Additional learning needs (ALN) innovation fund learning event
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learning event

Audience
Governing bodies and staff of all maintained nursery, primary, secondary and
special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs); further education institutions; local
authorities; health boards; parents/carers; and interested organisations.

Overview
This document provides an overview of the additional learning needs (ALN)
innovation fund projects delivered between April 2016 and March 2018.

Action required
This document should be brought to the attention of managers and relevant
staff, local authorities, governing bodies, and education and health professionals
working with education settings.

Further information
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Additional copies
This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government’s website at
gov.wales/aln
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1 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) innovation fund learning event

1.1 Background and purpose

In 2016 the Welsh Government launched the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Innovation Fund, a two year pre-legislative grant to local authorities (LAs) (worth £2.1million) to fund collaborative multi-agency projects supporting learners with ALN.

The funding was given to a host authority to manage for all of the LAs within their education consortia footprint. For each financial year (2016/17 and 2017/18) a total of £50,000 was available per local authority (LA).

The funding had to be used to support partnership projects with a focus on improving any or all of the following: early identification of needs; transition planning between education settings, out of education and into social care, and into adult life; impact monitoring of supporting interventions; the capacity of Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCoS) / Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos) in providing support to classroom staff, including skills development; the capacity of local post-16 provision for learners with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities (LDD) and/or the development of specialist local provision; the capacity of special schools to act as specialist support to mainstream schools; practice and arrangements for resolving disagreements and avoiding disputes; capacity of LA based specialist services to support learners in early years, maintained schools and further education institutions (FEIs) and raising awareness about the full range of local support available for learners with ALN and their families.

The funding concluded in March 2018 and to celebrate the work of the projects and share the learning across Wales the ALN innovation fund learning event was arranged. This was an opportunity for LAs to present their projects to the expert groups established by Welsh Government, who are considering specific issues faced by the ALN transformation programme.

The purpose of the day was for practitioners to share their learning and experiences with others across Wales and broaden the understanding of different ways of working. It was also for the expert groups to consider the learning from the projects within the remit of their work and in some cases, agree the next steps for their group. The agreed next steps of all the groups are included at Annex A.

The content of this document has been drafted based on discussions during the event and the conclusions have been written by the expert groups themselves. During the event some of the expert groups received the same presentation; a few projects are therefore mentioned twice in this report.
2 Early Years expert group

External chair – Nichola Jones
Welsh Government representatives – Hayley Jones and Tim Snell

2.1 Project 1 – Improving multi-agency assessments and interventions

Richard Hatwood (Inclusion Officer – ALN Performance), Denbighshire

The project identified a need to strengthen the early identification of and interventions for children with ALN attending pre-school settings and sought to develop a sustainable and multi-agency model to support the transition of children from pre-school settings to nursery.

2.1.1 Expert group reflections

The group considered the following aspects of the project to be particularly important:

- Co-locating Health, Education and Children’s services, in this case at a children’s centre, has a positive effect on the early identification of children with ALN and supporting their transition from pre-school settings to nursery. This does not have to be in one building, but acts as a hub, with satellites that brings professionals and families together.
- The transition plans developed by the multi-agency pre-school panel were based on discussions about the highest need children that are identified through work with pre-school settings.
- Schools involved in the project provided positive feedback, they felt more informed and able to support individual needs.
- Communication with families across all schools and settings is crucial. A common language is required and expectations for professionals and families should be clear.
- The project highlighted the importance of up-skilling all the staff in each setting. This does not have to involve significant investment as there are excellent existing training packages, such as the Solihull Approach, which can be disseminated internally, through a train the trainer programme. The project noted the importance of this being an on-going programme, given high staff turnover. Professional development for all staff across all early years settings is crucial.
- In terms of the reports, there has been a general increase in the presentation of complex needs, further work is needed to identify the specific types of needs that are being presented.
- Whilst considering this a very valuable project, the group noted that there are others working on similar issues. The expert group proposed to form a LA led, task and finish group for scoping such work and assisting in bringing together the approaches to support communication and training.
2.2 Project 2 - Children’s Assessment and Teaching Tool (CHATT)

Emma Griffiths (Advisory Teacher for Speech, Language and Communication, Carmarthenshire)
Lynne Watkins (Hywel Dda Health Board - Speech & Language Therapy)

The project developed a tool to empower teachers in identifying learners with speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCD) in their classrooms by providing a staged screening process, beginning within six weeks of entry to the setting. The tool aims to give teachers confidence in working with learners with SLCD, providing a range of strategies and activities to target specific difficulties. This enables teachers to give a full picture of a child’s SLCD for referral to specialist services should greater support be required.

