

Implementing the additional learning needs system between September 2021 and August 2025: a guide for parents and families



What this guide is about

The special educational needs (SEN) system is being replaced by the additional learning needs (ALN) system. This is happening over four school years – between September 2021 and August 2025.

This guide explains how and when children will move from the SEN system to the ALN system.

During the four-year implementation period, to make sure children continue to receive the support they need, the ALN system will operate alongside the SEN system.

This means until a child moves to the ALN system, the SEN legislation and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales continues to apply, and children will continue to benefit from the support available via the existing SEN system.

Where the guide says parent, this includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for a child and any person who has care of a child.

Where the guide says maintained setting, this means a local authority school and a local authority pupil referral unit (PRU).

New ways of working

We are determined to deliver a fully inclusive education system for learners in Wales.

We are creating a system where needs are identified early and addressed quickly, and where all learners are supported to reach their potential.

We are changing the separate systems for special educational needs (SEN) and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in further education to create a single system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with ALN.

We want to make sure that:

- children and their parent's views, wishes and feelings are listened to when decisions are being made about how to help children
- the right support is put in place quickly to help children with ALN
- everyone works together to help children with ALN, including education and health services
- most children with ALN can go to their local maintained setting if it is right for them
- children and their families can access learning support even before they start school
- children and their parents understand the additional learning provision (ALP) being offered
- if children and their parents are not happy with decisions about ALN, there are rights in law to help them do something about it
- children with ALN get help in Welsh, wherever possible, if they need it

What is changing?

The ALN system strengthens the importance of providing information so that children and their parents are involved as much as possible in decisions that affect them.

As the ALN system is put in place, you will notice the following changes to what things are called:

- special educational needs (SEN) becomes additional learning needs (ALN)
- special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) become additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCOs)
- special educational provision (SEP) becomes additional learning provision (ALP)
- plans such as individual education plans (IEPs) and statements will be replaced with a new plan called an individual development plan (IDP)

Some things have not changed. The definition of ALN is the same as SEN. This means if a child had SEN, it is likely that they will have ALN.

When and how children will move to the new system

Moving children from the SEN system to the ALN system is taking place over four school years. This is to make sure there is enough time for maintained settings and local authorities to discuss the support needed and to prepare IDPs.

From 1 September 2021, maintained settings and local authorities have needed to follow The Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALN Act) and [‘The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021’](#) (the ALN code).

The ALN Act and the ALN Code give rules about how the ALN system works for maintained settings, local authorities, and health services so they do what the law tells them to.

The ALN Act and ALN Code have applied to all children up to and including those in Year 10 in the 2021 to 2022 school year who did not have an identified special education need (SEN) on 1 September 2021 and who are later identified, or thought to have, an additional learning need (ALN).

This includes children who are educated in a maintained setting, in an independent setting, are educated other than at school (EOTAS) and children who are electively home educated (EHE).

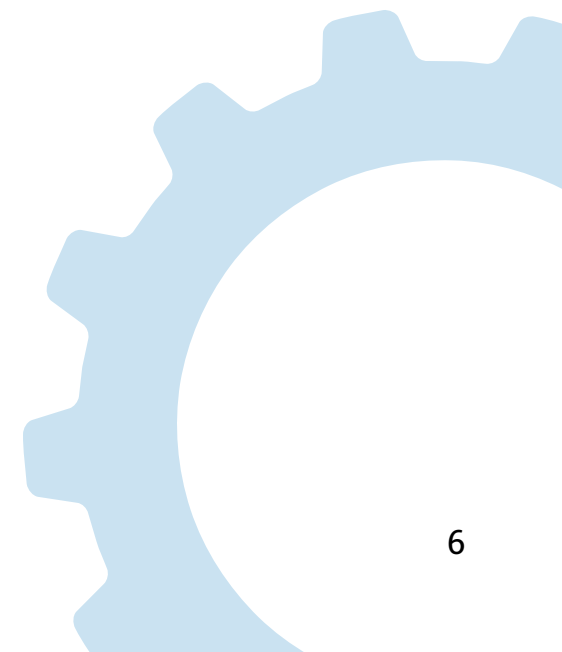
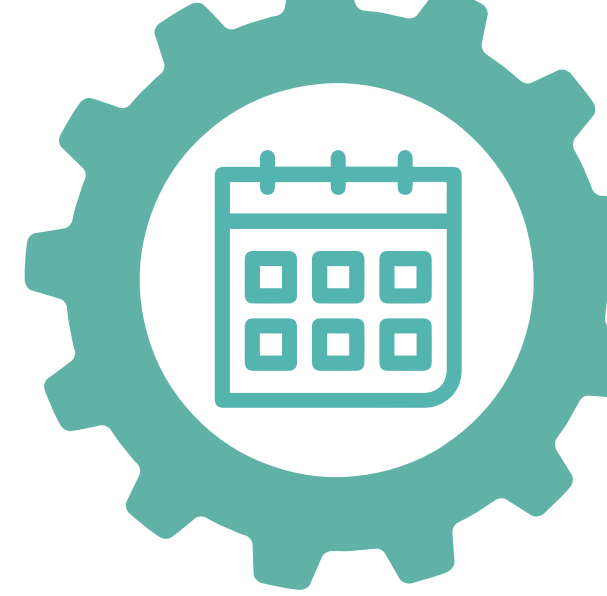
From 1 January 2022, children who were on the SEN system started to move into the ALN system.

