

Welsh Government evidence paper

For the Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into the implementation of education reforms

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In Wales, Education is Our National Mission. The implementation of our education reforms will achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Our aim is that all learners, whatever their background, are supported to be healthy, engaged, enterprising and ethical citizens, ready to play a full part in life and work.
- 1.2. An inclusive education system is one where learners' needs are listened to, responded to and all learners are supported to participate fully in education with a whole school approach taken to meeting their needs. Together the reforms to the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system are acting as a catalyst for change.
- 1.3. This evidence paper has been prepared for the Children, Young People and Education Committee. It synthesises a range of evidence on the progress to implement education reforms in Wales and summarises actions that Welsh Government are taking to support implementation.
- 1.4. There remains broad support for curriculum and ALN reform in Wales, for the new way of working, and commitment across the sector to get it right. This is set against a backdrop of wider reforms including the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, the new approach to school evaluation, improvement and accountability, and supported by the approach to national Professional Learning. These reforms are also happening in the context of ongoing challenges, including the continued legacy of the impact of the pandemic on learning and wellbeing, challenges with attendance, and an increase in children and young people with complex needs. As well as workforce, recruitment and budgetary pressures. Estyn's Chief Inspector for Wales in the foreword to his annual report cited that 'the enthusiasm of educators across the sectors to make progress and overcome the challenges they face is encouraging, and examples of emerging practice justify a degree of optimism for the future.'

2. Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

- 2.1. It is still early days in implementation of our ALN reforms which is a systemic and cultural change in practice to identify and support learners with Additional Learning Needs.
- 2.2. The ALN legislative framework is created by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET), the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021 (the Code) and regulations made under the Act. Through this statutory framework the Welsh Government aims to ensure all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and can achieve their full potential.
- 2.3. The Implementation of ALNET is now in the third year of implementation, which will complete in September 2025. A phased approach is being taken to introducing the ALN system, over four years with children moving from the SEN system to the ALN system in groups. Young people identified as having ALN, started entering post-16 education already on the ALN system from September 2023.
- 2.4. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language updated the Senedd on progress to date and actions to progress implementation of ALN Reform in an [oral statement](#) on 28 November 2023.
- 2.5. Local authorities (LAs), schools and settings are making steady progress to move learners to the ALN system, identify and plan for their ALN. The 2024 schools census statistical release will be published in July 2024 and provide a more up to date snapshot on learner status and changes in the system.
- 2.6. The Welsh Government has invested £62m revenue and £40m capital between 2020 and 2024 to support implementation. This includes additional resources in schools to implement the ALN system and lead whole-school strategies to embed inclusive education.
- 2.7. To support the ongoing implementation of ALN reform we are continuing to prioritise our investment in line with previous years, with the 2024-25 budget protecting investment of over £56.3m revenue funding. This funding will be directly allocated to schools and settings, post 16 provision and LAs.
- 2.8. The evidence produced over the last nine months has highlighted the need to strengthen consistency in the application of ALNET and Code. Evidence has identified areas in the system that need to be improved and the Welsh Government is working collaboratively with stakeholders to take action and co-produce solutions.

3. Monitoring progress of ALN implementation

- 3.1. This section provides a summary of the sources of evidence that Welsh Government has commissioned, including a four-year formative evaluation of the implementation of the ALN system and the use of a range of evidence, stakeholder intelligence and data to monitor implementation. These include the ALN Reform National Steering Group, Estyn in its role as education and training inspectorate for Wales, Education Tribunal Wales (ETW), National ALN Implementation Leads, the National Academy of Educational Leadership Wales, SNAP Cymru, TSANA, Association of Directors of Education in Wales and engagement with sector representatives and Trade Unions.

Evaluation

- 3.2. The [scoping report](#) of the formative evaluation of the ALN system was published on 15 December 2023. The report presents the findings of the first phase of the four-year evaluation, includes a theory of change for the reforms, summarises findings from a synthesis of existing evidence on ALN system implementation, and articulates the plans and priorities for the next phases of the evaluation.
- 3.3. The formative evaluation is assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the system, identifying any barriers or facilitators to implementation, and any early anticipated or emerging impacts of the new system. A report will be published at the end of each phase of the evaluation.
- 3.4. The evaluation of the [Curriculum for Wales \(CfW\)](#) will also consider the impact of CfW on ALN learners. Early insights research published in [April](#) and [September](#) 2023 highlight that school senior leaders found that the CfW provided increased opportunity to personalise learning and tailor delivery to focus on inclusivity for all learners, including those with ALN.

