

## CONDUCTING AN EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Strategic Review of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion

#### 1) ASSESSMENT AUTHOR(S)

Iwan Trefor Jones  
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#### 2) PARTNERS

Note any others who need to be included as part of the assessment process: this can include frontline staff, partner organisations, specialists in the field, etc.

School headteachers and the central workforce  
Parents  
Children and young people  
The Governors  
Social Services  
Health Service  
SEN Joint Committee

#### 3) ASSESSMENT START DATE

Engagement at the beginning of the Review in 2012, with a particular emphasis on equality results for users.

#### 4) ASSESSMENT END DATE

19 January 2016 (report to go before the Cabinet)

#### 5) THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY / SERVICE / FUNCTION

Note why the policy is needed and what the Authority hopes to achieve through it.

The aim of the review is:

“To ensure that children and young people (aged between 0 and 25 years old) with additional learning needs take advantage of opportunities and gain experiences that have been effectively planned for them, in order to enable them to make progress in line with their ability.”

This Review is conducted in the context of significant change in the field, including:

- Legislative matters
- Focusing entirely on early and preventative intervention
- Building the new Meirion-Dwyfor Special School
- The financial context

The outcomes that we are attempting to achieve via the Review include:

- Provision that puts far more emphasis on the early years, while trying to identify conditions very early on in children’s lives so that this can have an impact on their education and their lives in general;
- Robust collaborative multi-agency arrangements that will lead to sharing knowledge, and ensuring effective joint planning for the education and development of children and young people who require additional support;
- A system that intervenes early on as the child’s needs come to light, responding promptly

and implementing additional support immediately – no matter what the age of the child;

- Offer a service that ensures educational experiences of high quality, and that children and young people who receive the additional support make progress at a suitable rate, and contribute to promoting their independence.
- Introduce – a flexible process that is planned around the individual (PCP)
- Establish one integrated team to serve and support schools to provide support for children and young people with additional learning needs. This will make sure that expertise is distributed more consistently across the county.
- Improve communication in general, be it with children, parents, schools or other agencies.

## 6) ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

What engagement and consultation was conducted on the policy / service / function and what was the result?

From the beginning, the Review has focused on the needs of the children and young people who receive support at present and in the future.

- Conversations and discussion sessions were held with users and service providers/commissioners during the process:
- School visits – a sample of 17 schools were visited to discuss the current situation in the context of their ALN provision
- Engagement meetings – Collective heads, teachers and assistants
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) Forums – Co-ordinators of every school invited to certain meetings
- Skills Audit – online questionnaire to ascertain more information about the assistants' work situation
- Derwen Management Board
- Changing Culture Group – a range of primary and secondary school headteachers met with us regularly in 2014
- Parents, children and young people – have collaborated with SNAP (Advisory and support provision for parents of children/ young people with SEN) and engaged on multiple levels
- SNAP has collaborated with us by conducting a consultation to obtain opinion regarding the present procedure together with the original options that were offered. Face-to-face interviews were held with some of the families along with those that were receiving SNAP services as well as a series of focus groups with service users and providers
- The SNAP Children's Officer held interviews with a number of children who were on the ALN register of specific schools. In addition, a consultation was held with two groups of Secondary School pupils in September 2014, and again in November 2015.
- During the summer of 2014 an online questionnaire was offered to the parents of all ALN children.
- A meeting was held with a specific officer from Welsh Government – to discuss the White Paper - new legislative proposals for additional learning needs issued on 22 May 2014.
- Health Service, Anglesey Council, SEN Joint Committee– a series of high-level meetings has happened since September 2014.
- In November 2014 the Education Cabinet Member agreed to consult on the Council's ALN draft Strategy (January – February 2015). The document was shared with a wide range of stakeholders. A specific document was created for parents and information fairs were arranged across the county in late February 2015.

From the outset, there was unanimous support for the case for change. Through the engagement

our main objectives were reinforced time after time and areas that had not been given enough attention were highlighted. These areas included: Lack of communication, lack of consistency, no continuity from nursery to primary school, and not enough support for maintaining behaviour at secondary school. As a result, we have specifically strengthened and synchronised provision models, strengthened the emphasis on transitional periods, and prioritised the need to pay particular attention to behaviour support provision.

### **September – November 2015 Discussions**

During September – November 2015 discussions were held on the proposals to implement the ALN Strategy with over 380 stakeholders (in 22 sessions). The stakeholders included:

- Parents
- 2 specific groups of young people who are on the ALN register
- SENCO's - School's ALN Co-ordinators
- Assistants
- Governors
- Local Members
- Derwen
- The Internal Workforce (e.g. specialist teachers, and the SEN Joint Committee's workforce)
- Agencies (e.g. SNAP, Referral Scheme, Careers Wales)

The sessions were held in order to raise awareness and obtain opinion on the possible impact of implementing the strategy's principles. The sessions were divided into two sections, with the first section detailing the proposal in terms of the structure of the new service/provision, and the second section explaining a possible change to the way in which the service will be accessed. There was an opportunity for everyone to discuss and share their ideas during the sessions or by completing a feedback questionnaire that was available on paper or on the Council's website.

