

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	14 July 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Gill German (Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People), Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
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Title	Additional Learning Needs Transformation Update July 2022

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 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 ensure the Local Authority and schools are ready to meet their statutory requirements under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018 that started in September 2021 and is being implemented until 2024 (**Appendix 1**).

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. Scrutiny are 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.

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 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 National Implementation Lead (Elizabeth Jones). The majority of regional working groups have now completed their work and any remaining actions are now being followed up locally by each local authority (LA). We continue to work collaboratively with regional colleagues at strategic operational levels where necessary.

4.3. **Training** – Training on the ALN reforms is being provided to LA teams, the parental support group STAND and Governors Association (**Appendix 2**). GwE continue to provide training to schools regionally on Inclusive Practice (i.e. Graduated response through from Universal Provision up to Additional Learning Provision (ALP)).

4.4. **Budgets** - School Inclusion (including ALN) funding is fully delegated to schools as agreed in the school budget forum. This is working towards a 3 year rolling average following moderation Provision Mapping from schools. The aim of this is to allow schools to plan more effectively in supporting learners who are deemed to need support and to be reactive to the needs of all learners.

Early Years - In the year 2021-2022 we had a shortfall of £8,000 this was covered by Families First from an underspend.

[It is likely with the impact of Covid and the cost of living crisis where parents are having to reduce the number of sessions their child attends a pre-school setting or to delay their start we anticipate an increase in demand again this year as children present with developmental delays].

4.5. **IT System** - Denbighshire, Flintshire, Conwy and Wrexham have now implemented the regional IT system that enables the management of the new ALN processes. It is called ECLIPSE and Denbighshire lead 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. We are currently carrying out a review in order to refine processes.

4.7. **Provision** – We continue to work 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.

4.8. **Individual Development Plan** – We have been supporting schools with the ALN consideration process where needed. We continue to deliver workshops in our county wide Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCo) meeting, the most recent being on refining Outcomes and descriptions of Additional Learning Provision (ALP) on the Individual Development Plans (IDP). This IDP plan is replacing 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** – Documents are being developed by schools which will be included in 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 have worked regionally to develop suite of bilingual letters for schools and LA to use in ALN processes set out in the ALN Code. We have also worked with schools to create an Inclusion protocol for schools to adopt. The Denbighshire Principles and Processes draft document is nearing completion.

4.10. **School Readiness** – Schools have been supported with the new Additional Learning Need Coordinator (ALNCo) role, which was compulsory as of January 4th 2021. We have provided our own supplementary guidance in addition to the roles and responsibilities set out in the ALN Code so that schools consider the wider inclusion role ALNCo's may have. 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 supporting Education Services with the Eclipse IT system. The first year's initial set up cost of this was £27,100.00. This was 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 Welsh Government grants to support the LA and schools in implementing the ALN reforms.

- 6.3. Educational Psychologists (EP) – Nationally it is understood that there will be an increased workload through the introduction, implementation and embedding of the ALN reforms. We are planning to increase staffing levels within the implementation period to take account of the inclusion of the extended age range of involvement with pupils 0-25 years.
- 6.4. We have replaced one ALN Advisory Teacher (due to retirement) and have recently recruited to a second temporary ALN Advisory Teacher to support the implementation of the ALN Code and ALNET Act (2018) within the LA and across schools.

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

- 7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment was completed for the initial report (01/06/2021). 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, this is ongoing. Future engagement, ensuring that all stakeholders are able to contribute to the ongoing project was identified. SNAP Cymru have now been appointed as the region's advice service for ALN and as part of this agreement they will be setting up a regional parental partnership forum. The project continues to promote the Welsh language by being bilingual in the materials and systems produced. We continue to adhere to the ALN Code's expectation that provision is provided in Welsh where possible.

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 have work 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.

10.2. Current EYALNLO recruitment is in process due to current postholder taking early retirement.

10.3. Staffing levels for Family Link Workers (FLW):

1 member of the team temporary contract until December 2022

1 Assistant delivering Language and Play Sessions funded until March 31st

Risks

Rural schools grant has ceased and this has resulted in their not being a designated FLW for rural schools. This leaves us with a reduced service as we try and provide some support for rural communities putting increased demands on the existing team.

With the increase in financial hardship families and schools more than ever need Family Link Worker support and this will be impacted by the further reduction in staff in December and March.

Schools are requesting Solihull Parenting Courses and Language and Play sessions but we are currently at full capacity. We have identified that there is a need to boost the Language and Play Skills of pre-school children many of which are Covid babies and have missed out greatly.

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