Estyn, education and training inspectorate for Wales

- 3.5. At the request of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Estyn reviewed schools and LAs progress on implementing the ALN system and supporting learners with ALN. The [thematic report](#) highlighted examples of effective practice and important areas for action by LAs and schools.
- 3.6. Estyn commended the enthusiasm for person-centred practices, alignment with the CfW and how it has strengthened person centred planning and the relationships between schools and families.
- 3.7. Estyn identified areas of improvement including consistency of quality assurance of practice and provision to support person centred planning and the development of IDPs. They also identified the need for clearer expectations of the balance of responsibility between schools and LA's, ensuring schools are fully aware of ALNET duties and clarity over what constitutes additional learning provision. Insights from Education Tribunal Wales reinforce the need for

transparent decision making and communication, reducing variability and inconsistent application of ALNET and code.

- 3.8. The Welsh Government asked Estyn to explore if learner's needs were being met throughout their inspection and thematic activities. Estyn found that schools, and particularly ALNCoS, have a generally secure understanding of the provision that they make for learners and have normally adapted this well to meet their needs.
- 3.9. Estyn also found that of the schools reviewed, pupils are receiving the support they need, although they found that individual settings are interpreting and applying the legislation in different ways.
- 3.10. LAs were convened in early October 2023 to share the Estyn findings, insights from Education Tribunal Wales and national data trends. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language wrote to LAs on 16 October 2023 asking them to review the report, carefully consider and take forward the recommendations identified for LAs and schools within their local area.
- 3.11. A second thematic review of the ALN system is underway to build on previous findings and consider implementation of the ALN system in primary, secondary, all-age schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings. It will report in December and endeavour to provide a more practical resource for schools to share effective practice, enable them to self-evaluate and improve where necessary.

Data on movement of children from SEN to ALN system

- 3.12. Whilst the number of learners identified as having ALN or SEN has reduced, there is steady progress to identify the need for Additional Learning Provision (ALP) and issue statutory Individual Development Plans (IDPs). Estyn highlight that the combined number of IDPs and statements issued in 2023 was greater than the number of statements issued for, at least, each of the past five years.
- 3.13. The last [pupil level annual school census \(PLASC\)](#) was at January 2023, and showed at that point that there were 10,499 learners with IDP's under the new ALN system. This represented 16.6% of learners with ALN or SEN. The 2024 PLASC headline statistics will be published in July and provide a more up to date snapshot on learner status and changes in the system.
- 3.14. The PLASC data shows a continuing downward trend in the number of learners with SEN/ALN. In January 2023 there were 63,089 learners with ALN or SEN in maintained schools (13.4% of all learners), down from 92,688 learners (19.5% of all learners). This is a fall of 31.9% (29,599 learners) since April 2021, just prior to the start of the first year of implementation.

Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCo) review

- 3.15. The ALNCo role is vital to the delivery of the ALN system, both in terms of the ALNCo's own statutory responsibilities and as a source of guidance and support to other practitioners. However, challenges are noted in the evidence, particularly with regard to the workload of ALNCoS, and difficulties reported in cases where ALNCoS are not members of school senior management teams.
- 3.16. In 2023, in response to recommendation 6 of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body [fourth report](#), the Welsh Government commissioned an independent review of Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCo) non-contact time and remuneration. The [report](#) provides a number of recommendations and has been shared with the IWPRB.

Thematic evidence

- 3.17. Set out below is evidence related to the key objectives of the reform.

Early years

- 3.18. The [Estyn annual report](#) pointed to funded non-maintained nursery settings identifying children who may have ALN accurately, with effective systems for supporting them and their families. Many practitioners made effective use of support from the LA.
- 3.19. Estyn found that in most settings, leaders made effective use of funding to enhance provision for children's learning and development. The use of the Early Years Development Grant and other grants had a positive impact on children's physical, social and communication skills. A few settings also supported helpfully those learners with additional needs, for instance by providing sensory whiteboards to help them develop early mark-making skills.
- 3.20. Most settings continued to have strong links with parents and carers, providing valuable information for them to support their children's learning at home and understand the progress their child was making in the setting.
- 3.21. LAs have reported an increase of learners presenting with complex needs. This has been identified across all age groups, but this has been of particular concern in the early years (0-7) in relation to speech, language, and communication (SLC), and particularly social communication.
- 3.22. Progress of ALN implementation in early years will be key part of next Estyn ALN thematic review. Meanwhile, LAs are reporting that both for Flying Start core childcare and Flying Start expansion childcare there is an increased need for support to enable all children aged 2 to access childcare settings. This need is currently met from the Children and Communities Grant for 2-year-olds.

