





## Introduction

The Welsh Government is committed to transforming the expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs and has created an ambitious and wide-ranging Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme. In order to support the implementation of this new system the Welsh Government is providing financial assistance through the ALN Transformation Grant. This is the third of the four financial years that the grant will be available. The money is delegated via a host local authority, Rhondda Cynon Taf, acting on behalf of the five local authorities in the region, corresponding to the same footprint as the Central South Consortium.

A number of funding pre-conditions exist for the WG grant as detailed in the Grant Offer Letter (an excerpt of which is shown below). This report therefore fulfils the requirement to provide a summary document of key issues and practice in the region:

WG Targets:

Description of the target	Date by when it should be achieved	Evidence required
Support local authorities (including social services), schools, governing bodies, the FE sector, early years settings and Health Boards to undertake readiness self-assessments to identify areas to focus on in preparing for transition to the new ALN system, and to develop implementation plans.	September 2019	Key themes summary for state of the region document.
	March 2020	Final state of the region summary document

The information in this report is based on the following:

- ALN readiness surveys undertaken by the 5 Local Authorities, 4 Further Education Colleges and 2 Health Boards.
- Monitoring visits conducted in the 5 LAs in July 2019
- Monitoring visits conducted in the 4 FE colleges in August 2019
- Monitoring visits conducted in the 2 Health Boards in August 2019
- Minutes of monthly regional ALN Transformation Board meetings
- Feedback from school-based ALN Cluster Leads at twice-termly events in each LA (attendance rate of 98%)
- Challenge Adviser school summer term visit EFIs on school-readiness for the ALN Act



## ALN-Readiness in the South Central Region

### *ALN Initial Readiness Survey*

The ALN Initial readiness Survey is based on the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act. It is a self-evaluation tool for local authorities, schools, further education institutions and health boards to judge current practice and identify improvement priorities. The survey focuses on eight key themes namely:

- A. Implementing a unified plan for children and young people with additional learning needs
- B. Putting in place policies to support the implementation of a single, unified plan for children and young people aged 0-25
- C. Clear and consistent rights of appeal
- D. Increasing participation of children and young people
- E. High aspirations and improved outcomes
- F. Increased collaboration
- G. Avoiding disagreements and early disagreement resolution
- H. A bilingual system

### *A: Implementing a unified plan for children and young people with additional learning needs*

What has already been achieved?

- Programme of awareness-raising events completed with a wide range of professionals.
- A regional job description for the LA Early Years Lead Officer, a new statutory post introduced by the Act, has been created and shared across all LAs.
- The EY regional multi-agency, multi-disciplinary group is highly effective in developing consistency of approach across all LAs in supporting EY settings and professionals.
- A regional Statementing/Case Officer Group has been working together to identify common administrative and operational processes and systems. A plan of action is in place to develop regional information to explain the new ALN system and create regional templates and standard letters.
- All LAs and schools are aware of the WG Implementation Guidance for transferring statements to Individual Development Plans.
- Communication plans will be in place by September in each LA providing information to all stakeholders on key messages, timescales and training events. All 4 colleges are in the process of developing communication plans. One Health Board has a well-developed communication plan and effective and efficient ways of sharing key messages with all staff.

Areas for development:

- LAs will need to plan with schools a timetable for the year groups that need to be converted from statements to IDPs during the academic year 2020-21. Once the timetable is established LAs will need to identify the likely capacity issues (personnel/time/cost pressures) resulting from running two systems at the same time during the transfer window of September 2021 - August 2023.
- Engagement of Social Care Services needs to be secured.
- LAs will need to develop explicit multi-agency working arrangements to ensure the involvement of key professionals in transferring statements to IDPs.
- Health Boards will need to create local action plans to manage systems and co-ordinate the involvement of health professionals in the transferring of statements to IDPs.



- For LAs to manage the system of transferring statements to IDPs, both during the transfer window as well as on an on-going basis there will be a need for investment in IT infrastructure. The WG is currently consulting on the need to develop a national electronic platform and a decision on whether or not to proceed with this is expected in September.

*B: Putting in place policies to support the implementation of a single, unified plan for children and young people aged 0-25*

What has already been achieved?

