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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Toolkit

For parents and carers of children with additional learning needs



What is this Toolkit about?

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALNET Act), the statutory ALN Code for Wales 2021 (the Code) and supporting regulations, set out the legal framework for meeting the additional learning needs (ALN) of children and young people aged 25 or under in Wales. We call this legal framework the ALN system.

The purpose of this toolkit is to help you, as a parent (this also means anyone who looks after the child or has parental responsibility) of a child or young person, understand how the ALN system works in Wales and the support available if your child is considered to have ALN. It explains the legislation, and other documents that make up the ALN system.

You can discover more about the ideas and inspiration behind the ALN system in Chapter 3 of the Code.



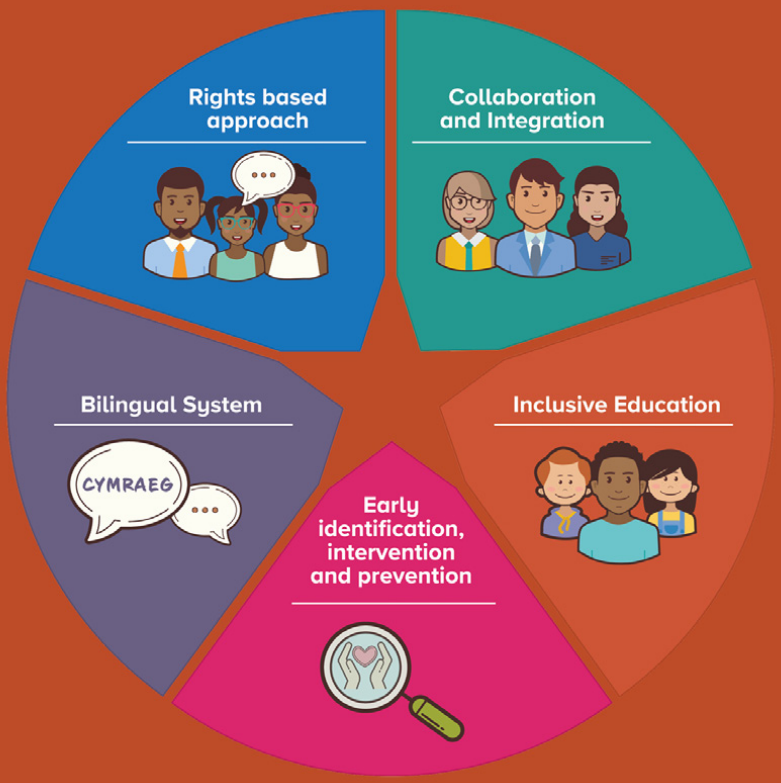


You know your child best

You know your child best and can help in understanding their needs and how to support them in the most effective way.

This toolkit aims to help you understand and access the services available to children and young people with ALN.

The ALN system and all our education reforms are designed to create inclusive education where every child and young person has the chance to succeed by giving them access to an education that meets their needs and helps them enjoy learning.



The ALN system operates on 5 key principles:

1. Rights based approach

Where the wishes and feelings of children, young people and their parents are central and that they are actively involved in the planning and decision-making process.

2. Collaboration and integration

Where services work together to ensure the right support is in place to help children and young people succeed.

3. Inclusive Education

Where most children and young people with ALN can be supported to participate fully in mainstream schools and colleges with the whole school working together to meet their needs.

4. Early identification, intervention and prevention

Where needs are identified early and support is put in place as soon as possible.

5. Bilingual system

Where reasonable steps are made to provide additional learning provision in Welsh for children and young people who need it.

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Supporting difficulties in learning

Everyone develops and learns in their own way and at their own pace. Many children and young people are likely to struggle with learning at times during their learning journey. This may be because they've missed school due to illness, or they're coping with something like a bereavement or trauma. In these situations, nurseries, schools and colleges may provide extra support to help them keep up with their learning and get back on track.

These situations don't necessarily mean a child or young person has ALN. However, they are important indicators and times when children or young people may need extra support and knowing what to do if difficulties persist.

Some children and young people may not have a learning difficulty, but they may need extra support to help them reach their potential. This should be provided as part of differentiated teaching, which means adapting lessons to suit different learning styles and needs. This could involve using a variety of teaching methods, materials or levels of support to help every child and young person understand and make progress.

Children and young people may experience difficulties in learning as a result of a disability, long-term medical condition, or a more significant or complex learning need. These may not always be immediately visible but can have a lasting impact on how a child or a young person accesses education.

It's important to recognise that learning difficulties can vary widely in cause, complexity and duration and the right support should reflect this.

You do not need a medical diagnosis for your child to be identified as having ALN. Decisions about the support they may need are based on significance of need, not a medical assessment.



