



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA(L)/KW/0871/17

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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15th December 2017

Dear Lynne,

In September the former Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language wrote to you to provide you with an update on the implementation of the additional learning needs (ALN) transformation programme and committed to doing so on a quarterly basis; this was in response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's second recommendation in its stage 1 report on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill.

This letter is the second of these updates. I have also previously provided you with a copy of my letter to the Finance Committee on 11 December on the breakdown of the £20m package of investment to deliver the programme.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

It was my privilege to help steer the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill through its final stages, and I was delighted that it was unanimously passed by the Assembly on Tuesday 12 December, exactly a year on from its introduction in 2016.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to your Committee for its diligent consideration throughout the legislative process which strengthened the robustness of the Bill. I am confident this legislation will help create a better system for supporting some of our most vulnerable learners.

Going forward, in anticipation that the Bill gains Royal Assent, our focus in 2018 will shift to the subordinate legislation, including a consultation in the autumn on some of the draft regulations and the next iteration of the draft ALN Code. These will then be

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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.

subject to Assembly scrutiny. I anticipate the final Code being published by the end of 2019.

Implementation/ transition support

On 11 December I published a summary of consultation responses on the implementation of the Bill alongside our proposed approach. Beginning September 2020, learners with existing Statements will transfer to the new system within two years, and all other learners with non-statutory plans within three years. This reflects stakeholder feedback from our consultation on options for implementation.

This will now be used to develop and refine a transition guide for delivery partners setting out detailed guidelines to support implementation. This will include detailed timescales for the roll-out of individual development plans to each cohort of learners in the phased approach. The guidance will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders and published for consultation next year. 2018 will see an acceleration of activities as we move into the implementation phase, including increased support and challenge for partners to prepare for operating the new system.

The five ALN transformation leads will take up post by spring 2018 and will be responsible for supporting delivery partners to undertake readiness assessments and develop implementation plans. The readiness work will be complemented by a thematic review that Estyn will be undertaking, exploring the extent to which primary and secondary schools, pupil referral units and education other than at school providers are aware of the reforms being introduced through the Bill and are preparing for implementation.

In September 2017 the ALN Strategic Implementation Group (ALN SIG) held its final meeting in its current format. The group has been instrumental to date in co-constructing the approach to implementation and the transformation programme as a whole. They have agreed that as we move into the implementation phase of the reforms, a smaller high-level group will oversee the work of the ALN Transformation Leads and support consistency of implementation, collaboration and the sharing of good practice.

The eight expert groups which were established by the ALN SIG will continue to work towards their agreed set of actions. This includes helping to develop the Individual Development Plan (IDP) template, awareness raising materials and new arrangements for health practitioners.

Workforce development

Specialists play a vital role in supporting learners with ALN. In partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Wales Data Unit, local authority heads of service have been helping us get a clearer picture of local authorities' current specialist support services workforce.

I have agreed to allocate £352,000 from within the ALN workforce development budget to be distributed as grant funding to local authorities over the next 2 financial years (2018-19 and 2019-20) to support the postgraduate training of local authority-

based specialist and advisory teachers of learners with visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) and multi-sensory impairment (MSI). This funding may also be used to facilitate training in Braille and British Sign Language for local authority-based specialist staff.

In order to ensure a continued supply of Educational Psychologists, we fund Cardiff University's Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) professional training programme. I have agreed to continue the current arrangement to DEdPsy for a further cohort from September 2018, whilst negotiations about arrangements from 2019-20 onwards are concluded.

Following recommendations from the Committee, we have undertaken further work on scoping the role of the ALN Coordinator (ALNCo). My officials have worked closely with a range of stakeholders to identify skills and training requirements for this important role. We envisage ALNCoS providing strategic leadership and acting as the first point of contact within the education setting for the provision of professional advice and guidance. ALNCoS will be expected to apply evidence based practice and to assess the impact of different approaches and techniques on outcomes for learners with ALN. They will also be expected to support sustainable and effectively professional learning for all ALN across the setting.

Awareness raising

As a result of the feedback to the consultation on implementing the Bill, we have commissioned Eliesha Cymru to develop a suite of learning and training materials to support implementation of the ALN transformation programme, including the Bill. These will form the basis of multi-agency implementation training once the Code and subordinate legislation are in place. This will help practitioners to understand and prepare for the changes being introduced under the new system and help ensure consistency across Wales.

Rapid evidence assessments and accessible guides on effective interventions to support children and young people with a range of ALN were commissioned earlier this year. The rapid evidence assessments of interventions to support children and young people with ADHD and ASD are nearing completion. The evidence from the assessments has been used to develop accessible guides and workshops have been held with practitioners and parents to understand their preferences regarding the structure and content of the guides.

Supporting policy/ business continuity

This strand of the programme focuses on ensuring the existing SEN and LDD system operates smoothly until the new ALN system comes into effect. As we move into implementation, this aspect of the programme increasingly focuses on maintaining business continuity.

To support the current post-16 specialist placement process, we have published technical guidance for specialist further education (FE) establishments. This guidance provides clear advice on Welsh Government's expectations regarding the role of specialist FE establishments in delivering post-16 provision for young people.

We have also published revised technical guidance for Careers Wales. Workshops will be used to reinforce the guidance and explore how it is working in practice.

I am confident we can continue to work effectively during the implementation phase on what is a major transformation package which will benefit the most vulnerable people of Wales.

I am copying this letter to Simon Thomas AM, Chair of the Finance Committee and Mick Antoniw AM, Chair of the Constitutional Affairs and Legislative Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education