



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT
OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Country Report: United Kingdom (Wales)



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



UNITED KINGDOM (WALES) COUNTRY REPORT

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Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education in Wales

The Welsh Government (WG) is committed to:

- raising the standards of education and training provision, attainment and infrastructure across Wales so that everyone can reach their potential;
- delivering a suitably skilled workforce with high-quality opportunities for all learners;
- supporting individuals, families, communities and businesses in improving economic and social well-being;
- reducing inequality through education and training.

As part of its planning, the WG commissioned a report ([Successful Futures – A Curriculum for Wales](#)) on the Curriculum for Wales, led by Professor Graham Donaldson. The report recommends a complete change in the curriculum, including focus on:

- Pedagogy
- Assessment
- Leadership and steering
- Teacher and leadership capacity
- Legislation
- Accountability.

A number of these elements were noted as foci for change in the [Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales](#) (Tabberer, 2013).

The WG has now embarked on a radical reform that will introduce a new curriculum. At its heart, the new curriculum aims to be more inclusive, child-focused and responsive to the modern world. In addition, in December 2016 the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language introduced the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales).

Transformation of the additional learning needs system aligns directly with the vision set out in Successful Futures (WG, 2015). It recognises the importance of learner-centred approaches and teacher assessment and supports the learning needs of all children and young people:

All children and young people should make progress along the same continuum, regardless of any additional learning needs they may have, although they may



reach and move between Progression Steps more slowly or more quickly than others (Welsh Government, 2015)

The latest data for Wales in terms of learners with identified Special Educational Needs¹ (SEN) confirms that over 22% of learners in Wales have an identified SEN. Almost 12% currently have a Statement of SEN. Data also shows that the attainment of learners with SEN is lower than the attainment of learners with no identified SEN. Figures for 2014/15 suggest that learners with SEN attain ~30% less than their peers.

Evidence shows that:

- the current assessment process is inefficient, bureaucratic and costly;
- the current process is insufficiently child-centred or user-friendly;
- needs can be identified late and interventions are insufficiently timely and effective;
- families say they are forced to battle to get the right support for their child and do not know where to turn for advice and information.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation

The WG's ALN Transformation Programme is about transforming the whole system to ensure that all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and can achieve their full potential.

At the heart of these reforms is a focus on inclusion; putting children and young people at the centre and ensuring they are supported to reach their full potential.

Reforms consist of a five-pronged approach:

- Legislation and statutory guidance
- Workforce development
- Implementation/transition support
- Awareness-raising
- Supporting policy.

Legislation and statutory guidance

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill

The Bill proposes a complete overhaul of the system for supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN). This will replace the current legislative framework which is based on a model introduced more than 30 years ago.

The Bill builds on current best practice, while addressing current concerns. It describes an approach where the learning of all learners is prioritised. Placing the learner at the heart

¹ The current term, Special Educational Needs (SEN), is to be replaced by the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN).



of the process, the system will be far more equitable, simpler and less adversarial for those involved. It aims to:

- create a single legislative system to support people aged 0 to 25 who have additional learning needs;
- replace the terms special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities with the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN);
- dispense with the system of statementing, creating a single statutory plan – the Individual Development Plan – which will ensure equity of rights regardless of the learner’s level of need or the education setting;
- ensure the views of learners and parents are considered throughout the planning process so that all parties view it as a collaborative effort to put the learner at the centre;
- create a system which embeds collaboration between agencies, enabling early identification of the learners’ needs and the correct support;
- place the systems for supporting learners with ALN in schools and further education settings on a more equal footing. This should, therefore, improve transition between school and post-16 education. This means that the legal rights and protections of learners with ALN will be secure when they move on to further education;
- provide for the right to appeal to the Education Tribunal against decisions taken by a governing body, further education institution or local authority in relation to ALN. This will be afforded to all learners up to the age of 25.

Engagement with children and young people

Children and young people, including those with SEN, were given the opportunity to comment on the draft Bill. Nineteen workshops took place with children and young people, which were held at 16 settings around Wales, with a total of 222 participants. The workshop settings included special schools, primary schools, secondary schools, further education settings, a pupil referral unit, a group of looked after children and home educated children. The comments made by these learners are being used to inform the on-going development of the Bill, new ALN Code and wider transformation programme.

Workforce Development

As part of the WG’s wider approach to reforming the system of SEN/ALN, the capacity of the education workforce to support the needs of learners with ALN is being addressed. The findings and recommendations of two studies describe the development requirements of the general education workforce, and explore the capacity of specialist support services in supporting learners with SEN. The reports have been published on the [Learning Wales website](#).