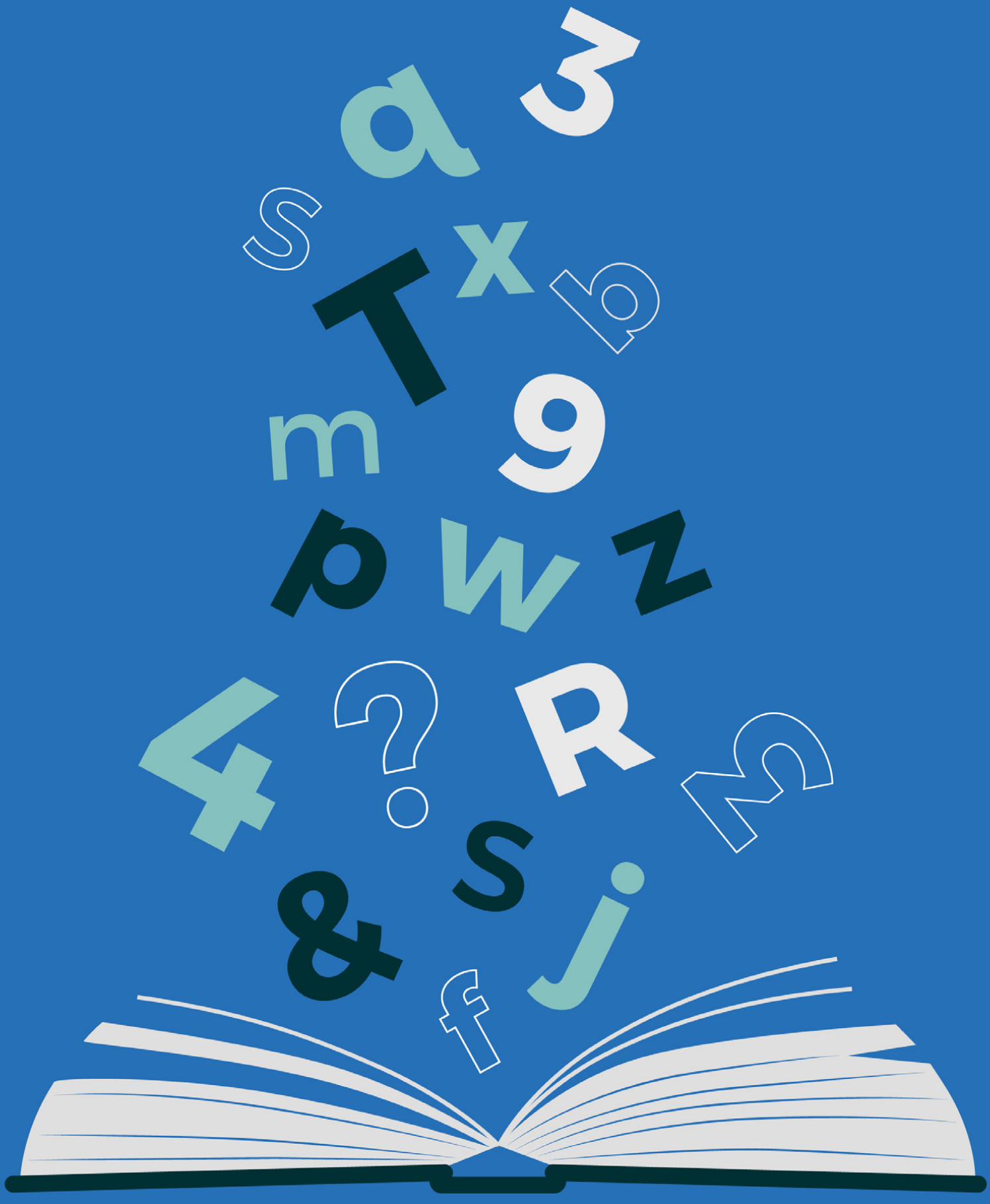
There is a wide range of learning difficulties or disabilities, but they can be broadly classified into the following 4 areas:

1. Communication and interaction

2. Behaviour, emotional and social development

3. Sensory and/or physical needs

4. Cognition and learning



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Where to go for help

If you have concerns about your child's learning or behaviour, or think your child has ALN, you should talk to your child's nursery, school, college or other setting.

It is very important that you discuss your worries with the nursery, school, college or other setting as a first step. They will discuss any concerns you have, tell you what they think and explain to you what will happen next.

You don't need a referral from a professional, and your child doesn't need a formal diagnosis. What matters most is understanding and identifying the right support your child may need to reach their full potential.



ALN is the shorthand for additional learning needs, and the ALNET Act contains the definition of ALN which nurseries, schools, colleges and local authorities have to use when deciding whether a child or young person has ALN.

A child or young person has ALN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different help from that given to others.

This process for determining whether a child or young person has ALN is summarised in the **flowchart on page 14.** The process is different for a child under compulsory school age. (In Wales, compulsory school age refers to children aged 5 to 16.)

Where a child or young person is being taught (or is going to be taught) in a language which is different from that used at home, that fact alone does not mean they have a learning difficulty or disability.

