

A guide for parents on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

We use the term 'deaf' to refer to all types of hearing loss from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary hearing loss. Details of who may be eligible for an Individual Development Plan (IDP) can be found on **page 3**.

We use the word 'parent' to refer to all parents and carers of children.

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Introduction

This factsheet applies only to families in Wales. It explains the replacement of the term **Special Educational Needs (SEN)** with **Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**. It also sets out the new system to support the learning of children and young people with ALN in Wales, which is being phased in from September 2021.

Over time, Statements of SEN, School Action, School Action Plus, and Learning and Skills Plans will be replaced with **Individual Development Plans (IDPs)**. IDPs will support children and young people with ALN aged 0 to 16, and 16 to 25, if they are in school or further education colleges.

The information in this factsheet is based on the **Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021**, is the Welsh Government's guide to schools, local authorities and colleges on how to support children and young people with ALN. This guide is accompanied by an example Individual Development Plan (IDP) on our website at ndcs.org.uk/IDP-template.

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021 contains more information on different parts of the new system and is available to download from the Welsh Government's website at gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-code.

At a glance – your child's rights

- You or any deaf child or young person, even if the child has mild or moderate deafness, can ask for an Individual Development Plan (IDP) if you feel extra support would help their learning. Your request must be considered.
- Sections of the Code of Practice highlight deafness as an Additional Learning Need. The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru believes there is a strong case for a deaf child or young person to request an IDP assessment.
- You and your child or a deaf young person should be at the centre of the process of creating the IDP and helping to decide what kind of Additional Learning Provision (ALP) is best for them.
- The IDP stays with the child and is reviewed regularly throughout their time in education. If your child's needs change, the support in their IDP may change or their IDP might be stopped. However, you should be told about any plans to change or stop an IDP and contribute to the decision-making process.
- Education and health organisations should work together to support the child. An IDP may include learning support from health professionals, such as speech and language therapists.
- Your communication needs, and those of your child, must be considered in any meetings to discuss the IDP.
- Your child has a right to an independent advocate – someone who helps learners to understand the process of getting or reviewing an IDP and helps them to voice their opinions on their support needs. Councils should be able to provide this service for free.
- You and your child have the right to challenge decisions around the IDP at every stage, including decisions on whether or not to provide, review, change, continue or stop an IDP and the support outlined in your child's plan.
- You can appeal to the Education Tribunal Wales if you can't resolve certain disagreements at school, college or local authority level.

Section one: Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

What do we mean by Additional Learning Needs (ALN)?

You might be used to the term Special Educational Needs (SEN). The term Additional Learning Needs (ALN) now replaces Special Educational Needs (SEN), but the definition is very similar.

For children and young people of school age or over, ALN is defined as:

- having greater difficulty learning than others of their age
OR
- having a disability which prevents or hinders them from using the facilities provided for education or training for others of the same age in mainstream schools or further education colleges (Equality Act 2010).

Children who aren't yet in school are considered to have ALN if they are likely to have either of the above in the future.

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru believes that deafness fits within the definition of ALN and that when requesting an Individual Development Plan (IDP), deaf learners are well placed to receive one.

If a school, college or local authority suggests that deafness, in particular mild or unilateral deafness, is not an ALN, you can refer them to **the Code** which outlines how the IDP process should work.

It specifically mentions deafness as an example of ALN (see *paragraphs 2.27 and 2.34 of the Code*) and that those with lower levels of deafness can still have support needs (see *paragraph 2.38 of the Code*).

To qualify for an IDP, a deaf child or young person must have both ALN and require Additional Learning Provision (ALP).

What do we mean by Additional Learning Provision (ALP)?

Additional Learning Provision (ALP) is the support given to a child or young person with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to help with their learning. It is different to the level of support generally given to learners of the same age. This could be support in a nursery setting, school or further education college in Wales, or even support to a family to help with their baby's development.

ALP takes many forms and can include:

- support that takes place inside or outside the mainstream classroom
- support for a deaf child's family
- hearing technology
- training for those working with a deaf child
- support from a specialist professional like a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) or a speech and language therapist
- naming a particular school or college with specialist support available for deaf learners.

Who can have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) assessment?

Children (0 to 16), and young people (16 to 25) attending sixth form or college, considered to have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) that needs Additional Learning Provision (ALP), are eligible for an **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** assessment to determine whether a support plan is needed and, if so, what that support should include.

IDPs are for children with all levels of need from mild to complex. The length and content of the IDP will vary, depending on the child's needs. Information in Welsh Government guidance (*paragraphs 2.27, 2.34 and 2.38 of the Code*) suggests that deaf children and young people are eligible for an IDP assessment.

