School Funding for Additional Learning Needs

Information for Schools

Cardiff Council is changing the way we fund our schools to support children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This leaflet has been produced to explain the changes.



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BACKGROUND

The ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) (Wales) Act (2018) and ALN Code 2021 came into force in September 2021.

The new legislation has created the opportunity for Cardiff to reconsider how best to ensure resources are available to schools so they can meet the needs of all children through their universal, targeted and additional learning provision.

WHY CHANGE THE APPROACH TO ALN FUNDING?

A single "ALN Support" budget will enable:

- **School based decision making**

  Schools will be able to make decisions regarding resources to secure and deliver additional learning provision to ensure that the identified additional learning needs are met in mainstream provision as quickly as possible. This may include universal and targeted intervention on an individual, paired or small group work basis, which will give learners the opportunity to learn with each other.

- **Greater stability and Workforce Development**

  Under the old system of funding, schools often had to rely on staff employed through short term or agency contracts, because the funding could change significantly from year to year. The funding could change dramatically for schools at short notice with children joining and leaving the school. Future funding will be fully delegated to the school through a formula, not dependent on applications for individual learners, so the ALN Support budget will be more stable and predictable. This means schools will have more opportunity to employ staff on a more permanent basis and to invest in the professional development of their staff. This will build capacity to meet the additional learning needs of the school community.

- **Greater flexibility and reliability of funding**

  Schools will be empowered to make their own decisions to provide the necessary additional learning provision in a more creative and flexible approach to address needs early and prevent escalation of difficulties.

- **Reduced delay and bureaucracy associated with panel decisions**

  Schools will no longer need to make lengthy applications for financial resources from the LA: the funding will already be in their budget to use in a timely way rather than a delay in support.

- **Schools will be better able to plan for the needs of all children with ALN**

  And adopt a whole school approach to universal, targeted, and additional learning provision to meet all needs.

WHAT WILL CHANGE?

Since 2012, to support the SEN (Special Educational Needs) approach, the council has provided every school with a budget for learners at 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus', and a 'Complex Needs Enhancement' budget for named learners with a statement of SEN. From April 2023 this will change.

The funding for School Action, Action Plus and Complex Needs Enhancement will be replaced by a single 'ALN Support' budget. This will enable schools to plan and implement additional learning provision (ALP) for learners with ALN, without the need to make individual funding applications to the council, or to wait on the outcome of panel decisions.

HOW WILL THE ALN SUPPORT BUDGET BE CALCULATED FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS?

For this financial year (2023 - 24), each individual school budget will be 'frozen', based on the level of funding that was in place at the end of January 2023. This will ensure that the ALN budgets will reflect the current level of need, enabling schools to sustain a consistent level of provision and support in the coming year.

Over the next few months, the Council will be working closely with schools to develop a fair funding formula, that will be applied from April 2024. The formula will ensure that future funding reflects the size of the school, while taking account of other factors such as: patterns of pupil movement between schools, and in and out of Cardiff, and socio-economic factors that can affect the level of ALN in a school.

The "ALN Support" budgets will include a weighting for physical disability and vision/ hearing impairment needs, as these are low incidence/ high support needs that would be difficult to predict through a formula.

IS THE LEVEL OF ALN FUNDING BEING REDUCED?

No. The ALN budget delegated to schools in 2023 - 24 is higher than the amount distributed to schools in on 2022 - 23. The proportion of the budget allocated to ALN will be kept under review and agreed with schools each year through the Schools Budget Forum.

Working together with schools, Cardiff Local Authority will:

- Support schools to plan, monitor and review additional learning provision. This will be done through raising awareness training and the sharing of good practice between schools.
- Develop working groups to look at communication, whole school provision planning and early years transition.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How are the LA communicating changes to parents?

An Information leaflet for parents is being prepared and will be shared via schools after the easter break. Schools remain responsible for ensuring that ALP meets a child's needs and delivers positive outcomes for the learner. Schools are also responsible for working with parents to explain any changes they wish to make.

Where a school has identified that the child needs support throughout the day, there continues to be a responsibility to provide this. This includes children admitted to the school after the changed approach to funding.

2. Will there be any central funding retained for in year movement? Many schools will receive many children within the school year. Many headteachers are concerned that funding will not transfer with children when they move. How will managed moves work? Many feel they would not agree to managed moves of complex children without additional funding for support.

A budget has not been retained for in-year movement.

In 2023 - 24, the "ALN Support" budget is not linked to individual learners and will not 'follow the child'.

Money will not be added to the budget when children are admitted, nor removed when children leave. Schools will need to adjust their provision map to support newly admitted pupils, including those agreed via managed moves.

