



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Learning Disability Action Plan 2022 to 2026

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Decision required

Agreement to the announcement, launch and publication of a Learning Disability Action Plan.

Summary

1. Agreement is being sought for the announcement, launch and publication of a cross-cutting action plan outlining the Welsh Government's strategic learning disability policy priorities for the remainder of the current government term.

2. The plan is effectively a successor to the 3-year Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme which formally ended on 31 March 2021. It incorporates:

- legacy actions from Improving Lives, many of which were significantly affected by the impact of the pandemic.
- priority activities identified by the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group (LDMAG) following their written evaluation of the Improving Lives programme.
- extant and proposed policy priorities identified by officials from across Welsh Government, and
- areas of concern raised by stakeholders, partners and consultees during a targeted engagement exercise on the draft plan.

3. The plan's actions also build on the momentum of Improving Lives and have been developed specifically to help people with learning disabilities, their families and carers to lead healthy, meaningful lives as valued members of the community as we continue to emerge from the impact of the pandemic.

4. The plan has been developed in full consultation and collaboration with the

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Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, Welsh Government policy officials and external stakeholder partners, including people with learning disabilities.

Objective of the paper

5. The Welsh Government's commitments to improving learning disability services have been delivered through the cross-government Learning Disability Improving Lives programme. This was launched in the summer of 2018 and ended formally on 31 March 2021.

6. The programme of 24 actions, agreed by Cabinet in 2018 covered education, housing, health, transport, employment and social care. The Health and Social care Directorate led the delivery of the programme.

7. Good progress was being made to deliver on the 24 actions in the programme, however delivery was affected significantly by the pandemic. The programme was paused in March 2020 until October 2020 when ministers agreed to re-start a limited programme focused on actions that would support individuals with a learning disability during the ongoing pandemic (MA/JM/3104/20 refers). Consequently, the impact of the pandemic and the need to suspend the programme resulted in many incomplete and outstanding actions when it ended.

8. Following the closure of the Improving Lives programme, the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group (LDMAG) undertook a review and evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the programme. This culminated in the submission of a report advising Welsh Government on the priorities for a future strategic work programme. The priorities sought to build on the achievements and momentum of the Improving Lives programme and support. Officials will continue to review equality impact assessments to ensure the outcomes are being addressed and to identify where they may be new areas to

consider.

9. The Deputy Minister for Social Services (DMSS) attended LD MAG on 22 June 2021 and confirmed learning disability services would remain a priority area for this term. The DMSS agreed the development of a learning disability action and took the opportunity to ensure LD MAG understood the challenges in terms of recovery. The DMSS emphasised the need for any strategic plan to be set in the context of the priority for recovery from the pandemic and to focus the key actions that would bring about real, and positive changes for individuals with a learning disability and their families. MA/JMSS/2560/21 refers.

The Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan

10. Following the DMSS's agreement to the outline plan in August 2021, LD MAG began developing the strategic action plan, facilitated by officials and in collaboration with policy colleagues from across Welsh Government. This took account of current and planned policy, and the need to focus on supporting recovery from the pandemic. All of the priority areas in the plan, including those in education, housing, employment and transport, have been approved by the policy leads as fitting their current or planned policies which have been agreed by their respective ministers.

11. The LD MAG agreed the draft plan for wider consultation with stakeholders at their meeting in December 2021. A six-week engagement exercise commenced on 21 January 22 and closed in early March. This targeted consultation of stakeholders, partners and network contacts from across the public and third sectors elicited over 60 detailed, comprehensive responses and has helped shape the final strategic action plan at Doc 1.

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Results of the engagement/consultation exercise

12. There was overwhelming support for the priority areas of activity outlined in the draft action plan; many of which reflected the priority activities already identified locally and being progressed by service providers and representative organisations to meet the needs of their populations.

13. There was particularly strong support for the following priority areas:

- i. Ensuring genuine collaboration and co-production in the development and implementation of policies and services for people with learning disabilities, including seeking the views of and involving people with lived experience in decisions that affect them.
- ii. Overarching and cross-cutting issues, e.g., equality.
- iii. Covid Recovery – addressing the impact of the pandemic on voice, choice and control, independent living, loneliness/ isolation and access to good quality co-produced social care services; making access easier, friendlier and more accessible.
- iv. Plans to explore the development of a learning disability observatory for Wales to provide robust data and evidence to support and drive policy development and implementation; first priority to establish a structured and systematic approach to the review of deaths of individuals with a learning disability.
- v. Delivery of the health actions that will reduce health inequalities, preventable adverse events and avoidable deaths; in particular, improving access to health checks, reducing the need for hospitalisation in specialist units and reducing length of stay.
- vi. Implementation of the Welsh Government's Restraint Reduction Framework and approaches to Positive Behavioural Support across health, social care and education.
- vii. Facilitating independent living skills: Ensuring the availability of dedicated advocacy and self-advocacy services; preventing the decline in these

services and the advancement of generic advocacy services which do not meet the needs of individuals.