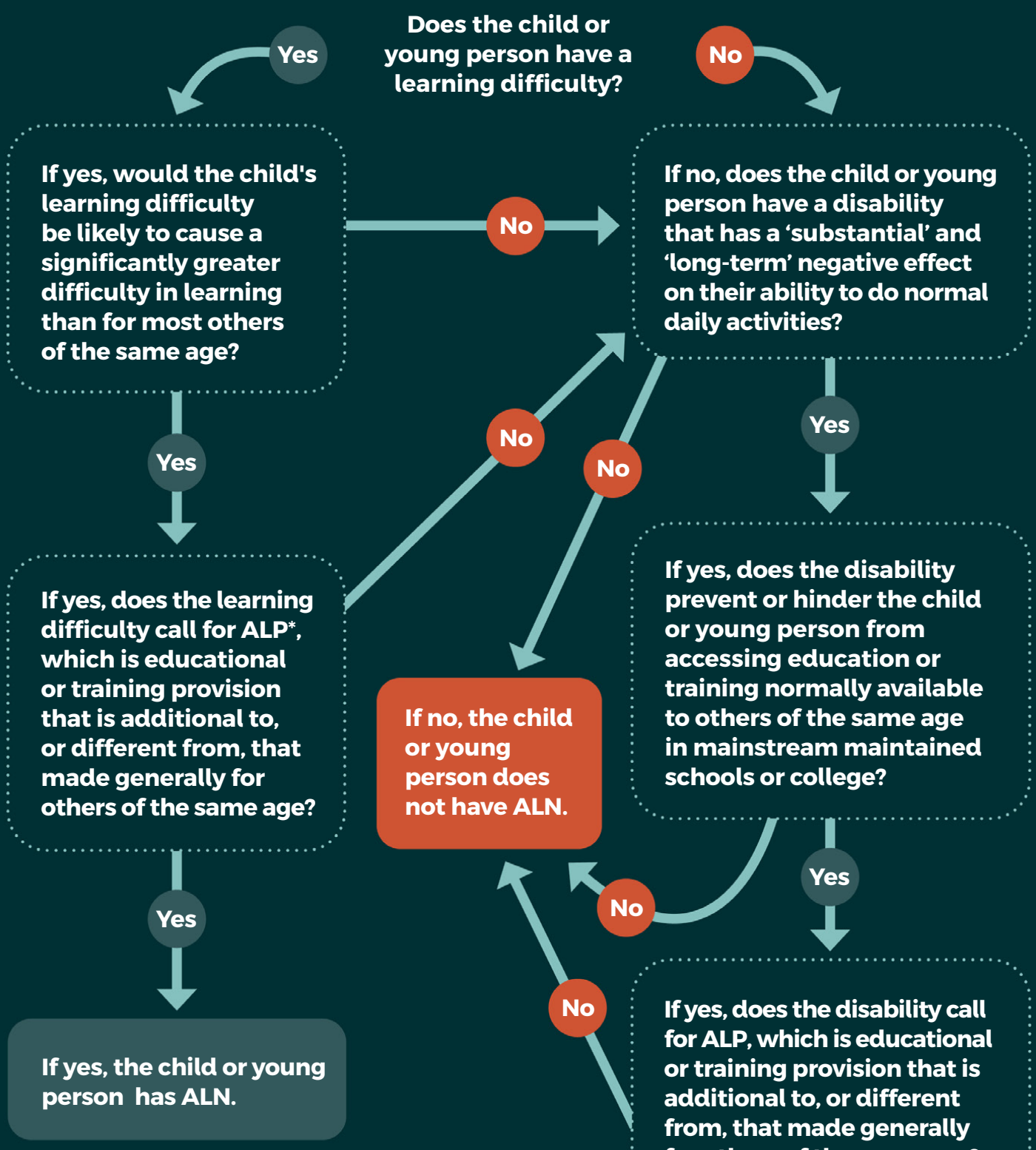
Does your child have ALN?

The flowchart on the following page is designed to give an initial indication of whether a child or young person has ALN (unless the child is under compulsory school age). If you think your child may have ALN, you should speak to a relevant professional.

It is also possible for a child or young person to have ALN under the ALNET Act if they have both a disability and a learning difficulty that satisfies the test.

Further information on how to recognise learning difficulties and when they may become ALN are available in **Chapter 2 of the Code.**





***Additional learning provision (ALP)** refers to the educational or training support that is additional to or different from what is typically provided to others of the same age in nurseries, mainstream schools, or colleges. It is tailored to meet the specific needs of children or young people identified as having additional learning needs (ALN).

How does this learning difficulty or disability impact the child or young person?

A child of compulsory school age or a person over that age is considered to have a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- find learning much harder than the majority of others their age

OR

- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational or training facilities generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or colleges. (This must be a disability which fits the definition in the Equality Act 2010 – that is, the disability has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on the person's ability to do normal daily activities.)

A child below compulsory school age is considered to have a learning difficulty or disability if, without extra support, they are likely to fall within one or both of the descriptions in the two instances above when they reach compulsory school age.



Does your child under compulsory school age* have ALN?

It is sometimes hard to know whether a child under compulsory school age has ALN because they have not yet started in formal education and are still developing many of the basic skills they will need to become a successful learner when they start school. (*In Wales, compulsory school age refers to children aged 5 to 16.)

However, if a child under compulsory school age has a disability that could affect learning, or appears to be developing in some way at a slower rate than other children of the same age, the way to assess if the child has ALN is to work out what learning difficulties (if any) the child is or would be likely to have by the time they start school at compulsory school age.

