



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 15TH MAY 2023

SUBJECT: ALN PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES OF WORKING GROUP

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update for Members regarding the:
- progress in implementation of ALN (Additional Learning Needs) Act for the Local Authority (LA) and schools;
 - support provided to school to support ALN implementation;
 - focus of inclusion / ALN working groups with Head Teachers, and recommendations made;
 - identified next steps

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1. The purpose of the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act is to create the legislative framework to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision by creating a unified process for children and young people 0-25. This focuses on a person-centred approach to identifying needs early, putting in place effective support and monitoring, and adapting interventions to ensure they deliver desired outcomes. The aim is to ensure improved outcomes through a simpler and less adversarial system. The LA work includes a focus on supporting schools to ensure statutory responsibilities are met.
- 2.2 In the context of support schools, and in recognition of the range of work required with Head Teachers linked to inclusion and ALN, a number of working groups were established to take forward critical areas of work, identify any barriers and agree solutions.
- 2.3 Actions have been agreed with Head Teachers to address emerging themes.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:

- a) consider the information contained in the report and to offer views and comments;
- b) endorse the approach taken in regard to LA's practice in embedding the ALN Act, working with Head Teachers and supporting schools.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked to endorse the approach of the LA in order that the statutory duties of schools / education provisions and the LA are met, and all children have their needs identified and met with appropriate provision.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Progress in the implementation of ALN Act (LA and Schools)

- 5.2 The LA is effectively implementing its statutory duties under the ALN Act in line within the legislative timescales. The statutory team was enhanced to ensure that the LA complies with its statutory responsibilities; officers have clear roles and responsibilities supporting development of effective systems and collaboration and communication between schools, families and children. The LA has adopted a person-centred approach and has developed systems and plans that mirror the principles of the Act without compromising their statutory duties placed on them by the current SEN (Special Educational Needs) system.

- 5.3 The ALN transformation is in its second year of implementation. A significant focus has been on ensuring that the LA and schools are compliant with statutory duties. This has included:

- ensuring the conversion of statements to IDPs in mandated cohorts;
- implementation of new processes for mandated cohorts in year two in line with the Welsh Government implementation plan;
- continuing the review of provision to support planning for future need;
- continuing to develop the online case management system including a parent and child portal;
- continuing to develop the breadth and use of key data to ensure it contributes to the review of provision;
- supporting schools with development of one-page profiles and IDPS;
- moderation of IDPs and provision maps ensuring coherent practice across schools.

5.4 Support to Schools to implement the ALN Act

- 5.5 The LA has created a unified online, Case Management System (CMS) for ALN and has provided training for schools and the LA with a single point of access for information / documentation relating to statutory Individual Development Plan (IDP) assessments.

- 5.6 The LA has reshaped its panel processes seeking to ensure a more coherent and robust process for decision making in relation to additional learning provision (ALP). This is supported by a Terms of Reference (TOR) and the LA's Principles document. The LA's revised Principles document provides schools / settings with clear guidance and outlines what is considered to be Universal, Targeted and Specific provision to meet need. Further work in this area is outlined in 5.23.

- 5.7 The LA developed the Additional Learning Needs Removing the Barriers to Learning online Matrix (RBtL Matrix) to support an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring, and facilitate early, timely and effective interventions for children and young people with additional learning needs. This now used across a number of LAs in Wales. New features of the RBtL Matrix are being developed by the LA to include a pupil friendly version to involve learners in identifying what they consider to be the barriers to their learning and their involvement in devising solution-focused targets. The LA's Youth Forum has led on work developing a learner's interface for the RBtL Matrix to support pupil voice. All reviews are person-centred and referrals to the LA or reports provided contain the voice of the learner including their views, wishes, aspirations. The LA ensures the parent's views are also captured and this is being developed via a Parent Forum, working with families to further develop the online RBtL Matrix.
- 5.8 The LA has an Early Years Emerging Needs Panel which links services and supports the early identification of ALN. Educational Psychologists (EPs) attend ISCAN multiagency meetings with colleagues from health to identify the need for early involvement with preschool children with emerging needs.
- 5.9 LA staff and schools understand well their responsibilities for early identification of ALN. The LA provides an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring, which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions for children and young people with additional learning needs outlined within IDPs. The LA has clear criteria for referrals to the ALN panel within the terms of reference and criteria for specialist provision is being amended through consultation with Head Teachers. The educational psychology service (EPS) phased model of service delivery enables more opportunities for schools to seek initial consultation and advice about pupil need at an earlier stage of identification or graduated response to need.
- 5.10 Schools audit their progress against key areas of development such as person-centred practice (PCP) approaches, implementation of one-page profiles, IDP development and development of ALN registers with ongoing support by LA officers. An effective process of ALN register moderation continues with ALNCOs across all schools. Guidance from Welsh Government (WG) has been made available to schools via WG websites, Hwb and LA documentation. WG guidance is simplified and disseminated to all schools with a timeline and template resources. Members of the Statutory Team have been made available to all schools to support throughout IDP processes and attend mandatory PCP meetings.
- 5.11 The LA has a range of universal services which aim to reduce the risk of children and young people becoming vulnerable. These include support to schools ensuring compliance with process and practice, promoting early intervention and identification of need. Partnership working and clear communication is a core value thus enabling concerns to be raised and addressed early. There is a comprehensive range of intervention and training available for schools and provisions from teams across the education directorate supporting development of knowledge and early identification of need, screening and assessment. Services supporting schools include educational psychology service (EPS), behaviour support, school-based counselling, advisory teachers, healthy schools and education welfare (EWS).
- 5.12 The EPS, Advisory Teacher Team and Statutory team deliver workshops and training for a range of ALN and ALP in school. Feedback and training evaluation from schools informs the programme of training that is available on a yearly basis. The Services also provide bespoke training to school based on their own local needs using their EP time allocation and/or through discussions with the Advisory Teacher Team.

