

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

8/2019

PUBLICATION DATE:

28/02/2019

Research to establish a baseline of the special educational needs system in Wales: executive summary

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Research to establish a baseline of the SEN system in Wales

Hefin Thomas, Brett Duggan, Dr Alison Glover, Jennifer Lane
(Arad Research)

Dr Carmel Conn, Dr Kathy Evans, Sharon Drew, Amanda
Kelland (University of South Wales)



Thomas, H et al. (2019). *Research to establish a baseline of the SEN system in Wales*, GSR report number 8/2019.

Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/research-establish-baseline-special-educational-needs-system/?lang=en>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Schools Research

Division: Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 0300 025 0377

Email: SchoolsResearch@gov.wales

Glossary

Acronym/key word	Definition
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALN	Additional learning needs
ALP	Additional learning provision
ALNCo	Additional learning needs co-ordinator
AMBDA	Associate Member of the British Dyslexia Association
BESD	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
BPVS	British Picture Vocabulary Scale
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DECLO	Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer
ELSA	Emotional literacy support assistant
EOTAS	Education otherwise than at school
EP	Education Psychologist
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FEI	Further education institution
HLTA	Higher-level teaching assistant
IBP	Individual behaviour plan
IDP	Individual development plan
IEP	Individual education plan
ICP	Individual communication plan
ILS course	Independent living skills course
ISC	Independent specialist college
LA	Local authority
LAC	Looked after children
LHB	Local health board
LDD	Learning difficulties and/or disabilities
LSA	Learning support assistant
OT	Occupational therapy/therapist
PCP	Person-centred practice
PEP	Personal education plan
PRU	Pupil referral unit
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCo	Special educational needs co-ordinator
SEP	Special educational provision
SLT	Speech and language therapy/therapist
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely
SMT	Senior management team
SNAP Cymru	SNAP Cymru is a charity offering information, advice and support to families and practitioners regarding SEN
TA	Teaching assistant
WEST	Wales Essential Skills Test

Executive summary

1. Arad Research and the University of South Wales were commissioned by the Welsh Government to carry out research to establish a baseline of the current special educational needs (SEN) system in Wales prior to the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the Act). This executive summary outlines the study method and presents a summary of research findings.

Background to the study

2. The Act was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 12 December 2017 and received Royal Assent on 24 January 2018. The Act's Explanatory Memorandum (Welsh Government, 2018a) notes that the Act makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). This replaces existing legislation surrounding special educational needs (SEN) and the assessment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in post - 16 education and training. The Act also continues the existence of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales, which provides for children, their parents and young people to appeal against decisions made by the local authority (LA) in relation to their or their child's ALN, but renames it the Education Tribunal for Wales.¹
3. The Act has three overarching objectives and creates:
 - a) a unified legislative framework to support all children of compulsory school age or below with ALN, and young people with ALN in school or further education (FE);
 - b) an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions; and

¹ The explanatory memorandum further notes that 'The new name reflects not only the Tribunal's role in determining appeals in relation to ALN but also the role currently undertaken by the SENTW in determining disability discrimination claims relating to schools, a function that the Tribunal will continue to undertake.' (Welsh Government, 2018a)

c) a fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.

4. Eleven core aims have been established that seek to achieve the Act's three overarching objectives. These are:

- a unified plan - the Act creates a single statutory plan (the individual development plan (IDP)) to replace the existing variety of statutory and non-statutory SEN and LDD plans for learners with ALN in schools and FE;²
- the introduction of the term Additional Learning Needs;³
- a 0 to 25 age range;
- increased participation of children and young people;
- high aspirations and improved outcomes;
- a simpler and less adversarial system;
- increased collaboration;
- a new duty on local health boards to appoint a Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO);
- avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution;
- clear and consistent rights of appeal;
- a mandatory Code;
- a bilingual system.

