

Additional learning needs (ALN) data fields: Guidance for PLASC, EOTAS Census and SWAC 2026 to 2027



Guidance

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Introduction

The guidance sets out additional learning needs (ALN) data changes being introduced to management information system (MIS) and education statutory data collections from September 2026.

The guidance explains how the revised and new ALN data fields should be completed and includes examples to support consistent interpretation and recording. It will sit alongside the existing [Pupil Level Annual School Census \(PLASC\) technical completion notes](#), [Educated otherwise than at school \(EOTAS\) Census technical completion notes](#) and [School Workforce Annual Census \(SWAC\) technical completion notes](#).

The changes refine existing data fields and introduce a small number of targeted additions to ensure information available to maintained schools and non-school settings, local authorities and the Welsh Government is aligned with the ALN system.

The changes will support a clearer and more consistent picture of learners with ALN at both a local and national level. Over time, the data will:

- strengthen the evidence base
- support planning, self-evaluation, improvement activity and decision-making across the ALN system
- support year-on-year analysis and understanding of how the ALN system is operating

The changes are informed by the Welsh Government [consultation on strengthening ALN data in maintained schools and non-school settings](#). In addition, the Welsh Government has considered [Audit Wales' report on the ALN system](#), and the need to balance improved evidence with clear, proportionate and manageable requirements for the workforce. The [summary of responses to the Welsh Government consultation](#) showed broad support, while highlighting issues around clarity, feasibility and workload.

The guidance has been developed with input from sector representatives, including additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCos), local authority ALN and data officers, and MIS suppliers to ensure it:

- is clear and practical
- reflects how ALN processes operate in practice
- supports the consistent recording of ALN data across Wales

Where the guidance 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.

Reviewing privacy notices

As part of implementation, schools and local authorities should consider whether there is a need to review privacy notices to ensure they remain accurate and relevant in light of the new data fields.

Privacy notices should:

- clearly explain what information is collected
- how the collected information is used and shared
- be in line with [Welsh Government privacy guidance](#) on information management and statutory data collections

PLASC, EOTAS Census and SWAC

The table below details new or amended data fields to be included in school MIS systems from September 2026 and part of statutory data collections from November 2026 (SWAC (School Workforce Annual Census)) and January 2027 (PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) and EOTAS (Educated other than at school) Census).

Data field	Descriptor	Change status
ALN support plan	To indicate the type of support plan a learner has. (This is the only field which should be recorded for learners with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. All other ALN fields will be defaulted to 'NULL'.)	Existing field – EHC plan added as response option.
ALN decision outcome	To indicate whether a school or local authority has given either an individual development plan (IDP) or a notification of no ALN for a specific learner since the last data collection.	New field in PLASC and EOTAS Census.
ALN decision body	To determine which body issued the IDP or notification of no ALN (dependent on response to above field).	New field in PLASC and EOTAS Census.
ALN area of need	To indicate which area(s) of need a learner with an IDP has.	New field in PLASC and EOTAS Census.
ALN local health board provision	To indicate whether any of the additional learning provision (ALP) for a learner with ALN has been secured by a local health board or NHS body (as specified in section 2C of their IDP).	New field in PLASC and EOTAS Census.
IDP review date	To record the latest review date of the learner's IDP.	New field in PLASC and EOTAS Census.
Local authority specialist resource base	To identify the number of local authority specialist resource bases (SRBs) in a school.	Existing field in PLASC – renamed for clarity.
Senior leadership team	To record whether the ALNCo is part of the school senior leadership team (SLT) – this field is to be completed for all staff roles (not just ALNCos).	New field in SWAC.

Data fields: PLASC and EOTAS Census

The following data fields relating to ALN are in the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) and the EOTAS (Educated other than at school) Census.

ALN support plan

Status: Replaces the legacy <SEN Provision> data field

Collections: PLASC, EOTAS Census

Purpose of the data field

This field records whether a learner has a school maintained or local authority maintained individual development plan (IDP). IDPs are statutory plans created under the [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) and are either maintained by the school or the local authority.

It is an existing field which has been updated to record an additional response option: Education, health and care (EHC) plan. An EHC plan is the statutory plan, made within sections 37(2) of [The Children and Families Act 2014](#), for a child or young person in England who needs more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Under the ALN system there may be limited circumstances where a learner who lives in England and has an EHC plan under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system in England, maintained by an English local authority, attends a school in Wales. In these cases, the EHC plan will be maintained by an English local authority but the school in Wales will take all reasonable steps to help the English local authority secure the special educational provision specified in the EHC plan. The response option 'EHC plan', should only be selected to record learners to whom this applies.

