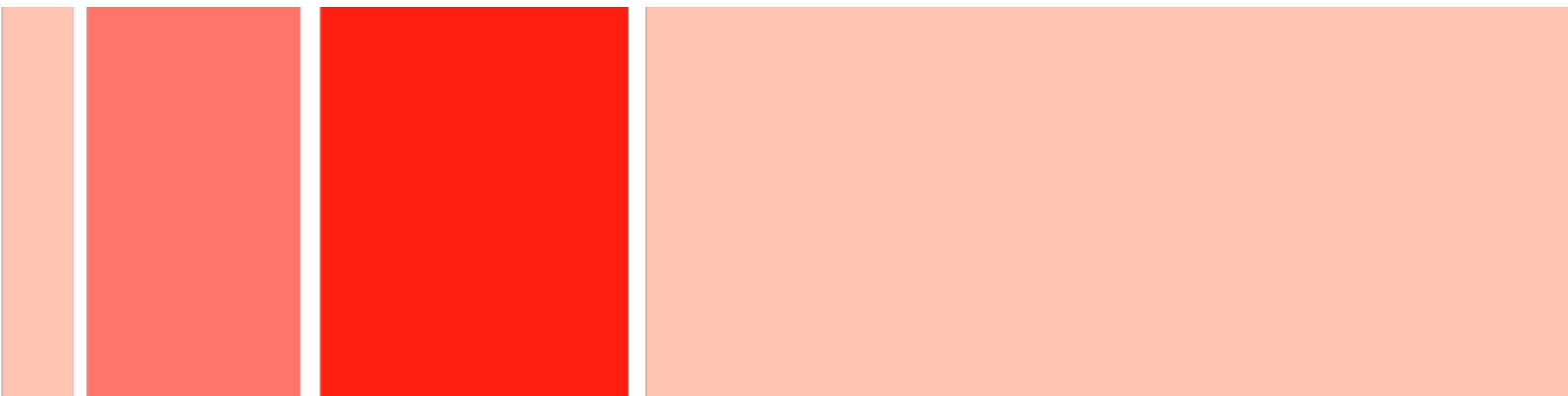


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Scoping study for a review of Welsh-medium additional learning provision



Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Scoping study for a review of Welsh-medium additional learning provision

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This report can be found on the Statistics and research pages of the Welsh Government website: <https://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

ALN

Additional Learning Needs

ALNET ACT

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act

ALNCo

Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator

ALP

Additional Learning Provision

EM

English Medium

EP

Educational Psychologist

IDP

Individual Development Plan

LA

Local authority

LDD

Learning Difficulties and / or Disabilities

LHB

Local Health Board

NAEL

National Academy of Educational Leadership

PLASC

Pupil Level Annual School Census

RHaG

Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (parents' group supporting Welsh-medium education)

SEN

Special Educational Needs

SWAC

School Workforce Annual Census

WESP

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

WG

Welsh Government

WM

Welsh Medium

WM-ALP

Welsh Medium Additional Learning Provision

1. Introduction

The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system was introduced under the [ALNET Act](#) and Additional Learning Needs Code 2021 ([ALN Code](#)). [Section 89 of the ALNET Act](#) sets out a statutory obligation on Welsh Ministers to review and report on the sufficiency of Welsh Medium Additional Learning Provision (WM-ALP) across Wales every 5 years, with the first report to be published by 1 September 2026, 5 years after the commencement of the Act. This report provides a summary of a scoping study undertaken to assess the current evidence base on WM-ALP, including any gaps, and provide recommendations for the 2026 review.

2. Background

The additional learning needs system

The ALNET Act creates a single legislative system for supporting learners aged 0 to 25 who have ALN. It replaces the previous Special Educational Needs (SEN) system for children of compulsory school age and the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) system for learners in post-16 education or training. The ALN system was rolled out to all learners between September 2021 and August 2025. In this report, the terms SEN or LDD may be used when referring to data or literature published before the ALN system was (fully) implemented.

Under the ALN system, if a learner is identified as having ALN, they have a right to a statutory plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is a statutory document that contains a description of a child or young person's ALN, the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) that is called for by the child or young person's ALN, and other associated information.

