

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/KW/5702/19

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales

13 December 2019

Dear Lynne,

During your Committee's scrutiny of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill, a commitment was made to provide regular updates on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation programme. This letter is the eighth of these updates.

1. Legislation and statutory guidance

On 17 September, I announced changes to the intended timescale for implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 ('the Act'). The ALN Code and regulations will now be laid for Assembly approval in 2020 and implementation of the new ALN system will commence on a phased basis from September 2021, with the statutory roles created under the Act commencing in January 2021.

I'm extremely grateful to those who responded to the consultation. The feedback received from stakeholders, learners and families will shape policy decisions on a range of difficult topics. Given the scale and complexity of the work required to make amendments to the Code and draft regulations in the light of the feedback we will now be laying the Code and regulations for Assembly approval in 2020. We will also be considering how the Code might be improved to ensure it is as clear as possible, for those with functions under the Act to fully understand their statutory obligations and how to operate the new system.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Furthermore, rolling out the new system from September 2021 will ensure that there is sufficient time for services to prepare before the new system comes into force, which will hopefully lead to a smoother and more successful implementation. Equally, commencing the statutory roles in January 2021 will allow the people appointed to the roles additional time to properly prepare themselves and their respective organisations to take on their duties from 1 September 2021.

2. Implementation / transition support

The ALN Transformation Leads submitted regional and further education implementation plans and communications plans for 2019-20 earlier this year. The plans set out how each region is preparing for implementation of the new system. My officials met with the Transformation Leads individually over the summer to discuss their plans in detail.

We are continuing to meet with the ALN transformation leadership group on a bi-monthly basis. Prior to the meetings the Transformation Leads prepare highlight reports which detail progress made against objectives set out in the respective implementation plans. We are content that good progress is being made across the regions in delivering the objectives.

In line with the decision to extend the timeframe for implementation of the Act, a decision has now been made to also extend the timeframe for the ALN Transformation Leads' posts by one year until March 2022.

3. Workforce development

Working with our ALN Transformation Leads, we are delivering an extensive package of training, core skills development and ongoing professional development for all practitioners. Part of this work includes the development of a specific professional learning offer for Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCos) to provide them with the opportunity to develop or enhance skills that will be necessary for them to effectively carry out the role. A project manager, who started work on the programme in November, will manage the development and implementation of this learning offer.

Students in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programmes will play a critical role in delivering the new ALN system and the Health and well-being Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). The accreditation criteria for ITE programmes in Wales sets out a requirement for partnership providers to develop a student teacher's knowledge and understanding of the health and well-being of pupils and ALN. Whilst we do not prescribe the specific content and resources to be used, we are working with universities to support their efforts to make ALN and health and well-being learning resources and opportunities available to enhance the main programmes of study in ITE and beyond. As such we are overseeing a project to develop resources in a number of areas including; neurodevelopment and pedagogy, child development, emotional and mental wellbeing, ALN and adverse childhood experiences. It is intended that the resources will be available for use from September 2020.

4. Awareness raising

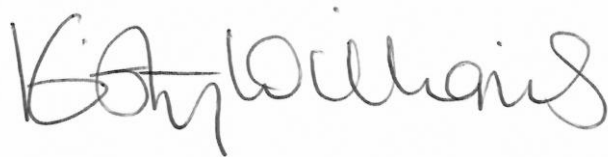
Since the 17 September announcement referenced in section 1 of this letter, the Welsh Government have been updating their online material to reflect the changes to the implementation timeline. An updated FAQ document has been published on the Welsh Government website, and new publications to target different stakeholders are in the process of being developed. Work is ongoing with Eliesha Cymru who are

helping the Welsh Government to develop ALN implementation training and awareness raising materials. An approach has been agreed for ensuring training is accessible and consistent for all stakeholders and delivery partners.

In addition, we will shortly be consulting on elements of the code and regulations that we were not able to consult on previously. These relate to parents of children and young people lacking capacity and the list of Independent Special Post-16 Institutions (ISPI). They are crucial elements of the overall code and regulations and we will target communications to alert stakeholders in order that they are able to engage and respond appropriately.

We anticipate that the ISPI regulations will affect a discreet group of stakeholders and we hope to launch this consultation early in the new year. The regulations relating to parents of children and young people lacking capacity and corresponding Code chapter will have a much wider anticipated audience, therefore to ensure equity of access we are also preparing easy read and young person friendly versions of this consultation and this we hope to launch in February 2020.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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