



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel - 15 June 2023

Additional Learning Needs Reform Update

Purpose:	To update the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel on Additional Learning Needs Reform
Content:	An update on the progress of Additional Learning Needs Reform
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Learners Service

1. Background

- 1.1 The Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion team (ALNIT) currently sits within the Vulnerable Learners Service and provides a statutory service, prescribed by the Education Act 1996, the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice 2002, the new Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018, Additional Learning needs Code 2021 and regulations.
- 1.2 The ALNET Act will replace the SEN Code of Practice 2002 through a phased implementation that began in September 2021. The legal frameworks inform the work of ALNIT and other key stakeholders such as educational settings and the Local Health Board (LHB).
- 1.3 During its implementation phase, pupils will follow either the SEN legislative system or the ALN system until full implementation takes place, this is determined by Welsh Government guidance.
- 1.4 The ALNET Act aims to improve the planning and delivery of support for learners from 0-25 with additional learning needs (ALN) by adopting a more person-centred approach to planning and delivery of support to meet the needs of children and young people.

- 1.5 In 2019, an ALN Strategy was developed for Swansea to outline the transformation programme required to implement the ALNET Act successfully between 2019-2022. This was developed with key strategic partners and overseen by the ALN Strategic Board. The strategic board's membership includes headteachers, councillors, FEI colleagues, local health board colleagues, DECLO, Social Services and the early years sector.
- 1.6 This strategy is now completed a new strategy has been developed to support full implementation and embedding of the reform.

2. Current strategy

- 2.1 The ALNET strategy has been reviewed and finalised, with a new strategy drafted that aligns to the regional strategy. All outstanding actions from the previous strategy have been transferred to the new strategy. This strategy covers the period between 2022-2027 and has the following priority areas:

- Schools
- Post 16
- Collaboration
- Early Years

- 2.2 The updates for these priority areas are as follows:

2.2.1 Schools

- There has been a significant level of work undertaken with schools to develop the workforce in readiness to deliver the ALNET transformation. This includes accredited training modules so that staff in schools have sufficient skills to identify and plan for meeting the needs of ALN learners.
- Our next focus for schools is on quality assurance to ensure that there is a consistent approach to ALN provision across Swansea. This will include specific focus on universal and enhanced provision and documents are being produced to provide clear and concise expectations and sources of support to meet these expectations.
- Moderation exercises are taking place to support staff develop a consistent quality of IDPs across the LA, as well as the development of provision maps to outline universal targeted and specialist provision on offer across the LA. Moderation exercises have evidenced there is still further work to be done to ensure consistent approaches but engagement is high and good support is in place.
- It will be necessary to develop closer links with and training for the School Improvement Team on ALN provision to support school improvement advisors in their evaluation of effective school leadership in relation to ALN provision.
- There is a significant transformational project underway to support sufficient specialist places and this is considering quality assuring provision at all stages of a graduated response model to ensure consistent offers are available to all learners whichever school they attend.
- A pilot is underway in relation to home to school transport for children attending a special school and a specialist teaching facility in a primary

school. The pilot involves schools using their own minibuses staffed by school employees. This provides a more positive learners experience in terms of wellbeing as journey time is used to provide a link between home and school with familiar staff who know the individual children's needs. It is also anticipated that financial savings will be achieved. Site management issues have been minimised and the project supports the climate change agenda.

2.2.2 Post 16

- Welsh Government have shared their proposed funding model for Post 16 places in Independent Specialist Post 16 Institutions (ISPIs). To date Swansea is seen as a model of good practice in terms of the breadth of Post 16 offer and so the local authority is likely to benefit from the new arrangements. However, any potential benefit needs to be considered in the context of increasing costs across all independent placements and strengthening our local offer remains a priority.
- The ALN team are in the process of setting up a bespoke post 16 specialist placement panel to consider requests for ISPIs. A draft term of reference will be shared with colleagues from social services and health at a meeting which has been scheduled for 9th June.
- Officers are working on a post 16 guidance document which will explain the options available to post 16 ALN learners, as well as providing information and signposting for young people. This will include information about further education (ALN) courses (including independent living skills) as well as opportunities offered by third sector agencies.
- Officers meet with colleagues across Wales to discuss post 16 provision, share experiences / challenges and seek to problem solve.
- There is positive collaborative working between the local authority and Gower college Swansea, who have employed two transition officers to support young people into college.
- Most local authorities in Wales have created a designated post 16 officer to manage this workstream. In Swansea, it is being absorbed by officers who are managing it in addition to their substantive duties. As a result, progress is a little slower.

2.2.3 Local Health Board

- The Local Health Board have invited Heads of Service from both Swansea and Neath Port Talbot to sit on their ALN strategic board and this has provided a helpful approach to working through a few challenges in terms of health board readiness for ALNET.
- ALN officers are linking with the Health Board to review the current Speech and Language Service Level Agreement. There is a history of the local authority funding work in the health board which should really fall within the board's statutory responsibility. However, recognising the significant challenges that the NHS as faced in the last few years it is acknowledged that this needs careful review and consideration to phase out old arrangements and implement new plans. This work is underway.
- The Senior Educational Psychologist has linked with the health board and has commenced a review of the referral process into the Neuro

Developmental Assessment Pathway which should provide benefits in terms of an improved referral mechanism.

- The Head of Vulnerable Learners Service sits on the regional Autism strategy group and is working in partnership to consider solutions to provide pre diagnosis support. The group has a key focus to prevent both escalation to the ND waiting list and also reduce waiting times.

2.2.4 Early Years

- There is continued support provided for early years settings, including funding, training, advice, and information. Training needs are identified through liaison with the settings and delivered flexibly to meet the needs of the settings.
- Specialist staff are available for regular question and answer sessions to provide support to practitioners.
- Moderation of EY IDPs takes place to ensure that there is a consistency of person-centred practice and IDP development.
- Information sharing between schools and early years providers is developing with a focus on transition in place.
- Early Years process pathways are regularly monitored to ensure they continue to meet demand across the service.

3. Successes

3.1 The project to support sufficient specialist places is gathering momentum and on track to meet the milestones identified in the timeline.

3.2 There is extensive work underway in relation to moderation, quality assurance and supporting schools to achieve a consistent, equitable offer to all learners. Collaboration with the local health board is strengthening and a productive partnership is developing.

4. Challenges

4.1 The online solution provided to schools to support IDP production has not been as successful as hoped. A few schools are struggling to use the tool and the officer seconded to support with this is due to return to school.

4.2 Budget pressures are felt as is the case with all council services. While Welsh Government has provided grant funding this is a temporary and uncertain funding source. The core budget is not sufficient to support current staffing and there are a few grant funded posts in the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team structure which are considered essential to the success of delivering the requirement of ALNET. Refinement to the ALNIT structure is needed and this will have to be achieved within the existing budget envelope.

4.3 Despite Welsh Government's wish to establish a less adversarial system we have seen an increase in the number of requests for tribunals. This has placed a pressure on services and highlighted a need for internal review of processes and procedures to ensure we can provide the appropriate level of resource to this important element of work.

5. Legal implications

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6. Finance Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. Integrated Impact Assessment

7.1 The report is for information and not for decision.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None