WM-ALP under the ALN system

One of the main principles of the [ALN Code](#) is to create “a bilingual system where all reasonable steps are taken to deliver ALP in Welsh for children and young people who require support through the medium of Welsh, with scope for increasing the delivery of ALP in Welsh over time” (2021, page 37). Section 3.22 of the ALN Code (2021, page 41) states that: “The Welsh Ministers have the power to change duties in the Act to secure the provision of ALP in Welsh from being duties to take all reasonable steps to do that, to being absolute duties (that is, to secure the ALP in Welsh)”. These statutory requirements to deliver WM-ALP apply both to local authorities (LAs) and local health boards (LHBs). Section 23.39 of the ALN Code places a duty on the body that is preparing or maintaining the individual's IDP to consider whether ALP should be provided in Welsh. If it is decided that the ALP should be provided in Welsh, this must be specified in the IDP, and the body that is maintaining the IDP must take all reasonable steps to ensure that it is provided (2021, page 257).

There is also a wider legislative framework designed to protect and promote the Welsh language, which is relevant to this study. This includes the [Welsh Language Measure](#) (2011), which gives official status to the Welsh language alongside English and sets out the principle that Welsh is to be treated no less favourably than English. It also includes the [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Act 2025](#), which introduces a range of provisions with the aim of ensuring that all children have the opportunity to become independent Welsh speakers by the time they complete statutory education.

3. Methods

This study drew upon a review of literature, policy documents and the main data sources; interviews with stakeholders; and discussions with Welsh Government officials.

Evidence review

Existing statistical data relating to WM-ALP were identified through discussion with Welsh Government statisticians. The literature and document review considered academic publications, policy documents, and reports from stakeholder organisations.

A literature search was conducted by the Welsh Government library service and two authors of this report, in English and in Welsh. It was restricted to publications from 2001 to 2024. Two authors of this report screened items generated by the search to identify those focusing on ALN/SEN in WM or bilingual settings, WM-ALP, and/or ALN/SEN policy for learners aged 0 to 25 years. Items focusing on non-relevant linguistic contexts, non-educational contexts, and papers that had been superseded by newer versions were excluded.

Important policy documents, such as the ALN Code and local authority [Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) (WESPs), as well as publications from stakeholder organisations, such as Estyn and the Children, Young People and Education Committee, were also reviewed.

Stakeholder interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams with 12 external stakeholders involved in education and the delivery of ALP in Wales. These stakeholders included Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCos), LA representatives, LHB representatives, and representatives from [Mudiad Meithrin](#), [Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg \(RhAG\)](#) and the [Welsh Language Commissioner's](#) office. An analysis was undertaken of emergent themes in the interview transcripts and notes.

4. Evidence review

This section summarises the review of literature, policy documents and available data.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)

Under Section 84 of [The School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#), LAs are required to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). These plans outline how LAs intend to improve standards in WM education and enhance the teaching of Welsh over the next 10 years. Outcome 6 in the plans refers to an increase in the provision of WM education for pupils with ALN in accordance with the duties in the [ALNET Act](#). Table 1 presents the authors' analysis of the main issues identified by LAs under Outcome 6 in their WESPs, and the number of LAs that noted these as issues.

Table 1: number of LAs that raised specific issues in their WESPs

Issue	Number of LAs (out of 22)
Pupils with ALN moving from WM to English-medium (EM) schools / having to access EM support	10
Smaller percentage of pupils with ALN in WM schools compared to EM	11
Insufficient workforce / professional development opportunities to deliver WM-ALP	13
Insufficient WM resources for children and young people with ALN	7
Importance of collaboration between schools or LAs	13
Plans in place to build further WM resource centres for children and young people with ALN	9

As discussed in the remainder of this section, several issues raised in LA WESPs were also raised in other evidence sources considered by this review.

Sufficiency of WM-ALP

In terms of data, the [pupil level annual school census](#) (PLASC) is an electronic collection of pupil and school level data provided by all maintained primary, middle, secondary, nursery and special schools in Wales in January each year. According to data from the [2023 Pupil](#)

[Level Annual School Census \(PLASC\)](#), the percentage of learners with ALN is slightly lower in WM schools than overall in Wales. There were 63,089 learners with ALN and SEN in primary, middle and secondary maintained schools in Wales, which translates to 13.4% of all pupils. Of the 108,866 learners in Wales (23.0%) educated in WM and bilingual schools (includes WM, Bilingual, Dual Stream and Transitional schools), there were 12,925 (11.8%) learners with ALN or SEN. Primary schools include Welsh medium, dual stream and transitional schools. Middle and secondary schools include Welsh medium and bilingual schools. For further information please see these [guidance notes](#). To note, the January 2023 PLASC data were the most recent available at the time this evidence review was undertaken. More recent data have since been published ([January 2024](#), [January 2025](#), [January 2026](#)).