Post 16 implementation

- 3.23. The Post-16 National Implementation Lead reports that Further Education Institutions (FEIs) are well prepared as post-16 implementation began in September 2023. Although, evidence of effective learner transition and information sharing between schools and FEIs is inconsistent.
- 3.24. ALN teams have adapted to their new duties and IDPs have been updated to reflect more appropriate outcomes and support within post-16 education and training. There remains a great deal of work to do to ensure a smooth and successful learner experience during transition from school to college.

Participation of children and young people

- 3.25. ALNET requires that learners' views should always be considered as part of the planning process, along with those of their parents/carers. Estyn report a consensus from schools that person-centred practice (PCP) brings a significant and well-needed improvement to supporting learners with ALN and their families. As a result, relationships between schools and parents have been strengthened. Additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCos) in schools have a good understanding of the new requirements and are positive about the PCP approach.
- 3.26. There are still inconsistencies in the overall quality assurance process for PCP, and despite the evident benefits of the PCP approach, many participating providers have expressed concerns about the additional workload it entails.

Advocacy and support

- 3.27. LAs have a responsibility to ensure parents have access to impartial information and advice regarding SEN/ALN provision in addition to arranging dispute resolution and advocacy services. SNAP Cymru provides impartial support for children and young people, parents and independent disagreement resolution services to most LAs in Wales. Some provide impartial in-house services.
- 3.28. Both Estyn and Education Tribunal Wales (ETW) report challenges faced by families as a result of LAs transparency around their decision making. This is resulting in a number of families not understanding the reasons behind a LA's decision regarding a child or young person having an ALN. They also share that the information provided by schools and LAs in relation to advocacy, case friends and dispute resolution services is weak and as a result, families may not be as aware as they should be of their rights to appeal.
- 3.29. ETW also communicate a rise in the number of disability discrimination claims being registered and suggest this is a result of clarity around the decision made by LAs and confusion about what support a child should have in school.

Bilingual system

- 3.30. The ALN system supports the ambitions of the [Cymraeg 2050 Strategy](#) to increase the use, and support the infrastructure to reach a million Welsh Speakers by 2050. However, Welsh-medium providers and families continue to express concerns around the availability of Welsh language workforce, assessments and resources to support ALN identification and provision.
- 3.31. Publications from Estyn, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Language Commissioner report that some LAs have found recruiting Welsh-speaking staff with the relevant specialist skills difficult. This, alongside a lack of specialist services, assessment materials and interventions available in Welsh are key challenges for the sector.
- 3.32. LAs have set out in their 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) how they will support workforce growth and improve Welsh language provision for learners with ALN. In their reports, all LAs have demonstrated increased focus on Welsh-medium ALN provision, as a result of their s63 obligations under ALNET to review Welsh-medium provision for learners with ALN. All WESPs have been approved and operational since September 2022.
- 3.33. The importance of having a sufficient number of teachers, support workers and other practitioners able to work through the medium of Welsh to support learners with ALN is recognised in the [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#). It includes actions to develop capacity and expertise within the workforce to support learners with ALN in the Welsh-medium sector.

Collaboration and multiagency input

- 3.34. The ALN system encourages improved collaboration and information sharing between agencies. This collaborative effort is crucial for early identification of needs and ensuring that appropriate support is provided, enabling children and young people to attain positive outcomes.
- 3.35. Under the ALN System, LAs will seek advice and assistance from health professionals to consider whether there’s a relevant treatment or service likely to be of benefit in addressing the learner’s ALN. Where a relevant treatment or service has been identified, this will be included as ALP within the IDP.
- 3.36. Estyn’s thematic report and Arad’s scoping report highlight difficulties in securing a health professional’s attendance at IDP review meetings, or in absence of attending, receiving written reports to support the discussion and informing the ALP. There are also variable interpretations over the roles and responsibilities in contributing to the IDP process, safeguarding and promoting the health and wellbeing of children with medical need. As well as general waiting times for assessment and access to specialist services.
- 3.37. Long waiting times for certain assessments and diagnoses within the NHS should not mean children and young people with ALN are left without IDPs.

Capacity of health practitioners and waiting times for diagnosis is an ongoing issue for Health Boards. It is important that delivery partners in schools, LAs and local health boards adopt the social model of disability. Measures to reduce barriers to learning can and should be adopted whilst medical assessments and treatments are in progress.

- 3.38. There is a need for a concerted effort to align expectations between LAs and health boards. The goal is to achieve effective interprofessional collaboration among jointly accountable bodies in the fields of education and health.