This means considering whether the child, when they reach compulsory school age:

- is likely to find learning much harder than the majority of others who would also be just starting school (or would be likely to find learning much harder if no support was given to them)

OR

- is likely to have a disability which will prevent or hinder them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided for others just starting school (or would be likely to have that kind of disability if no support was given to them).

If the answer is yes to either or both questions, then the child is considered to have a learning difficulty or disability under the ALNET Act, at the time they are being assessed.



This must be a disability which fits the definition in the Equality Act 2010 – that is, the disability has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on the child's ability to do normal daily activities.

If the child is considered to have a learning difficulty or disability under the ALNET Act, the final step is then to decide whether the learning difficulty or disability requires the child to be given additional learning provision (ALP) at the time of the assessment – ALP for a child under three means an educational provision of any kind.

Further information on how to recognise learning difficulties and when they may become ALN are available in **Chapter 2 of the Code.**



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What is additional learning provision (ALP)?

ALP is the shorthand for additional learning provision. It refers to the support that is additional to, or is different from, what is made generally to others of the same age in nurseries, mainstream schools or colleges. Any education support for a child under 3 is defined as ALP.

The ALN and ALP will be described in a child or young person's individual development plan (IDP).

What is an individual development plan (IDP)?

If a child or young person is identified as having ALN, an IDP must be prepared and maintained. The IDP describes what ALP is considered to be necessary to support the child or young person and is kept under review to make sure the IDP remains relevant.

When it appears that a child or young person may have ALN

Every child or young person learns in their own way and at their own pace. Nurseries, schools and colleges are expected to use differentiated teaching, which means adapting lessons to suit different learning styles and needs. This could involve using a variety of teaching methods, materials or levels of support to help every child and young person understand and make progress.

People who are trained and skilled in a particular role, for example teachers, will regularly check how your child is doing. If development is a lot slower than others, or slower than their own previous development despite the extra support through differentiated learning and teaching, then your child may have ALN.

If your child's nursery, school, college, or the local authority thinks your child may have ALN, or if someone brings this to their attention, they have a legal duty to look into it.

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The decision making process for identifying ALN

When a maintained* nursery, school or college becomes aware that a child or young person may have ALN, it must decide whether that is the case.

They might become aware that a child or young person may have ALN in different ways. The child or young person might say something, you as a parent or family member might raise it, or a professional or organisation might bring it up.

*Maintained settings are run and funded by the local authority. They have a legal duty to formally decide if a child has ALN.

Non-maintained settings include private nurseries, voluntary nurseries, playgroups, childminders, private independent schools or care at home with a parent or carer. They do not make this formal decision, but they are still responsible for supporting children who need extra help.

It doesn't matter how the maintained nursery, school or college becomes aware of the possibility, once it has, the nursery, school or college has a duty to decide whether the child or young person has ALN unless an IDP is already in place.

- A nursery, school or college has already looked at the situation before, and nothing significant has changed.
- The decision is about a young person, but the young person does not consent to the decision being made.
- The child or young person is registered at two schools or colleges, and the local authority is responsible for the IDP.
- A local authority in England maintains an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) for the child or young person.

Preparation of an IDP

If ALN is identified the child or young person will be entitled to an IDP. This is a legal document, and an IDP will be prepared.

No change, no new decision needed

If the nursery, school or college has already decided whether the child or young person has ALN, and nothing significant has changed, or no new information has come to light, they do not have to make a new decision.

When consent isn't given

If a young person does not consent to a decision on ALN being made, school or college should still try to meet their needs through additional support.

Asking the local authority for help

Sometimes a nursery, school or college may need to ask the local authority to get involved.

This happens when they believe a child or young person has ALN, but:

- the child or young person may need ALP that the nursery, school or college can't reasonably be expected to provide on its own,
- the nursery, school or college can't fully understand the nature or extent of the ALN, or
- the child or young person requires ALP that the nursery, school or college cannot clearly identify.

In these situations, the nursery, school or college must refer the case to the responsible local authority for a decision.





Timeframes

- When a school decides a child has ALN: they have **up to 35 school days** from when it comes to their attention that the child may have ALN to decide whether the child has ALN, and to prepare and deliver an IDP in writing.
- When a college makes the decision: they have **35 term-time days** starting from the day the young person gives their consent, to decide if they have ALN and to prepare and issue an IDP in writing.
- When the local authority makes the decision: they have **up to 12 weeks** from when it comes to their attention that the child or young person (subject to their consent) may have ALN, to prepare and issue an IDP in writing.
- When the local authority reviews a school's decision: they have **7 weeks** to respond.

These time limits can be paused if it is impossible to collect the evidence, for example if the child is unavailable due to illness, away during school holidays or travelling abroad.

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What is an IDP?

If a child or young person is identified as having ALN, an IDP must be prepared and maintained.

Most IDPs are managed within the education setting, unless the necessary support is too complex and the setting is unable to secure and deliver the ALP, in which case the local authority may take over.

