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Additional learning needs (ALN) system: parents' guide

A guide for parents and families about
how children will move to the additional
learning needs (ALN) system between
September 2021 and August 2022

Additional learning needs (ALN) system: parents' guide

Audience

This guide has been written for parents and families.

Overview

The guide sets out the arrangements for the first year of implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALN Act).

The guide explains how some groups of children will move from the special educational needs (SEN) system to the additional learning needs (ALN) system. It also explains what the new system means for children and their parents.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act

Related documents

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021

gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-code

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1. What this guide is about

The additional learning needs (ALN) system is being put in place between September 2021 and August 2024.

This guide explains how some children will move to the ALN system between September 2021 and August 2022.

Separate guidance will be published that explains how other children and young people will move to the ALN system.

The ALN system

We are determined to deliver a fully inclusive education system for learners in Wales, a system where needs are identified early and addressed quickly, and where all learners are supported to reach their potential.

To prepare for the implementation of the ALN system we have been working, together with partners to increase the skills and understanding of education staff to improve outcomes for children and young people with ALN. We are changing the separate systems for special educational needs (SEN) and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in further education to create a single system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with ALN.

We want to make sure that:

- children, their parents and young people's views, wishes and feelings are listened to when decisions are being made about how to help children and young people
- the right support is put in place quickly to help children and young people with ALN
- everyone works together to help children and young people with ALN, including education and health services
- most children and young people with ALN are able to go to their local nursery, school, PRU or college, if it is right for them
- children and their families are able to access learning support even before they start school or nursery
- children, their parents and young people understand the additional learning provision (ALP) being offered
- if children, their parents or young people are not happy with decisions about statements, there are rights in law to help them do something about it
- children and young people with ALN get help in Welsh wherever possible if they need it

What is ALN and additional learning provision?

Children and young people with ALN need extra support to learn. This would be because they:

- find it harder to learn than other children of the same age

- have a disability that means they cannot use, or find it difficult to use, facilities for learning in the local nursery, school or college

Some children and young people who need extra help in nursery, school, pupil referral unit (PRU) or college do not have an ALN. This may be children or young people who just need some help catching up.

The extra support given to children with ALN to help them learn is called additional learning provision (sometimes called ALP). This must be written into a support plan called an individual development plan (IDP).

Additional learning provision for a child aged under 3 means educational provision of any kind.

Additional learning provision for a person aged 3 or over is education or training usually in a nursery, school, PRU or college that is additional to, or different from, what is made available to most children of the same age.

This means that additional learning provision is support that is made available usually in nursery, schools or colleges but most children or young people of the same age do not need to use this support to make progress.

Additional learning provision can be delivered by teachers, teaching assistants or tutors. It can also be delivered by specialist services like a speech and language therapist or teachers of the deaf.

2. What is changing for children and young people with special educational needs?

The Welsh Government is changing the way children and young people with SEN are supported. The support children with SEN receive is called special educational provision (sometimes called SEP).

We are replacing the old (SEN) system with the new ALN system. The new ALN system strengthens the importance of providing information and support so that children, young people and their parents are involved as much as possible in the process and in decisions that affect them.

When the ALN system is introduced you will notice the following changes to what things are called:

- special educational needs (SEN) becomes additional learning needs (ALN)
- special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) become additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCOs)
- special educational provision (SEP) becomes additional learning provision (ALP)
- plans such as individual education plans (IEPs), statements and learning and skills plans (LSPs) will be replaced with a new plan called an individual development plan (IDP)

Some things have not changed. Having ALN is the same as having SEN. This means that if a child or young person has SEN they are also likely to have ALN. And it means the special education provision children and young people get to help them learn at nursery, school, PRU or college because they have SEN will continue, if it is still required, but it will now be called additional learning provision.

3. When and how children and young people will move to the new system

Moving children from the SEN system to the ALN system will take place over 3 school years to make sure there is enough time for nurseries, schools, PRUs and local authorities to discuss the support needed and to prepare plans.

Children will move from the SEN system to the ALN system in groups. The first group moving from the SEN system to the ALN system are children who:

- go to a local authority nursery, local authority school or PRU and have SEN with support through early years action, early years action plus, school action or school action plus
- do not have a SEN statement and are not involved in an SEN statement process (such as waiting for a decision about an SEN assessment or waiting for a decision about an SEN statement)

The table below shows when children in the first group must be moved to the ALN system based on their school year group.

Spring and summer terms of the school year 2021 to 2022	Nursery Years 1 or 2, Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 or Year 10
School year 2022 to 2023	Nursery Years 1 and 2, Year 1, Year 5, Year 9 and Year 10
School year 2023 to 2024	Year 4 and Year 8 and any other pupils with SEN on 1 January 2022 who did not move to the ALN system during the first and second years of implementation

Local authority nurseries, local authority schools, PRUs and local authorities must move these children from the SEN system to the ALN system between January 2022 and August 2024.

If your child is in one of the year groups moving to the new ALN system over the spring and summer terms 2022, your local authority nursery, local authority school, pupil referral unit (PRU) or local authority will get in touch with you and provide you with information on when and how this will happen.