5. The new system is expected to be implemented between September 2020 and July 2023. For the time being, LAs and those who work with children and young people

² There is not yet a national template for IDPs – this will be included in the ALN Code and subject to approval by the National Assembly for Wales in due course. IDPs will not become statutory until the Act comes into force. A template was developed and piloted by eight LAs between 2009 and 2012 as part of action research commissioned by Welsh Government. During the fieldwork for this study, some organisations referred to the IDP template that was used in this piloting phase (e.g. LAs delivering training relating to IDPs to school practitioners). In addition, other organisations referred to using IDPs but may have been using the term interchangeably with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

³ Some organisations have started using the term ALN, while others continue to use the term SEN. In this report, the term SEN is used to reflect the current system although some references to organisations using the ALN terminology are made where appropriate.

with SEN, must ensure that they continue to comply with the duties placed upon them by relevant legislation, including the Education Act 1996 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000. LA education departments, schools, early years settings and those who help them – including health and social services – must also continue to have regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (2004).⁴

6. The purpose of this study is to establish a baseline of the current SEN system ahead of the implementation of the Act. The findings will be used to inform a future evaluation of the impact of the Act.
7. This research took place during a transitional phase in relation to the SEN system in Wales. It is important to acknowledge that this creates some challenges in terms of establishing a baseline of the SEN system which existed prior to the introduction of recent changes that have been influenced by the ALN transformation programme. For example, the availability of the *Draft ALN Code* (National Assembly for Wales, 2017) as part of the documentation provided by the Welsh Government to Assembly Members to aid their scrutiny of the Bill may have influenced practice in schools, LAs or other organisations.⁵ Furthermore, some LAs, schools and other organisations were involved in action research projects between 2009 and 2012 that sought to develop and trial new systems and approaches to help shape future policy and legislation (e.g. developing and piloting IDPs).⁶ Findings from this action research have been published and were therefore available to organisations who could potentially learn from and adapt their practices, regardless of their involvement in the pilots.⁷ In addition, the Welsh Government has provided grant funding to LAs (in 2015-16 and 2016-17) to promote person-centred practice (PCP) in relation to SEN, including the development and delivery of PCP training courses. This could also be considered to have recently influenced practice across Wales

⁴ See <https://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/legislation-and-statutory-guidance/?lang=en> (Accessed 19th June 2018)

⁵ See <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s59527/Draft%20Additional%20Learning%20Needs%20Code%20February%202017.pdf> (Accessed 12th October 2018)

⁶ The mandatory IDP requirements, which will be set out in the new ALN Code for Wales, have not yet been published. This may vary from the IDP that was developed and piloted as part of a Welsh Government action research study (See Section 1.7 of the main report).

⁷ A series of reports based on the programme of action research to inform evaluation of the ALN Pilot is available here <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/programme-action-research-additional-learning-needs-pilot/?lang=en> (accessed August 17th 2018).

and this should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings (this is discussed in section 5 of the main report).

Aim and objectives of the study

8. The Welsh Government specification for the study defined the project's aim as being: 'to design and conduct a baseline assessment of the current SEN/LDD/ALN system with key LA, health, school and FEI personnel who are responsible for providing and delivering support, practices and processes for SEN/LDD/ALN in our education system in Wales. This should be done via a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods supplemented with appropriately identified monitoring data where possible.' (Welsh Government, 2017).
9. The study objectives were to conduct a national baseline assessment, in the form of a survey, and in-depth case study work in four geographical areas; one LA from each of the four education consortia regions. These are referred to in this report as the SEN baseline survey (the survey) and the LA case studies (case studies). In addition to the survey and case studies, an additional data gathering exercise (data requests) was undertaken to collect data from LAs. Further detail on the survey, case studies and data requests are included in section 2 of the main report. [\[LINK TO MAIN REPORT TO BE INSERTED HERE\]](#)

Method

10. Prior to the commencement of the study, the Welsh Government had developed a logic model for the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Bill (the Bill). This set out the inputs, processes and activities relating to the Bill as well as the anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts. The logic model was provided to the research team and informed decisions on what was in and out of scope for the study as well as the development of research tools for the survey, case studies and data requests. A copy of the logic model is presented in Annex G of the main report.

