



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Plans for additional learning needs

A consultation
for young people



Introduction

The Welsh Government wants all children and young people in Wales to have the best opportunities to do well in life.

We don't want anyone to be held back in life because they find learning difficult.

Some children and young people find learning harder than others and may need extra help with:

- school work
- understanding information
- letting people know what they think.

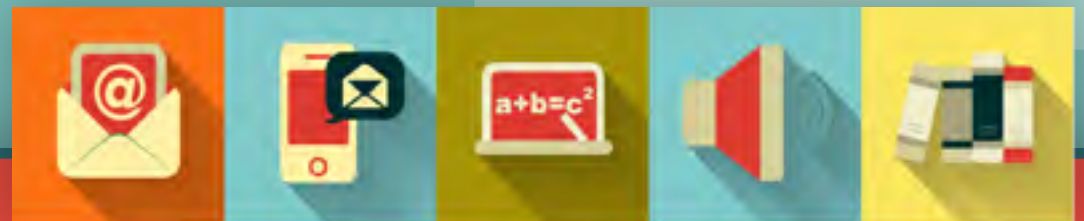
We call these **special educational needs (SEN) or learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)**.

In Wales there's a lot of good work to support children and young people with these needs, but we want to make sure that the right support is easily available to anyone who needs it.

What we want to do

This booklet is about the changes we want to make to the law so we can have a better system that helps services work together.

We want to know what you think, so please answer the questions as you go.



Introduction

Why do we need changes?

The systems we use today were put in place 30 years ago and they no longer do everything we need them to do.

Our vision

We want a new system in Wales to support children and young people who find learning difficult.

This new system will:

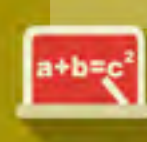
- put children, young people and their interests first
- listen to children, young people and their families in decisions that affect their lives
- make sure that the right support is put in place for children and young people
- make the process of agreeing plans easier for them
- help issues or disagreements to be sorted out quickly
- make sure that everyone is working together.

We have 3 main goals. To help us reach these goals we need to make some changes to the law.

Your rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out different rights that children and young people have including your right to an education and to have a say in decisions that affect your life.

We have paid attention to children's rights and the UNCRC when we were thinking about making these changes.



Goal 1

A single law about how to support children and young people aged 0–25 who need help with learning.

Why do we need to change?

Sometimes it isn't clear which children and young people should get support.

If they are checked and given a letter explaining their needs (a statement of SEN) then the local authority has to give them that support. If they don't get a statement they might not get the support they need.

We want to make changes because we think that:

- the label 'special educational needs' can make children and young people feel bad about themselves or be seen in a negative way
- it isn't clear who should be given a statement of SEN and who shouldn't
- each local authority is different so children and young people get different support in different areas of Wales
- trust between parents/carers, local authorities and schools can be broken and that leads to problems
- young people leaving school sometimes do not get the support they need
- the system for agreeing to send children and young people to independent schools is too complicated.

What changes are we planning?

1

We want to introduce the term 'additional learning needs' (ALN) to replace the term 'special educational needs' (SEN).

The new law will set out exactly what is meant by 'additional learning needs'. The new term will make it clear that this is a new way of helping those who find learning difficult. It will apply to children and young people from when they are born until they turn 25 years old.



Goal 1

2 We want children and young people to have an individual development plan (IDP) instead of a statement of SEN or other types of plans or assessments in schools and colleges.

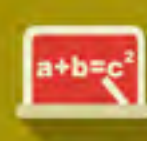
All learning needs are important and IDPs will mean more children or young people will have the right to have support to help them with their learning. This plan will set out how schools or colleges and other people (like doctors or social workers) will work with children and young people and their families.

3 We want Welsh Ministers to put in place a code of practice for the new system.

A code of practice is a guide to show people how the new system will work. It will set out clearly the parts everyone has to play in making sure children and young people get the support they need to help them with their learning.

4 We want everyone to understand what needs to be in the IDP and make sure the code of practice explains it clearly.

This will help make sure that everyone across Wales gets the same high-quality support that fits their needs.



Goal 1

5 We want local authorities to make sure that children and young people in their area have IDPs and get all the help they need.

This means that local authorities will have to work with schools, colleges and other people (like doctors or social workers) to make sure that the right support is provided.

6 We want all schools, colleges and pupil referral units to do everything they can to give the help and support listed in the IDPs.

7 We want local authorities to make sure that young people aged 16 and over have the education which is right for them and which their IDP says they need.

Sometimes young people need extra support from services skilled in helping with their learning needs. We want to make sure this is planned well so that the right support is put in place.

8 We want to stop children and young people being placed in independent schools that are not registered to give the support listed in their IDPs.

An independent school is a school that is not run by the local authority. We want to make sure that children and young people only go to independent schools when we know that these schools can meet their needs.



Goal 1 questions

Do you agree that the new term 'additional learning needs' (ALN) should be used for children and young people up to the age of 25 who need support when they find learning difficult?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

Do you think that IDPs should replace statements of SEN and other plans and assessments in schools and colleges?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

Do you think all the other changes we want to make to reach goal 1 are good?