- viii. Development of improved integrated children and young people's learning disability services across the public sector, including transition services.
- ix. Increasing employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities through supported jobs and apprenticeships.
- x. Improving access to good transport links.

Impact

14. Successful delivery of the actions outlined within the action plan will have a significantly beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities, their families and carers.

15. Policy leads and officials will continue to work with relevant partners and stakeholders across Welsh Government departments and the breadth of the public and third sectors to implement these actions, improving services and adapting/ developing bespoke, person-centred approaches that fully meet the needs of individuals.

16. Individual actions align fully with Programme for Government objectives of creating a more equal society and improving public services. There is significant focus on early intervention and prevention leading to a reduction in inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities, we will continue to review cross cutting equality issues when delivering the action plan, again revisiting impact assessments undertaken during the development of the IL programme.

17. The 10 priority areas listed above reflect the issues which emerged during the 2018 comprehensive review which led to the Improving Lives Programme and which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. These themes have also emerged in research to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of people

with a learning disability and their families.

18. The plan contains the strategic actions that will deliver against the priority areas outlined above. Other legacy actions from Improving Lives are also continuing to be delivered during the current government term, many of which have been updated and adapted to reflect the COVID recovery priorities. This includes actions within social care, housing, education and employment.

19. The plan also includes a focus on ensuring that collaboration and co-production, incorporating and including the voice and opinions of people with lived experience are central in the development of policies, service planning and decision-making. This must also include ensuring full accessibility for people with learning disabilities via the provision of easy-read documentation and building-in sufficient time for consultation and engagement with people with additional needs.

Next steps

20. Officials are currently working with policy colleagues from across Welsh Government on the development of an associated delivery and implementation plan which will set out the detailed actions that will underpin the strategic priorities within the action plan and ensure the successful achievement of the plans objectives.

21. Individual policy leads will continue to have responsibility for delivery of the actions within their remit, while oversight of the action plan will be undertaken by the LDMAG reporting directly to the Deputy Minister for Social Services.

22. Progress will be monitored and reported on annually with a formal review of the plan set to be undertaken at the end of the second year (spring 2024), to ensure focus is maintained on current and developing priority issues.

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Finance and resourcing

23. £700,000 within BEL 0661 – Older People, Carers and Disabled People Learning Disability budget has been agreed to deliver the legacy health actions from the previous Improving Lives Programme. An additional £1 million per annum, 2022-23 to 2024-25, has been identified from BEL 0920 Sustainable Social Services Social Care Reform Fund to undertake specific activities within the health and social services portfolio. Details of this additional funding allocation are currently being finalised and will be the subject of separate advice to the Minister Health and Social Services and Deputy Minister Social Services.

24. In relation to the education actions outlined in the plan (5.1 and 5.2) there is funding of £21.1 million per annum, 2022-23 to 2024-25, within the Additional Learning Needs BEL 5115 of the Education and Welsh Language MEG to improve the lives of children and young people with additional learning needs. This includes funding to support the ALN Act which is being implemented through a staged approach. A further £13.9 million per annum, 2022-23 to 2024-25, is allocated from the Post 16 Specialist Placements BEL 5271 for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities to access specialist further education provision.

Risks

25. The DMSS has previously agreed the development of an action plan in August 2021 (MA/JMSS/2560/21) which has been widely communicated to stakeholders.

26. The decision to agree the development of an action plan followed an options appraisal which included delivery of a limited 2-year proposal focussing only on Improving Lives legacy actions. A formal full successor approach to Improving

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Lives and the development of the four year action plan is now proposed. This decision has been published and widely communicated publicly, including via a far-reaching, targeted stakeholder engagement exercise.

27. A decision not to proceed with the plan at this late stage may lead to criticism for the Welsh Government and ministers and the Ministerial Advisory Group is likely to challenge such a decision.

Communications and publication

28. An oral statement announcing the Learning Disability Action Plan is scheduled for delivery by the Deputy Minister for Social Services on Tuesday 24th May 2022.

29. It is anticipated that the plan will be published, including in easy-read format, to coincide with the oral statement.

Recommendation

Agree the publication and launch of the Learning Disability Action Plan 2022-2026.

Eluned Morgan MS / Julie Morgan MS
Minister Health and Social Services / Deputy Minister for Social Services
May 2022

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