If your child has a temporary deafness, professionals may take into account factors such as how long the child has had the hearing loss, when deciding whether or not to assess for an IDP.

Please note: While those aged 16 to 25 are only eligible for an IDP if they attend college or sixth form, other young people may be able to access different types of support such as Access to Work (for those in employment) or Disabled Students Allowance (Higher Education). For more information, please visit ndcs.org.uk/financialsupport.

Section two: Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

You might have been familiar with School Action, or School Action Plus, Statements. or Learning and Skills Plans. All these will be replaced by IDPs over time.

An IDP is a legal document that outlines what Additional Learning Provision (ALP) a child or young person should have to support their learning. **Generally it is the duty of the school or further education college to prepare and maintain the IDP. However, in the case of pre-school children, learners with more specialist needs, or if a child is in care, the local authority will hold responsibility for the IDP.**

Those coordinating plans will often seek advice and support from other relevant professionals, including Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs), audiologists, and speech and language therapists.

The new system will take a more integrated approach to supporting learners, with various professionals working together. Each health board in Wales will have a **Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO)** responsible for making sure education and health authorities work together.

An [template of an IDP can be found here](#) on our website. It explains in more detail the information you can expect to see in an IDP.

How do you get an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

The first step is to ask for one as soon as possible.

If your child is identified deaf at their newborn screening or before they start school, you can ask your local authority for an IDP. The Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) will be your key point of contact.

If deafness is identified when your child is school or college age, or your child hasn't had an IDP before and you would now like one, the school or college is the first point of contact. Every school and college has an Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) who will be your key point of contact.

You or your child can ask for an IDP. You don't have to wait for a professional to refer your child into the IDP system. A professional, such as an audiologist working with your child, can refer your child for an IDP, but they should talk to you about this first.

I've asked for an Individual Development Plan (IDP), what's next?

Once you've asked for an IDP, the local authority, school or college **should** decide whether to provide an IDP. They should give you a copy of that IDP, within 35 school days of your request. They may only take longer than 35 school days if there are reasons that make this deadline impractical. The sooner your request is made the better, as the deadline of 35 school days doesn't include school holidays.

If the IDP is first prepared by the local authority when your child is a baby or infant, the IDP is likely to be made the responsibility of the school once your child starts education.

When the IDP is prepared, the school, college or local authority must make sure that you and your child are at the heart of the process. They must consult with you and your child about their needs and what support would be best for them.

You, your child, and key professionals who support them, will be asked to share your thoughts on your child's needs and invited to a meeting to discuss your child's support further.

A key part of involving you and your child in the process is understanding how they want to communicate their needs. This includes which language you all want to use in the process, and how that communication happens (*paragraphs 4.13 and 4.14 of the Code*). If you or your child would prefer to use British Sign Language (BSL) during the meetings to discuss the IDP, the school or college must make sure that happens. Also, if you or your child prefer to communicate in Welsh, the school or college should take this on board.

You and your child must also see a draft copy of the IDP and have an opportunity to comment on what it contains. If you or your child aren't happy with the IDP, the school or college should consider your concerns.

What is covered in an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

An IDP is a legal document. They might look different across different schools, colleges and local authorities and might be on paper or digital. However, every IDP must include certain information and particular headings. If the school, college or local authority doesn't use the headings outlined in the Code, that document may not be legally binding, and you can challenge them on this issue (*paragraph 23.5 of the Code*).

The IDP contains all the details about the child or young person – their Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and what kind of Additional Learning Provision (ALP) they need to support their learning. The focus is on the desired outcomes and how to achieve them.

Language

If English isn't your first language or you would prefer to communicate in British Sign Language (BSL) or Welsh in meetings, you can add this to **Section 1A.10** in your child's IDP.

One Page Profile

The One Page Profile (**Section 1C of an IDP**) is a summary of the child or young person's character, likes and dislikes, gifts and talents and important information for professionals working with them to know about. The learner (and, particularly in the case of younger children, their families) should play a key part in creating this profile. You might like to include information on how your child communicates, any technology they use and key deaf awareness tips.

The Code (*paragraph 23.24*) suggests using the following headings in the profile:

- *What is important to the learner?*
- *What is important for the learner?*
- *What is working and should be built on?*
- *What is not working and needs to change?*

Caution! A One Page Profile on its own can be helpful but is not a full IDP or legal document – it's a summary of your child and their general needs. The details of any learning support provided to them by law comes later in the IDP. **Do not accept** any suggestion that the Profile alone is the same as having an IDP.