2.2.1 Expert group reflections

- The group recognised the importance of this project, whilst raising the potential problem of duplication, given that several other authorities have done similar work
- Being able to establish the validity/reliability of the tool would be helpful
- The group suggested the need to produce a common principles document on early identification and intervention
- It is also important to consider capacity building for teaching professionals, including training for teaching and non-teaching staff
- The group considered the importance of involving families in the use of such a tool and the need to introduce a new set of terminology for them as well
- The importance of preparing professionals and parents/carers. How professionals ‘sell’ the issue of their child’s needs to parents is critical. In early stages of identification, this might mean explaining developmental delay, rather than ALN
- Preparing parents could begin even earlier, through ante and post-natal classes
- The group noted the pivotal role that health colleagues have in these issues and the crucial part that health visitors can play in early identification
2.3 Project 3 - Language and communication pathway (0-3)

Alison Williams (Aneurin Bevan Health Board) and Mary-Jo Speary (Head of Service for Communication Intervention Team (ComIT)), Torfaen

This was a scoping project of services for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) aged 0 – 3 years 11 months across the south east Wales region. Its aim was to; provide an overview of the full range of initiatives, groups, projects and services currently provided by different agencies; provide a comprehensive report of the most up to date research and policy relating to SLCN; and make recommendations to the LAs in the south east Wales region on possible future directions for the ComIT to support 0-3 years 11 months old with and/ or at risk of ALN as a result of primary SLCN.

2.3.1 Expert group reflections

- The project underlined the importance of the quality of environment the learners are in. More important than taking groups of learners to do different activities is enhancing the learning environment they are in all the time, in an education setting or at home
- It was important to consider the 0 – 3 part of early years that is often left out of such discussions
- Again, the vital role that health professionals/ practitioners can play was noted, particularly in relation to the 0 – 3 range as often health professionals/ practitioners are aware of issues for a child before the childcare or education setting. It was proposed that the findings from the day need to be shared with the health expert group
- The group discussed the particular importance of this issue for children who are not in Flying Start schemes and are, therefore, not yet on the education ‘radar’
- The group appreciated the project’s emphasis on evidence-based and effective interventions and noted the importance of such a robust approach, in order that resources are not wasted
2.4 Expert Group Conclusions

In considering the difference the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 ‘the Act’ is going to make, the group identified five key themes:

- **Pathways** - Children, young people and their families need clear and easy access to multi-agency services such as health, education and children’s services to facilitate effective early identification and interventions. This could be through the physical co-location of services, or a hub that connects to and brings different services, as required, together.

- **Professional Development** - Having a skilled workforce is vital and for early years there are particular challenges as it has so many strands. The implementation period provides an opportunity to establish joined-up working across early years providers before the duties in the Act commence.

- **Early Identification and Intervention** - The projects identified some great examples of this happening. There needs to be work on this from the ante-natal stage onwards.

- **Partnership and Integration** - Partnership working in the early years will help to facilitate the sharing of best practice, both regionally and nationally, which will help to reduce the duplication of similar resources and tools by different authorities and agencies.

- **Cross-cutting Issues** - Communication is vital, particularly as people get used to a new language, there is a strong need for partnerships with parents and the importance of measuring impact and gathering evidence on reliability and validity of new approaches.
3 Individual development plan (IDP) expert group

External chair – Gwern Ap Rhisiart
Welsh Government representative – Andrew Nicholas

3.1 Project 1 - Regional collaborative working

Sarah Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN, Caerphilly)
Tracey Pead (ALN Transformation Lead, south east Wales region)

The project commissioned a new Parent Partnership and Advocacy Service for the south east Wales region, to provide independent advice and support for parents/carers to empower them to play an informed and active role in their child’s education. This also includes a formal disagreement resolution and independent advocacy service. A central objective is that the service should offer a person-centred process, communicating with parents, children and young people in easily accessible language.

3.1.1 Expert Group Reflections

- The group considered it very useful for parents to have a good advocacy service, although there was some concern as to the limited degree of independence that this service appeared to have.
- The commissioning process was commended. However, it was not clear how parents were involved in it. From the experience of trialling IDPs in Gwynedd, the view was that it is a case of winning the hearts and minds of parents.
- It was noted that uncertainty leads to pressure and head teachers often see parents arrive too late in the process and in a crisis. There can be a huge variation in the quality of parent partnerships, including the skills of the providers and in the new world to come, consistency will be essential. There was agreement that it is time to have a look at this process.
- It was thought that there could be considerable learning from the work that was presented, especially around compliance.
- As we move from statements to IDPs, this project sets the scene for increased collaboration and provides a good basis for a clearly defined partnership, which should result in a consistent approach across the six authorities.
- The process outlined, with the involvement of providers from the beginning and the longevity of the project, seemed to lead to increased ‘buy-in’ and providers now have increased accountability in terms of achieving the objectives. It also facilitates long-term planning.
- The approach also enabled some reduction in cost and a possible reduction in numbers seeking tribunal.
3.2 Project 2 - Establishing a working group of ALNcos to Develop Consistent IDPs

