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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Buffy Williams MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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Dear Buffy,

Thank you for your letter of 10 February and for your questions following the oral evidence session I gave to the Committee on 23 October. My responses to these questions are in Annex A.

I welcome the live and responsive nature of this inquiry. The regular check-ins, visits, and engagement have contributed significantly to a shared understanding of how implementation is progressing and where further improvement is needed. I also recognise the way this work has informed the Committee's wider activities.

As I explained during the oral evidence session in October, there isn't sufficient time remaining in this Senedd term to undertake the full and careful process required to amend the ALN Code for Wales. We are clear that any amendments to the Code are informed by the findings of the ALN legislative review and wider evaluation, and that there must be adequate time for engagement and scrutiny. I therefore agree that this work should be a priority for the next Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Annex A

Clarification of who and how learners with ALN get support

Question 1. Can you provide a timeline for when the work on defining general provision will be completed and in place?

Work to define provision made generally continues to be co-developed with partners. There is an active working group taking forward a work plan to develop a national shared understanding of provision made generally. This working group is chaired by a local authority Director of Education with members from local authorities across Wales and Estyn.

Producing guidance on provision made generally has the potential to influence how the statutory legal test is understood or applied in practice. It, therefore, requires full and transparent engagement with children, families and the sector to ensure it is robust, trusted and fit for purpose.

It is not possible to undertake that level of comprehensive engagement before the end of this Senedd term, and it would not be appropriate to progress work of this significance without it. That work will therefore be for the next Government to take forward in a way that properly reflects the impact on children and families.

Question 2. Can you provide an update on how questions about the interaction between the ALN Code, Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000 will be resolved?

The Welsh Government recognises that the interaction between the ALN system, the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022, and the Learning and Skills Act 2000 is complex. Ensuring full alignment, particularly for post-16 ALN provision, is a significant and detailed piece of work.

We are working closely across Government, and with colleagues in MEDR, to develop a consistent understanding and a coherent approach. This includes identifying where clarification, further guidance, or adjustments may be required to provide certainty for learners and providers. A quinquennial review of Welsh medium additional learning provision is also underway.

This work is progressing, but it is important to get it right. Our priority remains on ensuring that every young person in Wales can access the right learning, receive the support they need, and achieve their full potential.

Improving support for families

Question 3: What are your views raised by our Advisory Group, and how some of the issues raised might be addressed?

The issues raised by the Advisory Group reflect genuine challenges faced by parents and carers navigating the ALN system. These perspectives are vital and have informed ongoing work to improve how information and support are communicated to families.

The Parent and Carer toolkit was developed in response to these concerns raised by families and was co-produced with families who have direct experience of the system. Feedback from parents and practitioners has reinforced the value of providing clear, accessible information that reflects lived experiences of families.

Our aim has always been to provide clear and accessible information for families, but we appreciate that this must be balanced with a realistic explanation of the complexity, potential pressures, and implications involved in routes such as Tribunal appeals or judicial review.

The Parent and Carer Toolkit will continue to be an evolving piece of work, and officials are actively gathering feedback and identifying areas where families are seeking further clarification. The recommendations to improve clarity and accessibility such as incorporating additional flowcharts, timelines, and other visual tools which are extremely valuable and will be put forward for consideration in future iterations to help ensure the toolkit provides clearer and more balanced information. If members of the Advisory Group would like to contribute to future versions of the toolkit, we would welcome their involvement and encourage them to contact the ALN team to take part.

The toolkit complements existing guidance, including detailed information on children's and parents' rights already published on the Welsh Government website: [A guide for parents about rights under the additional learning needs \(ALN\) system \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

We are also acting on the strong messages we heard from families about the importance of impartial advocacy. An independent review of advocacy provision across Wales is underway, to ensure families can access strong, trusted and impartial support when they need it.

Question 4: Can you provide further information on the support that will be given to children with ALN and their families who are home educating? What more can be done to ensure that families don't feel forced to make a decision to home education because of a lack of support for their child's needs in school?

As an action from the ALN legislative review, we are developing new supplementary guidance, to be published by the end of March 2026. This will provide additional guidance to local authorities on how to support home educated children with ALN. We will also be developing additional resources later this year, building on the Parent and Carer Toolkit, to help ensure families who choose to home educate are better supported and have access to clear and practical information.

Where children are still in school and parents are considering deregistering their child, it is important that parents raise any potential concerns with their child's school in the first instance if they feel that their child has ALN or that their child's ALN are not being met. They can also contact their local authority for further advice.

