

Easy Read



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

A guide for parents and carers of children with additional learning needs



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How to use this document



This is an Easy Read version of: [The toolkit for parents and carers of children who need extra help with learning.](#)



You might need help to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Where the document says **we**, this means **Welsh Government**. For more information contact:

Website: www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-aln-parent-and-carers-toolkit

Email: additionallearningneedsbranch@gov.wales



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About this guide



In Wales, there is a system to help children and young people who need extra support to learn.



This is called the **additional learning needs system**. We call it the **ALN system** for short.



This is an easy read guide for parents and carers of a child in Wales who has ALN.



This guide explains:

- How the ALN system in Wales works.
- What support you can get if your child has ALN.

The ALN system



The ALN system in Wales helps children and young people who need extra support to learn.



It makes sure they get the right help so they can do their best.

The ALN system means:



1. All children and young people aged 0 to 25 are given the support they need to do well; despite the challenges they may face.



2. Making sure children, young people and families are listened to and are involved.



3. Children and young people get the support they need before they start nursery, school, or college.



4. Children and young people can go to the **mainstream schools** close to them. **Mainstream schools** provide education for children and young people of all abilities.



5. Services work together to give the right support.



6. There are ways children, young people and families can speak up if they are not happy.



7. Education is provided in Welsh if needed.

About ALN

A child or young person has ALN if:



- They have a learning difficulty. This means they find learning much harder than most other people their age.

Or



- They have a disability which stops them, or makes it harder for them, to go to school or college.

Important to know:



A child or young person does not have a learning difficulty or disability just because the language they speak at home is different to the language used at school.

Supporting learners



Every child and young person is different.



Many can sometimes find learning hard and need extra support.



Some just need a little extra support to do as well as they can.



This **does not always mean** they have ALN.



However, if their progress is a lot slower than others, even with different teaching and support, they may have ALN.



If you think your child might have ALN, it is important to talk to someone first.



Children and young people can also talk to someone themselves.



You can talk to their:

- Nursery
- School
- College
- Or other place where they learn or are supported.



Your child **does not need** a medical diagnosis from a doctor to have ALN.



Your child **does not need** to be referred by a professional.



What matters most is finding the right support for your child.

Children in early years settings



Children under 5 are not in full time school yet. This is sometimes called early years.



To see if a young child might have ALN, adults look to see:

- how hard learning is for them
- and think about any disability that could make learning harder.



This can be someone from a place where the child learns or is looked after, like:

- Nursery
- Flying Start
- Playgroup
- Childminder.

A child under 5 has ALN if:



- They are likely to find learning much harder than others when they start school, **if no support is given to them.**

Or



- They have a disability which will stop them or make it harder for them to go to school, if no support is given to them.

Support for children and young people with ALN



If your child has ALN, they will get extra support. It is different or extra to the support children and young people usually get.



This support is called **additional learning provision**. We call this **ALP** for short.

Individual Development Plan



Children and young people with ALN have the right to an **individual development plan**. We call this **IDP** for short.



An IDP is a plan that describes what support they need to be able to learn.



The IDP is a legal document. The support described in your child's IDP **must** be provided.



The IDP should be made **with** you and your child.



The school or college usually looks after the IDP. Sometimes, the local council will.



You and your child can question what is in your IDP if you do not agree.



The IDP will be checked:

- Every 12 months, or sooner if needed.
- When someone asks for it to be checked.
- When anything important changes for the child or young person.

Making a decision about ALN



When your child's nursery, school, or college becomes aware that your child **may** have ALN, they **must** look into it.

They can become aware in different ways:



- You, your child, or a family member might say something.



- A member of staff or someone else working and supporting your child might say something.

It does not matter who says something. The nursery, school, or college **must** look into it, **unless**:



- Your child already has an IDP.



- The nursery, school, or college have already looked into it, and nothing has changed.



- It is a young person aged 16 to 25 who does not agree to it.



- Your child has 2 schools or colleges. In this case the local council is responsible.



- Your child lives in England and has the English version of an IDP managed by the local council in England.



Sometimes a nursery, school, or college will ask the local council or help with the decision about ALN.



This may be because they cannot provide the right support or need more advice.



In this case they will ask the local council to make the decision.



You, your child and young people have the right to:

- Ask the local council to check the school's decisions.
- Ask for the IDP to be checked.
- Ask the local council to take over the IDP.

How long does it take to make a decision about ALN?

Schools



Schools have **35 school days** to make a decision and make an IDP.



This starts from when a school becomes aware that your child **may** have ALN.

Colleges



A college has **35 school days** to make the decision and make an IDP.



This starts from when the young person agrees for a decision to be made.

Local councils

**12
weeks**

Local councils have **12 weeks** to make a decision and make an IDP.



You or your child can ask a local council to check some decisions if you are unhappy. For example, if you are unhappy with:

- A school decision about whether your child has ALN or not.
- A school IDP and you would like it changed.
- A school's decision to end an IDP.



Local councils have **7 weeks** to check and reply to a school's decision.



Sometimes the times will change if there is a good reason. For example, the child is ill or away during school holidays.

Disagreeing with a decision



Sometimes you might not agree with decisions made by your child's:

- Nursery
- School
- College
- Local council.



Please try to talk to them first to sort out any problems.



You and your child should be able to talk to them about the problems and find a solution.



All local councils in Wales must have ways to sort disagreements out quickly.



These are called **Disagreement or Dispute Resolution Services**. We call this **DRS** for short.

These services will:



- Tell you where you can get more information.



- Provide advice from experts who do not work for the local council.



- Explain how to get an **advocate** to help you or your child sort out problems and make **appeals** to the **Education Tribunal for Wales**.



An **advocate** is a person who helps you by speaking up for you and your rights, needs and wishes. They can be organised through **advocacy** services.



An **appeal** is a formal way of asking for a decision to be checked.

Advocacy



Advocacy services can give you an **advocate** to help you.



Local councils must make sure that you and your child know about **advocates**.



Advocacy services are free.

The **advocate** can help to do things like:



- Speak up for you when using dispute resolution services.



- Think about the **appeal** to the Education Tribunal for Wales and advise you what can be done.



- Write letters.



- Go to an **appeal** to speak up for you and your child.



Sometimes you, your child or a young person may not be able to understand their IDP or make decisions.



You may need extra help to understand your child's rights.



Your child or young person can get someone to support with this. This person is called a **case friend**.

Who to talk to if you want extra advice



You may also want to talk to someone and get advice. There are other people who can help.



The local council will have a full list of where you can find other information.



You can also contact these organisations who can give advice about concerns:

- Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- The Administrative Court – where a judge checks a decision in court.

National Health Service Wales complaints and concerns



If you are unhappy with your child's care and treatment from the NHS:



- Try to speak to the staff involved first. They will try to sort out any problems.



- If this does not help, contact your health board's [complaints team](#).



- Or you can use the NHS complaints system: [Putting Things Right](#).

Appeal



You, your child and young people can **appeal** when you do not agree with decisions about ALN or the IDP.



An **appeal** is a formal way of asking for a decision to be checked.



You can make an **appeal** to the **Education Tribunal for Wales**. Sometimes this is called **ETW** for short.



You can **appeal** to the ETW if:

- You disagree with the decision about whether your child has ALN.



- You disagree with what is in the IDP.



- You do not agree with the school or college named in the IDP.

- The IDP says support should be given in Welsh and this is not provided.



- The local council says no to changing the IDP or taking over the IDP.

- The local council decides to stop the IDP.



- The local council refuse to look into something because they say nothing has changed.



Appeals cannot be made about decisions made by schools directly. But you can ask the local council to check their decisions.



Everyone has to go along with the decision made by the ETW.



You can **appeal** against the decision made by the ETW, but this must be about how they used the law.



If needed, this can go to the higher tribunal. This is a court that can check the decision made by the ETW.

Planning for changes and transitions



All children and young people experience changes in education.



For example, changing class or starting a new school or college. This is sometimes called **transition**.



A **transition** means moving from one place or class to another.



Children and young people with ALN may find **transitions** harder and worry about changes. They may need extra help at these times.

Planning ahead can make things easier. You can help them by do things like:



- Help them talk about their worries and ask questions.



- Explain changes in a way they can understand.



- Give them things that can help, like school maps, timetables or comfort items.



- Think about using sensory items. Like earplugs or sunglasses.



- Visit the school and meet staff together.

- Make a photo book or guide your child can use.

Working together to support your child



Planning for changes is best when everyone involved works together.



This means you, your child, the school or college and any other organisations. For example, Careers Wales and Pathfinders.

You can:



- Share any worries about your child with the nursery, school, or college as early as possible.



- Keep a note of events or things you notice about your child. This can help when ALN decisions and IDPs are being made.



- Work with the nursery, school, or college. You can help them understand your child's needs.



- Go to meetings and reviews.



- Ask questions and keep up to date with the support your child gets.



- Use the support and guidance available. Like [advocacy](#).

People available to support



Many people support children and young people in education. This includes support through the ALN system.



If you are not sure who helps your child and how, you can ask your nursery, school, college, or local council.



There are people whose job it is to make sure, by law, that your child gets the right support. You may meet some of these people.



The early years additional learning needs lead officer - EYALNLO

They work with you, young children, nurseries, schools, children's services and health professionals.

They help you understand ALN and make sure young children get the right support as early as possible.



The additional learning needs co-ordinator - ALNCo

This is the person who organises support for children and young people with ALN in schools and colleges. They try and make sure things work well.

They work with teachers and other specialists such as speech and language therapists or health professionals to offer support and advice.

They try and make sure the child and young person can fully take part in school. But they also think about the child and young person's feelings.

They work with you, your child or a young person through all stages of education. Including times of change such as moving to a new year group, school, college or work.



Designated education clinical lead officer - DECLO

Sometimes, children and young people with ALN also need support from their local health board.

Every health board in Wales has a DECLO. They link health support with education support.

For example, they can make sure your child's speech and language therapist plans support with your child's school.

They share information with you, your child and the local council when extra help is needed.

They help make sure your child gets the right support.