Children are being moved by school year groups.

The table below shows when children in maintained settings, who receive SEP on 1 January 2022 or on 1 September 2022, will be moved to the ALN system.

Spring and summer terms of the school year 2021 to 2022	Nursery (N1, N2), Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 10
School year 2022 to 2023	Nursery, Reception, Year 2, Year 4, Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 and Year 11
School year 2023 to 2024	Year 6 and Year 10
School year 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025	All remaining children not already moved (Nursery, Year 2, Year 4 and Year 8).

Maintained settings or local authorities will get in touch with you and provide you with information on when and how this will happen.



From 1 September 2022, additional groups of children will start to move from the SEN system to the ALN system. These groups are:

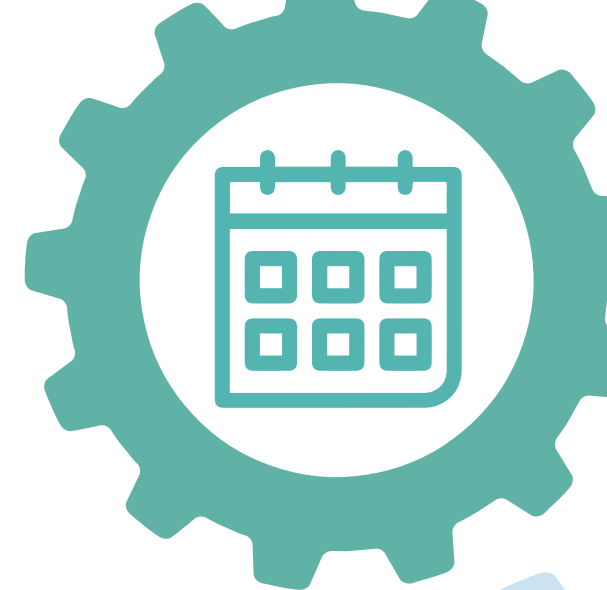
- children with SEN who do not attend a maintained setting
- children who have a statement of SEN
- children who are involved in an SEN process such as the local authority undertaking an SEN assessment or preparing a statement

The table below shows when children who receive SEP via statements must move to the ALN system.

School year 2022 to 2023	Children who are below statutory school age, Reception, Year 6, Year 10 and Year 11
School year 2023 to 2024	Year 6 and Year 10
School year 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025	All remaining children not already moved (Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, Year 8 and Year 9).

Maintained settings or local authorities will get in touch with you and provide you with information on when and how this will happen.

From 1 September 2022, children with SEN who do not attend a maintained setting and children who were involved in an SEN statement pipeline will move automatically from the SEN system to the ALN system.



How maintained settings and local authorities move children to the ALN system

Moving from the SEN system to the ALN system can be done in one of three ways.

It can be done through:

- an IDP notice or a No IDP notice being given
- an ALN notice being given
- automatically moving – this means that a notice is not given and the move to the new system happens because something has changed

IDP and No IDP notices

An IDP notice means a maintained setting or local authority has decided a child has ALN and an IDP will be made for the child.