Outline of Additional Learning Provision (ALP)

An important part of an IDP is **Section 2** which describes your child's ALP. Every deaf child will have different needs and require different types of ALP.

The IDP is designed to look at outcomes – what you want to happen eventually. The outcomes might be long term or short term – but each outcome should be written in a way that is SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound. The longer-term outcomes might be broken up with smaller targets or milestones. It is possible that the longer-term outcomes might stay in the IDP for several years.

You should be able to track progress over time with the IDP, as the document should stay with the child and continue to be reviewed throughout their school and college years, for as long as they need support.

The Welsh Government's guidance states that IDPs should give clear information on what support will be provided. So, for example, IDPs shouldn't just state that your child 'will have access to a Teacher of the Deaf', but should also outline how often visits from the Teacher of the Deaf will be.

Other information

An IDP includes lots of other sections, including:

- an outline of your child's Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- any disagreements about what should be included in the plan
- planning for any transition arrangements
- the date by which the plan should be reviewed.

A **template of an IDP can be found here on our website** and explains in more detail the information you can expect to see in an IDP.

It is important to bear in mind that the level of detail in an IDP will be different for different learners. Those with more complex needs are likely to have more detailed information than those with fewer needs.

How is a decision made on what kind of Additional Learning Provision (ALP) to provide?

A meeting should be held to discuss the Additional Learning Provision (ALP). This will usually include the school or college **Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo)**. Every school or college must have an ALNCo and they will be your first point of contact on any issues. If your child has not yet started school, your main point of contact will be the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) at your local council. Other professionals may be invited to this meeting if they can provide specialist input on your child's needs.

You and your child will also be invited to the meeting. The new system is designed around the concept of **Person Centred Planning (PCP)** which means that you and your child are at the centre of the process of deciding what is the best learning support for them. Everything should be clearly explained, and families and learners should be supported and encouraged to ask questions and raise concerns.

What happens before the Individual Development Plan (IDP) meeting?

It is important that the professional coordinating the IDP assessment gathers information on the child or young person's Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This information will be used to decide whether to offer Additional Learning Provision (ALP) and, if so, what kind of ALP to offer.

Information might include:

- reports on assessment and targets from teachers or support staff
- evidence from previous support interventions or observations in the classroom
- reports from specialist professionals such as Teachers of the Deaf (ToD), audiologists and speech and language therapists.

These reports should be shared with you before the meeting. If you need help understanding them, you can ask the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) or Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) as they have a responsibility to ensure you can understand the information.

The information you and your child provide is very important. This is your opportunity to explain the impact of deafness on your child's learning.

The more information that you can provide about your child's deafness and anything that they are finding difficult in their learning, the better chance you have of getting the right kind of learning support.

You are likely to be asked for the following information:

- What do you like most, admire or appreciate about your child?
- What has happened since the last review? (Where applicable).
- What do you think, from your perspective, are your child's aspirations for the future?
- What do you think is most important in your child's life, at the moment?
- What do you think is important for your child to help them develop and progress?
- What do other people need to know or do to help your child?
- What is going well at the moment, from your perspective?
- What is not going so well at the moment, from your perspective?
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

What happens in the Individual Development Plan (IDP) meeting?

The meeting to decide on the content of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a crucial meeting. Its aim is to decide whether your child should have an IDP or continue to have an IDP and, if so, what should be included in the plan, including an outline of the support that your child will receive.

During the meeting, the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo), or whoever is leading the meeting, should make sure that you and your child have an opportunity to discuss any suggestions around the child's support needs.

This is your chance to have your say on the support your child needs or to highlight things that you think your child will find challenging. If you're not happy with anything, or professionals in the meeting are suggesting options that you disagree with, it is important that you speak up. Your opinions should be considered and any differences of opinion recorded in the IDP.

Your child will be encouraged to attend the meeting and talk about the support they feel they need. Those arranging the meeting should ensure that any communication needs are met to enable this to happen. If your child needs support to express their opinions, they can ask for an advocate - a service provided for free by the council.

For most, these meetings will usually take place at school or college. Your child can let the ALNCo or the person leading the meeting know if there is anything that would help them feel more comfortable. They might not be able to meet all your child's requests, but they should consider them.

What happens after the meeting?

After the meeting, you should be sent a copy of your child's Individual Development Plan (IDP), or a letter outlining any decision not to provide an IDP. If you are unhappy with the content of your child's IDP or with a decision not to provide an IDP, you and your child have **rights to challenge this**.

