

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	20 July 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Gill German (Lead Member for Education, Children and Families), Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
Report authors	Geraint Davies and Joseph Earl
Title	Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Update July 2023

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The report provides a further 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 (ALNET Act).

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 2025. ([Following Ministerial announcement on implementation timescales](#))

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). This 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 initial regional working groups have now finished, but Denbighshire continues to work collaboratively with regional colleagues at strategic and operational levels where necessary.
- 4.3. **Training** – Training on the ALN reforms continues to be provided to local authority (LA) teams where needed. The LA continues to provide support and guidance to schools where required. At the recent Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) meetings schools' systems and processes have been discussed, shared and explored and we have had a workshop on writing Individual Development Plans.
- 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. We are in the process of refining the Provision Map schools use to capture this information.
- 4.5. **IT System** - Denbighshire, Flintshire, Conwy, and Wrexham have now implemented the regional IT system (Eclipse ALN) that enables the management of the new ALN processes. The regional IT ALN system, Eclipse, has had a workflow specifically created for moving learners from SEN to ALN system to

guide schools through the process. Denbighshire IT, along with regional colleagues, continues to work to refine the system. At present they are working with the supplier, OLM, on the online Individual Development Plan (IDP).

- 4.6. **Learner Support** - The Team Around the School (TaS) 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. We have now carried out an informal review of this support and have updated the Terms of Reference accordingly.
- 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.
- 4.8. **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** – We have been supporting schools with the ALN consideration process where needed. Schools and the LA continue to work on moving learners from the SEN system to the ALN system. This year the LA has started to move learners with statements of SEN to IDPs in line with Welsh Government guidance and timescales.
- 4.9. **Documentation** – Documents to support schools continue to be produced and refined where needed. Regionally developed IDP/No IDP notices and accompanying letters have been shared with schools. Processes for supporting learners, with and without ALN, in Denbighshire are continuing to be refined and shared with schools. The LA is working on a set of Principles around supporting learners with ALN.
- 4.10. **School Readiness** – Schools have continued to be supported with the implementation of the ALNET Act (2018). Information is shared in ALNCo meetings alongside training. Bespoke support has been given where requested or deemed appropriate.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1 This area of work contributes towards making Denbighshire a healthier and happier 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 learn and grow, in a fair and safe environment 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 and schools with the Eclipse IT system. We will continue to use Welsh Government Online IDP grant funding to support the ongoing costs of housing the IT system.
- 6.2. The LA continues to utilise Welsh Government grants to support the LA and schools in implementing the ALN reforms. This year the Welsh Government have increased funding allocated for ALN implementation from £6.6m to £12m, and implementation timelines have been extended by a year. This is in acknowledgement of the increased demands on the workforce to respond to the needs of children and move children from SEN to ALN alongside establishing inclusive education practices in the school. This level of funding will also be available in 2024-25 and indicative allocations will be provided to local authorities in the coming months. LA central ALN grant funding has however remained static.
- 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. Based on nationally recommended ratio of 1 EP to 5,000 children DCC will require 6 EPs, [currently have 4], budgeted for 5. Denbighshire Education Service are sponsoring a member of staff through the three year course, to enable her to become qualified as an Educational Psychologist. She would then return to Denbighshire to take up a qualified EP post as a fluent Welsh speaker, in Sept 2026. The sponsorship arrangement means that she will return to Denbighshire for Years 2 and 3 to do her placement. Not having sufficient EPs (especially Welsh speaking EPs) is a risk to key Authority legislative duties such as ALNET 2018, Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing and to the 'Cymraeg 2050 – A Million Welsh Speakers' agenda. WG pay for 10 training places per year in Cardiff University. Over 100 applications a year are received, and a rigorous recruitment process is followed. They also offer two unfunded places on this course beginning Sept 2023.

6.4 We have recently made the temporary ALN Advisory Teacher to a permanent position to support the LAs duties under the ALNET Act (2018). We have also recruited two temporary ALN advisory teachers to support implementation of the ALN Code and ALNET Act (2018) within the LA and across schools.

6.5 One of the Inclusion Officers for ALN has started flexible retirement and has reduced to two days a week.

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

7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment will generally be required for decisions or proposals for change in order to comply with the Equality Act 2010, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language Standards. Welsh Government have impact assessed ALN Transformation journey.

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 We previously reported pressures in the Educational Psychology team and Additional Learning Needs teams and mitigated the risks as highlighted in section 6.

10.2 Pressure in the ALN team due to conversions required and number of cases is a risk that was reduced through the recruitment of 2 temporary members of staff

10.3 It was previously highlighted as a risk following the retirement of the previous Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO), however, recruitment took place and a new member of staff is now in place for this role.

10.4 The funding arrangements are currently being discussed at a national level with regards to the Independent Special Post 16 Institution (ISPI). Had the first proposal been accepted Denbighshire would be financially impacted. Following the raising of concerns WG have agreed to review the processes again. We await their decision and will participate in the discussions.

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