- Multi-agency post 16 transition protocols are in the process of being developed.
- All 4 FE colleges have completed an analysis of what is available for learners with ALN at a universal level and what additional targeted support is provided. Consequently LAs are now in a position to embark on a 'map and gap' activity for post 16 learners with ALN.
- Excellent collaboration between the 4 colleges has enabled the development of a shared electronic resource to provide guidance for learners on what post 16 provision is available in the region.
- Information sharing protocols are in the process of being developed between LAs, health and FEIs.

Areas for development:

- The progress of developing multi-agency post 16 transition protocols have been slower than anticipated. Further collaboration is needed between senior strategic leaders in further education colleges, health and LAs so that there is a robust and joint understanding of how best to meet the needs of young people with ALN.
- Strategic and operational engagement of Social Care needs to be secured.
- LAs will need to undertake a scoping exercise to determine extent, nature and cost of specialist officer involvement required to support young people with ALN in local FE colleges.

*C: Clear and consistent rights of appeal*

What has already been achieved?

- A range of easy read/accessible regional materials (currently in draft form but will be ready early autumn) have been created for children and young people and parents and carers.
- Regional training resource created and shared with ALN Cluster Leads in readiness for dissemination to ALNCoS during the autumn term
- Arrangements in place to co-ordinate the resources 'going live' on all school and LA websites at the same time.

*D: Increasing participation of children and young people*

What has already been achieved?

- Previous self-assessments carried out by schools confirmed that ALNCoS had benefitted from high quality training on PCP but that invariably practice was not up-scaled at a whole-school level. Consequently regional training resources have been created and shared with ALN Cluster Leads targeting whole-school approaches through focusing on pedagogy for individualised learning.



#### Areas for development:

- There is a need to develop joint systemic mechanisms between LAs and the CSC to assess the impact of PCP on the progress of learners with ALN.

#### *E: High aspirations and improved outcomes*

##### What has already been achieved?

- Cluster working has been successfully established across the region with ALN Cluster Leads in place across all clusters. Attendance of ALN Cluster Leads at twice-termly events led by ALN Transformation Lead is high (98%). Engagement of ALN Cluster Leads is excellent having established twice-termly events to cascade information to cluster ALNCoS.
- A programme of professional learning for schools has been developed based on the findings from the ALN Act school-readiness self-assessment (97% response rate).
- Schools, LA officers, challenge advisers and strategic advisers are involved in 8 regional task and finish groups and working parties to create resources and guidance that will enable the development of school-led, self-improving practices for ALN.
- To ensure that schools are able to comply with the duties of the Act, the CSC leadership programme is being promoted to those current ALNCoS in need of professional development.
- All LAs have well-established timetabled opportunities for ALNCoS to receive updates at ALNCo Forums. ALN Cluster Leads have a standing agenda item at each ALNCo Forum to share resources and information.

##### Areas for development:

- Processes for ensuring robustness of individual target setting for pupils with ALN and evaluating the impact of differentiation and targeted support on learner progress needs further improvement.
- The quality of school self-evaluation for additional learning needs in relation to the progress of learners and the effectiveness of provision and leadership is variable across the region. The development of a framework for enabling school to assess the quality of provision and leadership for ALN would be of significant value.
- Challenge advisers and strategic advisers will need further professional development in understanding their contribution in challenging and supporting schools to build capacity for leadership and provision for ALN.
- Inclusion officers will need further professional development in their understanding of the wider educational reforms and how ALN is an integral part of these as opposed to stand alone activity. Inclusion officers need to develop approaches that can support school-led, school-to-school self-improving systems for ALN having a specific role in quality assurance and signposting to effective practice.

#### *F: Increased collaboration*

##### What has already been achieved?

- There is excellent collaboration between the five LA Inclusion Leads with regional approaches adopted in relation to preparing for the Act. There is also engagement at senior levels within LAs as all Directors of Education are aware of the work of the ALN Transformation Lead and the ALN Transformation Project Board. The ALN Project Board is chaired by a designated Director of Education who has a direct reporting responsibility to the Education Directors Group.



