# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs system** |
| **DATE** | **17 September 2019** |
| **BY** | **Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education** |

This statement is to update Members on the Government’s response to the consultation on the draft Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code and proposed related regulations. In June, I published three initial reports summarising external responses to that consultation, and I am grateful to all those who took time to respond.

Ahead of setting out an updated implementation guide that will fully take into account those responses and ongoing feedback I can confirm that:

* The statutory roles created by the ALN Act are to commence in January 2021 but the new ALN system will commence, on a phased basis, from September 2021. This will provide time for further dedicated training and development.
* I expect, in line with their existing statutory obligations, that local authorities, health boards and schools ensure that they are meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs. I have today written to local authorities to reemphasise this point.
* I will lay the Code and regulations for National Assembly approval in 2020. This additional time provides for further consideration of potential improvements that can be made to the Code in light of the extensive feedback received from stakeholders, learners and families.

I am committed to ensuring that the Code is as clear as possible so that those with functions under the Act fully understand their statutory obligations and are able to operate the new system effectively. In addition, we will be considering some complex policy issues, to ensure that the new ALN system is fair, clear and manageable for the practitioners implementing it.

Furthermore, I have asked my officials to work with services to ensure they understand that they must continue to deliver their existing statutory functions.

In introducing new duties and expectations for schools, further education institutions and local authorities there is always a need to take account of the academic year timetable and provide the necessary lead-in time. This is particularly true when we are supporting our most vulnerable learners. There is insufficient time to both issue the Code and regulations in 2020 and for all schools, further education institutions and local authorities to prepare properly to meet their operational requirements by the original date planned for implementation to start.

I am always ambitious in my expectations and goals for young people, teachers and our education system as a whole. However, as with our curriculum reform timetable, I will always take the time to reflect on feedback and conversations with teachers, parents, educators and unions.

Whilst it would be possible to commence the new system earlier than September 2021, going live partway through an academic year would cause additional pressures for these bodies. Rolling out the new system from September 2021 does not mean time to stand still, it will ensure services are fully prepared for the coming into force of the new system, which in turn will lead to a smoother and more successful implementation.

Commencing the statutory roles earlier in January 2021 will also support a smoother and more successful implementation.

Specifically we intend to commence the provisions in the Act requiring the appointment of: an additional learning needs co-ordinator for every mainstream maintained school, pupil referral unit and further education institution; a designated education clinical lead officer for every health board; and an early years additional learning needs lead officer for every local authority.

This will allow those persons appointed additional time to prepare properly to take on the duties of their roles from 1 September 2021 and enable them to prepare their respective organisations to take on their statutory functions from that same date.

In the light of these changes, an updated version of the implementation guide will be issued in due course.

I believe it is essential that we take the time to listen and respond to views expressed during the consultation, so that the Code and regulations are fully fit for purpose.

As well as working with key stakeholders as we refine the Code and regulations, we will be taking a number of other steps ahead of implementation of the new ALN system.

I will be launching a consultation on some other draft regulations under the ALN Act, relating to independent specialist post-16 institutions.

We will also continue working with our ALN Transformation Leads to develop and implement an extensive package of training, including a specific professional learning offer for additional learning needs co-ordinators.