

The impending changes to ALN legislation in Wales

What is the new legislation and why is it changing?

The new legislation Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 is replacing the current systems. The current Special Educational Needs (SEN) systems are included in section 4 of the Education Act 1996 this therefore means that this system is no longer fit for purpose (Welsh Government (WG), 2017). Mitchell and Ellis (2020) describe the bill as a once in a generation reform. Under the new legislation the term Special Needs is replaced with Additional Learning Needs (WG, 2020). By removing the term Special needs it is hoped that the stigma and labelling of children can be removed from society (WG, 2018). This will in therefore promote equality and inclusion for all students thus meeting the equality Act 2010 (WG, 2020).

Additional Learning Needs is a wide spectrum (Swansea Council, 2019). The Welsh Government (2017) describe a child with ALN as a child who has a learning difficulty or disability. Swansea Council (2019) suggests children with ALN will often fall into more than 1 area of need as they are constantly developing.

Welsh language

In the draft bill there was no mention of Welsh language provisions this has since been changed and been included in the aims (WG, 2018). Children and their Carers should be consulted when planning an IDP a about their chosen language and what language their Additional Learning Provision (ALP) will be in, this will be an ongoing decision (WG, 2018). However Mitchell and Elis (2020) suggest protentional barriers including the recruitment of welsh speakers impact on child having ALP in welsh. The Welsh Government 2006 Act Cymraeg 2050 aims to have 1 million welsh speakers by 2050. However in 2020 28.8% of the population in Wales spoke Welsh (StatsWales, 2020). Mitchell and Ellis (2020) also suggest where welsh is not the dominate language then there could be difficulty in meeting the need of the child. Mitchell and Elis (2020) also state that there could be difficulty if the child was to move counties or if they move to a out of country placement.

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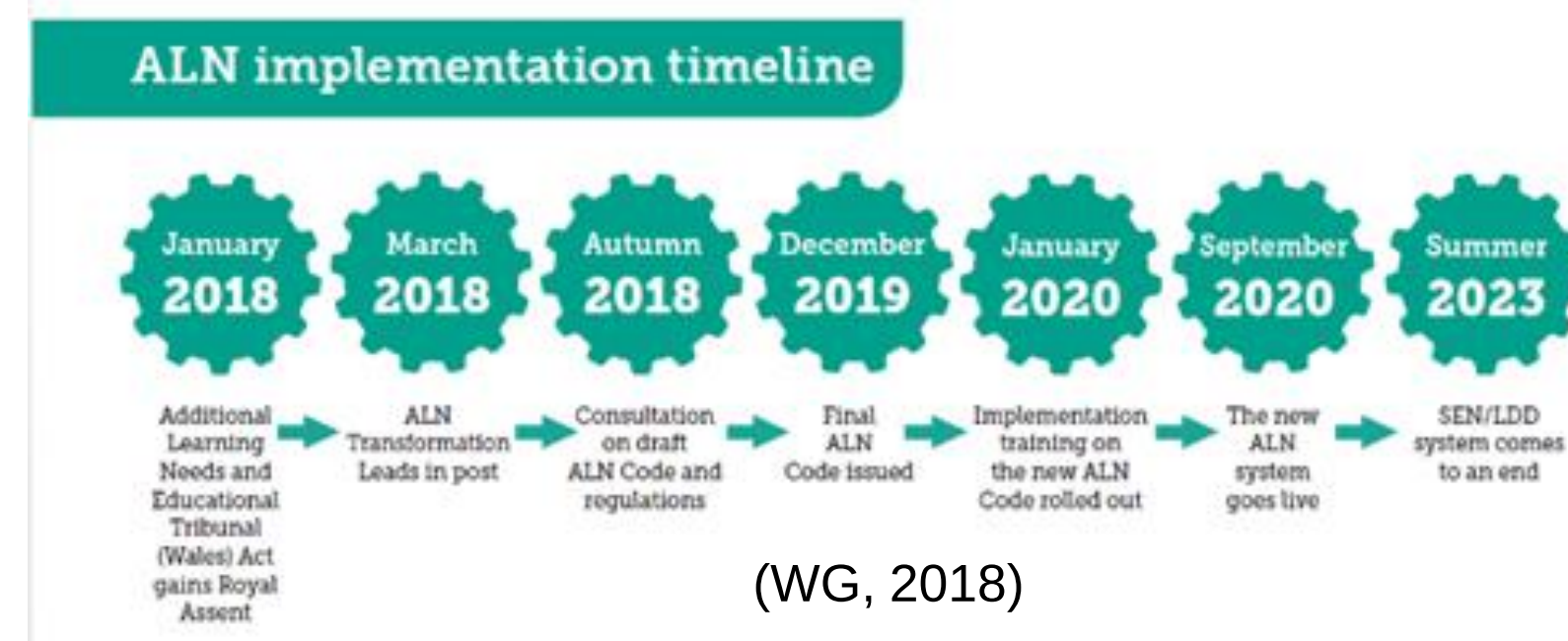
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SENCO to ALNCO