On the whole, positive feedback was received, with the majority supporting the case for change as well as the central integrated team model that was presented. Though the numbers attending the session were very positive (around 380 people across 22 sessions), the number of parents was disappointingly low. In response to that, it was agreed that there was a need to develop a Communication Strategy in order to look at different methods of reaching and communicating with the most vulnerable families on similar occasions in future. In addition, it is intended to release a 'Q & A' flyer to parents, summarising that discussions and responding to the main questions/concerns raised during the sessions.

The need to look at early years provision, post -16 provision and Health within the context of the Review was highlighted. The principle of establishing specific sub-groups to undertake that task was agreed upon.

### **7) AVAILABLE EVIDENCE**

The evidence can be based on local or national data, on monitoring, consultation, staff comments, etc.

The foreword by the Minister, Huw Lewis AM in the White Paper presents the legislative proposals for ALN summarising the case for change, and the evidence that we received:

"Today's system for supporting children with SEN is based on a model introduced more than 30 years ago that is no longer fit for purpose. Enquiries and reviews of SEN provision in Wales by

Estyn, the Wales Audit Office and the National Assembly's former Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee have identified that the current system is complex, bewildering and adversarial.

The evidence points to an assessment process which is inefficient, bureaucratic and costly, as well as insufficiently child-centred or user-friendly. Needs are sometimes identified late and interventions are not planned or implemented in a timely or effective way. Families tell us that they have to battle at each stage of the system to get the right support for their child, and they don't know where to turn to for advice and information."

One needs to be aware that we are dealing with some of the most vulnerable children in our schools and often the parents' situation is also vulnerable on multiple levels.

We have enough evidence regarding inconsistencies within the present provision, primarily in terms of:

- Quality Assurance
- Geographical Inconsistency
- Procedures for each disorder
- The provision packs offered to pupils

## **8) EVIDENCE GAPS**

Note any evidence gaps and explain how these can be filled.

No evidence gaps have been identified at present.

## 9) RELEVANCE AND IMPACT

This should outline what the relevance of the policy/ service/ function is to the general equality duties and to each of the equality groups (protected characteristics). It should be noted clearly what the actual or likely impact will be. Perhaps there will not be relevance or impact for every one of these duties nor the characteristics, but if relevance and/or impact is found in any one or more categories, then it will be required to move ahead with the Assessment.

### 9a)

<b>The Equality Act's General Duties</b>	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>The actual or likely impact</b>
<b>Getting rid of illegal discrimination, harassment and victimisation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	We predict a very positive impact leading to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring consistency in terms of the location and standard of the service across the county</li> <li>• A simpler system, quicker to identify needs and implement interventions</li> <li>• Improving communication and sharing information with parents to ensure better understanding of the provision</li> </ul>
<b>Promoting equal opportunities</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that sufficient information is available in an appropriate format for every individual affected</li> <li>• A wider range of pupils getting the same consideration for their needs via schemes that focus on the individual (IDP)</li> <li>• Offer a 'Career Plan' for teaching assistants – permanent contracts, the opportunity to job-share, training, and a range of specific jobs.</li> </ul>
<b>Fostering good relationships</b>	<b>Yes</b>	We will continue to ensure that there is enough multi-agency engagement in order to improve the understanding of all stakeholders.

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9b)

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>The actual or likely impact</b>
<b>Race</b>	<b>Perhaps</b>	Some of the children on the SEN register can be of a different race. This should not make any difference as we will ensure the understanding of any different cultural or linguistic needs.
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Yes</b>	This element is relevant as most of the service users have a range of disabilities that vary in their severity. Because of these disabilities / needs they need additional support. The new provision will offer better outcomes for children and young people with ALN, placing them centrally when planning for them. It is important that the needs of carers/parents are also protected. Parents/carers will get a better opportunity to voice their opinions while planning support for the children/young people. It will be important that we promote and explain these opportunities.
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Yes</b>	Most of the assistants are women and they work few hours on average, for a low salary without certainty of long-term employment. It should be highlighted that there will be a substantial decrease in the number of assistants in schools, but we will however be collaborating with the human resources service to direct the workforce to opportunities for alternative jobs. The new provision models will offer a 'Career Structure' for a certain number of assistants, with the opportunity to obtain permanent contracts, different salary scales, training and cultivating specific expertise.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<b>None</b>	No predicted impact
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>None</b>	No predicted impact
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<b>None</b>	No predicted impact
<b>The Welsh Language</b>	<b>Yes</b>	We have secured bilingual materials for all engagement with parents and families and ensure that future provision meets the linguistic needs of users. This will comply with the Gwynedd Council Education Department's Language Policy.
<b>Age</b>	<b>Yes</b>	The pupils referred to in this Review range from 2 – 18 years old but the proposals for the new legislation extend the provision and the responsibility to 0-25 years old.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<b>Yes</b>	No predicted impact; so long as we follow the relevant Human Resources guidelines.
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>	<b>None</b>	No predicted impact