The IDP will describe the ALN and the ALP that is required. It is a plan of support and developed with the child, young person and yourself. It is intended to be flexible and will vary in length and complexity dependent on the need.

The IDP must be reviewed every 12 months. However, reviews can take place sooner if needed. You or your child can ask your child's setting for an earlier review, or the local authority may also decide to review an IDP earlier.

There is a Welsh Government template for the IDP. The style and layout is open to change, but the headings are mandatory and must appear in the correct order. You can see the **templates in the annexes of the Code.**



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Reconsiderations and taking over responsibility for IDPs

The ALN system gives children and young people the right to ask for decisions to be looked at again.

You can:

- **ask the local authority to review school decisions:**
  If you disagree with a decision the maintained nursery, school or college has made about your child or if the school or college has declined to make the decision, you can ask the local authority to make their own decision.



- **ask for your child's IDP to be reviewed:**
  If the school or college maintains your child's IDP and you think it needs changing and you can't reach an agreement with the school or college; you can ask the local authority to review it and decide if it should be adjusted.

- **ask the local authority to take over your child's IDP:**
  Sometimes you might want the local authority to take over responsibility of your child's IDP instead of the school or college. You, your child, the school, or college can ask for this. The local authority will then decide whether they should take over managing the IDP. When the local authority reviews a school or college's decision, they have 7 weeks to respond.

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Information, advice and support

All local authorities, by law, must provide information and advice about ALN and the ALN system.



This includes how to avoid and solve disagreements and how to access independent advocacy services. They must make sure this information is easy for you to find, understand and use. There is an information, advice and support service in every local authority area.

You can find out more about information, advice and support in **Chapter 6 of the ALN Code.**



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Avoiding and resolving disagreements

Sometimes disagreements happen. You are encouraged to work together with the nursery, school, college or local authority to discuss the situation and find a solution. If you are unhappy, it helps to share your views early.



Local authorities must have systems in place to work with families to avoid disagreements from happening and to sort them out if they do. Every local authority in Wales must offer access to a Dispute Resolution Service (DRS). This service helps everyone involved talk through the issue and work together to find a solution.

Dispute resolution services offer clear, unbiased, and confidential help by person, by phone or online. They can help you prepare for meetings, share your feelings, and take part in decisions about your child. They can also support you with complaints and appeals.

This service reduces the need for disputes to be taken to the **Education Tribunal for Wales** (ETW) and usually leads to disagreements being settled quickly.

Using the service does not stop you from making an appeal and even if you have made an appeal, you can still talk to the local authority to try to reach an agreement.

Who to talk to if you need extra advice

The local authority should also let children or young people and parents know where they can find other sources of information both locally and nationally and remind them that advocacy services are available.

Advocacy can help children and young people understand what is happening and to share their views.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to make children, young people and parents aware of their right to independent advocacy.

The following bodies can provide independent advice on any concerns:

- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**
- **Children's Commissioner for Wales**
- **Welsh Language Commissioner**
- **The Administrative Court**
  (for judicial review)

NHS Wales - complaints and concerns

The process for raising concerns or complaints or disagreements in NHS Wales is called **Putting Things Right.**

If you have concerns about NHS care or treatment, it's best to speak to the staff involved as soon as possible. They will try to resolve your concerns straight away. If this doesn't help, or you do not feel comfortable speaking to the staff, you can **contact the health board or trust's complaints team.**



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Advocates

It is important to know that there are people to advise, help and speak up for children and young people if there is a disagreement. They are called advocates.

They will explain to others how the child really feels and what might be done to help them. Children and young people can always ask the local authority for an advocate.

Local authorities will tell parents, children and young people about advocates. There is no cost for their services.

An advocate can:

- speak up for them when using dispute resolution services
- help them with a possible appeal to the ETW
- speak up for them at an appeal.

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Rights under the additional learning needs system

Children have rights under the ALN system. Most of those rights also apply to parents. This does change when the child becomes a young person over compulsory school age and up to 25. At that stage, the rights apply to the young person, but not to the parents.

Any child or young person with ALN has a right to an IDP, which is a legal document that must be followed. Children, young people and parents have the right to appeal to the ETW.

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Appealing to the Education Tribunal for Wales

Children, their parents and young people can appeal some decisions made by their local authority or college.



An appeal can be made on the following:

- a decision by a college or a local authority whether your child or young person has ALN
- whether a young person needs an IDP
- what the IDP says about your child's needs, support, or review dates
- if the support (ALP) in the IDP is missing or not right
- if the IDP says support should be given in Welsh
- which school or college is named in the IDP
- if the local authority refuses to change or take over an IDP
- if the local authority decides to stop the IDP
- if they refuse to look at something again because they say nothing has changed.

Appeals cannot be made about ALN decisions made by maintained nurseries or schools. You can find further information about asking the local authority to review school decisions in **section 6 of the ALN Code.**

If your child's school maintains their IDP, you can't appeal against the school directly. Instead, you must first ask the local authority to look at the situation. If needed, it is the local authority's decision that you may then be able to appeal to the ETW.

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Case friends

Some children need extra help in understanding their rights under the ALN system. A case friend is someone who can support your child with this.