4. Support arrangements

Strategic support

- 4.1. The ALN Reform National Steering Group brings together key delivery partners and stakeholders to provide strategic direction, advice and support. This informs the implementation, monitoring, ongoing improvement and evaluation of implementation of ALNET.
- 4.2. Officials and the three National ALN Implementation leads for Post-16, Welsh language and expert strategic lead, act as the conduit between the sector and Welsh Government. They provide challenge and support to LAs to enable the sharing of learning and effective practice across Wales.
- 4.3. As the ALN Implementation programme moves into its final stages, the active dialogue with key delivery partners is being strengthened to create a two-way information flow, to support and challenge implementation and reiterate statutory responsibilities and legal/policy intent.
- 4.4. Officials continue to work with key partners to explore issues presented within the system and the implementation phase. This includes workshops to facilitate a shared understanding of national trends and emerging evidence from Education Tribunal Wales Tribunal cases.
- 4.5. The Welsh Government has produced a range of non-statutory guidance which is available on Welsh Government web pages including: Children, Young People and Parents guides, factsheets, easy reads and interactive resources. We are reviewing the non-statutory guidance for parents and carers with children and young people with ALN.

Health and education collaboration

- 4.6. In December 2023, the Welsh Government established the ALN Multi-Agency Collaboration Working Group. The group aims to improve collaboration and develop a consistent approach to emerging issues related to the interface between education and health under the ALN system.
- 4.7. The group includes representation of Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer's (DECLO), LAs, third sector and the Welsh Government to develop

solutions and recommend action to emerging issues resulting from implementing the ALN reforms. In particular:

- to improve the understanding of section 20 (*Additional learning provision: Local Health Boards and NHS trust*) and section 65 (*Duties to provide information and other help*) of ALNET
- to manage the relationship and expectations and develop agreed approaches to the role health professionals play when developing individual development plans (IDPs)
- to review how Individual Healthcare Plans and Individual Development Plans work together to provide support for learners in schools
- to develop new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), based on local health boards' duties under ALNET, to gather valuable data, improve monitoring and improvement across Wales.

Strengthening school improvement

4.8. ALN is a key priority within the review of education partners and school improvement arrangements. We are moving to the second phase of this work focussed on exploring how school improvement can best be supported at all levels of the education system. Underpinning all of our work is strong support for collaboration across schools, clusters and LAs.

Professional learning

4.9. Professional standards for teaching and leadership make clear the responsibility on all teachers and leaders to ensure the needs of all learners are met, all staff who work with children and young people with ALN have a responsibility for ensuring that their learners' needs are identified and provided for.

4.10. Recent developments include strengthened statutory appraisal guidance, reinforced ALN accreditation criteria for initial teacher training, plans for neurodivergence Professional Learning and a [new Professional Learning Area](#) on Hwb to improve accessibility to Professional Learning, including ALN provision.

4.11. In collaboration with third sector organisations, a suite of electronic learning materials have been developed and is available on Welsh Governments National Digital Learning platform (Hwb) including National Professional Learning Pathway for ALN, online training for practitioners in statutory roles, professional learning for headteachers and understanding different types of learning difficulties or disabilities.

4.12. Education practitioners can also opt to enhance their professional knowledge of ALN by pursuing the ALN pathway on the National MA (Masters) in Education (Wales). Training on the ALN system is available for those in statutory and senior leadership roles.

- 4.13. The Welsh Government continues to invest £6.2m to train 10 new Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) students per year for three years from 22-25, with a new tie in agreement securing ongoing employment of graduates in Wales.
- 4.14. As part of the wider commitment to ensure that all practitioners have access to consistent and high-quality Professional Learning throughout their career, we will continue to review ALN Professional Learning as the reform agenda progresses.

Enabling funding

- 4.15. Implementation funding has been deployed through the Local Authority Education Reform Grant (LAEG) to support implementation, recognising pressures of implementation whilst managing parallel SEN system, with over £62m revenue funding invested between 2020 and 2024. The 2024-25 budget further protects and continues to prioritise investment of over £56.3m for ALN reform and boosts resources to support ALN learners across both pre 16 and post 16 learning.
- 4.16. As set out in our [2024-25 budget proposals](#) in December we developed a more streamlined and transparent approach to LA education grant funding, prioritising funding to schools to temporarily increase schools and settings capacity and time to deliver a whole school/settings approach to meeting needs of ALN learners. This includes expectations for LAs to develop joint working and partnership projects to prepare for transition and improve post 16 additional learning provision locally.
- 4.17. A further grant to Wrexham County Borough Council in 23-24 has delivered research on post-16 education provision across North Wales to prepare for the transfer of responsibility for specialist post-16 education provision, and £700k funding to FEIs to prepare for transition of learners.