Sarah Kirkby Redrup (Operational Manager for ALN) and Laura Sheldon (ALNCo), Vale of Glamorgan

The project established a group to:
- Create a model IDP based on information from the Act
- Gain a level of expertise in order to support colleagues
- Create a bank of useful resources and opportunities to share with colleagues
- Establish a working group to share best practice
- Audit, evaluate and seek feedback

Person centred practice (PCP) approaches were central to the project with training for champion ALNcos, who then hosted cluster support groups for all schools in the region.

3.2.1 Expert group reflections

- The group was concerned about the amount of time the new IDP process will take. However, it was noted that this project was reporting back on starting the IDP process from scratch, which is more time consuming than if there is already a process in place. It is important to get the new template in place, so others will not be reinventing the wheel.
- The training offered in support of this project was focussed on primary schools. Secondary and post-16 staff will also need up-skilling and different skill sets and tools will be required for these groups. The time required for this will need to be built into the transition process.
- Decisions around when an IDP should be maintained by the school or the local authority is a key part of this. It is crucial that these are appropriately identified, and it must be acknowledged that there is a fear of increasing numbers. There is a need to flag up the issue of thresholds and a concern that if it is not done properly, then children in mainstream schools may be missed.
- The group felt a good one-page profile with SMART targets may be sufficient for all learners, but flexibility needs to be built in to take account of the fact that individual learners may need additional support at times.
- More clarification is needed on how the IDP will work with other existing processes, for example personal education plans (PEP’s) from looked after children (LAC) reviews, especially as some schools have high numbers of LAC on their roll. Although, for such children, the IDP’s will be incorporated into the PEP for the LAC reviews, the panel was concerned that PEP’s are not standardised across all authorities. Andrew Nicholas confirmed work in this area was ongoing with Social Service colleagues.
- PCP was well received by schools but work on this should have happened before and not just as a part of this innovation fund. Working
within the cluster model may be a key to support the sustainability of this work

- The tool kits to support learners through the process have been shown to be effective and useful and should be shared
- Finally, it was noted that the move towards IDPs represented a cultural shift and that this would take time

### 3.3 Project 3 - Early help offer for families

Tracy Merritt (Group Manager) and Leonie Rayner (Inclusion Support Team Coordinator), Pembrokeshire

The approach provides an early help offer that is based on a local team of professionals, supporting clusters of schools and families of children with ALN. The team includes educational psychologists, specialist teachers, speech and language and occupational therapists and parent support officers.

This team works to:

- Support schools in the early identification of learners with ALN and the implementation of interventions and tracking of learners
- Facilitate a network for support staff and ALNcos providing professional development as well as sharing good practice
- Facilitate drop-in surgeries and consultations from a range of agencies
- Plan for the transition of ALN learners
- Consider common themes arising from schools and families and put in place a bespoke professional development framework

This project established a new website with regional ALN information to support the above work

### 3.3.1 Expert group reflections

- It was noted that although the theme overlapped with the first presentation from the day, the approach of this project was very different
- However, the group also questioned the rationale behind using innovation funding for a website. The feeling from the group was that this should have been a part of ongoing work and was not in itself transformational
- The project demonstrated a strong will for collaboration and all the LAs in the region are now working together. This will support the work of the ALN transformation leads
- It must be acknowledged that everyone is now waiting for the new ALN Code to be published
3.4 Expert group conclusions

The presentations and group discussions have shown that:

- LAs are starting to work together in a way that has not happened in the past
- There is so much expectation around the new ALN Code and the impact it is going to have on education. We need to be very clear on the timetable, so that people know what is happening and when
- Time is a big factor, especially with IDPs, and what is practically possible for schools and partners to be communicating. There is no problem with the will to do it, but time is a problem. As we move forward, we do need to attend to time/resource pressures, so that we don’t put something in place that is going to be impossible to implement
- All stakeholders want the best for children, but it is extremely important that we are clear about our vision and that we involve key people in any changes that we make as we move forward.
4 Post-16 expert group

External chair – Chris Denham
Welsh Government representative – Michelle Cobley

4.1 Project 1 - Review of specialist college systems

Kirsten Jones (Vice Principal Education & Training and Wales Director of Natspec)

The project sought to bring specialist further education (FE) colleges together to identify how the progress of learners with moderate and severe learning difficulties and disabilities is tracked. To do so a review of specialist college systems and processes for delivering, recording and quality assuring non-accredited learning programmes was undertaken. The need for consistency of process was identified for baseline assessing, progress recording and evaluation. In light of the Act implementation, the project also proposed scope for further work involving the general FE sector in agreeing cross-sector approaches to benchmarking, consistency of practice in progress monitoring and recording and the need for over-arching systems for data collection and analysis.