Every IDP should be reviewed at least once a year, but if you, your child, or anyone else working with your child thinks the IDP should be reviewed more frequently, a request can be made to do so.

Reviewing the Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) must be reviewed at least once a year. It's possible that an earlier review might be advisable, for instance if there is a significant change in your child's deafness. Moving to a new area can also trigger a review of an IDP to see how these needs can best be met with the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) available in the new area.

You can ask for a review earlier than the date noted in the IDP, and the school, college or local authority must conduct the review, unless they consider it unnecessary.

Relevant factors might include:

- the length of time since the plan was prepared or reviewed
- if there has been a change in circumstances which might affect the plan
- if new evidence or information has come to light which might affect the plan.

Professionals can also request an early review of an IDP, but you must be contacted if an early review is to take place and given a chance to contribute.

You should be provided with a report on progress before the IDP review meeting. If you have any new information you wish to share, you should do so before the review meeting.

The purpose of the review is to see if the outcomes listed are being achieved and whether the ALP given is working well enough for your child. Again, the opinions of your child and family are important. If you are not happy with any element of the support, this is your chance to say.

If at the end of the meeting there's an agreement to change the IDP then the school, college or local authority must give you and your child a revised copy of the IDP. The same is true even if there are no changes to the support provided. The date for the next review must also be included in the IDP.

Transition planning

Preparing for the next stage in your child's education – whether it's starting school or nursery, moving schools or going to college, moving to a new classroom or moving on to independent living – is called transition planning. A well-planned, smooth transition will give your child the best chance of adapting to the new setting.

It often makes sense for the transition-planning to be discussed at an Individual Development Plan (IDP) meeting, but it might be useful to have a separate meeting. Whatever your situation, you can record discussions on transition transition in **Section 3C** of the IDP.

Support discussed under this section, should still be entered as Additional Learning Provision (ALP) under **Section 2** of the plan.

Nursery and primary school

The transition into the first education setting can be a very anxious time for you and your child. To make things smoother, ask if you can visit the school or nursery with your child so they can become familiar with the surroundings. It is also helpful to consider if any deaf awareness training or adaptations are needed at the new nursery or school.

Secondary school

The transition from primary to secondary school can be particularly challenging, with moving around the building for lessons, different teachers for different subjects, meeting new pupils who might not understand deafness and more noise in general. Again, it is useful to visit the new school, maybe more than once, to meet key people and to see whether deaf awareness training or any adaptations are required.

Careers and college

As young people start to make decisions around their education and future career path, they will be considering their future education and careers options.

We know that many deaf young people worry about how their deafness will affect their career. But, with the right support and adjustments, deaf young people can follow their career dreams for most career choices. If this is something your child is worried about, you can ask for your child to be given direct careers advice, so that they understand the support available to them.

If your child is thinking about college, they may want to explore the different options and support that colleges can offer.

Smaller transitions

Even if your child is just moving from one classroom to another, the transition section of the IDP can serve as a useful prompt to talk about any support that is needed to help this move.

Whatever transition takes place, the IDP Review meeting should include people from the new setting. This might be the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo), a teacher or another representative.

What happens if there's a disagreement?

From time to time there may be disagreements about whether your child has Additional Learning Needs (ALN), whether an Individual Learning Plan (IDP) is provided, or what is outlined in the IDP.

The process is meant to give you plenty of opportunities to address and resolve these disagreements before they get any worse. You can raise concerns at any point with your Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo), Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) or the person coordinating your child's plan.

If you feel the school or college is not addressing your concerns, you can take the matter up with your local authority. However, there are also other steps you can take.

Caution! Bear in mind that some of the more formal ways to challenge decisions have time limits. You should be made aware of these in writing throughout the process.

Dispute Resolution Service (DRS)

If you reach a point where you can't resolve the dispute with those coordinating your plan, then you can turn to the local authority Dispute Resolution Service (DRS). This service is designed to help discussions with the aim of reaching an agreement.

You can use this service at any time during the process. The local authority must let you know about this service and provide information about it in an accessible format for children and young people. Importantly, the local authority DRS must be free, and the staff must be impartial, have training in disagreement resolution and have a detailed understanding of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system.

You or your child can also appeal to the Education Tribunal for Wales against a decision. There are strict time frames for lodging an appeal. Families are encouraged to use the DRS, but it is not a legal requirement that you do so. If you wish, you may lodge an appeal at the same time as contacting the DRS, and then withdraw your appeal if you are happy that the issue has been resolved through dispute resolution.