SEN baseline survey

11. An e-survey was undertaken to gather professionals' views and experiences of the current system for children and young people with SEN and LDD. The survey included questions on the current SEN/LDD system as a whole and on specific aspects of the system, including assessment, planning, transition, avoiding and resolving disagreements and partnership working. The survey questionnaire is included in Annex D of the main report.
12. The survey was aimed at school SENCos/ALNCos (although other school practitioners also provided responses), LA education and social services staff, local health board (LHB) staff, further education institutions (FEIs) and independent specialist colleges (ISCs). Contact details for LA, LHB, FEI and ISC staff were provided by Welsh Government.⁸ School contact details were sourced using the Welsh Government schools contact list and this was supplemented with web searches for schools' email addresses.
13. The survey was conducted over a four-and-a-half-week period between 31 January and 5 March 2018 and was e-mailed directly to 1,904 individuals or institutions (e.g. schools, pupil referral units). Non-respondents were sent up to three emails reminding them to complete the survey during this period. In addition, telephone calls were made to schools where emails were found to be invalid to request their correct email address. Targeted phone calls were also made to secondary schools who had not responded to the survey. Awareness of the survey was also raised through a Welsh Government education newsletter and ALN distribution list.
14. In total, 726 survey responses were deemed to be 'in-scope' for the purposes of the survey analysis.⁹ These included 525 respondents who completed the questionnaire and 201 respondents who provided a partial response. A breakdown of the number

⁸ Contact details for staff in 12 out of the 22 LA education departments and 19 out of the 22 social services departments as well as all FEI principals and staff in all ISCs and LHBs were provided by the Welsh Government. In the other LAs, the research team invited the directors of social services and education to distribute the survey to colleagues in roles relating to the SEN system.

⁹ These were respondents who had answered at least one question beyond the profile questions. Respondents considered to be out of scope were those who clicked 'other' when asked who they worked for (and were excluded from the survey as they did not fall within the scope of the study), respondents who started the survey more than once (their most complete response was included in the analysis) and respondents who did not answer any questions beyond the profile questions (and therefore did not provide sufficient data to be analysed).

of responses by sector is in Table 1 of the main report. More detailed profile data on respondents from schools by sector and medium of education is provided in Annex B.

LA case studies

15. As part of the baseline research, in-depth qualitative research was undertaken in four LAs, one in each of the regional education consortia. These case studies were based on interviews with practitioners working in schools, PRUs, FEIs, LAs and LHBs. The purpose of this phase of the research was to draw together a detailed picture of the existing SEN system in various organisations, geographic areas and contexts. The four case study LAs were selected to include a range of characteristics in terms of the percentage of pupils with SEN, percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM), size, geography, deprivation and the percentage of Welsh speakers. Further detail on sample selection and the characteristics of the four LAs is provided in the main report.
16. Overall, fieldwork was conducted in eight mainstream schools, four special schools and four PRUs. In each LA, visits to one primary, one secondary and one special school as well as one PRU were conducted. Interviews or group discussions were conducted with school senior managers, SENCos, teachers, ALN managers in FEIs and other practitioners.
17. Interviews with 18 LA staff were undertaken – 12 in LA education and 6 social services departments. The roles of LA staff varied by area but included senior officers with responsibility for managing a range of services in their local areas. Further detail on those who contributed to the research is set out in the full report.
18. Interviews with a total of 19 LHB staff were undertaken, made up of between three to seven in each area. Again, interviews were carried out with LHB representatives from across a wide range of service areas, including community paediatrics, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), paediatric speech and language therapy (SLT), nursing, occupational therapy. See the full report for further detail.

LA data requests

19. An additional data gathering exercise was undertaken in the form of data requests to collect information from LAs about numbers of statutory assessments requested and undertaken, time taken up by SEN/LDD processes and numbers of disagreements, appeals and tribunals. A copy of the data request proforma is included in Annex F of the main report.

Findings

20. There was general agreement, particularly among those working within the education sector, that current processes and practices within the SEN system are effective. It was felt that some aspects of the system (e.g. timeliness of processes, availability of Welsh-language assessment tools) need addressing and some variation in quality exists. However, most participants from schools and colleges agreed that assessment and review processes and the delivery of special educational provision (SEP) for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans are effective, and that the situation for learners with a statement is similarly effective.¹⁰ Findings in relation to various aspects of the ALN system are outlined below.