3. If there is no central pot, has this decision been stress tested against fairness and equity for all and against ALNET? This has the potential of becoming a postcode lottery for children with ALN, based on what individual schools can afford to provide not what is necessarily appropriate for the child.

The changes made in the 23 - 24 budget provide an opportunity to monitor the impact of changes and continue our conversations with schools prior to introducing a formula in 24 - 25.

Schools will need to make decisions about support based on the child's needs. Where there are budget difficulties, schools should bear in mind that children have a statutory right to the ALP required to meet their needs. Under the ALN Code, this is not limited to children who have/ used to have a statement, or a 'funded' IDP, but to every child with an IDP. In making efficiencies to how children are supported, it will be important to ensure that children have the support they need to make progress in their learning and wellbeing, and to be safe.

4. Is the LA planning to provide guidance or models for ways of using money? They seem less keen on schools setting up classes but are there other examples that could be shared.

We are developing provision mapping tools and we will facilitate school to school sharing of good practice. The ALN clusters and forums will focus on this as a priority from next term.

5. What, if any, are the 'exceptions' and how will these be managed (nursery, HI, VI, complex medical). What panels and processes will approve these?

The "ALN Support" budgets for 23 - 24 include a weighting for physical disability and vision/ hearing impairment needs, as these are low incidence/ high support needs that could not be predicted through a formula. We anticipate that an SI/ disability weighting will continue as part of a future formula.

The weighting is based on pupils with very high support needs. The NATSIP (nationally agreed criteria for HI and VI) have always been used to identify high level HI and VI needs. The weighting also covers children with a manual handling plan (eligibility criteria 'A'). There will be no need for a referral or panel process for these learners: they are already known to relevant services, usually from early years, or through specialist teacher referrals in the case of new arrivals/ emergent needs.

For transparency, we will share the detail of the criteria and how they are applied, at the ALNCo Forums. We recognise that every child has rights under the ALN Code, and under disability legislation. The purpose of the ALN support budget is to enable schools to support all children with IDPs or statements.

6. We need timely and swift EY Specialist Provision panel decisions as these decisions directly affect the provision for reception. Has this been factored in under the 'freeze of CNE' or will the LA be providing additional monies to school for these pupils?

We clarified in January that we would factor April admissions to nursery and add these to the 'frozen' budgets.

We know this will be an important area to work on with our schools. The Early Years ALN Lead Officer and their team will be working closely with schools throughout the coming year to further refine planning processes, and to understand the pressures on schools.

7. How does the role of IDP writing change?

The responsibility to write IDPs does not change. Schools will need to determine ALP based on the intended outcomes, and to bear in mind the responsibilities set out in the Code.

8. The freeze decision risks the potential of creating a situation where IDPs, which are legally enforceable, being written to fit what the school can offer. Which misses the point of Person-Centred practice. How will you stop this happening?

Schools should put in place the provision that is needed as this is a statutory responsibility. This applies to current statements and IDPs, and to future IDPs. Schools will need to take account of professional assessments and advice in determining the intended outcomes and ALP and how this will be resourced. Some children will require support throughout the day, whether individually or in small groups.

The ALN Code includes mechanisms to protect the rights of children and young people. Where CYP are not satisfied with a school decision on ALN or ALP they (or their parents) can ask the LA to reconsider. The LA will make sure the reconsideration process enables us to monitor what is happening in individual schools, and to work with families and schools to reach agreement about ALN/ ALP.

9. If we are not making referrals for CNE, what impact will this have on the LA in terms of monitoring numbers of children across the city and what the provision is for them?

The ALN Code and technical guidance requires LAs to establish an effective Information Management System to ensure we have oversight of every child with ALN and their IDP.

10. Where are the LA at with regard to establishing the actual funding formula going forward beyond this financial year?

A task and finish group has been established and will meet throughout the Summer term 2023, to develop an ALN formula. All schools will be consulted during the Autumn 2023 term.

11. What is being done to plan for issues around recruitment and retention of ALNCOs? What training is planned? What is the current training offer for new ALNCOs as this used to be very good?

Training for new ALNCOs continues. This is provided by Inclusion Officers. ALNCO forums continue and following discussion with ALNCos, some of these will be held in person next year, while others will continue to be held on TEAMS.

12. What is the relationship between the LA and WG with regard to funding? Is the LA campaigning for more money? Is any ALN ear marked by WG?

WG does not earmark ALN money in the Revenue Support Grant. It is the council's responsibility to resource schools to meet ALN. The council takes every opportunity to engage with the government regarding school budgets.

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