4.1.1 Expert group reflections

- The group agreed that there is a need for transparent decision making and that this must be multidisciplinary
- 18 to 25 provision is ‘new’ to health and there is a lot of nervousness and uncertainty about expectations within health provision
- The issue of how GPs, physiotherapists, occupational therapists etc. can be involved in the decision making process is an important piece of work that needs to be looked at
- Independent colleges are being asked to evidence ‘value for money’ and they need some clarity about how this will be measured, how a baseline assessment is carried out and who might develop a ‘toolkit’ to do this, in order to ensure some consistency across the sector.
- FE colleges are increasingly taking a ‘holistic view’ of education provision as opposed to accredited learning; this is a good opportunity to create some minimum standards in relation to non-accredited learning
- The group agreed that a move away from a narrow view of accredited courses to a broader view of education and learning is positive. There was, however, some concern about a lack of consistency and this needs to be addressed.
4.2 Project 2 - Transition for 0 – 3 and post-16

Jennie Hughes (Senior Achievement Leader – Inclusion, Cardiff)
Claire Bridges (Principal Special Educational Needs Casework Officer, Cardiff)
Catherine Kegan-Smith (Early Years SENCo, Cardiff)

The project promoted:

- Four awareness raising events with social services, sharing information about the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Act.
- 12 multi-agency workshops, identifying the challenges and opportunities for developing a single planning approach

In relation to early years provision, it piloted new processes and established consistency of recording. In relation to post-16, it analysed and reviewed existing provision, organised an FE transition roadshow and an FE open day for ALNCo's, special schools and special resource bases.

4.2.1 Expert group reflections

- The group noted that it appears Cardiff is ahead in planning and implementing in this area. It would be useful to share the work completed in Cardiff with other LAs
- The key to this success has been genuine collaborative working, particularly between the pre and post-16 sectors
- The group noted the usefulness of Cardiff’s:
  - evaluation of the multi-agency learning event
  - Map and Gap analysis
  - draft transition protocol (which will be given to Welsh Government for dissemination)
  - structure for discussing how the two Acts work together to deliver joint provision
- It would be useful to have a list of provision, particularly specialist organisations and other out of county provision. LAs know what is available in the county, but this needs to be supplemented by knowing what is available regionally and nationally, given this is not what LAs have had to do in the past
- Clarity would be appreciated about whether services and equipment are purchased and owned by the institutions or whether they are drawn from a central provision and follow the young person around, e.g. should colleges and schools employ their own speech and language therapists, or would they be better provided by health
- Dealing with reviews of multiple statutory plans was complex, e.g. Social Services need to appoint an independent reviewing officer to review Care and Support Plans and Education will be chairing a person centred review of the IDP. Care and Support reviews are very formal while IDP reviews are more informal. There is scope for these to be combined to avoid multiple meetings. LAs could address these issues
individually, but a centralised model for best practice from the Welsh Government would be welcomed

- Understanding of the changes and the legislation varies. Some schools are well briefed and up to date, whereas others need training. The Cardiff team is addressing this with a training programme for every school, using materials that have been developed and delivered by the ALNCos. They have offered this for use by other regions.

### 4.3 Expert group conclusions

- It is really important that the excellent work that has been done in Cardiff and other LAs is shared around Wales
- The fact that this group only saw two presentations, and only one of these was from a LA, suggests that there has not been enough focus on post-16 provision. We need to be absolutely certain that we are carrying out true partnership and collaboration between LAs, schools, colleges and other organisations to ensure that we have joined up thinking and understand each other. A lot of work has already begun on this issue and we need to make sure that we are not just talking about it but actually doing it
- Our change management teams in some of the regions have observed that it is now, when we are asking people to change, that some will start telling us how good the old system was; we will need to work hard to overcome this resistance
- It is important we ensure that LA decisions around post-16 placements for young people take account of a number of things including that:
  - They are completely person centred
  - They recognise multi-disciplinary views as well as the views of the young person and parents
  - They are developmental, start early enough and deliver timely decisions
  - The decisions are informed by a good understanding of what is available locally and within independent specialist colleges, specialist colleges and other provisions around Wales
- It is important that we make opportunities to get LA officers into colleges to show them what colleges can offer. The two have operated separately for a long time and need to re-acquaint with each other. College managers and teams also need to understand the challenges for LAs.
- These decisions need to be reviewed regularly. LAs and colleges might not always get it right, so there needs to be a process for reviewing how decisions are working out
- It is vital to have a shared language. Work is needed to ensure that colleges, schools and LAs around Wales have a clear understanding of the language being used with things like complex needs and describing provision
- Part of the Act is about encouraging organisations to look at ways of sharing services and promote joined up thinking; this needs our attention.
5 Training expert group