## 10) ADDRESSING THE IMPACT

a)	<p><b>Note any potential impact in terms of equality</b></p> <p>To date, the response to the Review has been positive with the perception that the proposals will result in an improvement in terms of equality for the users. By using methods that focus on the individuals, children, young people and their families will get a better chance to voice their opinion when planning the support for them. This provision will be reviewed and checked more regularly in order to measure and ensure quality.</p> <p>Area forums will be able to prioritise cases in order to ensure access to support much faster.</p> <p>There will, however, be a significant impact in terms of the number of assistants that will be employed within the new model as a result of the Review's emphasis on ensuring a more effective and efficient service.</p>
b)	<p><b>What steps can be taken to reduce or improve these impacts?</b></p> <p>We will continue to engage with all stakeholders regularly in order to try to manage the change. We will listen and try to respond to all comments that we receive.</p> <p>The new provision models will offer a 'Career Structure' for a certain number of assistants, with the opportunity to obtain– a permanent contract, different salary scales, training and cultivating specific expertise. We will collaborate with the human resources service to refer the workforce to opportunities for alternative posts.</p> <p>We are currently considering possible models to reduce this impact by offering opportunities for schools to appoint their own assistants or for a cluster of schools.</p>
c)	<p><b>Does the plan need to be re-considered?</b></p> <p>No</p>

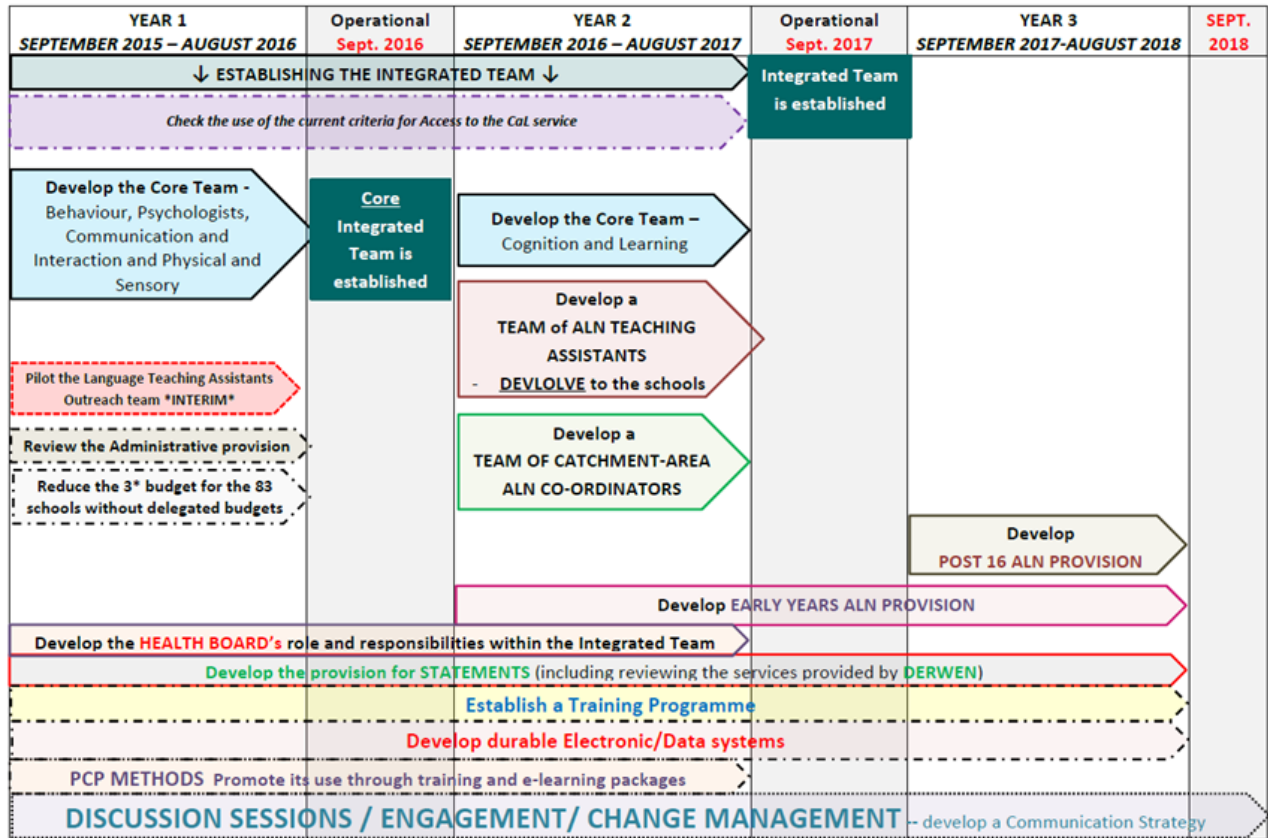
## 11) MONITORING AND REVIEWING ARRANGEMENTS

<p>The Strategic Review's Project Board will monitor the next steps.</p>
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## 12) ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan should be attached, containing the actions, responsibilities, timetable and an outline of the reviewing and evaluating arrangements.

Action Plan:



We will continue with engagement by utilising the same principles.  
 We will give further consideration to elements of equality in discussions with the Human Resources Department.

13) DECISION

Submitted to Cabinet for a decision on 19 January 2016.