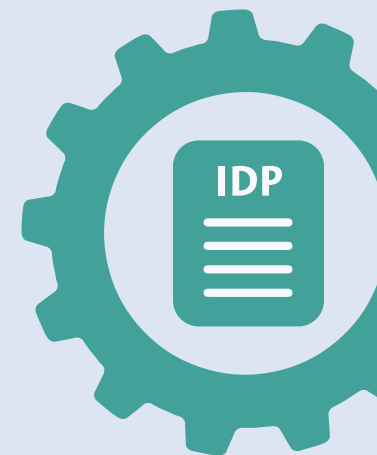
A No IDP notice means the maintained setting or local authority has decided the child does not have ALN and an IDP will not be made for the child.

On occasion, a child who had SEN might be given a No IDP notice because their needs have changed, and they no longer need additional support to learn.

Most children will move from the SEN system to the ALN system when their maintained setting or local authority gives them an IDP notice or a No IDP notice (depending on the needs of the child).

Maintained settings will give most of the IDP notices or No IDP notices but sometimes a local authority will give them.

Local authorities will give IDP notices or No IDP notices (depending on the needs of the child) to children and their parents who have statements, are looked after and to children who are registered at more than one education setting (such as a PRU and a school).



Automatically moving from the SEN system to the ALN system

In some cases, a change in the child's circumstances means that the child will move automatically from the SEN system to the ALN system. The child will move to the ALN system on the date of the change of circumstance.

Where a child moves automatically from the SEN system to the ALN system, your maintained setting or local authority will let you know.

ALN notices

In exceptional circumstances, a local authority can give an ALN notice.

An ALN notice is not the same as an IDP notice because the ALN notice does not involve deciding about the child's ALN.

An ALN notice allows local authorities to move a child from the SEN system to the ALN system outside of the mandated years referred to above (if exceptional circumstances arise).

How children and their parents can ask for a child to move to the ALN system earlier than planned

From 1 January 2022, children up to and including Year 10 in a maintained setting who receive SEP via school action or school action plus, and their parents, can ask to move to the ALN system at any time.

From 1 September 2022, most children, up to and including Year 11 receiving SEP wherever they are educated, can ask to move to the ALN system at any time.

Children and their parents can do this by asking the maintained setting or local authority to issue an IDP notice to move them to the ALN system earlier than planned.

This can be done in writing (such as in an email or message) or verbally (such as in person or in a phone call).

The maintained setting or the local authority can issue an IDP notice or a No IDP notice.

The maintained setting must issue an IDP notice or a No IDP notice within 15 school days.

How children and their parents can ask for a child to move to the ALN system earlier than planned

A local authority must issue an IDP notice or a No IDP notice within 15 working days or as soon as reasonably practicable (depending on the child's circumstances).

However, the duty to give a notice does not apply where:

- an appeal is ongoing in relation to a child with a statement
- a pre-statement pipeline is ongoing in relation to a child (a pre-statement pipeline is where a child does not have a statement but is trying to get a statement)
- the child has already moved to the ALN system

In some circumstances, a child or their parent can request the local authority gives an ALN notice. In that case, the local authority must give an ALN notice within 10 working days of the request.

What if I do not agree with a decision?

Sometimes, disagreements can arise. Most of the time, disagreements can be sorted out by discussing the problem with the maintained setting or local authority. If you are unhappy with anything, you should make your views known as soon as possible.

If your child attends a maintained setting, always speak to the school's additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) as soon as you have worries or concerns. Working together will provide opportunities to discuss any problems and help them to be sorted out at an early stage.

If you are still unhappy, then you can talk to your local authority to seek further advice. You or your child can ask the local authority to reconsider a decision made by a school.

If your child does not attend a maintained setting, you can talk to your local authority to discuss any concerns you have.

If you or your child disagree with decisions made by your local authority, you can make an appeal to the Education Tribunal for Wales about certain things.



Further support and information

You can find out more about your rights and the support and advice you can receive under the new ALN system from ‘A guide for parents about rights under the additional learning needs (ALN) system’.

If you need more support, there are many voluntary organisations that help children and their families.

Some of the main organisations are listed below:

- SNAP Cymru
- National Deaf Children’s Society
- National Autistic Society Cymru
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Cymru
- Children’s Commissioner for Wales