Independent advocacy services

The local authority must also provide free independent advocacy services for your child, if they request it. The independent advocate can give expert advice and information and help your child communicate their views and wishes to make sure they're heard.

Education Tribunal for Wales

The Education Tribunal for Wales is independent of government, local authorities, schools and colleges, and its decisions are legally binding. It hears and decides appeals about children and young people who have or may have Additional Learning Needs (ALN). You can start an appeal to the Tribunal at the same time as using the local authority Dispute Resolution Service (DRS) and this should not have any effect on the appeal to Tribunal.

The timeline for seeking an appeal to tribunal is set at eight weeks after a decision has been made, though anybody involved in the appeal can ask for a delay. If you are also using the local authority DRS, the eight-week timescale is extended by another eight weeks.

You can appeal to the Tribunal on various aspects of the Individual Development Plan, including:

- a decision on whether a child or young person has Additional Learning Needs (ALNs)
- a decision on whether to provide an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- aspects of the Individual Development Plan, including the description of ALN, whether or not a specific school or college place is named, and the outlined Additional Learning Provision
- a local authority's decision not to revise an Individual Development Plan (IDP) when asked to reconsider
- a local authority's decision not to take over responsibility for an Individual Development Plan (IDP) at your request or that of your child or the school
- a decision to end an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- deciding not to make changes to an Individual Development Plan (IDP) because there is no change in needs or no new information that affects the decision.

The Tribunal can make the following decisions:

- dismiss the appeal
- order that a person has or doesn't have the Additional Learning Needs (ALNs) determined by the Individual Development Plan (IDP) assessment
- order a further education institution or local authority to prepare an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- order a further education institution or local authority to revise an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- order a school, further education institution or local authority to maintain an Individual Development Plan (IDP) (with or without revisions)
- order a local authority to take over responsibility for maintaining an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- order a further education authority or local authority to review an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- return the case to the further education authority or local authority responsible for it, to reconsider the observations made by the Tribunal and decide if a different decision should be made.

Complaints

There are other ways of challenging decisions made about the Additional Learning Provision your child gets:

- The complaints procedure of the school, college or local authority.
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for procedural complaints against local authorities and NHS bodies. The ombudsman is only able to look at whether the process was followed correctly and not at the detail of the decisions.
- Free investigation and advice service provided by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- The Welsh Language Commissioner if your Welsh language communication needs weren't met during the process.
- In some circumstances you could apply to the courts for a judicial review into the lawfulness of a decision or action.

What parents can do

- Ask for an Individual Development Plan (IDP) as soon as possible.
- Keep records and copies of reports, identifications, and assessments from NHS bodies or education settings.
- Prepare for meetings to discuss Additional Learning Needs, Additional Learning Provision or the reviewing of Individual Development Plans.
- Make sure the meeting organiser is aware of your and your child's communication needs.
- Get to know the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator in the school or college.
- Talk to your child about what they would like to achieve and how best to achieve it. Be clear about what your child wants and how much support they need. Speak out if you disagree with support suggestions professionals are making and give your reasons for disagreeing.
- Remember, the One Page Profile on its own is not a legal document. A full Individual Development Plan will also need to include **Section 2** and the Additional Learning Provision.
- Make sure you ask for an Individual Development Plan review if you think your child is not thriving with the support they are getting, or if changes to their deafness or circumstances affect their support needs.
- Remember that you have a right to challenge decisions you are unhappy with and that there is support to help you do this.
- Contact the **National Deaf Children's Society's Helpline** for information or advice.

Glossary

ALN Additional Learning Needs (formerly Special Educational Needs or Learning Disability).

ALNCo Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (in schools and colleges, formerly Special Educational Needs Coordinator – SENCo).

ALP Additional Learning Provision – the learning support for the child/young person with ALN.

DECLO Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer – a professional in a Health Board who liaises with local authorities on ALN.

DRS Dispute (or Disagreement) Resolution Service – these are services designed to help talk through any disagreements regarding IDPs. Each local authority must have one and publicise how to get in touch and use the service.

EYALNLO Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer. Each local authority has a duty to appoint one. They are a key contact for families of early years children who wish to have an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

IDP Individual Development Plan – the plan that contains details of a learner's ALN and ALP, is updated annually. (Formerly Statements or School Action or School Action Plus).

One Page Profile – in **Section 1C** of an IDP, this is a summary of the key information about a learner and provides space to record important information about your child for professionals.

PCP Person Centred Planning – putting the child, young person or parent at the centre of discussion and decision making.