There is no data currently available in the PLASC on how many learners with ALN require WM-ALP (according to their IDP) and/or receive ALP through the medium of Welsh. Notably, several LAs also report in their WESPs that they do not have a full understanding of the WM-ALP required and therefore cannot determine if the need is being met. Furthermore, the literature reviewed for this study suggests that, currently, there is no consistent way of defining and assessing the WM-ALP required and the extent to which it is being met.

Challenges with the availability of WM-ALP are widely noted in the literature. A [joint report by the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner for Wales \(2023\)](#) suggested that the needs of learners with ALN that speak Welsh are not being adequately met. It called on the Welsh Government to address national challenges, "including the lack of Welsh-speaking workforce, a lack of Welsh-medium resources and standardised assessments, and inconsistencies in arrangements for regional collaboration." (2023, page 1). The report was informed by LA WESPs and the Commissioner's own individual case work.

Stakeholder reports highlight inconsistency in WM-ALP across Wales. A report by [the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) described the situation as a "postcode lottery" (2024, page 151). Estyn's [thematic report on the new ALN system](#) also noted variation across LAs in the availability of WM ALN specialist services, though it was generally less of an issue in areas where Welsh is the dominant language (2023, page 41).

This is echoed in WESPs, with many LAs with low percentages of Welsh speakers reporting insufficient capacity to deliver WM-ALP for all pupils who needed it.

Some stakeholder reports have highlighted consequences of issues with WM-ALP. A joint report by the [Children's Commissioner for Wales and Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (2023) noted that some families are faced with a choice between getting the necessary support required by their child's ALN and getting education in the language of their choice. A [report by the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education committee](#) (2024) raised the further issue of some parents changing the language of their home after changing the language of their child's education, causing significant distress. [Davies \(2023\)](#) argues that if caregivers perceive WM-ALP to be insufficient or unsuitable, they are less likely to request it from their LA, which in turn affects the LA's interpretation of the extent of need and therefore what is done to improve or increase the provision.

[Estyn's thematic report \(2023\)](#) noted that LAs are working to improve their WM specialist provision, such as through establishing specialist classes for pupils with ALN in WM schools. However, the literature suggests that children and young people with ALN in WM settings overall are at a disadvantage compared to those in EM settings ([Davies, 2023](#); [National Academy of Education Leadership \(NAEL\), 2023](#)).

Workforce

A wide range of professionals and practitioners are involved in the delivery of ALP, including those who are attached to a specific school (e.g. ALNCos, teachers, TAs) and those who support multiple schools (e.g. EPs, SLTs and other healthcare professionals).

In terms of data, the [School Workforce Annual Census](#) (SWAC) collects information on teachers and support staff in local authority-maintained schools in Wales, including their Welsh language skills. Teachers record their Welsh linguistic skills measured against the Welsh Language Competency Framework for education practitioners. Data from the SWAC indicated that, as of [November 2023](#):

- 10,060 teachers (39.1%) reported having Welsh skills at intermediate level or above. At the local authority level, the proportion ranged from 13.5% in Blaenau Gwent to 92.8% in Gwynedd
- 6,390 teachers (24.8%) were teaching/working through the medium of Welsh in their current post, with a further 1,585 (6.2%) able to teach/work through the medium of Welsh but not doing so in their current post
- 6,355 support staff (21.1%) reported having Welsh skills at intermediate level or above compared to 39.1% of teachers
- The proportion of support staff with Welsh skills at intermediate level or above ranged from 3.0% in Blaenau Gwent to 89.3% in Gwynedd

To note, the November 2023 SWAC data were the most recent available at the time this evidence review was undertaken. More recent data have since been published ([November 2024](#) and [November 2025](#)).

Whilst the SWAC provides useful data on the Welsh language skills of the education workforce in general, due to the range of practitioners involved in different ways in the delivery of ALP, it is difficult to fully understand the size of the workforce available to deliver WM-ALP. The [ALN Code](#) (2021, page 72) states that “ALNCos are not expected to be directly involved with the day-to-day process of supporting every learner with ALN. This is the responsibility of the class teacher, however learning support staff can aid the ALNCo in ensuring that teachers are supported and the needs of all learners are met”. Regarding non-school staff who support the delivery of ALP (e.g. Educational Psychologists or Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs)), there is limited information available. There is some data available on the Welsh language skills of health practitioners. However, data on staff who deliver ALP specifically is not readily available and would likely be challenging to acquire.