Assessment

21. Most school and college respondents agreed that review processes for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and statements and for learners with FEI-based plans are effective (See Figures 29 and 30 of the main report). The largest proportions of respondents in mainstream and special schools strongly agreed or agreed that this was the case for statutory review processes while the

¹⁰ The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) notes that 'Special educational provision means: (a) for children of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the LEA, other than special schools, in the area (b) for children under two, educational provision of any kind.' It defines 'school action' as 'when a class or subject teacher identify that a pupil has special educational needs they provide interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum offer and strategies. An IEP will usually be devised.' It defines 'school action plus' as when the class or subject teacher and the SENCO are provided with advice or support from outside specialists, so that alternative interventions additional or different strategies to those provided for the pupil through School Action can be put in place. The SENCO usually takes the lead although day-to-day provision continues to be the responsibility of class or subject teacher. A new IEP will usually be devised.'

highest proportions of LA social services and LHB respondents agreed to an extent. For reviews of non-statutory plans, the largest proportion of respondents in mainstream schools and ISCs strongly agreed or agreed that processes were effective, while respondents in FEIs were more likely to agree to an extent this was the case. This was supported in the evidence collected through case study research with school and FEI practitioners.

22. The findings suggest that participants consider the statutory assessment process to be robust and fair, with appropriate people involved. However, practitioners also perceive there to be a conflict between the pressure to conduct assessments and put SEP in place quickly (both for school-based and statutory assessments) and the need to take a graduated response that enables progress to be monitored and decisions to be made based on sufficient evidence. The findings suggest that organisations are facing challenges in meeting parental expectations about how quickly assessment can be undertaken and support be put in place for their child once concerns have been raised. Although parents/carers were not directly involved in the research, participants frequently referred to parents' perceptions that statutory assessment processes take a long time. This underlines the importance of making processes more responsive and timely so that learners and parents/carers do not have to wait as long as well as ensuring effective engagement with learners and parents/carers throughout assessment processes.
23. Findings suggest that the type of evidence provided by schools for statutory assessment varies and that there is a lack of consistency in practice across LAs, with some providing more guidance to schools than others. This suggests there may be a need for LAs to provide more prescriptive guidance or training for schools on evidence gathering to inform decisions about whether learners have ALN under the new system.

SEP

24. Among those who completed the survey most practitioners were of the view that SEP for learners supported through statements is effective (See Figure 13 in the main report). The largest proportion of respondents across special schools (73%),

mainstream schools (50%) and LA education departments (45%) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is effective. In terms of specific aspects of SEP for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and those with FEI-based plans, the largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (71%), FEIs (53%), and mainstream schools (45% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus and 43% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is effective. These findings were mirrored in schools and FEI case study interviews, with interviewees reporting that their processes for delivering SEP through school action/plus and FEI-based plans are effective in terms of targeted support, one-to-one and group work, specialist resource bases and special classes.

25. The findings suggest that participants believe SEP is effective for learners supported through statements and non-statutory plans. Case study interviewees felt that the effectiveness of SEP was evidenced by attendance, attainment scores, exclusion rates, parent satisfaction and learner well-being and confidence. However, while the findings suggest that the quality of SEP for learners supported through school action/plus is considered to be good, practitioners seem to perceive that there is less capacity available within external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) to deliver support for these learners.
26. There were mixed views about the use of specialised groups in mainstream schools. Some interviewees were critical of their use, noting that they reduce access to a broad curriculum and were not always taught at an appropriate level while others believed that this ensured quality in teaching and learning.
27. The research also found mixed views on whether the input of specialist staff (e.g. LHB staff, LA educational psychologists) should be more focused on supporting the direct delivery of interventions or whether specialist input should focus on providing guidance and training to non-specialist staff. There appears to be some tension between a desire for more direct health practitioner involvement (especially among some school practitioners) and a view that LHB staff will have to adopt a more strategic role than is currently the case. The findings also suggest there are mixed

views on the quality assurance processes in health for SEP. These issues may have implications for when the role of the DECLO is introduced through the Act and how the responsibilities of different organisations are made clear under the new system.

28. The findings indicate that plans need to be sufficiently flexible to meet the broad range of needs of many learners and also be responsive to the changing needs of children and young people as they develop. Some case study interviewees considered that 3-4 targets within IEPs are insufficient for learners who have more than one or two areas of need. However, while the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) notes that IEPs 'should be crisply written and may focus on three or four individual targets', it does not place a limit on the number of targets that can be included.