This additional response option:

- enables schools and local authorities to record this information in a consistent way
- supports schools and local authorities to effectively plan their provision
- ensures the Welsh Government has an accurate picture of learners attending schools in Wales who require additional learning provision (ALP) or special educational provision

How to complete the data field

This field is mandatory for all learners. For each learner select 1 of the following responses:

- School maintained IDP
- Local authority maintained IDP
- EHC plan (learner must live in England and attend school in Wales)
- No support plan

Note: This field does not record individual healthcare plans (IHCP).

ALN decision outcome

Status: New data field

Collections: PLASC, EOTAS Census

Purpose of the data field

This field is intended to provide the Welsh Government, local authorities and schools insight into the volume of ALN decisions the workforce is making (which takes time and resource). This field must be completed for all learners, regardless of whether they have ALN.

This field records whether, since the last statutory data collection, a learner has been given (issued) either an IDP, or a notification of no ALN, following an ALN decision.

The information will:

- support resource planning
- help identify trends
- improve understanding outcomes for learners who have been determined to not have ALN

This field captures the workload involved in making new decisions about ALN. The number of learners with ALN is captured in the 'ALN support plan' data field.

How to complete the data field

This field applies to all learners, including those who have not had an ALN decision and outcome since the last statutory collection.

The field is defaulted to 'No ALN decision outcome' for all learners.

If a learner has received an ALN decision since the last statutory collection, you should update the field to record 1 of the following responses:

- IDP given: select this option where an ALN decision has been made (since the last statutory collection) and an IDP has been prepared and given to the learner or their parent. (In line with the ALN code, an IDP is considered to have been given once the process of preparing an IDP has been completed, including consideration of any comments or concerns from the learner or their parent about a draft IDP)
- Notification of no ALN given: select this option where an ALN decision has been made (since the last statutory data collection) that a learner does not have ALN and the learner and their parent has been notified of that decision

If an ALN decision process is ongoing for a learner at the time of the statutory data collection, the response should be 'No ALN decision outcome' as an IDP or notification of no ALN has not yet been issued to the learner and their parent.

Repeated data field for multiple decisions

This field should be completed if more than one ALN decision outcome has been given (issued) since the last statutory collection.

Examples

- It has not been brought to the attention of the school or local authority in the last year that the learner may have ALN and therefore the duty to decide whether a learner has ALN does not apply. In this circumstance select 'No ALN decision outcome'.
- A learner has an IDP which was initially given 3 years ago and continues to be reviewed annually. Additional learning provision (ALP) is in place, and no new decision on whether the learner has ALN has been required since the last statutory collection. As this field records new ALN decisions made during the reporting period, not the number of learners with ALN, select 'No ALN decision outcome'.
- Since the last statutory collection, a parent has contacted the school as they think their child may have ALN. The school is in the process of considering the learner's needs, consulting with class teachers, the parent or parents, and other relevant professionals. At the time of the data collection, an IDP has not been issued, although it is possible one will be issued soon. For this learner select the option 'No ALN decision outcome' as the IDP or notification of no ALN has not been issued yet. The outcome will be captured in the following year's statutory collection.
- Since the last statutory data collection, a class teacher identified that a learner may have ALN. Following a person-centred review (PCR), the school decided the learner did not have ALN and notified the learner and parent or parents of this decision. In this circumstance, select 'Notification of no ALN given'.
- Since the last statutory collection, a parent contacted the school as they thought their child may have ALN. Following a PCR, the school decided the learner did not have ALN and notified the learner and their parent or parents of the decision. New information about the learner became available 6 months later. Following consideration of the new information and a PCR, the school decided the learner has ALN and gave an IDP to the learner. In this circumstance, select 'Notification of no ALN given', then in the repeated field, select 'IDP given'.

ALN decision body

Status: New data field

Collections: PLASC, EOTAS Census

Purpose of the data field

This field records which body issued the IDP or notification of no ALN. It will provide insight into where ALN decision-making is taking place across the system. This will support the Welsh Government, local authorities and schools to understand who is undertaking this work and support future resource planning.

How to complete the data field

This field should be completed for all learners where, following a new ALN decision, an IDP has been issued or a notification of no ALN has been given since the last statutory data collection. Where multiple decisions have been made and IDPs or notifications of no ALN have been issued to a learner, you should record the body which gave each IDP or notification.