Given the limitations of the current data available on the workforce to deliver WM-ALP, it is difficult to assess its sufficiency. There is a lack of evidence on the workforce situation across the various professional and practitioner groups involved in the delivery of WM-ALP, where the gaps are, how workforce issues are managed, and the consequences of these issues for schools, learners and their families. However, LA WESPs highlighted workforce issues, with 13 out of 22 LAs stating that they faced challenges recruiting Welsh-speaking

staff with the necessary skills, or that WM-ALP was insufficient due to the shortage of staff available to deliver it. This point was echoed in stakeholder reports, where it was identified as one of the main challenges ([Welsh Language Commissioner and Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2023](#); [NAEL, 2023](#)).

In the education sector, the [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#) (Welsh Government, 2022) sets out steps to develop the Welsh language workforce in schools, including increasing the number of practitioners able to work through the medium of Welsh who are supporting learners. In the healthcare sector, '[More than just words](#)' (2022) is the Welsh Government's five-year plan to strengthen Welsh language provision in health and social care. The plan includes actions to increase Welsh speaking capacity within the current workforce as well as among new recruits. Both plans recognise that strengthening the Welsh-speaking workforce is a long-term undertaking.

Funding

Funding is a recurring theme in the literature on WM-ALP. While funding may be a wider issue, the literature suggests it has specific implications for WM-ALP ([Fychan, 2023](#)). The Welsh Government has [increased the funding available to support ALN reform](#), including investment in work to improve WM-ALP. However, further understanding is needed of how funding is determined and allocated to support WM-ALP and how it is used, as well as on the specific funding challenges and gaps in relation to WM-ALP.

Collaboration and sharing of information

Section 7.22 of the ALN Code places a duty on LAs to identify opportunities to share resources with each other. The importance of collaboration to support the delivery of WM-ALP is also mentioned in 13 LA WESPs. Examples of collaboration might include sharing resources or information or allowing staff to work across multiple health boards or LAs.

[Estyn \(2023, page 49\)](#) describes the current collaboration and sharing of information and materials between agencies as "too variable". The report notes that many schools and LAs have taken substantial steps to improve WM-ALP, but work is needed to share learning and good practice.

A [report by the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner for Wales](#) (2023) highlighted the lack of formal collaboration arrangements between LAs as a “weakness in most of the WESPs” (2023, page 3). Collaboration in the form of allowing pupils to access WM-ALP in settings other than their local school (e.g. allowing pupils to attend a school in a neighbouring LA) has been used as a solution in some situations where WM-ALP was not available in the local school. However, this is a contentious issue. Statham and Siencyn (2014, page 134¹) state that Welsh-speaking children with ALN should “receive their education through the medium of Welsh, in their local community”, so they can actively participate in their local community, rather than having to travel to neighbouring LAs for their education.

There is also a need for collaboration between education and health, with Section 21.21 of the ALN Code stating that “some children and young people will require the support of NHS bodies to help meet their needs”. The literature is currently scarce on how collaboration between education and health works, and what the issues and considerations are. The importance of collaboration between education, health and social services is also discussed by Mitchell (2018) in [research exploring how deaf children are supported within education](#) in Wales. Mitchell (2018) argued that services should collaborate with one another to be part of a Wales-wide strategic plan to improve the provision that is currently available.

In summary, existing literature points to the importance of collaboration within and across sectors. However, the evidence base to understand current collaboration practices and their implications for WM-ALP, where the gaps are, and to identify effective models of collaboration, is limited.

Resources and diagnostic assessments

No inventory has been identified of the WM resources or diagnostic assessments available for ALP. However, the literature suggests a lack of ALN resources available in Welsh ([Chief](#)

¹ Statham, J and Siencyn, S. W. (2014). Bilingual Education in Wales. In F. Armstrong, M. Masterson, and P. Potts, Equality and Diversity in Education 1: Experiences of Learning, Teaching and Managing Schools, Volume 1 (pages 122-136). Oxford: Routledge.

[Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2022](#); [NAEL, 2023](#)). There are developments in this area. The Welsh Government has established [Adnodd](#), which is described as a 'one-stop shop for resources for education practitioners in Wales'. It commissions bilingual resources to support the new Curriculum for Wales. Gwynedd and Môn have developed the [ADYaCH](#) (ALN and Inclusion) website to enhance the availability of Welsh language ALN resources. ADYaCH includes bilingual resources and assessments for individuals with ALN. The website also provides useful bilingual resources for parents and caregivers of learners with ALN.