- 5.13 Evaluation of the planning and implementation of the ALN Act highlighted the need for a more accessible / central communication system for all learners and their families. This resulted in a pilot Project for 'IT Cubes' facilitating, person centred, multi-agency meetings, supporting pupils with ALN and their families gain access to professionals quickly and efficiently through remote services. The pilot was supported through grant funding which has facilitated the expansion of the project setting up four IT Cubes in primary and secondary schools in the Caerphilly Borough.
- 5.14 The LA has an effective regional partnership in place that contributes to ensuring that parents are well informed about its services and works collaboratively with the independent advocacy service to support parents via dispute resolution. Termly reports are provided to the LA enabling a good understanding of any issues raised, tailoring of support and revision of service improvement plan targets as necessary. Only a very few appeals have been made to the Education Tribunal Wales over time.
- 5.15 The views, wishes and feelings of the learner and parent(s) / carers are central to the planning and provision of support. The LA and schools support learners' participation in the decision-making process and understanding the requirement for their 'consent' to be obtained before proceeding further with the IDP assessment process.
- 5.16 In line with the ALN Act and Code, the LA keeps provision under review to ensure that the needs of learners with ALN are met. This involves collaboration with colleagues from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to ensure high quality teaching and learning and effective monitoring of outcomes, work with 21st century schools, reviewing of existing provision and staffing (for example resource bases and regional services), review of placement criteria, analysis of trends based on current and historical knowledge of numbers of learners, needs and capacity, moderation of registers and IDP's, measuring impact on learners outcomes and thorough self-evaluation. The newly developing case management system enables tracking linked to objectives set within IDPs. Standardised assessment outcomes, feedback from schools regarding impact of services input, learner voice, and qualitative data provides a range of information to track progress.
- 5.17 The LA has a range of provision through the medium of Welsh and ensures that documentation and tools are available in Welsh. All statutory documents and templates relating to the IDP process are available in Welsh and the LA is consulting with their IT systems provider in developing the Welsh interface for the online Case Management System for both the LA and Schools.
- 5.18 The LA has clear processes for managing transition. There is an annual transition panel to consider specialist placement at key phases. Pupils and parents are supported through enhanced transition which can include booklets, photos, videos, school visits. There is good support from the outreach teacher linked to the special school, in addition to support provided by EPs and Advisory Teachers. The LA is establishing links with local mainstream colleges and specialist provisions such as ISPIs (Independent Specialist Post-16 Institutions) around Post 16 pathways and maintaining the LA's statutory compliance to support learners with ALN until the age of 25. The LA is in the process of exploring a Post-16 Lead Officer to support this work.

5.19 Focus of working groups with Head Teachers and recommendations

5.20 As a result of the significant range of work required with Head Teachers linked to inclusion a number of working groups were established to take forward critical areas of work, identify any barriers and agree solutions.

5.21 Delegation of additional support

5.22 The delegation of additional support group was established to re-explore a model for delegation with volunteer head teacher representatives from across primary and secondary phases. The principle was to find solutions to barriers within the existing system enabling schools to:

- have a funding allocation as part of the school formula which would support effective planning and management of their resources for all pupils in the school;
- respond flexibly to the identified needs of their school;
- develop provision fit for purpose;
- monitor and evaluate impact on pupil outcomes;
- allow opportunities to recruit and train staff themselves due to more certainty with funding (moving away from panel process), likely to be more cost effective and provide appropriately trained staff.