Other groups of children, such as those with statements of SEN, will move from the SEN system to the ALN system between September 2022 and August 2024. The Welsh Government will issue guidance about this later.

If a local authority nursery, local authority school, PRU or local authority does not move a child by 30 August in the year they are supposed to move them, the child will automatically move to the ALN system on 31 August. They will move the child by giving either an IDP notice or a no IDP notice.

This means that if a child is, for example, due to move to the ALN system during the spring and summer terms of the school year 2021 to 2022 and they have not had an IDP notice or a no IDP notice by 30 August they will move to the ALN system on 31 August 2022.

The local authority nursery, local authority school or the PRU must then make a decision about if the child has ALN and, if required, prepare an IDP within 35 school days from 31 August 2022. A local authority has 12 weeks from 31 August 2022 to make a decision and, if required, prepare an IDP.

4. How local authority nurseries, local authority schools, PRUs and local authorities move children to the ALN system

The new ALN system emphasises increased collaboration, and the importance of providing support and information to ensure that children, and their families and young people participate as fully as possible in decisions that affect them. This is why schools, PRUs or local authorities will work with you, your child and other professionals following the person-centred approach to decide how best to meet your child's needs.

Most children will move from the SEN system to the ALN system when their local authority nursery, local authority school, PRU or local authority gives them an IDP notice.

Nurseries, schools and PRUs will give most of the IDP notices but sometimes a local authority will give an IDP notice.

Local authorities will give IDP notices to children who are looked after and children who are registered at more than one education place (such as a PRU and a school).

An IDP notice means a nursery, school, PRU or local authority has decided a child has ALN and an IDP will be made for the child.

It is likely that children who had SEN with provision via early years action, early years action plus, school action or school action plus will have ALN.

On occasion, a child who had SEN will be given a notice called a no IDP notice. A no IDP notice means the nursery, school, PRU or local authority has decided the child does not have ALN and an IDP will not be made for the child. For example, children may be given a no IDP notice because their needs have changed and they no longer need additional support to learn.

How children and their parents can ask for a child to move to the ALN system

Children in the first group moving from the SEN system to the ALN system, and their parents, can ask to move to the ALN system at any time after 1 January 2022.

Children and their parents can do this by asking the local authority nursery, local authority school, PRU or local authority to move them to the ALN system by issuing a notice. This can be done in writing (such as in an email or message) or verbally (such as in person or in a phone call).

The local authority nursery, local authority school or PRU must issue an IDP notice or a no IDP notice within 15 school days. A local authority must issue an IDP notice, or a no IDP notice within 15 working days.

Sometimes a local authority will issue an ALN notice to move a child to the ALN system. The local authority must do this in 10 working days.

Automatically moving from the SEN system to the ALN system

There are some changes of circumstances that mean a child will automatically move from the SEN system to the ALN system. When this happens you should expect to hear from your local authority nursery, local authority school, PRU or local authority.

This means that a notice does not need to be given to a child and their parent for the child to move from the SEN system to the ALN system.

A child will automatically move if they were at a local authority nursery, local authority school or PRU on 1 January 2022 and then:

- became a registered pupil or an enrolled student at another education place, such as another school or PRU (became registered at more than one education place)
- became looked after by a local authority in Wales
- stopped going to the school (this does not include if a child stopped going to the school at the end of nursery to move to primary or stopped going at the end of primary school to attend senior school)

If a child was looked after on 1 January 2022 and stopped being looked after, they will automatically move to the new system.

Also, if a child was going to 2 education places (such as 2 schools or a PRU and a school) on 1 January 2022, and then only went to one education place, the child will automatically move to ALN system.

Automatically moving means the local authority nursery, the local authority school, the PRU or the local authority must make a decision about if a child has ALN when it thinks a child might have ALN. If it decides the child has ALN, the local authority nursery, the local authority school, the PRU or the local authority must give the child an IDP.

Groups of children moving between September 2022 and August 2024

The following groups of children and young people will move to the ALN system between September 2022 and August 2024:

- children who have SEN and do not go to a local authority nursery, local authority school or PRU
- children who are in Year 11
- children who have a statement of SEN or an education and healthcare plan (EHCP)
- children who are involved in an SEN statement process

A timetable for moving these children and young people from the SEN system to the ALN system will be published in 2022.

5. What if I don't agree with a decision?

Sometimes, disagreements can arise. Most of the time, disagreements can be sorted out by discussing the problem with the school, PRU or local authority. If you are unhappy with anything, you should make your views known as soon as possible. Always speak to the school's additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCo) as soon as you have worries or concerns. Working together will provide opportunities to discuss any problems and help them to be sorted out at an early stage.

If you are still unhappy, then you should talk to your local authority to seek further advice.

You can also appeal to the Education Tribunal for Wales.

If you need more support, there are many voluntary organisations that help children and their families. Some of the main organisations are listed here:

- SNAP Cymru
- the National Deaf Children's Society
- National Autistic Society Cymru
- the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Cymru
- the Children's Commissioner for Wales

You can also get more details from your local authority or email the Welsh Government.