External Chair – Michelle Hatcher
Welsh Government Representative – Rhiannon Evans

5.1 Project 1 - Capacity of special schools to act as specialist support to mainstream schools

Ceri Jones (Head of Access & Inclusion Service, Rhondda Cynon Taf)
Helen Jenkins (Lead Teacher, Cognition and Learning, Rhondda Cynon Taf)

This was a group of projects carried out by all the LAs in the central south region. Each LA began by auditing their current ALN provision and then developed outreach projects to improve the skills of mainstream teachers using the expertise of special school/ specialist services and resource base teachers. Each LA developed/ purchased resources to support staff training.

The presentation gave an overview of all the projects and then focused on those developed by Rhondda Cynon Taf. These involved a team of specialist teachers and colleagues from ALN settings who trained mainstream teachers, ALNCOs and head teachers in strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in early years. Following the training, support visits were conducted to help implementation of strategies into mainstream settings.

5.1.1 Expert group reflections

The group considered the following aspects of the projects to be particularly important:

- The importance of working collaboratively on a train the trainer model in order to get away from segregation, with training sessions integrated in LAs to bring groups from specialist and mainstream settings together
- This coordinated approach to training, with a LA strategic overview, is an important factor for bringing together different approaches and commonality in practice.
- In relation to this, it is vital to consider:
  - Who is best to deliver outreach training?
  - How do we deliver collaboratively?
  - How do we avoid duplication?
- It is also important that such work:
  - Utilises evidence-based interventions
  - Has a shared set of learning outcomes
  - Pays attention to the impact on different age groups
  - Where possible, includes outreach visits to ensure strategies are being implemented correctly and offer support after the training
  - Puts tools in place to measure the impact of the training
- The multi-agency approach requires the development of a shared language which will ensure practitioners in all sectors receive the same messages.
- Training is required for school improvement officers, challenge advisors and ALNCOs.
5.2 Project 2 - Building capacity for ALN transformation in Carmarthenshire

Steve Campbell (ALN Advisory Teacher, Carmarthenshire)

The presentation reported on 2 projects:

1) To review current LA Special Educational Needs (SEN) systems, processes and provision and create an information card for each LA.
2) To develop a new approach for the efficient and effective use of the ALNCo role.

The projects began with an audit of ALNCos and use of PCP across all Carmarthenshire schools. This led to the establishment of a group of PCP coaches to train school representatives who then introduce PCP approaches to all other staff members in their school.

The projects developed preparation packs, questionnaires and templates to support PCP approaches to writing IDPs.

A provision map and data cards were developed to allow access to ALN data across the LA.

5.2.1 Expert group reflections

The group noted the usefulness of these projects and discussed the following issues:

- How does the training element of these projects fit with the training package being developed by Eliesha Cymru to support implementation of the Act and new ALN Code?
- That training being developed going forward should consider using case studies to maximise impact
- The group was concerned about how the train the trainer pack developed by the project is being rolled out across schools
- It is important to measure how schools are using their delegated ALN money as there is not a single model across LAs
- The importance of having head teacher buy-in. ALNCos will need to spend time out of school to focus on service and this needs the support of the head teacher
5.3 Project 3 - Practice and arrangements for resolving disagreements and avoiding disputes

Sarah Bowen (Inclusion Manager, Merthyr Tydfil)

The project initially commissioned Snap Cymru to audit mediation services across the central south region and to draft guidance for schools. Training on the guidance was then delivered to schools. A central south trainer’s handbook was developed and a train the trainer programme prepared. Each LA trained six trainers in order to provide a sustainable resource for schools and enable a consistent approach to resolving disagreements. The project involved learners in decisions about the content and form of materials and how information could best be shared.