5.23 Further information is available in the Education Scrutiny Report of March 2023.

5.24 Panel processes

5.25 Meetings were held with the Head Teacher working group to discuss the LAs ALN Principles and Practice document for schools and PRUs, the LA's revised panel process including the work of the panel itself, the Terms of Reference (ToR) document, and the referral form. The head teachers present shared the information with their colleagues and following the recommendation that further opportunities were provided for head teachers to link with LA officers, 4 sessions were provided enabling all head teachers to attend at their convenience. 15 Head Teachers attended. During these sessions, head teachers raised concerns about the roles and responsibilities of schools (linked to the Act and Code); the amount of work for ALNCo's; funding of ALN; the use of TAs to support individual pupils who require support; the number and timeliness of early years pupils identified ALN; transparency of the ALN Panel process, SRB criteria, detail contained in panel outcomes, and the impact of EP reports considered at panel.

5.26 Based on feedback from Head Teachers amendments are being made to the LA ALN documents; these will then be shared with the working group before making final amendments and sharing with all head teachers. Head teachers have been invited to observe the ALN panel and a number of primary head teachers will act as a critical friend on panel on a rolling programme. Further changes will, in time, be made to the ToR in line with delegation of funding. SRB criteria will be discussed with SRB head teachers in the first instance, before further discussion within the working group.

5.27 Effective deployment of teaching assistants (TAs)

5.28 Meetings with Head Teachers raised concerns around the lack of consistency in the training that TAs receive, the current shortage of TAs and challenge in being able to recruit and retain staff.

5.29 Several recommendations arose aimed at addressing these concerns through the provision of a suitable training package for TAs. Next steps will involve linking with EAS to identify the courses available for TAs, an evaluation of the training; providing training for schools on 'Walkthrus' in the summer term and identifying training that the LA can provide to TAs.

5.30 IDP and Tracking processes

5.31 Meetings with Head Teachers to discuss IDP's and tracking processes revealed concerns in relation to:

- the volume of information additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCO's) need;
- ALNCO's feeling overwhelmed with the workload;
- concerns about writing IDPs;
- difficulty releasing staff to attend training;
- concerns over funding issues and sustainability of budgets with the increase in the number of pupils with challenging needs;
- the management of ALN within schools;
- the timing of PCP meetings which impacts on effective planning especially around Early Years (EYs) transition into school.

5.32 The group recommended work with the early years team and admissions to improve the timing of PCP meetings and a cluster approach to planning meetings to be held for early years and yr 5. Discussion regarding cluster training suggested that Head Teachers would welcome more in person opportunities building on regional and local training that has already been delivered to Head Teachers, ALNCO's, TA's and Governors over the period of implementation including revisiting general information regarding ALN reform and writing effective IDP's and outcomes. Cluster training will therefore be scheduled over the summer and autumn terms. Head Teachers requested a one-page summary outlining the main aspects of the ALN reform to support head teachers and a flow chart illustrating the roles and responsibilities in relation to the IDP process. Information shared previously will therefore be revisited to ensure it meets these needs. LA officers will also provide case studies of good practice.

5.33 Professional learning

5.34 Head Teachers expressed the intention to embed professional learning within whole school development planning but identified the need have time to effectively plan professional learning to ensure it matches the needs of the school and the target audience. It was identified that earlier more detailed information regarding the training offer would enable professional learning to be incorporated within school development planning including potential financial spend.

5.35 Priorities were identified linked to 'mop up training', opportunities for cluster sessions, re-induction for ALNCO's, use of 'Walkthrus' programme supporting basic principles of classroom management, examples of what good looks like, and training for office staff.

5.36 Head Teachers identified challenges with releasing staff for training during the school day.

5.37 Communication

5.38 Head Teachers identified the need to reduce duplication and ensure effective methods of communication. Work is underway to develop the use of share point to

share and store information, a regular newsletter capturing information for all education directorate teams and a contact list of staff.

5.39 Multiagency working

- 5.40 The multiagency group met to explore concerns linked to the Head Teacher's concerns regarding:
- a lack of understanding of other agencies linked to the ALN Act and inappropriate messages being given to parents;
 - engagement with social services post Covid linked to remote working, and communication;
 - communication with health colleagues.

5.41 Head Teachers also identified positive aspects of work with and communication from agencies and acknowledge positive aspects of work across council teams and within health and social services departments.