If a child or young person finds it hard to understand, a case friend can:

- speak up for the child or young person
- support them in making decisions
- make an appeal to the ETW on their behalf
- help them understand information about ALN.

You or your child can ask the ETW to appoint a case friend.



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Planning for change and helping your child through transitions

All children and young people experience changes during their education. Transitions such as moving between classes, changing year groups, or starting a new school or college can be challenging.

Children and young people with ALN may find changes more difficult than others. They may need extra help to make sure their learning and support aren't affected during these times. Planning ahead helps make these transitions smoother, support their well-being and can improve both their learning and social development.

Involving your child and other professionals

Transition planning works better when it includes the views of your child and you as a parent. Talking about upcoming changes can help them feel better prepared.

Sometimes it is helpful to involve other professionals to explain things such as **Careers Wales** and **Pathfinders Cymru**, who offer guidance and resources for young people with ALN and their families.

Practical guidance for managing transitions

Some children or young people may become particularly anxious about changes.

You can support them by:

- encouraging them to talk about their worries and ask questions
- explaining the change in ways they understand
- sharing practical resources, like school maps, timetables, worry boxes, or comfort items
- thinking about sensory needs—some children may benefit from familiar smells, sunglasses, or earplugs. Schools and colleges must make reasonable adjustments to help children feel comfortable
- visiting the new school or college together, meeting key staff, and creating a photo book or guide your child can refer to. You might also be able to arrange a phased start.

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Working together to support your child

It's important that your child's voice is heard, so their views and experiences are part of planning the support they need. You are part of a wider team, which includes the school or college and other professionals. They also have legal responsibilities which must be maintained.

Building positive relationships

When parents, nurseries, schools, colleges and professionals collaborate, it benefits your child. Developing a strong relationship with your nursery, school or college helps you share information, raise questions, and plan together how your child will be supported.

Practical guidance for parents

- **Share information early.** If you have concerns about your child's learning, development, or well-being it helps to let the nursery, school or college know as early as possible. Your insight will help the professionals understand how best to support them. It can help to keep a diary of events, or things that you notice about your child, especially if needing evidence to support IDPs or applications for extra services and help.

- **Work with the nursery/school/college.** Nurseries, schools, colleges and other educational settings will work with you to understand your child's needs and agree the planned support. They are expected to involve you at every stage of the ALN process, and you should have a meaningful role in creating or reviewing their IDP.

- **Attend meetings and reviews.** Your voice matters. You'll be invited to meetings; for example, meetings about your child's progress, meetings about ALN and meetings to review an IDP. Meetings give you a chance to ask questions and share what's working (or not) at home. Meetings are person-centred and might involve a range of people to make sure everyone works together and looks at the whole picture of your child's needs; these are people like nursery, school or college staff, local authority staff, health professionals or other support people like an advocate.

- **Stay informed and ask questions.** You have the right to fully understand the support your child is getting. You can ask about the help being provided, the people involved and how progress is being made. If anything is unclear, you can ask for further explanation.
- **Make use of support and guidance.** If you need help understanding the process, there is advice and support available for you. This includes impartial information, advocacy and routes to appeal if you disagree with decisions being made.

Key people who help in the ALN System

Many people support children and young people in education, including through the ALN system.

If you're unsure who is involved or what they're doing, you can ask the nursery, school, college or local authority to explain how your child's support is organised.

The following roles are required by law to make sure children and young people with ALN get the right support:

The early years additional learning needs lead officer (EYALNLO)

The role of an EYALNLO is to work with parents, nurseries, schools, children's services and health professionals to raise awareness of ALN and promote early intervention where necessary.

Whether your child goes to a flying start setting, private or voluntary nursery, playgroup, or is at home with you, the EYALNLO co-ordinates the local authority's responsibility to children under compulsory school age.

They work with schools and other settings to help identify ALN and make sure the right support is in place.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo)

All mainstream schools or colleges in Wales have a person who co-ordinates support for children and young people with ALN. This person is known as the additional learning needs coordinator or ALNCo. They work alongside teachers and other professionals such as educational psychologists or speech and language therapists to offer advice and guidance. The ALNCo helps make sure things are working well.

The ALNCo helps make sure your child's needs are being met and that they have an IDP if needed. They also help organise support from specialists outside the school or college, such as speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, or health professionals.

A key part of the ALNCo's role is to make sure children and young people can fully take part in school activities and use all available facilities, while always considering the feelings of the child or young person and their family.

They also support teachers by suggesting ways to adapt learning and teaching to meet your child's needs, and they help train learning support staff.

The ALNCo's work covers all stages of learning, including times of change such as moving to a new year group or school (sometimes called transition), and planning for life after school, like college, training, or work.

Designated education clinical lead officer (DECLO)

Every health board in Wales has a DECLO. They connect health and education and play a crucial role in making sure health professionals (such as speech and language therapists and child and adolescent mental health service practitioners) and education settings such as nurseries, schools or colleges, work together.