5.3.1 Expert group reflections

The group considered the following key points:

- The importance of engaging parents with the arrangements for resolving disagreements and avoiding disputes by providing training through schools
- A Multi agency approach is vital, including training for Health and Social Services. Health has its own disputes process, but it should be aligned with Education, with a shared language and common approach to dispute resolution. Currently, parents need to choose to pursue a Health or Education complaint or both
- Capturing learner voice is very important, depending on the needs of the child. In this project, it allowed the generation of new ideas on media format for easy access – e.g. using animations and QR codes
- An important theme is the need for consistency of message at a national level
5.4 Expert group conclusions

The group identified the following key themes:

1) It is important to focus on the population of children and young people considering:
   - How to work collaboratively, finding opportunities to work together, involving all agencies
   - How to avoid duplication of training
   - Who is best to deliver training

2) There is a need for a national focus and an agreed all-Wales approach, identifying national, regional and local priorities and maintaining consistency of approach

3) Exploring the models of training delivery that can be most effective - learning that is engaging and solution focused, not just reading from a manual. The use of relevant case-studies is an essential part of this

4) The importance of training for school improvement teams

5) An initial audit of training needs is important to produce effective, bespoke training

6) Accountability and quality assurance needs to be established by measuring the impact of training and the follow up support

7) Parental engagement is vital – how to get them on-board at an early stage and involved in training

8) The need for multi-agency training, for all agencies, including Health, Social Services, early years settings and FEIs

9) The format of training needs to be modern and accessible, e.g. using QR codes

10) How is learner voice captured within training delivery? How do we genuinely get their opinion to impact on our training?
6 Transfer and transition expert group

External chair – Gaynor Davies
Welsh Government representative – Bethan Cowan

6.1 Project 1 - Transition for vulnerable learners - developing outreach support

Lorraine Young (Senior Advisory Teacher for ALN, Ceredigion)
Sophie Davies (Teacher Development Officer for Learning Difficulties, Neath Port Talbot (NPT))
Hayley Lervy (Co-ordinator for Inclusion, NPT)

The project focused on learners with ASD in the Ceredigion and NPT areas, with the aim of meeting their needs more effectively, by:

- developing more innovative ways of providing specialist outreach support for schools
- ensuring smoother transitions from primary to secondary (Ceredigion and NPT); the transition of complex ASD learners into NPT.

A team of specialist staff was seconded to plan and deliver innovative ways of working.

6.1.1 Expert group reflections

- The group felt that a key issue is how support staff are trained around ALN and proposed a rolling programme of champion training across the sector to ensure we have the capacity to address ALN transition
- The group identified a disconnect in a 0 to 25 agenda; from 16 upwards as 13 FE colleges don’t feed into the consortia. Also, from a college’s perspective, one LA may have a particular approach but learners coming into the college will come from across 4 or 5 LA areas with different approaches
- The spectrum of transition for leaners aged 16 to 25 is huge and it isn’t clear how the strands will come together to streamline transition at FE stage
- Moving forward, the group felt the need to avoid duplication, review what has happened, assess the quality of the products and see if they are scalable and applicable to FE settings, and consider whether further investment in key resources was necessary
- If we can get it right for the people with the most complex needs, that would be a great boost for getting it right for everyone else
- It was suggested that task and finish groups might be set up to review the tools or products that have been developed through the innovation fund and a plan devised for what should be developed further. There needs to be a way of sharing all the innovation fund results and being clear about what has and hasn’t worked
- One central space for all of the materials and information on all of the innovation fund projects would enable sharing of good practice
• The group also highlighted the importance of sustaining the work going forward; ensuring clear criteria for evidencing the impact and building partnerships with social services

6.2 Project 2 - Transition for 0 – 3 and post-16

Jennie Hughes (Senior Achievement Leader – Inclusion, Cardiff)
Claire Bridges (Principal Special Educational Needs Casework Officer, Cardiff)
Catherine Kegan-Smith (Early Years SENCo, Cardiff)

The project promoted:

• Four awareness raising events with social services, sharing information about the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Act.
• 12 multi-agency workshops, identifying the challenges and opportunities for developing a single planning approach

In relation to early years provision, it piloted new processes and established consistency of recording. In relation to post-16, it analysed, reviewed and improved existing provision, organised an FE transition roadshow and an FE open day for ALNCos, special schools and special resource bases.