5.42 Early years

- 5.43 Head teachers identified that Early Years is under extreme pressure currently with the volume of children impacted by lack of social contact and development opportunities prior to starting nursery. Discussions focused on:
- challenges linked to childcare and nursery settings particularly linked to ALN legislation and funding;
 - the application process, admission and transition, particularly linked to the need for more advanced notice, access to appropriate information and time to plan;
 - the process PCP transition meetings from pre-school settings into school;
 - the range of information required from parents / carers prior to start;
 - the need for additional and appropriately qualified staff;
 - exploring the development of specialist provision at an earlier stage;
 - concerns regarding implementing the new curriculum and the ALN Act;
 - specific concerns regarding toileting, behaviour, and social needs;

5.44 The group agreed ongoing work in relation to supporting transition into school and developing provision for the first term children start in school nursery, ongoing work with the DECLO (dedicated education clinical lead officer), improved information sharing and timescales, development of a toileting policy, sharing contact details of early years' teams, supporting the ongoing developments linked to flying start.

5.45 Engaging parents

- 5.46 Head Teachers shared changes in relationships with families post Covid. From a community perspective staff are being asked to support with more issues which is positive but also challenging, especially when schools staff do not have the knowledge to support. Head Teachers identified:
- increased crime and antisocial behaviour in communities impacting families and increasing anxiety of pupils;
 - Covid created dependency on LA and schools to do/manage everything;
 - changes in demographics of the school community demonstrating increasing vulnerability of children and families;
 - reduced engagement with extra-curricular engagement.

5.47 Head Teachers identified the importance of working with partners with a focus on community issues. Managing expectations was seen as particularly important; ensuring consistent messages across the LA and schools, for example in relation to changes associated with ALN,

5.48 Admissions and transition

5.49 This work is scheduled for the summer term.

5.50 Next steps

5.51 Based on the developments linked to embedding changes to ALN and in these working groups consultation will be ongoing in some areas and new opportunities will arise to develop further working groups. For example, a focus on EPS service delivery, managed moves at primary, developments linked to specific learning difficult service delivery, and admissions and transition. Emerging actions from existing groups are identified in themes presented below:

5.52 Training

5.53 Building on the comprehensive offer already available from services a training plan will be provided to capture the offer and ensure the training meets requirements which will include face to face sessions and recordings as appropriate. This will include universal, targeted and specific support, whole school training and individual school professional learning needs. Head Teachers have identified that there is a need for further support to enable head teachers to keep abreast of ALN developments and share best practice, refocus on behaviour management, focus on training for teaching assistants and safeguarding training for new teaching assistants.

5.54 Specific work with teaching agencies was identified to promote the role of teaching assistants, understand the expectation of the role, and ensure a standard of basic training.

5.55 A professional learning programme / training events calendar will be created by LA / EAS and distributed in summer term for the following year. This will allow schools to plan and link to school development plan. Pre-event consultation with schools will ensure that content of training meets requirements and needs of schools attending.

5.56 Consideration will be given to synchronising INSET days across clusters. This will facilitate training events that will encourage schools to send teaching assistants to training events and network meetings.

5.57 Officers will continue to work with health and social services through the DECLO and lead officer in social services to ensure appropriate training is in place.

5.58 Opportunities for ongoing networking

5.59 A termly Head Teacher Forum will ensure opportunities for Head Teachers to meet with LA colleagues in addition to all the existing opportunities, to discuss any queries or concerns. The Primary Heads Forum will consider emerging themes and liaise with the inclusion teams in advance to allow colleagues to prepare.

5.60 The ALNCO forum will be reinvigorated and scheduled termly as well as the ongoing cluster ALNCO events.

5.61 Caerphilly Heads Induction Programme and Deputy Head network meetings will evolve to enable increased participation and involvement of a range of officers.

5.62 LA officers will continue to work with colleagues in Social Services and Health to explore concerns raised by Head Teachers.

5.63 Sharing best practice

5.64 Networks of best practice to be implemented across schools.

5.65 Exemplars of documentation to be produced support new ALNCOs, teaching assistants and other school staff. This could include paperwork for IDPS, reviews, paperwork for panels etc.

5.66 Support materials

Head teachers identified the need to develop the Caerphilly website to ensure it is accessible to parents and contains relevant information. Head Teachers requested easy read information for school staff in relation in order that staff can share information with parents linked to the following:

- Understanding stages of child development.
- Developing the right provision for a child.
- What is universal, targeted and specific support; does this mean 1-1 support and what does this look like?
- What is good transition?
- What is a PCP approach?
- What is a PCP meeting?
- What IDP?
- What is the LA Panel?

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 In considering the recommendations the following assumptions have been made:

- Meeting the ALN of children and young people 0 – 25 years is a key statutory duty of the Council and as such must be reported to scrutiny to ensure that members are kept informed.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report provides information and therefore an integrated impact assessment has not been completed at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The report reflects with views of the consultees.

11. STATUTORY POWERS

11.1 Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Education Act 1996
Equality Act 2010
Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014)

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