The workforce development for education practitioners focused on three levels:

- Core Skills Development within Schools
- Advanced Skills Development



- Specialist Skills Development

Core Skills Development within Schools

Wales is currently undertaking an ambitious education reform programme, aimed at raising standards across the board. As part of this, the WG has recently introduced a 'New Deal' to support teachers, leaders and support staff with their professional development.

New Deal Pioneer Schools have been appointed to develop a range of high quality professional learning. This will ensure that all practitioners in Wales have the skills in pedagogy and leadership to be able to successfully deliver the requirements of the new curriculum, as set out in the Successful Futures report (WG, 2015).

Going forward, the New Deal Pioneer Schools will have a key role in ensuring that professional learning needs in relation to ALN are met. They will work in partnership with schools from across Wales to ensure that this is achieved.

Advanced Skills Development

Each school setting should have access to one individual with advanced skills. This is considered to be the role of the SEN Co-ordinator (SENCo). Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCo) are currently being proposed as part of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. ALNCoS will replace SENCoS and will be required to have prescribed qualification and/or experience.

Guidance is being developed on the existing role of the SENCo.

A specification for the proposed ALNCo qualification will be developed, in consultation with Higher Education Institutions.

Specialist Skills Development

All education settings should have access to individuals with specialist skills. This is considered to be the role of specialist services provided by the Local Authority (LA) or National Health Service (NHS).

Consideration is currently being given to the development of a national workforce planning system for LA-provided specialist services. This would inform the commissioning of training placements on specialist training courses on a sustainable basis. A workforce planning system already exists within the NHS.

The WG will commission a workforce analysis in order to have a system operating and reporting on workforce requirements.

Other major elements

These will include the following:

Person-centred practice

The Welsh Government is aiming to embed person-centred practice (PCP) across all education settings. PCP encompasses the use of person-centred thinking tools that help to gather information in a way that ensures the views of the learner and their family are included in decisions.



In 2015/16 a GBP 300,000 grant was provided to LAs and further education institutions (FEIs) to commence rolling out PCP across all education settings in Wales. The roll-out of this approach to planning aims to benefit learners in the immediate term. It will provide an essential building block upon which the proposed legislative reforms will sit. A further GBP 300,000 grant was provided for 2016/17.

Resources designed to support the roll out of PCP can be found on the [Learning Wales website](#).

Autism in Schools

As part of the delivery of the 2014 ASD Interim Delivery Plan, WG developed the Learning with Autism programme to raise awareness of autism in primary schools. The programme provides a suite of resources, including teacher training and an Autism Heroes package for learners. It is supported by the Association of Directors of Education Wales and is being rolled out across schools. Funding has been provided to expand this programme to secondary schools and FEIs in the coming year.

Implementation/transition support

Feedback in response to the consultation on the draft Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill in 2015 called for a broad support package. This package would help practitioners across services and settings prepare for the change in processes and procedures and develop closer multi-agency and cross-sector working practices. These are the core aspects needed to ensure successful and consistent implementation of the new system.

The WG has convened an ALN Strategic Implementation Group consisting of key delivery partners to assist with planning for implementation of the new system.

The WG has recently established the ALN Innovation Fund. For this financial year, GBP 1 million has been made available for regional partnership bids for projects aimed at preparing delivery agencies for the forthcoming system changes.

Awareness-raising

It is essential to help all those in the system understand:

- the evidence for best practice;
- what can be expected from interventions;
- the interventions that are likely to be most effective;
- the role of professionals to help ensure realistic expectations and effective deployment of resources.

The WG will continue to engage with key stakeholders and raise awareness among service providers both prior and during the implementation of the reforms.



Supporting policy

The WG recognises the importance of maintaining a focus on the provision of effective policy guidance to ensure that good practice is supported and embedded in the current SEN system, as well as the future ALN system.

Wider educational reforms in Wales

The ALN reforms are just one element of the wider educational reforms currently underway in Wales. These ambitious reforms include the new curriculum for Wales and a change in approach to professional development.

A Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life

The purpose of the new curriculum is to support children and young people to be:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Professional Learning

The Professional Learning programme will support and enable all practitioners to successfully meet the opportunities and challenges which lie ahead as a result of the review and recommendations for the new curriculum.

Professional Learning will support practitioners to develop their practice in the most effective ways to improve outcomes for their learners, including those with ALN.

The professional development of education practitioners is fundamental to the effective operation of both the existing SEN system and the future ALN system. As such, it is an essential pillar of the ALN Transformation Programme.

Work on this has commenced and will focus on three levels of core skills development for all practitioners, to support:

- a wide range of low-complexity, high-incidence ALN within settings;
- advanced skills development through development of the role of ALNCoS;
- specialist skills development through a national workforce planning system for LA-provided specialist support services available to education settings. These include educational psychologists, teachers of the visually or hearing impaired or speech therapists.

This programme will be delivered as part of the Pioneer Schools project.