Classrooms, facilities and technology

- 4.18. The Welsh Government has made £2.646 billion investment in the school estate across Wales through its Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme since 2012. The programme is currently moving into its third phase, a nine-year rolling programme taken forward in collaboration with delivery partners in LAs and further education institutions. In addition, £40m has been invested over the last two years to support the improvement or creation of inclusive spaces and facilities for learners with additional learning needs.
- 4.19. This has included making adaptations and refurbishment to accommodate Welsh-medium learning, upgraded resource centres and sensory equipment, creation of sensory and discovery areas, additional areas within schools to

provide specialist Autism provision for secondary aged pupils, expansion of social, emotional, and behavioural provision for primary age pupils, particularly those with neurodiverse conditions.

Early Years

- 4.20. Through our Early Years Integration Transformation Programme, pathfinders have been piloting and testing different delivery models and approaches to explore how to deliver early years services in a more systematic way, ensuring children and their families are able to access the support they need at the right time, right place, and in the right way. Pathfinders have piloted provision of training and resources to the early years workforce to support emerging and additional learning needs, readiness for ALNET, assessing and providing support for individuals presenting on the neurodevelopment diagnostic pathway, and strengthen support for parents who have infants/children with ALN.
- 4.21. Our [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan](#) published on 15 March brings together, for the first time, all our policies and programmes relating to early childhood play, learning and care to develop and deliver a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality, inclusive, play-based childcare and education opportunities for all babies and young children aged 0-5 years old, and the seamless transitions between settings and schools. The Childcare Offer for Wales is underpinned by an £2m Additional Support Grant (ASG) to enable access to childcare and respond to the needs of children with additional needs.
- 4.22. Speech, language and communication needs are the most common type of ALN amongst children in Wales, as such we are prioritising children's SLC development through investment in [Talk with Me](#), £1.5m investment in 'Prosiect Pengwin'. This is a bespoke bilingual SLC surveillance tool for Wales that will support early identification and support, and upskilling the early years workforce in line with the all Wales [SLC training pathway](#).

Inclusive practice

- 4.23. The 'Enabling learning' section of CfW guidance is supporting practitioners in planning, designing and implementing a pedagogically appropriate inclusive curriculum for all learners to progress, at their own pace, towards realising the curriculum's four purposes. Fundamental to this are ensuring enabling adults, engaging experiences and effective environments are in place, that can support ALN learners.
- 4.24. A priority over the next year is to share effective and emerging practice. A suite of case studies are being developed with the sector that include interviews with practitioners and parents to exemplify effective practice in planning for and supporting ALN learners.

- 4.25. An online National Network Conversation event recently created space for practitioners to reflect on how the CfW can support equity and inclusion, overcoming barriers that can limit learner progression, and ensuring the education of all learners is seen as having equal importance throughout the 3-16 continuum. This coincided with the release of a suite of [case studies](#) sharing effective practice across a range of settings.
- 4.26. The next Estyn thematic review will focus on providing a practical resource for schools to share effective practice to enable them to self-evaluate.

Bilingual provision

- 4.27. To strengthen Welsh language support and additional learning provision, a Welsh Language National Implementation Lead has been appointed to advise on gaps in current provision and resources, facilitate events to share effective practice on a LA, school/ setting and multiagency level and provide support to the sector. Issues in relation to Welsh medium provision are being considered in preparation for a five-year review, and we are working collaboratively with the sector via an ALN Welsh Language Stakeholder Group.
- 4.28. Through the bilingual educational resources company, 'Adnodd', new Welsh-medium resources will support learning and teaching under the CfW and identify and commission resources to better support ALN learners. We are also in the early stages of working with partners to develop specific Welsh language assessment tools, and a review of evidence-based interventions for SLC in the early years is supporting options to make interventions available in Welsh.

Post 16 implementation

- 4.29. The Further education National implementation lead provides strategic challenge and support to all FEIs across Wales which includes engaging with LAs to enable the sharing of effective practice. The lead has arranged and facilitated a wide range of groups and events, at a local and national level, to identify and monitor challenges while working to improve them.
- 4.30. The establishment of Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) will provide additional opportunities to secure and fund facilities for further education and training, and secure general, proper, and reasonable facilities for learners with ALN from early 2025. The Commission has been established as the regulatory body responsible for the funding, oversight and regulation of tertiary education and research in Wales.
- 4.31. The increase in LA post-16 officer appointments has accelerated partnership working between LAs and FEIs, and local agreements are beginning to emerge. LAs are also engaged with their new duties for supporting specialist college (ISPI) placements. The national LA Post-16 ALN Group that meets once a month is promoting a consistent approach to decisions made about ISPI applications.