The DECLO helps NHS professionals understand their legal duties under the ALNET Act and makes sure there are clear processes for them to carry these out. NHS professionals collaborate with nurseries, schools and colleges by:

- sharing information with parents and the local authority education department as early as possible for pre-school children when emerging needs are identified
- providing information to support planning and decision-making for children and young people with additional learning needs. This is to ensure that IDPs are accurate and effective
- delivering relevant NHS treatments or services that could be of benefit in addressing a child or young person's barrier to learning.

DECLOs also support Health Boards in handling complaints, disputes, or appeals to health support under the ALNET.

You can find more about what different professionals do in the ALN system in **Chapters 8, 9 and 10 of the Code.**



Health services

Health services do not decide whether a child has ALN, but they do play an important role. They share information and advice with nursery, schools, colleges and local authorities and they may contribute to IDPs where it is needed. If a child or young person needs health-related support (for example speech and language therapy), this should be included in the IDP.

Nurseries

Nurseries help young children learn, play and grow in a safe and supportive environment. They get to know each child and can notice if a child might need some extra help with their learning or development.

If your child goes to a school nursery run by the local authority, the school has a legal duty to decide if your child has ALN.

If your child goes to a non-maintained nursery (for example, a private or voluntary nursery, playgroup, or with a childminder) for their education, the nursery can't make this formal decision, but they can talk to you about any concerns and help you contact the local authority so that support can be explored together. The local authority will then decide whether your child has ALN and, if needed, prepare an IDP to make sure the right support is in place.

Schools

Schools work with children and young people every day to help them learn and succeed. The Curriculum for Wales gives teachers flexibility to adapt their teaching so that it meets the needs of each child or young person. This means schools can put the right support in place to help every child make progress.

Sometimes a school may feel that extra help is needed for a child or young person to reach their full potential. If they think a child or young person may have ALN, they will look into this. If an IDP is already in place, the school is responsible for keeping it up to date.

Colleges

Colleges play an important role in supporting young people with ALN after they leave school. They work closely with schools and local authorities to make moving from school to a college as smooth as possible.

They help identify what support a child or young person needs and prepare an IDP to make sure that support is in place.

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Common misconceptions

A medical diagnosis is needed for your child to receive an IDP.

Not true.
You do not need a medical diagnosis for your child to be identified as having ALN or to receive an IDP.

A child or young person can have ALN without a diagnosis and decisions on ALP do not depend on a medical assessment.

IDPs can be issued to a child or young person without waiting for a diagnosis and support should not be delayed because of NHS waiting times.

ALN support only applies to children or young people with severe needs.

Not true.
It can apply to a wide range of needs. A child or young person has a significantly greater difficulty in learning compared to the majority of others of the same age and/or a disability which prevents or

hinders them from making use of the educational or training needs facilities generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or colleges. This can include cognition and learning, communication and interaction, as well as sensory and/or physical needs and behavioural, emotional and social development.

An IDP guarantees one-to-one support.

Not true.

An IDP outlines the necessary support, which can take many forms. This includes adapted learning and teaching, group work or specialist input. It might include one-to-one support where that is appropriate to meet needs. It's key to talk to the nursery, school or college about what support your child needs and agree a way forward together.

You can't apply for an IDP; the nursery, school or college must do it.

Not true.

You can raise concerns and discuss additional support with your child's nursery, school or college. You can ask the nursery, school, college or local authority to consider if your child has ALN that requires an IDP. If they say no, you can challenge that decision.

The local authority makes all the decisions.

Not true.

Most IDPs are managed by nurseries, schools or colleges unless the child or young person has complex needs or has special circumstances which involve the local authority. If you or your child disagree with any decision made by the local authority, you can use dispute resolution services or appeal to the ETW.



ALN support ends after primary school.

Not true.

The system covers all children and young people up to age 25. Transitions between schools and colleges may call for extra support. When a young person is leaving education, transition planning can help with the emotional and practical challenges ahead.

I need to pay a solicitor to represent us.

Not true.

The local authority will encourage you to use independent advocacy services. Those services are provided free of charge.

If your child has ALN, they must move to a special school.

Not true.

The ALN system is built on the principle of mainstream first, meaning children and young people should be supported to learn in mainstream settings (nursery, school or college) wherever possible. Where appropriate, they should also have access to a setting close to their home, within their own community, so they can maintain familiar routines, friendship and support. This approach helps children and young people with ALN feel a sense of belonging both in school and in their wider community. At all times, the child or young person's wishes should always be considered first.



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Useful Links

ALN Advice

The Welsh Government's Additional Learning Needs page explains the ALN system in Wales, outlining how children and young people with learning needs or disabled children and young people are supported in education, and is aimed at parents, carers, and professionals working with children and young people.

SNAP Cymru

A Welsh charity offering free, independent advice and support to families and professionals on ALN, including advocacy and dispute resolution.

Family Information Service

Provides free, impartial information and advice to help families access childcare, early years education, and support services across Wales.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

An independent champion, providing advice and support to children and young people, promotes the importance of children's rights, and scrutinises how public bodies' decisions affect those rights.

Neurodivergence Wales

Provides information, resources, and community support for neurodivergent people and their families in Wales, including guidance on education, employment, and well-being.