Review

29. The research found that practitioners were broadly supportive of current statutory review processes. Survey findings showed that the largest proportion of respondents from special schools (50%) and mainstream schools (44%) strongly agreed or agreed, and the second largest proportion agreed to an extent (43% and 30% respectively) that current statutory review arrangements are effective. Although the highest proportion of respondents from LA social services departments (50%) and LHBs (41%) agreed to an extent, some (16% and 20% respectively) disagreed to an extent that current statutory review arrangements are effective.
30. Case study findings suggested that interviewees consider review processes to be generally effective. However, the findings indicate that practitioners consider the review of statements to be repetitious and many feel this may be an area where the Act can positively influence practice. Findings also suggest that objectives set out in learners' plans were frequently too broad in scope and were not updated often enough to reflect changes in learners' needs. Practitioners in LHBs felt they were not always informed early enough about review processes and that they did not always have capacity to participate in review meetings. There may be a need to

consider what implications this may have for the development of multi-agency partnership arrangements under the new system.

Involvement of learners and parents/carers

31. Most survey respondents from schools, LAs, FEIs and ISCs agreed that children and young people are supported to understand and participate fully in the decisions that affect them as well as having opportunities to raise concerns and to have their questions answered. However, fewer LHB respondents agreed that children and young people were effectively involved; fewer than half agreed that children and young people are supported to participate fully in the decisions that affect them and are offered opportunities to raise concerns and have their questions answered.
32. Most survey respondents across all sectors agreed that parents and carers are supported to understand the decisions that affect their children, to participate fully in the decisions that affect their children, offered opportunities to raise concerns and have their questions answered.
33. Findings suggest practitioners consider that planning processes have become more person-centred in recent years although many highlighted that this could increase the time taken up by these processes (e.g. in facilitating more structured conversations with parents/carers). However, findings also suggest that while schools seek the involvement of parents in reviews of plans for learners supported through school action/plus, parental engagement remains fairly limited for those with non-statutory plans.
34. Findings suggest that practitioners consider that learners value being involved in planning and review processes and that this improves learner 'investment' in their education. However, there may be a need for educational settings to explore ways of supporting learners and their families to engage in discussions about their learning.

Working with others

35. Survey responses showed that most respondents within all sectors agreed that effective working relationships have been developed with schools, LA education departments and parents/carers. Respondents were more likely to agree to an extent that effective working relationships had been developed with FEIs, health and LA social services departments and Careers Wales. Case study responses reinforce the survey findings and interviewees were also more likely to consider that working relationships were effective within their own sector than with other sectors.
36. The findings indicate there are opportunities to improve communication and information sharing between health practitioners and other sectors, as well as within health services. For example, some LHB staff (e.g. SLTs) reported they do not always receive invitations – either from schools or paediatricians – to planning and review meetings as well as feedback and reports. The findings also suggest that some LHB staff feel they are not notified early enough about issues. There may be a need to consider what implications this may have for the development of multi-agency partnership arrangements under the new system.

Transition

37. Most respondents considered transition processes to be effective for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and statements. Higher proportions of respondents from schools than respondents from FEIs, LAs, LHBs agreed transition processes were effective. Respondents in each sector were more likely to agree there are effective transition processes in place within their setting/service compared to processes for transition into and out of their service/setting. Case study findings suggest transitions from primary to secondary schools are generally effective, although most interviewees in schools and LAs noted the effectiveness of transitions varies according to individual schools and SENCOs. The effectiveness of transition from early years settings to schools varied by case study area, with some areas reporting they have established better links than others between early years providers, health visitors and schools. Transitions to FE were reported to be fairly good although FEI interviewees highlighted challenges in ensuring they became

aware of learners' SEN/LDD at an early stage and noted there are variations in practices across LAs in terms of preparing for transition (e.g. how much information about learners is shared with them).

38. Views on the effectiveness of transition from early years providers to schools varied considerably across the case study areas. This may suggest that effective local arrangements for transition from the childcare, pre-school and nursery provision to schools are not consistently in place across Wales.
39. Some interviewees in FEIs noted that they were only notified of learner needs in advance of enrolment if they had a statement, and that they sometimes only found out about the needs of learners who had been supported through school action or school action plus if they disclosed these needs during enrolment (or afterwards if learners do not disclose needs). Some FEIs indicated that information about learners' SEN was passed to them systematically by some LAs but not others. This suggests that there are opportunities for promoting more consistent practices in information sharing between LAs and FEIs. Findings also suggest that FEIs and schools consider the role of Careers Wales to be important in supporting post-16 transition.