Wales' involvement with the Children Not In School (CNIS) provisions in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will support the rights of parents and children as the proposals propose to establish a pilot programme in a limited number of local authorities, where parents must be offered and attend a formal meeting with the local authority if they wish to

withdraw their child from school for home education. The meetings are intended to provide local authorities with an opportunity to discuss reasons for withdrawal of the child from school and to identify any additional needs at an early stage, ensuring families receive appropriate support and that wider factors affecting a child's wellbeing are taken into account.

Strengthening multi-agency integration

Question 5: Can you provide an update on outcomes from the trilateral meetings?

The trilateral meetings have confirmed a shared commitment to strengthen how health and education services work together so that oversight, training and responsibilities for supporting children and young people with complex healthcare needs are clearly defined. This work will inform forthcoming changes to supporting learners with healthcare needs guidance for both schools and health boards, which will be published later this year.

A strong multi-agency approach is essential to supporting the healthcare needs of children and young people. Education settings, local authorities and health boards have responsibilities to support children and young people's health and well-being while they are in attendance. Improving multi-agency collaboration with increased integration between health and education is a priority for this government.

As an outcome of the trilateral meetings, we have established a shared commitment to strengthening multi-agency integration across health, social care and education.

Officials are now progressing a set of joint actions, including:

1. Embedding ALN and health needs into Regional Partnership Board planning, supported by joint communication across sectors and building on the spotlight event that took place in December 2025.
2. Strengthening area-based planning through improved population-level data sharing between schools, local authorities, and health boards.
3. Appointing an NHS-based professional advisor to lead on multi-agency collaboration, system integration, shared expectations and performance indicators.
4. Developing a clear health policy statement to inform co-produced, multi-agency ALNET guidance and ensure consistent practice across sectors.
5. Strengthening how health and education services work together so that oversight, training and responsibilities for supporting children and young people with complex healthcare needs are clearly defined, through the development of joint guidance for schools and health boards.
6. Exploring further policy alignment around needs-led, inclusive approaches, especially relating to neurodivergence.

Question 6: How effective do you think cross-Government working has been in ensuring ALN support is holistic, integrated and timely? Reflecting on your time in the Government, what has worked effectively and what do you think should change?

Cross-Government working has strengthened over time and has helped reinforce the principles of the ALN system, helping services align more effectively around the needs of learners. The trilateral meetings have demonstrated a clear shared commitment across education, health and social care. Joint forums, including the spotlight event, have strengthened relationships, promoted effective partnership working, and are building a more consistent understanding of the ALN reforms across sectors.

However, I am not complacent. Multi-agency working is not yet consistent, and delays can arise when processes and responsibilities across sectors are not sufficiently aligned. These challenges can result in missed opportunities for timely support, with consequences for children's educational outcomes and wellbeing.

There remains a need to strengthen shared accountability, clarify roles and responsibilities, and make better use of existing structures, including Regional Partnership Boards and their children and young people sub-groups.

Question 7: Have local authorities, the NHS and the Welsh Government been able to work together to effectively meet the needs of learners? Are there examples of good practice and how can this be disseminated across Wales?

Following the ALN legislative review, the ALN Multi-Agency Collaboration Group has been re-established with a stronger focus on delivery and improvement. Its priorities include developing supplementary guidance to clarify roles and responsibilities and sharing effective approaches to new multi-agency working.

There are examples of good practice across Wales, demonstrating how integrated working can improve outcomes for children and families, which have been shared through national events and networks to support wider learning. Our aim is to make joined up working the norm across Wales, ensuring that every child and young person receives coordinated, person-centred support. Some examples which have been shared and are now being adopted across Wales include:

- All health boards have designated a DECLO who are working together to deliver a nationally consistent model of delivery and strong collaboration between education, health and social services to meet the needs of children. Across a range of models, DECLOs have strengthened communication, collaboration and joint working between health and education, from early years through to post16. We will be recruiting a professional advisor on multi-agency collaboration based within NHS Performance and Improvement (NHSP&I, formerly the NHS Executive).
- The Occupational Therapy Model in Neath Port Talbot, which was shared at the ALN Effective Practice Event last year, demonstrated how to deliver truly joined-up support. It showed how health and education professionals can work together to embed structured physical activities in schools, such as "corridor circuits", to support motor skills development, sensory regulation, and readiness to learn. The model is now being

adopted in other local authorities with support from Welsh Government funding, illustrating how effective, collaborative practice can be scaled across Wales.

