



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

National ALN Steering Group meeting: 17 November 2022

Agenda and summary of National ALN Steering Group meeting 17 November 2022.

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Attendees

Attendees included: local authority (LA) inclusion leads, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the National Academy for Educational Leadership, colleges, Estyn, the Education Tribunal for Wales (ETW), SNAP Cymru, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, health board directors of service, and the Welsh Government (WG).

1. Welcome and Introductions

Apologies were given for two members.

2. Governance

a) Minutes and actions of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and updates on actions were shared.

b) Membership

New members were introduced to the Steering Group (the SG).

c) Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were updated.

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3. Implementation Updates

a) Thoughts on implementation

The SG discussed time issues for schools, early identification and increases in demand, a lack of Welsh medium resources and assessment tools, and constitution of appeals panels.

b) Post-16

Colleges were making final preparations for implementation and had developed partnerships with LAs, health colleagues to ensure effective partnership working and consistent practice. LAs have nominated post-16 officers, seconded from FEIs, to allow them greater capacity for preparatory work. An all-Wales post-16 LA group meets regularly to discuss issues, share solutions and resources.

The SG agreed to establish an ALN health collaboration task and finish group. WG would present information on existing and emerging themes and issues at the next meeting.

c) Progress moving children from SEN to ALN

WG shared the Interim National Implementation Lead's intention to meet with schools across Wales to gather information on the progress to move children from SEN to ALN system. Schools will be asked about numbers of newly identified learners, numbers moved and to be moved in mandated years.

4. Group workstreams and networks

a) Proposed workstreams feedback

Workstreams would be managed through task and finish groups, the SG welcomed this approach; members were asked to share relevant information from the organisations and networks they represent, to help maintain board oversight of risks and challenges to implementation.

WG shared policy updates, including plans to fund 10 students to undertake doctorates in educational psychology, with a new tie in agreement so that EPs work in Wales on graduation.

A member suggested WG should extend the proposed workforce development activity to include educational psychologists, and any other relevant specialisms. It currently focusses on ALNCoS and school practitioners but does not capture conversations both from this Group and ADEW around training and availability of EPs. Some of the ALNCo Masters modules would also have been relevant to speech and language therapists (SALTs), occupational therapists (OTs) and physio therapists (PTs) who work alongside ALNCoS.

Members noted the importance of transparency between WG and the SG around WG activity and work in train, to ensure there is consensus around the direction of travel before work commences.

5. Welsh Government business

Due to time constraints the chair progressed on to item 5C.

c) ALN data

WG presented a paper which focussed on reductions in ALN numbers.

LA colleagues confirmed a decrease in identification has been noted over the past year, however there was evidence of over identification previously, particularly around School Action+. A decrease is not necessarily a negative, and fluctuations are to be expected. More use of universal provision and differentiated teaching could have contributed to a reduction in ALN numbers.

Swansea Bay University Health Board undertook a survey which shows higher rates of ALN diagnoses following the pandemic, which has impacted on children and young people's well-being and mental health needs, and in some cases this has resulted in developmental delays. This places increased pressure on Occupational Therapists, Physio Therapists, and Speech and Language Therapists and also on education practitioners who are dealing with higher levels of developmental delays in in-coming learners.

6. Estyn ALN insights and thematic review

Estyn gave a summary of the main headlines from the annual report covering academic year 2021 to 2022. The full report will be published 18 January 2023.

The SG discussed the findings of the thematic review, some themes include:

- the need to improve availability of Welsh medium resources and assessment tools.
- higher numbers of learners coming to school with numeracy and literacy skills, and physical development below normal expectations for children of their age and levels of development; this was also seen in non-maintained

nurseries.

- How IDPs are being received and how PCP is supporting learners, schools' preparedness for ALN reforms and training undertaken.
- A need to extend professional learning opportunities to all school staff.
- Professional learning opportunities to LA based staff and the levels of understanding staff in statutory roles have of the requirements imposed on them by the ALN system.

7. Any Other Business

No items were raised. The next meeting was scheduled for 17 January 2023.

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