6.2.1 Expert group reflections

• The group felt there may be a need to work innovatively with neighbouring counties to meet a critical mass of learners in the 19 to 25 age brackets
• Larger LAs have more scope to provide services compared to smaller ones, which may require merging services/ resources and thinking differently about how services are commissioned
• This is where the regional data in terms of independent specialist college provision is going to be really important. Most consortia have well-established inclusion groups, which are working together effectively and others need to be part of those discussions. By influencing the agenda at a strategic level other partners like Health, can work with authorities and colleges to provide for those with the most complex ALN needs
• For transformation to happen, and to avoid just doing things only slightly differently, we need to make the transformational agenda a national priority
• The group felt that discrepancies on outcome-focused commissioning between authorities on an operational level needs to be looked at on a more strategic level to reduce barriers
• The group observed that the timescale for producing the code is very tight and timescale slippages can cause difficulties
• The group was interested in the synergy between the Act’s and how by harmonising the two pieces of legislation, they can work better together
6.3 Project 3 - Improving multi-agency assessments and interventions

Richard Hatwood (Inclusion Officer – ALN Performance), Denbighshire

Feedback from schools across the north Wales region indicated that children entering nursery classes were presenting with more complex and challenging needs. The project identified that there was a need to strengthen early identification and intervention for children attending pre-school settings and sought to develop a sustainable and multi-agency model to support the transition of children from pre-school settings to nursery.

6.3.1 Expert group reflections

- The process is very complex as it relies on the size of the authority and the moderation processes in place. It would be useful to share information and good practice on effective models in use across Wales
- Working together to build sustainability is good practice. When learners transfer/transition to mainstream school/college, agencies need to continue to work together as children’s needs change and mainstream may not continue to be best for them
- The group identified the need for LAs and FE colleges to identify and work to address challenges associated with their engagement with each other and at other transition points
- The group highlighted the need to consider non-traditional transitions. For instance, traveller families with a child with SEN who is only in school every three months. There is a need to ensure there are systems in place for that child to transition to other areas as smoothly as possible and for those who are difficult to engage.
- Pockets of good practice and case studies with what worked and what didn’t should be shared, possibly in a good practice guide
- The group agreed that flexibility is important. Things that work well in some areas may not be so easily replicated in other because the systems aren’t the same
- The group identified the need to avoid duplication arising from developing guidance and protocols in isolation
- The group felt that a system of measuring the work that has been developed through the innovation fund would be helpful to make sure that everyone is clear about how it has been moderated, quality assured and how that is then fed back to everybody
6.4 Expert group conclusions

The group concluded that excellent work has been taking place across the regions and we now need to establish forums or platforms where that good practice can be shared across Wales.

Key themes emerged across the 3 presentations:

- The need for consideration of the transferability/scalability of the projects – how, for example, lessons learned in early years can be applied in primary, secondary and post-16
- The need for longer term evaluation in terms of learner outcomes before spreading good practice across Wales
- The need to consider access to data, how this is shared and used across settings. Some of our data systems don’t ‘speak’ to each other. This is particularly important if we are looking at evaluating and sharing the work of these projects
- The need to address sustainability and future funding, sharing examples of innovative uses of other grant funding streams.
- Where things have worked well, there is usually a really strong multi-agency, partnership approach. When sustainable models are being looked at for up-skilling and training, all agencies and partners were involved in that training delivery
- This multi-agency approach was also shown at strategic level in some of the policy documents and guidance materials that have been developed
- The need for a shared understanding of language between sectors/providers, particularly in relation to the relevant legislation
- There was a focus on up-skilling, with PCP as an integral approach but in some projects the high-level buy-in of key partners such as Health, Adult and Children’s Services was missing. This would enable really effective working across agencies and settings.
7 ALNCo expert group

External chair – Liz Jones
Welsh Government representative – Paul Jones

7.1 Project 1 - Supporting the role of the ALNCO in Pembrokeshire

Sue Painter (Challenge Advisor/ Statutory Reform Advisor, Pembrokeshire)
Emma Wilson (Specialist Teacher for Specific Learning Difficulties, Pembrokeshire)
Melanie Ferrier (Paediatric Occupational Therapist, Pembrokeshire)

The priorities for this project were:

- Remodelling services to provide early help and support by:
  - Supporting schools and families in the early identification of need
  - Professional development of school staff through the Pembrokeshire toolkits, consultations and individually tailored programmes
  - Supporting families through the development of support networks, consultations with professionals and parent skills training
  - Planning for transition of learners
  - Using common themes arising from schools and families to inform a bespoke professional development framework

- Use of digital technology to manage, exchange and share information to support the role of the ALNCo:
  - To manage, exchange and report information, reducing teacher workload
  - Quick and single set up to record provision
  - Tracking of learners and staff involved in each intervention
  - One-page profiles for each learner
  - IDPs with timed review dates
  - Easily accessible learner outcome reports, detailing cost and time

The project also developed the Pembrokeshire Specific Learning Difficulties Website, aimed at educational staff, parents and the learners themselves.