The literature also highlights a lack of Welsh diagnostic assessments for ALN. For example, research suggests that there are insufficient diagnostic tests available to identify specific types of language-related difficulties amongst Welsh-speaking children ([Thomas and others, 2022](#)). The Welsh Government is taking measures to enhance diagnostic assessment and support through the medium of Welsh with certain areas and further work will be required.

5. Stakeholder interviews

This section summarises the main themes that emerged from analysis of interviews with stakeholders.

Geographical variation

Many interviewees highlighted geographical variation in the sufficiency of WM-ALP. One described provision across Wales as “too patchy,” ranging from LAs with ALP available fully in Welsh and English, to those with almost no WM-ALP. Interviewees noted that the inconsistency means that caregivers and learners in some areas must travel to neighbouring LAs to access support. Concerns were raised about some LAs’ limited awareness of these issues and their impact.

Several interviewees noted that WM-ALP is strongest in areas with a relatively high percentage of Welsh speakers, particularly Gwynedd and Môn. Outside these areas, provision was said to be limited due to a lack of Welsh speakers in the workforce. It was also suggested that larger LHBs may offer better WM services regardless of the linguistic context in the area. Interviewees suggested that the sufficiency of WM-ALP can also vary substantially between schools within the same LA and between different areas within the same LHB.

Interviewees also highlighted geographical variation in access to Welsh-medium training for ALN practitioners. Some of the training was reported to be available only in one location. It was hypothesised that this may result in clusters of practitioners able to deliver WM-ALP near those training centres, leaving gaps elsewhere and contributing to uneven provision. However, this point would require further exploration.

English as the default language for ALP

Several interviewees felt that English is the default language for ALP in Wales, with Welsh often treated as an afterthought in service provision, resource development, and training. ALNCos particularly reported difficulties accessing WM-ALP from the health sector, where they perceived English to be the default language, particularly in areas with low community use of Welsh. This situation was reported to create barriers for pupils needing support in

Welsh, with one interviewee noting that it places learners from Welsh-speaking homes at a particular disadvantage.

Learners with ALN in WM schools at a disadvantage

Several interviewees highlighted that pupils with ALN in WM schools may face disadvantages compared to their peers in EM schools. One ALNCo described limited options for WM education for pupils with ALN in their area, especially where specialist support is needed. The interviewee described a case where a family had to choose between WM education and accessing appropriate ALN support. Another ALNCo reported that WM schools often have fewer ALP resources than EM schools. An LA representative also noted a lack of parity between WM-ALP and EM-ALP in their area, with some pupils having to travel to access provision. One interviewee referred to a “fundamental injustice”, where pupils with ALN in WM schools do not get the same level of support as their peers in EM schools, with families facing greater barriers and challenges.

Data to inform WM-ALP

Some interviewees raised concerns about limited data on both the number of pupils who need WM-ALP and the workforce able to deliver it, in both the education and health sectors, and felt it needs improving.

Interviewees noted that LAs and schools often rely on statistical data to assess the need for WM-ALP. If this data is outdated or inaccurate, these assessments may be inaccurate. Data on pupils with ALN in bilingual schools was seen as particularly unclear, potentially leading to under-identification of those needing support in Welsh.

Interviewees suggested that LHBs lack a full understanding of the need for WM-ALP. Families may prioritise accessing services over the language in which it is provided, leading to an underestimate of need. They suggested that the number of requests for WM-ALP is low. However, the process for identifying whether a learner needs ALP through the medium of Welsh in the health sector is unclear. One interviewee noted that underestimating demand may lead to it being treated as a lower priority.

Workforce to deliver WM-ALP

The consensus from interviewees was that the current workforce for delivering WM-ALP is insufficient, with notable gaps among teaching assistants, SLTs, and particularly EPs. They reported some improvements in recent years, but that challenges remain.

One interviewee noted that many LHB teams providing ALP have few or no Welsh-speaking staff. It was noted that even among those who do speak Welsh, not all feel confident delivering clinical services in the language, which may have implications for clinical quality. One interviewee described access to Welsh-speaking health practitioners as a matter of “chance”.