- 4.32. For young people who have very complex ALN and may need to attend independent special post-16 institutions ('ISPIs'), the responsibility for securing and funding specialist provision will transfer to LAs on 31 August 2025. Interim arrangements put in place for 2023-25 have enabled LAs to make decisions on specialist provision for young people during this period. It is proposed that the budget for ISPI placements will be transferred to LAs during 24/25 academic year, ahead of August 2025, although this is still under consideration.

Information/Participation of children, young people and their families

- 4.33. The Welsh Government recently funded SNAP Cymru to run a series of free parent and carer events for families of disabled children and those with ALN aged 0-25. Nearly 300 people participated in 14 sessions held in local venues across Wales and online. The sessions offered parents and carers opportunities for attendees to find out more about the implementation of the ALN system in Wales; share with the Welsh Government their experiences of the ALN reforms, and access independent support and advice from the SNAP Cymru team. The in-person events also encouraged parents and carers to meet and connect with other families with a shared lived experience of ALN.
- 4.34. The Welsh Government are also producing non-statutory guidance for parents and carers on the support system for children and young people with additional learning needs. We have also commissioned Children in Wales to establish an ALN Children and Young People's Participation programme across a range of settings in Wales, to ensure the voice and rights of children are at the core of planning and policy development.

5. Rollout of the Curriculum for Wales

- 5.1. Schools and settings across Wales continue to roll out the CfW. This academic year, learners up to and including Year 8 are now learning under the CfW.
- 5.2. Co-construction opportunities including National Network conversations and the practitioner policy group enable regular direct input from the profession on developments and ongoing challenges. Equally, the review of the middle tier made clear that assessment, curriculum design and learner progression remain top priorities for headteachers. Alongside research, reports from school improvement services, Estyn and commissioned work such as the Camau i'r Dyfodol project, this provides a robust basis for ongoing policy development and support to schools.
- 5.3. In terms of progress, we know that many schools have developed a clear CfW vision relevant to their context. Leaders generally share this vision appropriately with their staff, learners, parents and other stakeholders. Practitioners regularly outline the changes in their thinking and practice under the CfW. This includes how they continue to develop authentic learning experiences using the mandatory statements of what matters to develop conceptual understanding and supporting learners to become more effective.
- 5.4. While cluster working looks different across different schools and settings, practitioners continue to identify the importance of collaboration to develop a shared understanding of progression, and the importance of building strong relationships between schools to facilitate professional dialogue. Developing understanding of progression and what effective learner progress looks like is the aspect of curriculum design (alongside assessment approaches) schools currently find most challenging.
- 5.5. Many practitioners are taking ownership of curriculum planning and delivery, embracing the autonomy and the opportunities presented. However, there is uncertainty among some teachers about moving away from established practices and approaches, particularly in relation to assessment.
- 5.6. Challenges in being able to allocate sufficient time and resources to curriculum realisation is an issue for schools, as is fully engaging with and accessing the professional learning offer. There are concerns about the impact of attendance on learner progression and, if not addressed, on the longer-term outcomes and ambitions of the CfW.

Literacy and numeracy

- 5.7. In November 2023 the Minister for Education and Welsh Language published a [Written Statement](#) on work underway and planned to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy for all learners across Wales. It announced the publication of an updated [oracy and reading toolkit](#) enhancing the package of support available to schools and settings to develop and embed their own whole school approach to achieving high standards of oracy and reading. The toolkit emphasises the importance of the whole school community working together in a coordinated, consistent, and sustained way where speaking, listening, and reading are part of all aspects of school or setting life.
- 5.8. We fund projects run by Books Trust Cymru and the Books Council of Wales to promote literacy and reading for pleasure and provide support to develop resources and targeted support for schools on the learning and teaching of literacy skills. We continue to work with the profession to scope and develop further support for literacy, which we know is a critical gateway for accessing the curriculum as a whole.
- 5.9. Similarly, the [Mathematics and numeracy plan](#) was also announced within the statement laying out Welsh Government actions to support the sector in securing meaningful mathematics and numeracy learning.
- 5.10. The actions from the plan, which include the creation of a national Professional Learning offer for mathematics and numeracy, are being developed in co-construction with practitioners and education improvement partners, as well as being supported by a range of experts specialising in maths and the teaching of maths:
- A **practitioner group** to co-develop and pilot support, ensuring it is practical for teachers to use in their curriculum planning or classroom. This utilises members of the existing practitioner policy group.
 - A **regions and partnerships group**, consisting of members from regional consortia and local authorities. This group has been collating existing professional learning materials on maths and numeracy. It is considering how we can transform these materials into a comprehensive and user-friendly national Professional Learning offer.
 - An **Evidence and Research Group**, whose membership includes expertise in maths and the teaching of maths from across the UK. This group will identify gaps in the current offer and suggest evidence-based Professional Learning materials that can be tested by practitioners, with a view to including these materials as part of the national Professional Learning offer.