Challenges

40. Against this backdrop of a perception by practitioners of the overall effectiveness of the SEN system in Wales, a number of areas were consistently reported as areas of challenge. One notable area of challenge related to the specified time-scale between identification of need for statutory assessment and the assessment process being completed, which was seen as too long for many learners and was not currently meeting parental expectations. Respondents consistently pointed out that access to many health services is currently severely limited in most areas and the time taken for referrals can be overlong. The quality of SEP practice was thought by some to be a further area of challenge, with good practice reported in some settings, services and regions, but criticism of practices, systems and services also evident. Statements were seen as too broad and unclear in their

objectives, not updated appropriately in many cases and insufficiently responsive to a learner's changing needs.

41. It is notable that FEIs/ISCs and LHBs also reported challenges in their interactions with LAs and schools: fewer than half of respondents from FEIs/ISCs and LHBs agreed that effective working relationships are in place, and colleges noted difficulties in ensuring they become aware of learners' SEN/LDD at an early enough stage.
42. It is apparent the new Act seeks to address many of these areas of challenge, for example through the new arrangement of IDPs that introduces one system for all learners with ALN and requires plans to be maintained up to the age of 25 years, where the young person remains in further education. Further, the Act aims to create a more timely and responsive system where learners' needs are identified earlier, and provision put in place more swiftly. However, the research highlights the fact that there is not complete agreement about the effectiveness of the SEN system as it currently exists and that there are inconsistencies in practice.

Welsh language

43. Findings from the research suggest that most schools and LA education departments agree that assessment arrangements are available through the medium of Welsh for learners supported through school action/plus and those with statements. Perhaps unsurprisingly, respondents from Welsh-medium schools were notably more likely than those from English-medium schools to agree that assessment processes are available through the medium of Welsh where requested. However, interviews with practitioners working in Welsh-medium settings showed that they felt there to be a lack of contemporary, age-appropriate Welsh-language SEN screening and assessment resources suggesting this is an area where improvement is required. Furthermore, significant proportions of survey respondents from LHBs and LA social services departments selected 'don't know' or 'neither agree nor disagree' when answering questions in relation to Welsh-medium assessment, possibly reflecting limited involvement or awareness of the issue.

44. In terms of general views on assessment processes, respondents from Welsh-medium schools were notably more likely to agree that assessment processes for learners supported through early years action/plus are effective. This may be an area which merits follow-up research to consider the reasons for this.
45. The findings show that survey respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that SEP is available through the medium of Welsh for learners with statements and those supported through school action/plus. Respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than English-medium mainstream schools to agree that Welsh medium SEP is available where requested for learners with statements and those supported through school action/plus and early years action/plus. This is likely to reflect their greater levels of familiarity with the Welsh-medium SEP and support that is available generally (including for SEN). However, a notable proportion of respondents in special schools disagreed that Welsh-medium SEP is available for learners with statements. This may be linked to the case study findings, which indicated that that support was not always available through the medium of Welsh, mainly due to capacity issues in certain roles, particularly specialist staff. This suggests that further consideration of the Welsh language skills of practitioners working in the SEN system is needed, with potential implications for recruitment and training. As with assessment, notable proportions of respondents selected 'don't know' in response to questions on Welsh-medium SEP, indicating their limited involvement in this aspect of the system. This may also reflect a lack of knowledge among practitioners about the Welsh language skills that exist in their workforce and the support that can be provided in Welsh if it is requested.
46. In terms of general views on SEP, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely to agree that that SEP is delivered in the most appropriate setting. However, respondents from English-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely to agree that: SEP is delivered in a timely way; that SEP is delivered in the most appropriate setting; that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP; and that SEP enables learners supported through school action/plus to achieve their full potential. These differences, perceived reasons for them, and potential actions may merit further investigation in any follow-up research.