- Another example shared at the spotlight event is the Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs (ISCAN) which is a regional initiative across Gwent designed to provide a co-ordinated, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach for children and young people aged 0–18 years who present with two or more developmental needs. It aims to reduce fragmentation, improve access to timely support and empower families to navigate complex health, education, and social care systems.

Advancing bilingual and inclusive education

Question 8: What training and development opportunities are available to staff who work with children with ALN? In particular, those who may be contracted to support children, such as transport escorts.

We are developing a national ALN professional learning programme through Dysgu, alongside training in neurodivergence, mental health, child development, updated person-centred practice materials, and early years workforce support through Cwllwm and local authorities.

Responsibility for ensuring contracted staff, including home-to-school transport escorts, have the appropriate skills and training rests with local authorities. This forms part of their wider duty to ensure safe, suitable and inclusive transport for all learners.

Question 9: In setting a five year timescale, was the original intention of the 2019 Act that the review of the sufficiency of Welsh medium additional learning provision should be carried out once every Senedd term? If so, are there any plans to revisit the timings of the reviews to reflect the change in the length of the Senedd term?

The requirement to undertake a review of the sufficiency of Welsh-medium ALN provision every five years is set out in legislation. The first review must report by 1 September 2026.

There are no plans to alter the statutory five-year cycle. This would require legislative change to ALNET.

Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021

Question 10: When do you expect to publish further guidance on assessment and progression, such as the age-related expectations you have said were under development? Will this provide a clear framework for education professionals to assess pupils, support their learning development and provide clarity on how they should progress under the Curriculum for Wales?

Personalised Assessments

We are progressing work to develop a new Personalised Assessments report to support teachers to better understand learner progress. The report is designed to provide

practitioners with a nationally defined age-related indicator, together with information on their learners' progress.

This is intended to complement the existing suite of Personalised Assessments reports, which includes individual learner progress and feedback reports, as well as a range of group reports designed to support teachers in understanding their learners' strengths and areas for improvement. When interpreting this new report, teachers are encouraged to exercise their professional judgement and consider it alongside wider evidence to form a holistic understanding of learner progress.

Work will be informed by the newly developed Professional Learning Resources for literacy and numeracy. The initial focus is on creating a report for Numeracy (Procedural), English Reading, and Welsh Reading, which will be tested later this academic year with Year 6 learners only.

Curriculum

Within the Curriculum for Wales areas, descriptions of learning provide guidance for teachers on how learners should progress within each statement of what matters as they journey through the continuum of learning in an area. They are arranged in progression steps 1 to 5 which cover ages 3 to 16 of the learning journey.

While understanding and meeting the needs of individual learners means that there is no such thing as a 'standard' learning journey, each of the progression steps are broadly aligned to ages. Our Curriculum Design professional learning includes support on using this guidance effectively for the purposes of progression and assessment.

Literacy

We have worked with Estyn to explore how we can set out further detail on what good progress in reading looks like at each age. What has been developed so far focuses on progression in reading at Progression Steps 2, 3 and 4, describing in much greater detail what learners should know, understand and be able to do at these stages, and provides concrete examples and indicators of progress. Alongside this, the document outlines what effective provision should include and identifies key professional learning priorities to help teachers deliver high-quality, progression-focused reading experiences.

We are continuing to develop this work and have been testing the detail with practitioners within Policy Group, and the Ministerial Headteachers Advisory Group. Building on the feedback we have received, we are also exploring other ways in which this detail can be presented, with closer alignment to the principles set out by the Literacy Expert Panel and a strong focus on professional learning. We will share this detail more widely in the coming months. We remain keen to be guided by the evidence about what best supports standards and what schools find most helpful.

Mathematics and Numeracy

Swansea University has been commissioned to develop a professional learning resource that covers the whole of the Mathematics and Numeracy Area of Learning and Experience (ALoE), which has 4 statements of what matters. The resource package has been released in phases, with content related to progression steps 1,2 and 3 already published and content on progression steps 4 and 5 of the learning journey on target for publication in March 2026.

The resource is a professional learning offer which is a major component of work to develop a deeper understanding of progression in mathematics and numeracy for teachers. Key to this is the inclusion of 'granular detail'. This expands, breaks down and details the descriptions of learning for each progression step and supports teachers to further their understanding of progression in the learning pathway. In this way the resource package provides a clear framework and clarity on progression in the Mathematics and Numeracy ALoE under the Curriculum for Wales.

As part of the commissioned work, Swansea University is delivering training the trainer sessions to local authority Mathematic and Numeracy leads/advisors. This will support the effective use of the resource to support teachers in a clear and consistent understanding of learner progression and age-related expectations for mathematics and numeracy across schools in Wales.