Individual Development Plans (IDP's)

Currently children with ALN will have a statement of special needs. However, from September 2021 children will have a Individual Development Plan (IDP) (WG, 2021). A IDP will be linked to either education or training provision depending on the age (Mitchell and Ellis, 2020) .A statement of Special Educational Needs (WAG, 2010) lasts until 19 years if stay in education or 16 years if they leave. However, an IDP has an age range of 0 to 25 years (WG, 2021). Any child with a SEN statement, School or Early Years Action and Action plus will have an IDP (Snap Cymru, 2014). Nursery, years 1, 2,3,5,7 and 10 children who have a school action or a school action plus or who do not have a diagnosed SEN before 1st September 2021 will be included in the first year of the implementation (WG, 2021). An IDP will be a single plan which will be developed using a person centred planning approach (WG, 2017). Also need to take into consideration the voice of the child and the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (WG, 2021). Swansea Parent Carer Forum (2020) state that their needs to be a culture change of not just looking at paperwork but listening to the child. By involving parents and carers Ware (2014) state it will enable them to have more confidence in the school. Ware (2014) also states that parents and carers will feel that the child is being given the support that they require.



Under the new legislation the term Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is being replaced with Additional Learning Needs Coordination (ALNCO) (WG, 2017). The new legislation is also creating 2 new job roles these include the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (ALNLO) and the DECLO (WG, 2017). In order to become an ALNCO teacher's need to be employed at the school for over 3 terms and have the relevant experience (WG, 2021). However Welsh Government (2021) also state in exceptional circumstances if the previous SENCO at the school does not have these qualifications that they are able to remain at the post. Mitchell and Ellis (2020) state that the ALNCO will have a strategic role and new responsibilities. These new responsibilities will include the co-ordination of resources and staff, supporting staff, and being involved in budgeting (WG, 2021). The ALNCO will liaise with other agencies on how to best meet the needs of the child (WG, 2021). The ALNCO will also become a resource for the staff at the setting and will be in charge of training supporting staff (WG,2021). However Winwood (2012) states that this could lead to a heavier workload which could lead to stress and added pressure. Swansea Parent Carer Forum (2020) state that there is concern that ALNCO's will not have the time required for them to effectively complete their job. However Welsh Government (2021) state ALNCO's should have sufficient time. In addition to the extra responsibilities the ALNCO will form part of the senior leadership team (WG, 2021). However, there is concern regarding smaller schools where the head teacher would take the role of SENCO (Mitchell and Ellis, 2020). Welsh Government (2020) have since stated that in certain circumstances schools may share an ALNCO.

Further reading

Gwynedd Council (2021) Example of IDP. Available at: <https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Residents/Documents-Residents/Schools-and-learning-documents/ALN/PDF---F9.pdf>

Welsh Government (2018) Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018: <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-04/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act-2018-explanatory-memorandum.pdf>