7.1.1 Expert group reflections

The group noted the following points:

- ALN needs to be considered across all areas of education as all practitioners have responsibility for ALN learners not just the ALNCo. It is important to consider how to embed good communication on ALN across regions
- Up-skilling of the workforce is essential and this needs to take place for all mainstream teachers
- Provision maps are crucial so that staff can identify support at the push of a button and this requires an excellent IT infrastructure.
7.2  Project 2 - ALN Bill ready ALNCOs

Richard Austin (Head of inclusion, Monmouthshire)
Hayley Page (Assistant Head teacher – Inclusion, Monmouthshire)

The project aimed to:

- Identify current best early years ALN practice across agencies with a particular focus on effective multi agency assessment and excellence in transition to school
- Support the identification of excellent ALN practice in mainstream and special schools which would support the transition from the current system to the new statutory framework
- Identify practitioners who have experience of post-16 provision and in working in a multi-agency/ multi-disciplinary context
- Facilitate the development of a common set of ALN related processes/procedures and systems

7.2.1  Expert group reflections

- The group noted the project’s strategic strength, with a regional approach and emphasis on accountability
- The idea of a training needs analysis, based on a readiness survey was warmly welcomed
- The group raised several questions in response to the presentation:
  - How to use other staff to support the ALN agenda, e.g. School Improvement colleagues?
  - How to include all staff across a setting?
  - How to challenge speech and language therapy to prioritise ALN?
- The group felt that in order to improve ALN for all, it is necessary to make it an integral part of curriculum reform.
7.3 Project 3 - ALN cluster co-ordination pilot

Einir Thomas (Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs, Gwynedd)

The project piloted the establishment of a cluster co-ordinator to work with the schools of the Botwnnog Gwynedd Cluster, and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern, Anglesey, to facilitate and support staff in working with learners with ALN.

The aims were to:

- Provide an effective service that works to ensure child-centred organisations.
- Tailor training provision for staff on subjects that are relevant to them in order to become familiar with the new proposed legislation in the field of ALN and inclusion.
- Work with others to align and moderate the ALN provision of Botwnnog cluster schools.
- Develop the use of one page profiles and standardised IDPs that are manageable and operational
- Provide annual and interim reviews that respond to the needs of individuals within ALN and inclusion
- Develop a professional, healthy and active multi-agency relationship that overcomes obstacles in order to contribute to the targets and outcomes of children and young people

7.3.1 Expert group reflections

- The group welcomed evidence that the cluster approach:
  - clearly strengthens the relationship with parents and facilitates provision for children of compulsory school age
  - enhances conflict resolution
  - establishes a point of informed contact
  - facilitates multi-agency collaboration
  - enables greater consistency
- The group also considered that the approach will need to provide greater clarity for headteachers and more collaborative working with governors
- The group cautioned that cluster working needs to be strategically applied, especially as this project would not be replicable without special funding
7.4 Expert group conclusions

- There are really good pockets of practice and we have definitely moved forward, however, preparing the workforce for the implementation of the Act still remains a challenge. It is one thing looking at ALNCo’s but it is an entirely different issue to prepare the entire workforce. The workforce is not just in schools but in our wider partners as well and we need to acknowledge that it is going to remain a challenge.
- The main learning we’ve had from the presentations is to make sure that ALN is seen as an integral part of all the other national reforms, such as the Curriculum reforms, Professional Standards, School Improvement (an integral part of which is ensuring that schools are inclusive and meet the needs of all learners). We still feel that there is a disconnect in prioritisation between Inclusion and Improvement services. We need to work together to address this and ensure that we do it as part and parcel of bigger national reforms.
- We need to concentrate on workforce development, through a broader professional learning offer, not just for ALNCo’s in schools, but to ensure that all teachers are teachers of ALN. We need to ensure that Challenge Advisers are aware of what good ALN teaching actually looks like and work with all our key partners to ensure we do meet the needs of all learners.
- The group strongly believes that developing practice should be done through school-led, self-improving systems. There is superb practice in some schools and we need to actively identify them and to hold this up as pinnacles of excellence to inspire other schools.
- We need schools and outside agencies to work more effectively together to ensure that we get quality teaching and learning in the first place, rather than chasing interventions later.
### Annex 1 – Expert groups next steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert group</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Next steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Years</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Work with the Welsh Government as an advisory group to develop the specifics of the Early Years ALN Lead Officer role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Group closed – following the agreement of the IDP template for the Code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 16</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Post 16 work to be progressed by the FE transformation lead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training expert group</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Work with the Welsh Government as an advisory group to test training materials being developed by Eliesha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer and transition expert group</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>As per the actions log, the work of this group is being considered as part of the Code and regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALNCo expert group</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Group closed – following the development of the ALNCo framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health expert group</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Work with Welsh Government as an advisory group to develop health aspects of the legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC expert group</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Work with Welsh Government as an advisory group to develop LAC aspects of the legislation.</td>
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