legislation in Wales

Introduction.

Welsh Government (WG) (2019) states the new statutory Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system has been created for children and young people aged 0 to 25 years of age as a modern multi-agency approach that will support them on the journey throughout their education. Notably, this was to replace the 30-year-old Special Educational Needs (SEN) system that is outdated and not fit for purpose as learners' outcomes are considered poor compared to the rest of the pupil population in Wales (Education Wales, 2020). The new ALN system was to be implemented in September 2020 over a three-year rolling programme according to (WG, 2018). However, it was pushed back as some organisations including the National Deaf Children's Society (2018) pointed out improvements that needed to be addressed before the code was finalised. In contradiction to this the education minister for Wales 'Kirsty Williams' stated the delay was due to unsatisfactory time to ensure schools, colleges and councils were ready for the ALN reform (D'Souza, 2019).

"EVERY Child has special talents. It is our duty and privilege to find these talents and to adapt our lessons to best implement them."

(Meehan, 2019)

The transformation from SEN to ALN.

The transformation of SEN to ALN places the child or young person at the centre of discussions, ensuring their views, wishes and feelings are included in the process of planning support that will enable them to effectively learn and achieve their full potential (WG, 2021). However, one implication early years practitioners will endure is the increased collaboration with communities, families, and other professionals (Well-being of future Generations Act, 2015).

The new ALN code provides clear, legal enforced parameters, within which early years practitioners are responsible for the delivery of education for children and young people with ALN must Act (WG, 2019a). Some early years practitioners are concerned that this could lead to Parents having more control over schools to meet the needs of every child, including holding them accountable for unsatisfactory provisions (Conn and Hutt, 2020).

Conversion of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) to Individual Development Plan (IDP).

The implementation of IEPs for children with special educational needs has been internationally accepted in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the USA (National Council for Special Education, 2006). As IEPs identify adaptations or interventions needed to the educational curriculum to accommodate the needs of individual learners (Tremblay, 2007). However, Estyn (2018) states some early years practitioners do not carry out assessments or progress tracking efficiently which can lead to a lack of planning and implementing appropriate strategies to support pupils. Further, more this can lead to a delay in the process of an assessment to issue a statement which can take up to 26 weeks (WG, 2020).

In comparison the IDP is planned through a person-centred approach (Snap Cymru, 2014) with a time scale that would be in place within 13 weeks (WG, 2020). However, the preparation involved in putting an IDP together could on occasions require extra time and effort for early years practitioners as specialist in-put and advice will be required (WG, 2020).

The role from SENCo to ALNCo.

The role of a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) included co-ordinating the provision of (SEN) within schools for children who were identified as needing support (WG, 2017). However, with the change in legislation to Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) requires a broader responsibility of leasing and securing specialist services to support the effectiveness of an Additional Learning Provision (ALP) for children aged 0 to 25 years (WG, 2021). Further responsibilities include liaising with early years providers to facilitate a smooth transition into mainstream education (ALN Wales, 2019). However, results from National Education Workforce Survey (2017) reported that 59.4% of practitioners already felt unable to manage their workload during the agreed working hours (Educational Workforce Council, 2017). In comparison, a survey by National Foundation for Educational Research highlighted key findings that practitioners reported working less hours in 2019 compared to 2016 (Department of Education, 2019).

In conclusion. It cannot be denied that the new ALN Legislation in Wales will be beneficial as a single unified support system for children and young people with ALN to improve outcomes. However, Sibita (2020) gives caution to ensure the Welsh government works closely with local authorities to ensure expenditure does not exceed targets set, as evident in the reform in England.