Education Tribunal for Wales

Decides appeals relating to additional learning needs decisions and claims of disability related discrimination in schools in Wales. Provides guidance and resources for families navigating the tribunal process.

Autism Wales – National Autistic Society Cymru

The National Autistic Society's dedicated Welsh branch delivers a wide range of personalised support, resources and guidance for autistic people and their families in Wales. This includes school specific advice, peer support groups, diagnostic information, campaigns and policy updates.



Post 16 Support

Careers Wales

Offers resources and advice for young people and families navigating post-16 education, training, and careers, including support for those with ALN.

Colleges Wales

Represents further education colleges in Wales. It supports colleges to meet the needs of young people with ALN by improving staff training, transition support, and access to learning, and improved transition planning.

ALN Pathfinder

Supports young people with ALN and their families in planning the transition from school to further education, offering practical tools, videos and guidance.

Learning Disability Wales

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. It promotes the importance of accessible and inclusive post-16 education for learners with complex needs, raising concerns about barriers in the current ALN reform process.

NATSPEC

Represents specialist colleges and provides guidance on post-school options for learners with complex ALN, while raising concerns about equitable access under the ALN system.

Early Years

Early Years Wales/ Cwlwm

Early Years Wales is a specialist umbrella organisation dedicated to supporting the development and education of pre-school children in Wales by encouraging parents to understand and provide for their needs through high quality pre-school provision and childcare.

Mudiad Meithrin

Is a specialist organisation dedicated to supporting the development and education of pre-school children in Wales through Welsh-medium early years provision. It works to promote the use of the Welsh language from the earliest age by encouraging families to engage with high-quality Welsh-medium childcare and early education settings, including Cylchoedd Meithrin and Ti a Fi groups.



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Glossary

The glossary below gives the meaning of words and expressions, including abbreviations, used in this toolkit.

'Additional learning needs (ALN)' means children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities that need extra support to learn.

'ALNET Act' refers to the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

'Additional learning support (ALP)' is the name for the extra support that is given to children and young people with ALN.

'Child' means a person not over compulsory school age (the meaning of which is given by Section 8 of the Education Act 1996).

'The Code' refers to 'The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021'.

'Education setting' means any place where education is provided, including nurseries, schools, colleges, or other arrangements such as education other than at school (EOTAS).

'Individual development plan (IDP)' is the plan for children and young people with ALN. It explains their ALN and the ALP they require.

'Maintained nursery' is a nursery that is run by the local authority. This could be a nursery class in a primary school or a separate nursery school.

'Non-maintained nursery' is a nursery that is not run by the local authority. This includes private nurseries, voluntary nurseries, playgroups, childminders or care at home with a parent or carer.

'Compulsory school age' refers to children aged 5 to 16 in Wales.

'Differentiated teaching' means learning and teaching built around your child's needs and situation.

'College' means an institution falling within Section 91(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

'Local authority' means the council of a county or county borough in Wales, except where specific reference is made to a local authority in England (for the meaning of which, see Section 579(1) of the Education Act 1996).

'Parent' has the meaning given in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. That definition includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child and any person who has care of the child.

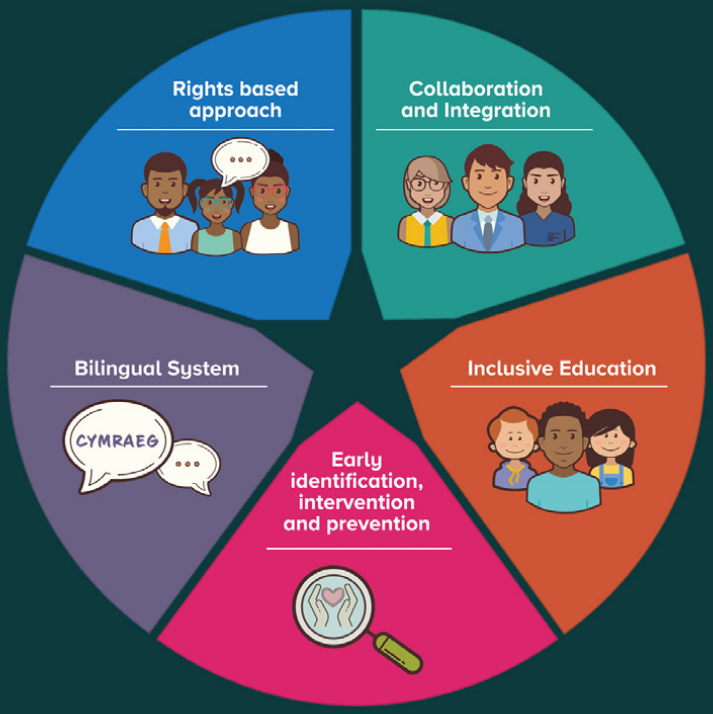
'Young person' means a person over compulsory school age, but under 25.

'Looked after child' is a child who is in the care of the local authority, such as living in foster care or residential care.

'Education other than at school (EOTAS)' refers to the arrangements made by the local authority for a child or young person to receive education outside a mainstream or special school.

A more comprehensive glossary of terms is available in **Chapter 1 of the Code.**

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