6. Support arrangements

Curriculum Design Support

- 6.1. As set out in our Budget proposals, our planned total directly attributable provision for CfW implementation, which includes funding to schools, is at some £31m in 2024-25. There are a range of programmes in train with schools across Wales to develop greater coherence and more in-depth understandings of curriculum development, including Professional Learning. This support will become increasingly crucial in supporting schools to raise standards and understand the standards of their learners.
- 6.2. In September 2023, we published findings from Phase 2 of the [Camau i'r Dyfodol project](#) on understanding curriculum and progression. This wide range of practitioner produced supporting materials has been used within regional and national professional learning programmes to support understanding of curriculum and assessment design. At the same time, we published a [playlist](#) of blogs, podcasts and video case studies from schools and settings involved in a curriculum design pilot. This successful approach supported 30 schools and settings across Wales to understand how to design learning that is purposeful for learners and supports deeper understanding and learner progress.
- 6.3. Practitioners report supporting materials as useful, but pressures on their time to engage and improve their understanding remains an ongoing challenge. School collaborations take time but are necessary to change school culture on curriculum design, progression and assessment. As a result, we are embedding supporting materials into existing and planned regional and national professional learning.
- 6.4. Phase 3 of the Camau i'r Dyfodol project this year is seeing a range of schools and settings supported by researchers and curriculum experts to better understand progression, as well as work with educational partners to support the embedding of these approaches across the system. The outputs of this will be made available to all practitioners across Wales and included in nationally available professional learning. Crucially, the evidence from the project will continue to inform the development of further support to schools.
- 6.5. Building on the successful curriculum design pilot, we are developing bespoke professional learning as part of a national programme for curriculum and assessment design. Working with international curriculum design experts, this programme is being co-constructed with practitioners and education partners across Wales and will be available nationally from this summer. We will also be developing a range of support for assessment design and language that can effectively communicate learner progression to parents and carers and between practitioners when developing a shared understanding of learner progression.

Professional Learning

- 6.6. On 12 December 2023, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language made an [Oral Statement](#) on key developments to ensure all education practitioners have equity of access to high quality professional learning to support their continued development. Our quality assurance approach includes new arrangements to endorse professional learning provision aligned to our national priorities. This has been led by the National Professional Learning Endorsement Panel, chaired by Professor Ken Jones.
- 6.7. Endorsed provision will be promoted via the [Professional Learning Portal](#) which launched on Hwb in September 2023 and brings together in a single place the range of professional learning available to practitioners. The portal also promotes provision aligned to the national [Curriculum for Wales Development Programme](#). During 2023/24 this programme has included a core focus on assessment and progression, and curriculum design.

Curriculum for Wales guidance refinements

- 6.8. In January we published the updated 'Continuing the Journey' section of Curriculum for Wales statutory guidance, co-constructed with a wide range of practitioners. Received well by the profession, this provides greater clarity on statutory expectations for curriculum and assessment design. Importantly for schools, this section is significantly shorter than the one it replaces: providing both clarity and simplicity for schools. A range of practical and multimodal supporting materials were also published to exemplify effective use of guidance, including further support on cluster working, use of curriculum framework and case studies. Guidance refinement continues to respond to schools' needs as the curriculum rolls out.
- 6.9. In February we published draft statutory guidance on 14-16 Learning for consultation (closing on 8 May). The draft guidance sets out our policy for learning and teaching in years 10 and 11, alongside the legal requirements for schools, and will form part of the statutory CfW framework guidance. We are proposing to call on schools to ensure all learners make progress in respect of the four components of the 14-16 Learner Entitlement. This is to help provide equity and consistency in the curriculum experienced across Wales, with all schools valuing the same things that contribute to a learner's progression and onward transition.
- 6.10. The Learner Entitlement will inform our proposals on what should be included in the new school information ecosystem, this includes the information requirements that will replace the interim (capped 9) performance measures. Drawing on the 14-16 guidance, which we propose to issue in July, proposals for the information ecosystem will be developed this year. Work continues with practitioners and leaders, and we will be sharing proposals with the sector with a view to new arrangements being finalised by summer 2025, in readiness for the first teaching of year 10 learners under the CfW.

