

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform



The approach to supporting children who have difficulties with learning has changed in Wales. The Welsh Government has passed new legislation, called the Additional Learning Needs (Wales) Act 2018, and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021, which replace all of the previous legislation and guidance about special educational needs.

The main changes include:

- Bringing together all existing systems into a new, single system for ALN
- Being more learner-centred
- Providing learners with the same rights and entitlements whatever their age or setting
- Improving transition between settings
- Providing Welsh language provision where needed
- Being a fair and transparent system for all

The Welsh Government hope that these changes will mean that children and their parents and young people will:

- Get the support they need earlier
- Be more involved in making decisions about their lives and the support they need
- Be able to find information more easily than before
- Be supported if they disagree with decisions
- Be able to appeal decisions to the education tribunal
- The new law says that a 'child' means an individual under compulsory school age (16 years), while a 'young person' is someone aged between 16 and 25 over compulsory school age.

Children and young people who have additional educational needs and disabilities will now receive support for longer using one system. Some young people may be able to get support until the age of 25.

The government wants children, their parents and young people to have more say about the support they need.

For young people 16 or over, they will be the main person making decisions, however they may still want to ask their parents to help them make decisions. They can also ask for information advice and advocacy from someone impartial.

This new system will protect the rights of all children, regardless of the extent of their additional learning needs.

What happens now?

Most children and young people have their learning needs met through **universal support** in the classroom which can include, for example, small group work and differentiation. However, children and young people with special educational needs have additional or different support to that usually provided, which is outlined in one of the following:

- A Statement of Special Educational Needs
- An Individual Education Plan
- Learning Skills Plan

What's Changed?

From September 2021, a new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system began to replace the previous Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. As well as the name change, responsibilities towards children and young people with ALN has also changed.

All children with Additional Learning Needs, within a specified timeframe, will have an **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** which will replace the current SEN Statement, Individual Education Plan or Learning and Skills Plan. The IDP template will include a one-page profile to ensure that IDPs reflect the child's or young person's needs and personality, including what is 'important to' and 'important for them'.

Learners with Additional Learning Need who require **Additional Learning Provision (ALPs)** to be made for them, will be entitled to an IDP outlining their support needs. This new system will protect the rights of all children, regardless of the extent of their additional learning needs.

When the Changes are Made, What Will Happen to Existing Statements?

Any existing statements will continue to be legal documents until replaced by an IDP or until the local authority tells you that it intends to end a statement.

The new 'Decision Making Duty' on Schools, Colleges and Local Authorities

When a school or college or LA is 'made aware' that a child or young person may have additional learning needs, it **MUST** decide whether that child or young person does have additional learning needs unless:

- An individual development plan (IDP) is already in place for the child or young person
- A decision has already been made and the school is satisfied that the child's needs have not changed since that decision and there is no new information;
- The young person(16+) does not consent (agree) to the decision being made

What Role do Children, Their Parents, and Young People Have in the Process?

Schools, colleges and local authorities should work in partnership with parents, carers, children and young people to prepare an IDP for children and young people with ALN.

The new system puts the learner at the heart of everything that happens and the Welsh Government expect schools, FEIs and local authorities to take a person-centred approach to planning for, and supporting children and young people.

The ALN Act 2018 says that that the views, wishes and feelings of children, their parents and young people must be considered at all stages of the IDP process.

Parents and carers can request that a school consider their child's needs and request that a decision regarding ALN and IDP's are made. If the school decides that the child does not have ALN, it must notify the child and their parents/carers of the decision and the reasons for it.

For further information please see link below

<https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs>