

Easy Read

Additional Learning Needs

What we found out

April 2026

How to use this document



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Additional Learning Needs - Do public bodies know if the system is working?



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About this report



This report is about support for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs.



Additional Learning Needs is known as **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.

Why this work is important



Children and young people with ALN have different needs.



There is a system to help them to do the best they can, we call it the ALN system.



A new law in 2018 changed the ALN system.



The old system was sometimes confusing.



The aim of the new system is to:

- Work better together.
- Focus on the needs of each person.



Now, every learner with ALN should have an **Individual Development Plan**.



Individual Development Plans help schools or colleges understand how to best support learners.



But we found there are still some problems with the new ALN system.

What we did



We looked at how the system is working. And if there are any problems.

We looked at whether public bodies knew:



- How many people need support.



- If there are enough staff with the right skills.



- How much support costs.



- How well learners are doing.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

We mainly looked at:

- The Welsh Government



- Councils



We focused mainly on what they do to support ALN learners in schools.

We also looked a little at:

- Early years services
- Health boards
- Further education



What we found



The ALN system is under pressure.



Public bodies do not have enough information. They do not fully know:

- How many learners need support.
- How much support costs.
- How well learners are doing.



This makes it hard to plan and improve the system.



The Welsh Government is working with partners to improve things.



More work is needed to make sure the ALN system works well for children and young people.

We found these problems:



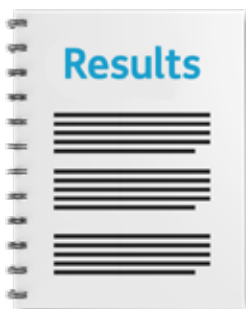
- There is not enough information about how many children and young people need help. Or how **complex** their needs are.
- There is not enough information about staff numbers and their skills.



- Public bodies do not know enough about how much ALN support costs.



- It is hard to tell if the ALN system can keep working in the future.



- We do not know if children and young people are getting good results.



- The new ALN system can still feel hard for some people.

Key facts



Around 48 thousand learners up to the age of 25 have ALN.



The number of school learners with ALN has gone down.



The number of learners with support like an **Individual Development Plan** has gone up.



The cost of ALN services is close to £1 billion a year. But the real cost could be higher.



Councils are spending more on ALN than in the past.

Our ideas



Collect better information about:

- Learners with ALN.
- Staff who support them.



Make the costs of support clearer.



Collect more information on how well learners with ALN are doing.



The goal is to plan better and make sure support works well.



The Welsh Government should lead these changes.



For our ideas to work well, other public bodies also need to be involved.