ALNCos and LA representatives reported difficulties recruiting Welsh-speaking staff, particularly those with the skills to support learners with ALN. Other interviewees stressed the need for proactive, long-term planning to train enough Welsh-speaking practitioners across professions.

Attitudes towards the language and understanding of the importance of WM-ALP

Some interviewees felt that some of the challenges seen stem from attitudes towards the Welsh language. It was suggested that many people working in the ALN sector, including decision-makers, neither prioritise the Welsh language, nor fully understand the need for and importance of WM-ALP. Increasing awareness of its importance was seen as essential across the sector. One interviewee argued that the Welsh language has also not been prioritised sufficiently by the Welsh Government or some LAs, contributing to the current lack of WM-ALP.

Some interviewees expressed concern that some families are still being advised by practitioners and/or schools to move their children to EM settings or to stop speaking Welsh at home. An ALNCo highlighted how distressing this can be for pupils.

While one interviewee felt there had been little progress, other interviewees noted recent improvements, with one describing a “genuine change” in the perceived importance of WM-ALP and greater commitment from LAs. From a health perspective, it was reported that

health professionals also increasingly recognise the importance of offering SLT services in a child's first language.

Funding

Stakeholders held mixed views on funding. One ALNCo welcomed increased Welsh Government funding that enabled their school to set up new provision, while others highlighted funding given to a Welsh university to develop a recruitment strategy to attract Welsh speakers to the SLT profession.

However, some ALNCos reported the more general issue of a lack of clarity around their school's ALN budget, making planning difficult. A LA representative also noted funding challenges and highlighted that limited understanding of ALN funding allocation made it hard to plan support for Welsh-speaking pupils with ALN. Stakeholders noted that schools must plan budgets carefully due to funding constraints and consider the balance between what they would ideally provide and what is affordable. One LA representative noted that low numbers of Welsh-speaking pupils with ALN made a dedicated WM-ALN resource centre economically unviable. Another interviewee highlighted the financial challenge of providing specialist WM-ALP in areas where the percentage of learners in WM schools is low.

Stakeholders noted some budget and funding issues affecting WM-ALP specifically. Some ALNCos reported that Welsh-speaking staff supporting learners with ALN often had to create their own materials, requiring more qualified staff and therefore increasing salary costs. Stakeholders also noted additional expenses for training and retaining Welsh-speaking staff to support learners with ALN given the shortage of Welsh speakers with the necessary skills. One ALNCo suggested WM settings should receive higher budgets to reflect these needs.

Sufficiency of resources, assessments and training

Interviewees reported a lack of up-to-date and suitable WM resources, assessments, and training, and called for Welsh Government to prioritise improvements in this area. An LA representative suggested a lack of parity between Welsh and English ALN resources.

As noted in the 'Funding' section, several interviewees highlighted that limited Welsh language ALN resources and training mean staff are having to translate or create their own. ALNCos and LA representatives described greater workloads and time pressures as a result, with one interviewee describing the situation as "unsustainable." The need to translate resources was also seen to have quality implications, particularly for diagnostic assessments where validation and standardisation is important, and also where Welsh language resources are not updated as frequently as English versions. Some interviewees also noted that existing Welsh language resources are particularly unsuitable for secondary school learners, with 'child-like' materials leading to disengagement.

Collaboration

Interviewees discussed collaboration to support WM-ALP across schools, between LAs and between education and health. This included sharing resources and information, sharing staff, and learners accessing provision in neighbouring schools or LAs.

The ALNCos interviewed reported strong collaboration between schools within and beyond their cluster, and LA representatives also praised the collaboration between schools. ALNCos valued opportunities to discuss common challenges and resources, particularly with other WM schools in their area. For example, one ALNCo noted that schools in their cluster frequently discussed and shared resources they were developing to avoid duplication. There was some variation, however, with some ALNCos reporting limited time for collaboration due to competing tasks, and another feeling "lucky" to have the time.

Some ALNCos felt that collaboration between LAs could be improved. One interviewee, for example, noted reluctance from a neighbouring LA to share resources, though the reasons were unclear.

Collaboration between health and education was seen as challenging by many in the education sector, with calls for improvement. In contrast, an interviewee from the health sector viewed existing service level agreements with LAs as effective in enabling WM-ALP delivery. Interviewees from the health sector suggested creating an information-sharing platform to strengthen communication and collaboration.

The relevance of collaboration within the healthcare sector was also noted, with staff from other areas sometimes stepping in to provide Welsh language support when local teams lacked Welsh speakers. While not ideal, this was seen as an acceptable interim solution.