- Good reciprocal relationships have been created between the ALN Transformation Lead and the Central South Consortium. Arrangements are in place to develop the ability of strategic and challenge advisers to provide appropriate support and challenge for schools. CSC staff are well represented on the ALN regional task and finish groups and working parties to improve teaching and learning and leadership for ALN in schools.
- The representatives from all 4 FE colleges are committed and enthusiastic in engaging with the ALN Transformation Programme. All colleges are involved in co-creating the post 16 transition protocols and information sharing protocols.
- All colleges have engaged well with the ALN Transformation Lead for FE and have successfully undertaken workforce skills analysis and have created consequent action plans. At an operational level there is significant and plentiful activity in preparing for the Act.
- The progress of health boards is variable. One HB (HB1) has taken a well-planned strategic approach and following accurate self-assessment has a comprehensive understanding of what needs to be done within the health board to comply with the Act. An action plan is in place with direct reporting mechanisms to the Executive Board. Recruitment of the DECLO is underway with a September interview date. The second HB (HB2) by contrast has a well-established history of effective operational practice with inclusion services and was an early adopter of joint commissioned services to meet the needs of learners with ALN. However, strategic and coherent approaches to meet the requirements of the Act are in the early stages of development. The appointment of a temporary DECLO is being considered for the remainder of this financial year.

#### Areas for development:

- LAs ultimately will have responsibility for making sure that the needs of learners with ALN who attend FEIs are met appropriately. However, colleges are autonomous institutions and as yet there are no strategic and systemic joint plans at a senior level in place to develop a shared understanding of what LAs and FEIs would consider appropriate provision for learners with ALN.
- There is a duty in the Act for LAs to keep additional learning provision under review. As part of this LAs are expected to make judgements on the quality of differentiated teaching in schools, impact of interventions on learning and the effectiveness of systems for monitoring the progress and achievement of learners and their inclusion in the everyday life of the school. LAs and the CSC will need to develop and plan a systematic approach to achieving this. Creating a framework enabling school to assess the quality of provision and leadership for ALN would be of significant value.
- Although the Act makes it clear what are the duties of Local Authorities, in practice this has been interpreted as the responsibility of Education Services alone. There is limited understanding from Social Care Services on the implication of the Act for developing holistic and joint approaches.
- There is a need for HB1 to agree on research-informed evidence-based practice within each of the therapy disciplines. Once this has been developed there will be a need for joint work between HB1 and the respective LAs to develop a joint and shared understanding of what constitutes universal provision for learners with ALN. HB2 needs to develop a strategic approach to preparing for the Act. In the first instance it needs to consider appointing a substantive DECLO.
- Currently there are no strategic and systemic joint undertakings at a senior level in LAs and Health Boards to develop a shared understanding of what LAs and HBs would consider appropriate provision for learners with ALN



- There is a need to make explicit how the ALNET Act is related to the work of the Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Boards as strategic involvement from key partners is limited.

### *G: Avoiding disagreements and early disagreement resolution*

What has already been achieved?

- All LAs have provided training for school-based and college-based staff in avoiding disputes and dispute resolution. Three LAs have already trained up 100% of their schools. Arrangements are in place in the other LAs to provide 'mop-up' training sessions.
- A supplementary regional training resource has been created to address feedback from those that had attended the aforementioned training, requesting a condensed presentation for delivery to teachers in all schools. This has been shared with ALN Cluster Leads in readiness for dissemination to ALNCoS and subsequently all schools during the autumn term.
- All LAs are engaged in creating regional materials which will 'go live' on all council and school websites at the same time.

Areas for development:

- Extending this approach to pre-school learners and young people enrolled in FEIs needs to be developed further.

### *H: A bilingual system*

What has already been achieved?

- A regional training directory has been created so that expertise from LAs large enough to develop capacity in Welsh medium ALN interventions/approaches can be access by all schools.
- Initial joint discussions held between CSC, ALN Transformation Lead and Cardiff University to develop a standardised, fit-for-purpose Welsh medium reading test.

Areas for development:

- There are very few commercially available evidence-based literacy and numeracy interventions, making it very difficult for Welsh medium schools to engage in research-informed practice. Creating Welsh medium resources, assessment materials and evidence-informed interventions needs further development across the region although it would be beneficial for this to be completed at a national level.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis above shows that a number of early improvements have already been secured. The improvements to date have been achieved on the basis of effective professional relationships between LAs, Health Boards and FEIs coupled with the significant commitment to preparing for the ALN Act. Operational practices are already well underway. However, these on their own will not address the remaining challenges. To meet all of the deliverables prescribed in the ALN Transformation Programme will require the continued need to improve strategic and systemic joint working practices across all agencies.