

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	September 2021
LOCATION:	Virtual
TITLE:	Additional Learning Needs strategy
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To update cabinet on Ceredigion's Additional Learning Needs strategy
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	Update on Additional Learning Needs

BACKGROUND:

The New Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales was issued in March 2021 with the intention to implement the new system from September 2021. However, the implementation programme has been revised due to the impact of the pandemic.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (2018) Act Wales is a part of the wider education reform programme in Wales. This provides a new statutory framework for supporting children with additional learning needs (ALN), and is accompanied by a mandatory Code which makes sure that the new system has a set of clear, legally enforceable parameters within which schools, local authorities and other partners responsible for the delivery of services to children and young people with ALN must act. The Additional Learning Needs Code <https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-code>

The aim of the new approach, as stated in the Code is as follows:

'To support the creation of a fully inclusive education system where all learners are given the opportunity to succeed and have access to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning.'

The new statutory framework is underpinned by the following 5 principles:

- a) **A rights-based approach** where the views, wishes and feelings of the child, child's parents/carers or young person are central to planning and provision of support.
- b) **Early identification, intervention and effective transition planning.**
- c) **Collaboration** where all involved work together in the best interests of the child or young person
- d) **Inclusive education** supporting participation fully in mainstream education, wherever, feasible and a whole setting approach to meeting the needs of learners with ALN.
- e) **A bilingual system** where all reasonable steps are taken to deliver ALP in Welsh for children and young people who require support through the medium of Welsh.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Due to the significant impact of the pandemic the ALN implementation plan was further reviewed by the Minister in July 2021 to be as follows:

From 1 September 2021, the ALN system will commence exclusively for children of compulsory school age and below who:

- are newly identified as having an additional learning needs (ALN) following ALN Code processes, regardless of their setting - including those that may attend an EOTAS setting, an independent school or who are electively home educated;
- are detained;

From 1st January 2022, the ALN system will commence for children of compulsory school age and below who:

- attend maintained schools (including PRUs) in Nursery Years 1 and 2 and Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 10) who have special educational provision via early years action / early years action plus or school action SA /school action plus SAP;
- Children who currently have special educational provision via a statement; are awaiting or are in the process of an SEN assessment; and those who are over compulsory school age, will not be included in the first year of implementation.
- The movement of children to the new system is spread throughout the year.
- Parents will not be able to request a move to the new system until 1st January 2022.

Local Authorities are still awaiting the final three-year implementation guidance, which is expected to be published early in the Autumn term. This delayed guidance, is impacting the certainty of advice we are able to deliver to schools, as well as the preparation we are able to undertake with our parents and support agencies.

Ceredigion's ALN Vision Statement:

To create a fully inclusive education system in Ceredigion, where Ceredigion learners are given the opportunity to succeed and have access to local education provision that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from and enjoy learning.

Ceredigion authority, like Welsh Government, believes that improving outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs is everyone's responsibility. Accordingly, it works in partnership with schools, parents and other agencies to ensure that all children in Ceredigion, whatever their need, are valued, experience success in their learning, achieve their potential and personal goals and maximise their chances of a full and meaningful life.

At all stages Ceredigion will promote the independence and resilience of all pupils, so that they can lead dignified lives in their local community through the provision of sustainable and integrated services that support them. All services will be developed through the person-centred processes of collaboration and co-production, which emphasise facilitated discussion

about needs, outcomes and provision that consider views, wishes and feelings and are designed to avoid or resolve disputes and disagreements at an early stage.

Under the new ALN system local authorities have a duty to review the arrangements made by schools to meet the needs of learners with ALN. This guidance will outline Ceredigion Authority's principles and expectations for educating children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). It also provides clarity on what is expected of Ceredigion mainstream schools in meeting the needs of learners with ALN and will be reviewed by the authority. This document will form an integral part of the authority's framework for meeting the needs of all children and young people between the ages of 0 and 25.

Ceredigion is already well placed to implement many of the principles of the new ALN reforms:

- favouring mainstream education and inclusive provision;
- the availability of interventions and ALN provision through Welsh;
- person centred practice is already embedded in the majority of Ceredigion schools;
- our Resource Panel system will continue to be effective in considering schools' referrals for LA support and LA maintained IDP;
- an 'ALN Readiness survey' last term demonstrated that many of our larger schools are confident that they will be able to meet the statutory requirements;
- we have introduced a system of ALNCo Champions to further support our ALNCoS in ensuring they will be ready to meet the requirements of the ALN Act and Code;
- we have provided additional funding to schools to provide additional non-contact time for our ALNCoS, so that they have the time to implement the necessary changes during the transition period;
- our central staff team have set aside one day a week for focussed preparation work for the ALN system. This will continue this term;
- we have produced an ALN Toolkit for schools which should be finalised and shared by the 9th of September.
- Ceredigion has a well-established multi-agency forum for discussing and supporting pre-school children in Nursery settings and has sound transition processes from Nursery to school.
- Ceredigion has established closer links with staff from our FEI and share responsibility for specialist provision at post 19 (Camu Mlaen).

There are also some risks involved:

- the fact that we still have no clear guidance from Welsh Government regarding the specifics of the revised Implementation plan at the beginning of September means that we are having to delay our preparation work with school staff, parents and partner agencies;

- there have been many alterations to the implementation plans over the past three years which has led to uncertainty and lack of confidence;
- the increased work load for ALNCoS and school staff generally, from having to operate two different systems side by side, - alongside the many changes caused by COVID restrictions, should not be underestimated and is likely to lead to increased stress;
- the significant delay in Welsh Government’s publication of ALN training for mainstream teachers means that many are still not sufficiently aware of the increased responsibility that the ALN Act and Code places on them. Ceredigion awareness training has promoted that they will have responsibility for identifying the needs of their learners and providing inclusive provision, through differentiated teaching and standard interventions to meet their learning needs within the classroom. Where this is not effective, parents and learners have significantly increased rights to appeal to the Education Tribunal for Wales;
- school staff are also focusing on preparing for the reform of the New Curriculum for Wales. The close links between the curriculum reform and the ALN reform have not been sufficiently highlighted by Welsh Government which means that at times the curriculum reform has taken precedence over the ALN reform, although the ALN system is already statutory;
- the increased workload on the central ALN team, as a result of changes to the ALN system is heavy. We have been unable to recruit an educational psychologist and have had to recruit an educational psychologist in training who will be unable to start in the role until September 2022. We have had to readvertise the new post of IDP coordinator to write the LA maintained IDPs and to coordinate the provision and attend review meetings.

The new ALN system will operate in parallel to the SEN system, during the three-year implementation period. A review of the implementation plan and principles and expectations document will be provided, once the final implementation plan and information has been confirmed by WG.

Ceredigion’s Principles and Expectations document will be presented to cabinet in due course.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why	No An ALN impact assessment will be completed following receipt of the final implementation plan.
	Summary:	
	Long term:	
	Integration:	
	Collaboration:	
	Involvement:	

	Prevention:	
RECOMMENDATION (S):		
For Information		
REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):		
For Information		
Contact Name:	Meinir Ebbsworth	
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Date of Report:	September 2021	
Acronyms:	ALN- Additional Learning Needs SEN – Special Educational Needs ALNCO- Additional Learning Needs Coordinator IDP – Individual Development Plan	