Some interviewees highlighted that improving collaboration at national and regional levels could help to address geographical variation in WM-ALP. While they agreed that national coordination is important, one interviewee suggested starting with regional collaboration as it is often quicker and more achievable.

The health sector and WM-ALP

Interviewees raised issues about the health sector's provision of WM-ALP, with differing views between education and health professionals. While some interviewees from schools, LAs, and the third sector reported difficulties accessing WM support from the health sector, a health sector interviewee perceived that most LHBs could meet current demand, though they might struggle with an increase in demand.

Some ALNCos reported a lack of Welsh-speaking health staff to provide WM-ALP, with one describing it as “impossible” to speak with practitioners in Welsh in their LHB. As a result, schools often send referrals in English to avoid delays. One ALNCo highlighted “huge delays” when IDPs were submitted in Welsh, causing children to wait longer for services. ALNCos reported that some parents prioritise timely support over receiving it in Welsh, with one noting a general “tolerance” for English-language health services to avoid delays. One ALNCo warned that delays in receiving a diagnosis through the medium of Welsh could have serious consequences for pupils.

Interviewees consistently emphasised that challenges in accessing WM support from the health sector are systemic in nature, while praising the efforts of individual practitioners.

Praising ALN staff

Despite the systemic issues they raised, interviewees consistently praised the efforts of ALN staff across sectors, noting they are “doing their best” with the resources available.

Managing ALN reforms alongside curriculum changes and post-pandemic recovery was seen as a major challenge. Practitioners were frequently described as going above and beyond, working extra hours and taking on tasks outside their roles to support pupils. One

example involved a Welsh-speaking SLT who recorded Welsh sounds in their own time to assist a non-Welsh-speaking colleague supporting a bilingual child.

6. Conclusions

The evidence considered for this scoping review points to the existence of a number of challenges with regards to the availability of WM-ALP. These challenges include geographic variation in the availability of WM-ALP across Wales; a lack of resources, assessments and training; and insufficiencies in the workforce available to deliver WM-ALP. However, the review also identified a number of gaps in the evidence base to understand the sufficiency of WM-ALP. For example, a lack of available data regarding both the need for the WM-ALP and the workforce available to deliver this emerged as a theme in both the literature review and stakeholder interviews. Notably, a lack of such data presents important challenges for assessing the sufficiency of WM-ALP. Furthermore, whilst existing evidence points to the importance of collaboration in supporting the delivery of WM-ALP, the evidence base around current collaboration practices and their implications for WM-ALP is limited. The findings also point to a need for further understanding in relation to how funding is allocated to support WM-ALP, how it is used, and the specific funding challenges and gaps in relation to WM-ALP.

It is important to note that sufficiency is a complex construct to measure, and it is often done on a case-by-case basis. Further work is also required to understand the need for WM-ALP and the processes in place to identify this need, in order to fully understand the sufficiency of WM-ALP.

7. Recommendations

On the basis of this scoping study, we propose the following list of recommendations for the 2026 quinquennial review into the sufficiency of WM-ALP:

Recommendation 1: the scope of the review should include CYP of all ages under that ALNET Act in a variety of educational settings to ensure that as diverse a range of experiences are covered as possible. The majority of available evidence comes from maintained schools for pupils of compulsory school age, and there is a marked gap in the evidence from settings different to these.

Recommendation 2: it is also important that the review includes the voices of caregivers and families and learners themselves, as this is something which is notably absent from the literature at present.

Recommendation 3: the sample should include practitioners who work with CYP with ALN on a day-to-day basis, along with managerial- and strategic- level colleagues. The interviews highlighted a disconnect between the understanding of the present situation held by managerial or strategic level colleagues and the experiences of practitioners working with CYP daily. Therefore, it is important that the review considers all perspectives and experiences.

Recommendation 4: the following issues should be explored further:

- issues pertaining to the workforce, including recruitment of Welsh-speaking staff into relevant ALN careers as well as training opportunities, which was frequently highlighted as an area of priority by the interviewees
- the available statistical information on the workforce available to deliver WM-ALP and how to improve this
- the availability of statistical data regarding the number of pupils who require or would benefit from WM-ALP
- current WM resources and assessments available for pupils with ALN
- the funding available for WM-ALP and how decisions are made regarding the allocation of funding for WM-ALP
- collaboration, including between the health and education sectors