For each record select 1 of the following responses:

- School
- Local authority
- Local authority reconsideration
- Does not apply (DNA): this is autofilled where a learner has not been given an IDP or notification of no ALN since the last statutory data collection

Repeated field for multiple decisions

This field needs to be completed to record the body which issued each ALN decision since the last statutory data collection.

ALN area of need

Status: New data field

Collections: PLASC, EOTAS Census

Purpose of the data field

The information recorded in this field will support the Welsh Government, local authorities and schools to:

- better understand learners' needs
- identify trends
- to plan provision accordingly

The response options are aligned with the 4 areas of need described in the ALN code (Communication and interaction; Cognition and learning; Behaviour, emotional and social development; Sensory and/or physical needs).

How to complete the data field

You must select 1 or more options to indicate which area or areas of need apply for learners with an IDP. (These options are expected to be presented as drop-down menus or selectable fields within MIS systems, although the exact appearance and functionality will vary between suppliers). You should record all applicable areas of need (1 or more) to provide an accurate reflection of the learner's needs.

For all learners with an IDP, select all relevant options:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Behaviour, emotional and social development
- Sensory and/or physical needs
- Does not apply (DNA): this is autofilled if 'No support plan' is selected in the area of need field

The ‘[Areas of need](#)’, as defined in the [ALN Code](#), are included below for reference.

- *“Communication and interaction: Some children and young people might experience difficulty in one, some or all aspects of speech, language and communication. This area of need may encompass children and young people with speech and language delay, impairments or disorders, specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, hearing impairment and those who demonstrate features within the autistic spectrum; it may also encompass some children and young people with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. The range of need will include those for whom language and communication difficulties are the result of permanent sensory or physical impairment.”*
- *“Cognition and learning: Some children and young people who demonstrate features of moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, may require specific programmes to aid progress in cognition and learning. Some of these children and young people may have associated sensory, physical and behavioural difficulties.”*
- *“Behaviour, emotional and social development: Some children and young people will demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties. They may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive or lacking concentration; they may have under-developed social skills; or present challenging behaviours.”*
- *“Sensory and/ or physical needs: This area of need includes the wide spectrum of sensory, multi-sensory and physical difficulties. The sensory range extends from profound and permanent deafness or visual impairment through to lesser levels of loss, which may only be temporary. Physical impairments may arise from physical, neurological or metabolic causes that only require appropriate access to educational facilities and equipment; others may lead to more complex learning and social needs; some children and young people will have multi-sensory difficulties some with associated physical difficulties.”*

ALN local health board secured provision

Status: New data field

Collections: PLASC, EOTAS Census

Purpose of the data field

This field records whether any of the ALP for a learner with ALN has been secured by a local health board or NHS body (as specified in section 2C of the IDP).

This information will provide quantitative evidence on the extent to which local health boards or NHS bodies are involved in securing ALP for learners with ALN. It will also help build understanding of the role of health services within the ALN system at a local and national level.

How to complete the data field

This field should be completed for all learners with an IDP. It will show whether the local health board is responsible for securing any of the learners’ ALP (as recorded in section 2C of the IDP).

Select 1 of the following responses:

- True (Yes): where provision is secured by a local health board or NHS body and recorded in section 2C of a learner's IDP.
- False (No): where the IDP does not include any provision that is secured by a local health board or NHS body.

Example

- A learner with ALN requires occupational therapy to support them in developing their fine motor skills. The provision is secured and delivered by the local health board. In this case, you should select True.

IDP review date

Status: New data field

Collections: PLASC, EOTAS Census

Purpose of the data field

The ALN framework requires an IDP to be reviewed within 12 months from when the IDP was prepared, revised or a decision was made not to revise it. This statutory timeframe:

- protects the rights of learners
- ensures timely and relevant support
- promotes a fair, transparent and accountable system

Collecting information consistently will support and the Welsh Government, local authorities and schools to ensure the system works fairly and effectively.

We recognise the time and effort involved in maintaining and reviewing an IDP. Collecting this data will help the Welsh Government better understand how the review duty is being implemented in practice.

How to complete the data field

This field should be completed for all learners with an IDP. This field requires the date on which the most recent review was carried out.