Yes No Don't know

Comment



Goal 2

One system of working together so that all services can step in early with the right support for children and young people who need help with learning.

Why do we need to change?

We know that:

- sometimes parents/carers and families say they aren't included or listened to
- some parents/carers say the system we have now is too slow and difficult
- school inspectors have said that different services (like schools, doctors and social workers) don't work well together
- support doesn't always get put in place as early as it needs to
- children who are in care or looked after by local authorities often have lots of separate plans made for them which means telling their story again and again
- even though a child or young person has a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) who helps them, the help they get can be different across Wales.

What changes are we planning?

9

We want local authorities to include children, young people and their families and listen to their views when thinking about what support they need with their learning.

We want children and young people to help come up with the plan about what support they should have to help them learn. We will have guidelines on how local authorities do this in the new code of practice.

10

We want IDPs to be looked at each year but more often if needed.

This will help to make sure goals are being reached and the right support is being given. Children and young people or their parents/carers will be able to ask for their plan to be looked at if they are worried or have concerns.



Goal 2

11

We want the new code of practice to set out rules and guidance for professionals like health visitors, nurses and nursery staff so they can step in early when young children are finding learning difficult.

12

We want all the people who are responsible for education, health and social services to work together to support children and young people who need help with learning.

We want all those involved in helping children and young people with learning to share information and work together to meet the goals in IDPs.

13

We want the new code of practice to support and encourage staff and services to work together well.

This includes giving guidelines on sharing what works well so we can learn from each other.

14

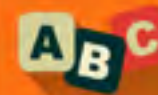
We want all schools to have an ALN Coordinator (ALNCO).

This would be the new name for SEN Coordinator (SENCO) that already work in schools. There will be guidelines on how this job should be done so that all children and young people get the same help no matter where they live.

15

We want IDPs to replace Personal Educational Plans (PEPs) for young people who are in care or looked after by local authorities.

A lot of children and young people in care find learning hard for many different reasons. We want them all to be given an IDP if they need one as soon as they come into care so they get support quickly.



Goal 2 questions

Do you agree that all the people responsible for education, health and social services should have to work together to support children and young people who need help with learning?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

Do you think that an IDP should be given to all children and young people who are looked after by a local authority instead of the plans they have now?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

Do you think all the other changes we want to make to reach goal 2 are good?

Yes No Don't know

Comment



Goal 3

Clear information, advice and support which is fair to everyone if things go wrong or they don't like a decision.

What changes are we planning?

Why do we need to change?

We know that:

- the way people get advice and information is different across Wales
- sometimes problems take too long to deal with
- there are different rules about how children or their parents/carers can say that they don't like a decision, which makes it unfair.

16

We want local authorities to make sure that children, young people and families get all the information and advice they need.

17

We want local authorities to make sure that disagreements and complaints are dealt with quickly so that parents/carers and children don't have to go to a tribunal (which is like a court where someone listens to and decides a disagreement).

The tribunal is there if parents/carers disagree with the local authority about the support their child's getting but it can take a long time to sort things out. In future local authorities and parents/carers or children will have to try to work through their problems together before they can take this disagreement to a tribunal to decide. This would mean problems can be dealt with more quickly.



Goal 3

18

We want local authorities to have a person who makes sure disagreements are dealt with in a fair way.

There will be guidelines for how everything would need to be carried out.

19

We want to make it possible for people to go to the tribunal if they have an issue with any part of their IDP that can't be worked out with their local authority first.

We want disagreements to be dealt with quickly, but if they can't be sorted out easily, we want to make sure that the tribunal is able to help by making a decision on how to make sure that children and young people get the right support that they need.

20

We want all children, young people in school (or their parents/carers) to be able to use the tribunal.

At the moment the tribunal only makes decisions about statements of SEN, but under this system anyone who has an IDP could ask the tribunal to make a decision if they are having a disagreement about the support they need to help with their learning.

21

We want to give the right to use the tribunal to 16 to 25-year-olds who have an IDP.

We want to make sure that anyone up to the age of 25 can take a complaint about the support they need to the tribunal.

22

We want children and young people to be able to get help from a person they trust (or an advocate) if they want to challenge what's in their IDP or support.

We want to make sure that there are clear guidelines so that children and young people know how to get help to have their views heard and understood. We have services like **Meic** to help them when they need it.



Goal 3 questions

Do you agree that all children and young people up to the age of 25 should be able to appeal to the tribunal when they have an issue with any part of their IDP that can't be worked out with the local authority first?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

Do you think it's a good idea to have to try to work out problems before they can go to a tribunal for a decision?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

Do you think all the other changes we want to make to reach goal 3 are good?

Yes No Don't know

Comment



Final question

Is there anything you think we've left out from all these plans?

Comment

Conclusion

We think these changes will make a real improvement to the learning and lives of children and young people who have ALN.

Next steps

Please send you answers in by 25 July 2014 to:

Additional Learning Needs Branch
Support for Learners Division
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Tel: 029 2082 6098

or e-mail: SENReforms@wales.gsi.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014
WG21275