Curriculum resources and supporting materials

- 6.11. We continue to commission and make available to schools and settings, through our [Hwb](#) education platform, a growing range of bilingual curriculum support materials – based on our commitments and ongoing needs assessments with the profession. For example, as part of a suite of additional multi modal supporting materials to be released throughout 2024 and 2025, we will exemplify how schools and settings should be consistently using the CfW framework to select content for their learners that supports development towards the four purposes. These examples, across the six Areas of Learning and Experience, are being designed to exemplify the process of selecting content that is purposeful, responds to identified learners' needs and supports learner progression. These worked examples are a direct response to practitioner demand for modelling of effective curriculum design within national expectations for learner progress.
- 6.12. Schools have identified that wider public understanding of curriculum reform would help their community engagement and communicating the classroom changes they are making as a result of the CfW. To support this, promotional videos outlining the changes that parents and carers can expect to see as a result of their children learning under the CfW will be available in the summer. This is intended to support schools in gaining public confidence in education provision as we value all learners and their progress towards the four purposes.
- 6.13. Working with practitioners, we continue to review existing content on Hwb to ensure its alignment with the CfW, and we are liaising closely with [Adnodd](#) regarding forward commissioning and quality assurance processes that will be put in place over the year ahead.

Local Authority Education Grant: Reform

- 6.14. Our more streamlined approach to local authority grant funding through the LEAG, as set out in our [2024-25 budget proposals](#), has resulted in discussions on the terms of the grant for 2024-25 taking place with all LAs. This includes on the expectation that for professional learning and curriculum reform elements existing delivery arrangements will be maintained through 2024-25. This is to maintain support to schools on curriculum reform while allowing for any transition planning necessarily arising from the outcome of the recent review of the roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales (see below). We continue to work with both LAs and with providers to ensure alignment of support and value for money.

School Improvement Partnership Programme

- 6.15. The recent review, led by Professor Dylan Jones, has provided consistent and clear views from school leaders that they would prefer a localised support system alongside strong national leadership. Underpinning all of this is strong support for collaboration, across schools, clusters, and local authorities.

- 6.16. On 31 January the Minister for Education and Welsh Language published a [written statement](#) and announced a new phase to this work reflecting a period of co-construction with all of our education partners on how any change can be implemented. In this phase we are focussed on exploring how school improvement can best be supported within the education system at three levels - local, supra-local and national. These new arrangements are focused on improving educational standards, reducing workload and improving value for money.

7. Monitoring progress of Curriculum reform

Evaluation and monitoring

- 7.1. Our [Evaluation Plan](#) sets out two key and immediate strands of work to understand our progress with curriculum implementation, and the impact it is having on schools, practitioners, and learners.
- 7.2. The first strand, the Formative Evaluation of the CfW, is underway. It is a large-scale programme examining how the reforms are working, how practice is changing in schools and settings and how these changes are being experienced by practitioners, learners and their families. As described in the Evaluation Plan, a key question for the Formative Evaluation is the extent to which the reforms are working for all learners irrespective of their background or ability. The evaluation will consider how practitioners are using the CfW to take an individualised approach to learning to cater for learners of all abilities and on different progression steps.
- 7.3. Research with parents and learners will ensure their perspectives on the impact of the CfW are also captured and considered throughout the evaluation. The evaluation will also report on any differences in experience for different groups of learners. During this summer term a programme of qualitative ‘deep dive’ research is underway to gain rich, detailed insights on specific parts of the curriculum, including a focus on schools’ and settings’ approaches to equity and inclusion. Surveys with senior leaders, practitioners, learners and their families will follow. Findings are expected from early 2025 and these will inform findings set out in the 2025 curriculum Annual Report.
- 7.4. The second strand is the proposed programme of National Sample-Based Monitoring assessments. This will involve a rolling programme of assessments of samples of learners across Wales to build a picture of standards in learning over time, while minimising burdens on schools and the system. The feasibility study for this work, which includes wide engagement with stakeholders, school leaders, and practitioners is underway, and will provide options for consideration. The study will complete in June, informing next steps about how

progress will be monitored in the long term. We will continue to publish outcomes from this work in a timely manner.

Annual Report and next steps

- 7.5. We continue to summarise and report progress on curriculum reform through our annual reporting approach, with the next Annual Report due in early July. We expect that to set out the latest position of curriculum rollout across the system based on a range of evidence.
- 7.6. Alongside this, we continue to work closely with schools and the system and use this to inform the next steps of support. The curriculum is designed to raise standards, focusing on both the knowledge and skills need to acquire as they progress and it is critical that the next steps of support provide further scaffolding to allow schools to enable that.