In the response field enter the date for the most recent review as follows:

- Following a review, the date on which a copy of the revised IDP was first given to the learner and their parent.
- If during the review it is decided the IDP should not be revised, the date that the notice of decision not to revise was given to a learner and their parent.
- If the IDP was issued in the last 12 months, and a review has not yet taken place, the date on which a copy of the IDP was first prepared and given to the learner and their parent.

Examples

- A learner has a school maintained IDP. The school arranges a person-centred review (PCR) of the IDP and some revisions to the learner's ALP are agreed. The IDP is updated accordingly and given to the learner and parent. In this case, the date on which the revised IDP was given should be recorded.
- A learner has a school maintained IDP. The school arranges a person-centred review (PCR) of the IDP and decides no revisions to the IDP are required. The school gives notice of the decision that the IDP should not be revised to the learner and their parent. In this case, the date on which notice of the decision not to revise the IDP was given should be recorded.
- A learner with ALN joins a school with an IDP issued by their previous school. The current school has not carried out a review of the IDP as it was given less than a year ago. The date on which the prepared IDP was first given (issued) by the previous school should be recorded.
- A looked after learner has an IDP maintained by their local authority. The learner has held the IDP for several years and it has been reviewed and updated annually in line with the ALN code. At the latest review which took place within the previous 12 months, a decision was made not to revise it. The date that the local authority gives notice of the decision not to revise the IDP should be recorded.

Local authority specialist resource base

Status: Updates to the previous 'Local education authority (LEA) designated special class' field.

Collections: PLASC

Purpose of the data field

This field records the aggregate number of local authority specialist resource bases (SRBs) in a mainstream school (sometimes known as specialist teaching facilities). It has been updated from the previous PLASC field on local authority designated 'special classes'. The only change is to the name of the field. This is school level information and not collected about individual learners. Please refer to the [PLASC technical completion notes](#) for further information.

Local authority SRBs are classes designated, funded and admission determined by the local authority.

Do not include classes established on the school's own initiative or 'in-house provision' to support learners with ALN.

How to complete the data field

This field should be completed by adding the number of local authority SRBs in the school.

Examples

- A mainstream primary school has 1 local authority SRB for learners with social communication needs and 1 local authority SRB for learners with sensory and physical needs. The school should record 2 in this field.
- School-based or in-house provision organised and funded by the school should not be included in this field.

Data fields: SWAC

The following data fields relating to ALN are in the SWAC (School Workforce Annual Census).

Senior leadership team

Status: New data field

Collections: SWAC

Purpose of the data field

The [ALN code](#) sets out the expectation that additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCos) should either be part of the senior leadership team (SLT) or have a clear line of communication to them. Following recommendations from the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, the Welsh Government is implementing changes to recognise ALNCos are part of SLT in all settings.

This field has been introduced in this context to support understanding of leadership structures within schools including the role of ALNCos.

This field must be collected for every member of staff and records whether each individual is a member of SLT.

How to complete the data field

For all staff, enter 1 of the following responses:

- 0 if the staff member is not part of SLT
- 1 if the staff member is part of SLT

ALNCo roles

This falls within the <StaffRoles> data item

Status: Updated data field

Collections: SWAC

Purpose of the data field

This field collects data about all roles and responsibilities undertaken by members of staff including the ALNCo role. The staff roles code set has been reviewed with a new ALNCo role added. There has also been a revision to an existing ALNCo role description to provide clarity and distinguish between those with qualified teacher status (QTS) and those without, and to ensure accuracy in recording and reporting.

How to complete the data field

For all staff, enter 1 of the following responses using the new and revised ALNCo role codes:

- AQ: main role – ALNCo with QTS (for individuals where it is their primary role)
- SP: main role – ALNCo with no QTS (for individuals where it is their primary role)
- SC: additional role – ALNCo (as an additional role to main responsibilities)

Role codes 'AQ' and 'SP' (ALNCo with or without QTS) along with recording the relevant full-time equivalence (FTE) should be used where their ALNCo role is their main role and the member of staff does not have:

- any teaching responsibilities
- other leadership roles (such as headteacher, deputy or assistant headteacher)
- higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA), teaching assistant or support staff responsibilities

Where an ALNCo does have any of the above, they should be recorded against those roles with the relevant FTE. They should also record an additional role of 'SC ALNCo' (as an additional role to their main role).

Additional validation will be added to the collection to help schools to record staff roles accurately.

Contact

If you have policy queries about the new and amended data fields or would like to provide feedback on this guidance, please contact:

additionallearningneedsbranch@gov.wales

If your query is about technical completion notes, please contact: IMS@gov.wales