

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	10th June 2021
Lead Member / Officer	Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People) / Geraint Davies (Interim Head of Education)
Report authors	Mari Gaskell and Joseph Earl
Title	Additional Learning Needs Transformation Update June 2021

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The report provides an update on the progress made to ensure the Local Authority and schools are ready to meet their statutory requirements under the upcoming Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To provide information regarding the actions taken to ensure the Local Authority and schools are ready to meet their statutory requirements under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018 starting in September 2021.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Scrutiny:

- 3.1 is invited to discuss the details of this report and to identify any aspects of the transformation work which may benefit from detailed examination in the future; and
- 3.2 confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 5) as part of its consideration.

4. Report details

Context

4.1. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018 will replace the current Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (2002). The new Act will be supported by regulations and an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code. The Act replaces the terms 'special educational needs' (SEN) and 'learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities' (LDD) with the new term 'additional learning needs' (ALN). The Act creates a single system, with a single statutory plan, the Individual Development Plan (IDP). This plan will replace existing plans, such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Statements of SEN and Learning and Skills Plans.

Progress

4.2 Regional - Denbighshire continues to work collaboratively with colleagues across the region and with support from the regional Transformation lead (Helen Smith). We have in the past 6 months completed an update report for the region which shows how Denbighshire is working towards the implementation of the ALN reforms (**see Appendices 1, 2 and 3**). There are various regional working groups ongoing, with action plans agreed by regional inclusion leads. Denbighshire is leading on the Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) and Looked After Children (LAC) working groups.

4.3 **Training** – Staff across Denbighshire schools and Education Services have been given the opportunity to attend Person Centred Practice training to prepare them for the intended person centred approach of the ALN reforms. We are holding half termly meetings/workshops with school representatives to prepare schools for the ALN reforms. Furthermore, regional training continues to be provided by the North Wales ALN Transformation Team. There is access to training for elected members and other stakeholders which is included in **Appendix 3**.

4.4 **Budgets** - School ALN funding is now fully delegated to schools as agreed in the school budget forum – working towards a 3 year rolling average. The aim of this is

to allow schools to plan more effectively in supporting learners who are deemed to have ALN and to be reactive to the needs of all learners.

4.5 IT System - Denbighshire, Flintshire, Conwy and Wrexham joined to procure a new IT system that will enable the management of the new ALN processes. It is called ECLIPSE and Denbighshire is leading on this project. Supplied by OLM, ECLIPSE is a cloud based workflow solution enabling users to work more efficiently and effectively whether logging on via a smart phone, tablet or computer. It will allow collaborative working when determining if a child has ALN, efficient documentation management for those learners with ALN, easy monitoring of time frames, deadlines and annual reviews with specific timed alerts to ensure statutory duties are met.

4.6 Learner Support - The Team Around the School has been established to continue to meet the current requirements of the Statutory Assessment process and the ALNET Act 2018 in relation to early intervention and prevention and accurate, timely identification of additional learning needs. It will ensure a flexible responsive and transparent process which will provide clear actions to support the progression of the learner's educational journey.

4.7 Provision – We are currently working with schools to map out their provision, including interventions and strategies that they use to support learners with and without ALN. This will then allow us, along with schools to have a clear understanding and when a child is needing Additional Learning Provision (ALP), a key question in determining if a child has ALN (**Appendix 4**).

4.8 Individual Development Plan – As part of the transformation work and in readiness for the new legislation, we have been trialling the Individual Development Plan (IDP) in a small selection of schools. This plan will replace existing plans, such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Statements of SEN and Learning and Skills Plans. This will ensure consistency and continuity, and that provision and rights are protected regardless of the severity or complexity of needs.

4.9 Documentation – Other documents are being developed including a 'Learner Profile' (which will eventually be recorded on the Eclipse IT system), this will capture the support, progress and targets of learners in need of targeted support

that may not be defined as ALN. We are currently working with schools to create an ALN/Inclusion protocol for schools to adopt.

4.10 **School Readiness** – Schools have been supported with the new ALN

Coordinator role, which is now compulsory as of January 4th. We have provided the Welsh Government's non-statutory guidance alongside our own supplementary guidance. Schools have also been completing the GwE milestones (these are guide targets to meet the requirements of the ALN reforms) on the G6 online platform and we also offer support to schools where requested along with GwE representatives.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 This area of work contributes towards making Denbighshire a place where young people want to live and work and have the skills to do so. It also contributes to make Denbighshire a place where young people can flourish and have the best start in life regardless of any additional learning needs they may have.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. DCC ICT are now supporting Education Services with the implementation of the Eclipse IT system. The first year's initial set up cost of this is £27,100.00. this has been funded through a Welsh Government SEN/ALN grant. Ongoing costs of housing the IT system will be shared between the LA and schools.

6.2. The LA continues to utilise the Regional ALN Transformation grant to support the LA and schools in preparation for the ALN reforms. Furthermore, Schools continue to use ALN Transformation cluster funding to support their preparations.

6.3 Educational Psychologists (EP) – Current staff capacity is currently an area of risk as we have a vacant post that is proving difficult to recruit. Along with this, nationally it is understood that there will be an increased workload through the introduction, implementation and embedding of the ALN reforms. We should be considering increasing staffing levels to take account of the inclusion of the extended age range of involvement with pupils 0-25 years.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. Reflecting upon the assessment process, it can be seen that there are clear positives for many areas. These include improving outcomes for children and young people with ALN. This will hopefully have positive long term implications for those individuals with ALN and their communities and is also a benefit that there may be more opportunities for jobs and training. The holistic person centred approach of the new statutory ALN system aims to be more inclusive, which would hopefully encourage all to engage with the support processes that will enable children and young people with ALN to reach their potential, leading to engagement with their communities. The barriers that exist with the traveller community have been identified as an area that needs attention which will be explored by the project team. There is also work to be done in future engagement, ensuring that all stakeholders are able to contribute to the ongoing project. One way of addressing this will be the setting up of a regional parental partnership forum. The project aims to promote the Welsh language by being as bilingual as possible in the materials produced and systems procured, and also in that the new statutory ALN system expects that all reasonable steps are taken to provide provision in Welsh where possible. The transition to online meetings and training in light of the Covid-19 pandemic will hopefully have a positive effect overall in regards to a globally responsible Denbighshire with the only expected negative outcome of the project being the use of server space for the new cloud based ALN IT system (**Appendix 5**).

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. Discussions (where applicable) with trade unions and head teachers have been very positive. We are also working regionally in setting up a parent partnership as a forum to share and receive comment on the continuing work on the ALN reforms.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. Costs will be met from existing delegated budgets to schools, Education budget and also grant funding that has been made available from Welsh Government.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. Capacity within the Educational Psychology team and Additional Learning Needs teams is needed/will be needed to be maintained and possibly increased to ensure that the LA meets all statutory requirements.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Powers in relation to matters detailed in this report are as per:

- Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- Section 7 of the Council's Constitution