47. Survey respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that review processes were available through the medium of Welsh for learners supported through school action/plus or those with statements. However, similarly to questions on assessment and SEP, a high proportion of respondents in some sectors selected 'don't know' or 'neither agree nor disagree'. Similarly to assessment and SEP, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than those from English-medium schools to agree that Welsh-medium reviews are available where requested. Case study findings suggested that reviews were conducted through the medium of Welsh where this was requested, although interviewees also noted that the ability to provide input in Welsh depended on the Welsh language abilities of staff.
48. In terms of general views on review processes, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than those from English-medium schools to agree that: review processes for learners supported through school action/plus are effective; review processes use PCP effectively for learners supported through school action/plus and early years action/plus. In terms of working with others, Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than English-medium schools to agree that there is clarity of responsibilities within the current system for learners supported through early years action/plus. They were also notably more likely to agree that they receive the information they need for learners supported through early years action/plus. These differences may merit further investigation in any follow-up research.
49. Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than English-medium schools to agree that: young people are supported to understand decisions and participate in decisions that affect them; and that young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns. These differences may merit further investigation in any follow-up research with learners.
50. Practitioners in Welsh-medium settings consistently mentioned a lack of contemporary, age-appropriate Welsh-language assessment tools. This suggests a need for Welsh Government to consider how this need could be met in future (e.g.

through commissioning the development of screening and assessment resources in the medium of Welsh).

51. The findings suggest there is a lack of capacity to deliver provision (SEP) through the medium of Welsh in some areas. The Act will require LAs to keep provision (ALP) under review, including the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh. The Act also places a duty on Welsh Ministers to arrange reviews of the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh every five years and for reports on the outcome of the reviews to be produced and published.
52. The Welsh Government has recently published information on workforce skills (Welsh Government, 2018b)¹¹. The findings from this research suggest there may be a need to consider the implications for training and recruitment in the sector. LAs also suggested there was a low level of demand for Welsh-medium SEP and support in some areas. LAs suggested they assessed the demand for Welsh-medium SEP, but Welsh Government may wish to consider how systematically this is done as part of reviewing LAs' Welsh in education strategic plans as well as specifically in relation to the above duties in the Act.

General implications for the implementation of the Act

53. Findings show that schools and other organisations are preparing for implementing changes related to the Act. Many participants described the forthcoming changes as cultural, including promoting the importance of gaining different perspectives on learning (e.g. via PCP). However, the findings also suggest that schools consider some of these changes to be potentially onerous and that there are concerns among practitioners about the time implications of some aspects of the reforms.
54. The findings suggest that some schools are already using their own versions of IDPs even though there is not yet a national template and the statutory ALN system has not yet come into force. While there is evidence that some have started using IDP templates that have been piloted by LAs alongside current arrangements for

¹¹ Welsh Government recently published information on workforce skills in *Local authority special educational needs specialist services workforce data: an analysis* (Welsh Government, 2018b). See: <https://beta.gov.wales/local-authority-special-educational-needs-specialist-services-workforce-data> (Accessed 3rd October 2018)

SEN, some schools appear to be using the terminology IDP and IEP interchangeably and may not have a clear understanding of the forthcoming changes to plans. This may have implications for how the Welsh Government communicates the development and introduction of statutory IDPs to the education sector.

55. The explanatory memorandum (Welsh Government, 2018a) notes that 'for most children with ALN who are looked after, the Act will require their IDP to be incorporated into the personal education plans (PEPs) made for these learners as part of their care and support plans (CSP).' Findings from the case studies showed that some school interviewees were unclear whether review processes for PEPs and IDPs would remain separate or be merged in future. This may suggest that further clarity is required through the ALN Code and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children) (Welsh Government, 2018c) in terms of ensuring organisations understand changes to processes.¹²
56. Findings suggest that a perceived lack of capacity in LHBs is considered to limit the extent to which health professionals are able to be involved in processes relating to SEN. This may have implications for how the role of health professionals in the new system is communicated to LHBs and other partners.
57. Findings suggest that some parents/carers and practitioners incorrectly believe that obtaining a statement of SEN ahead of the implementation of the Act will enable learners to 'secure' support they would otherwise not be able to obtain. This suggests that Welsh Government may wish to consider disseminating messages that clarify this aspect of the reforms.
58. This research has focused on gathering the views of practitioners on various aspects of the SEN system, with a view to conducting similar follow-up research in future as part of an assessment of the proposed reforms. Participants welcomed the opportunity to take part in the research and emphasised the importance of also

¹² Welsh Government, 2018c. Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children). Version 2 – April 2018. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180328pt6en.pdf> (Accessed 8th November 2018)

seeking the views of learners and parents/carers as service users in order to obtain a clearer picture of the impact of the Act in due course.