They make sure you and your child get the information you need.

They help make sure that IDPs are right and working well.

They also help Health Boards when there are problems or complaints about health support.



Nurseries

Nurseries help young children learn, play and grow. They can help notice if your child might need extra help early on.

Some services for young children are not run by the local council. They still work with them to check and decide whether a child has ALN. For example:

- Private nurseries
- Playgroups
- Childminders.



Schools

Schools help children and young people to learn and do well.

Teachers can change how they teach to meet each child and young person's needs.

This means schools can give the right support to help every child and young person make progress.

Sometimes a school may think a child or young person might need extra help.

If they think a child or young person may have ALN, they will check this.

If a child or young person already has an IDP, the school must keep it up to date.



Colleges

Colleges support young people with ALN after they leave secondary school.

They work with the school and local council to make moving from school to college as easy as possible.

They help find out what support a young person needs.

They will also write the IDP and make sure that support is in place.



Local councils

Local councils are responsible for making sure every child and young person in their area gets an education and can do their best.

They make sure children and young people with ALN get the right support.

Other situations



Some children and young people with ALN may be in different situations, so their support might be different.



This can include children and young people who:

- Need a school outside of their local council area.
- Learn somewhere that is not a school.
- Need to learn at home.
- Are in hospital.
- Have parents who work in the armed forces.



[Contact your local council](#) to find out what support you can get.

Important facts you need to know



- You do not need a medical diagnosis to have an IDP.



- ALN is not just for children or young people with very complicated needs.



- Having an IDP does not mean your child will get 1 to 1 support. It depends on your child's needs.



- You can ask the nursery, school, college, or local council to decide if your child has ALN. If you disagree with their decision, you can question it at any time.



- ALN support is for children and young people up to 25 years old.



- If your child has ALN it does not mean they need to move to a special school.



- You do not need to use a solicitor who charges to get legal help. Your local council should tell you about free **advocacy** services.

Where to go for help

You can get useful information from your local council: [Support from your local council](#).

ALN advice

The Welsh Government's additional learning needs page explains the ALN system in Wales.

gov.wales/additional-learning-needs

SNAP Cymru

A Welsh charity offering free advice and support on ALN, including **advocacy**.

www.snapcymru.org

Children's Commissioner for Wales

They help make sure children and young people are treated fairly and listened to.

childcomwales.org.uk

Neurodivergence Wales

Provides information and community support.

neurodivergencewales.org

Education Tribunal for Wales

Decides about **appeals**, gives advice and support about how they work.

educationtribunal.gov.wales

Autism Wales – National Autistic Society Cymru

They give a range of support and advice for autistic people and their families in Wales.

autism.org.uk/what-we-do/wales

Family Information Service

They give free advice to help families to access childcare, early years education, and support services across Wales.

gov.wales/find-your-local-family-information-service

Support after age 16

Careers Wales

Offers information and advice for young people and families.

careerswales.gov.wales/my-future/support-for-parents-and-carers/legislation-and-support-agencies

Colleges Wales

It supports colleges to meet the needs of young people with ALN.

colleges.wales/en/page/additional-learning-needs-aln-in-the-post-16-sector

ALN Pathfinder

Supports young people with ALN and their families moving from school to further education.

alnpathfinder.wales/en/blog/post/transition-from-school-to-post-16-education-and-training-for-young-people-who-have-aln

Learning Disability Wales

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales.

ldw.org.uk

NATSPEC

Represents specialist colleges. They give advice on options for learners after school with complex ALN.

natspec.org.uk/colleges/post-school-choices-in-wales

Early Years

Early Years Wales / Cwlwm

Early Years Wales is an organisation supporting the development and education of pre-school children.

earlyyears.wales/en/cwlwm

Mudiad Meithrin

They support the development and education of the Welsh language. This is for children below school age.

meithrin.cymru

Useful words and terms

This is list of words and terms that are often used when talking about ALN.

ALNET Act - the law for supporting children and young people with ALN. The full name is Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

Code - means the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021. This is legal guidance for schools, colleges, council and health services. It says how they should support children and young people with ALN.

Child - person under 16 years old.

Young person - A person aged between 16 and 25 years old.

ALN – Additional learning needs. This means children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities who need extra support to learn.

ALP – Additional learning provision. This is the name for the extra support that is given to children and young people with ALN.

Education setting – Any place where education is given. Includes nurseries, schools, colleges, and other places.

Maintained nursery– A nursery that is run by the local council. This could be a nursery class in a primary school or a separate nursery school.

Non-maintained nursery – A nursery that is not run by the local council. This includes private nurseries, playgroups, and childminders.

Compulsory school age - In Wales, compulsory school age means children aged 5 to 16 years old.

College - A place of learning after age 16.

Individual development plan - is the name for the plan children and young people with ALN will have.

Advocate - a person who speaks up for you.

Appeal - is when you ask for a decision to be changed by a tribunal.

Case friend - is someone who can help a child or young person understand their plan, and takes decisions for them, like deciding to appeal. They already know the child or young person and are not an advocate.

Tribunal - a special group of people whose job is to deal with an argument like a court does.