



ALN Education Transformation: Supporting LA Implementation

Evaluative Summary (Summer 2022)

Context

Following initial discussions with all schools in Autumn 2021, an evaluative summary was produced to outline the current position of schools across BG. Following these initial discussions, YGTCS has continued to support schools to progress, in line with their set timelines, in order to realise fully the implementation plans for mandated years by Summer 2022. The work of YGTCS has been very much led by each individual school's own requirements, and any support identified has reflected fully these bespoke needs as part of a co-constructed provision package working within Priority 2 of the Regional Implementation plan.

As part of its work, YGTCS has undertaken evaluative discussions during the summer term with individual schools, to determine progress during the first year of the 'roll-over', the challenges faced and plans moving forward into 22-23. All schools once again engaged fully in open, honest and non-judgemental discussions with regards to their current position for ALN transformation. These professional dialogue sessions were held with the school's respective Headteacher (and/or SLT Lead where applicable) and ALNCO, together with YGTCS's Headteacher and ALNCO.

From the outset, it is imperative to note that although schools have been open this year and have not had firebreaks or national lockdowns to contend with, this academic year has been far from normal. There has been hugely significant and ongoing challenges faced by all schools due to C-19, with staff absences and the availability of supply staff a key concern. As such, many planned activities/interventions have been affected and this has naturally impacted on learner progress.

An additional area of concern, although not necessarily under this remit of Priority 2 but naturally impacting on later years, are the significant concerns with those learners in the early years setting. It has been reported across the LA schools that communication skills (speech and language), emotional wellbeing and disruptive behaviours are significantly higher than those pre-Covid. There are further reports of toileting concerns and an increased number of non-verbal learners. As such, schools are directing significant human and consequentially financial resource to this area of great concern. The sustainability of this support and the potential detriment to other learners is a real worry.



Introduction

As discussed previously, Priority 2 of the RI plan comprises six key objective areas. Each of these aspects are integral in securing ALN transformation and the professional discussions held during the summer term have sought to determine progress since the Autumn,

Objective 1

'Ensure consistent PCP approaches involve children, young people and parents at every opportunity'

PCP approaches across both primary and secondary schools were reported as strong in Autumn, with all schools fully adopting the principles and practices. The concern, however, was that most ALNCOs were facilitating this comprehensive and time-demanding role within their settings. Since Christmas, many schools have reported that there has been extensive professional learning provided by ALNCOs to either whole staff or identified staff with regards to the PCP process. Primary settings reported the greater involvement of Class teachers in supporting the PCP process and all schools welcomed the full return to face-to-face multi agency reviews. Most ALNCOs confirmed that throughout the next academic year, there would be greater opportunities provided for key staff to participate and engage in PCP reviews and to share the facilitation.

There was a collective agreement that the PCP paperwork and processes were supportive for both schools and families, and ensured the focus remained fully on the child in question.

Objective 2

'Ensure the school continues to develop and effective and efficient workforce ready for transformation'

The time allocation for ALNCOs to fulfil their now statutory roles remains as highly variable, ranging from non-teaching ALNCOs to those allocated one afternoon a week. The increasing strategic demands of the role was fully recognised by all leaders, but budgetary demands continues to be identified as the key limiting factor in providing greater time. There are, however, a number of schools both within primary and secondary settings, who for 22-23, have increased the non-contact time for ALNCOs. The sustainability of this time beyond the next academic year remains questionable. All Headteachers continued to be responsive in recognising key 'pinch-points' during the year and provided the tie for their ALNCOs accordingly.

As per the Autumn term, it remains that in many primary settings, the ALNCO is part of the leadership team. In many secondary settings, the ALNCO role does not sit within the senior or extended leadership teams, although there is a direct line to leadership through line management arrangements.



Governor professional learning has been undertaken in all settings, with further upskilling planned for 22-23. This has predominantly been delivered by the Headteacher and/or ALNCO, although in some instances, the ALN Lead for the LA has facilitated.

Schools with bespoke ALN governor sub-committees that were established at the start of the year have purported that these have continued to develop throughout this academic year.

Despite schools identifying calendared opportunities throughout the year to support the ongoing professional learning for their staff, these opportunities have been impacted by severe staff absences. All schools have identified key specialists within their teams to focus during 22-23 on areas such as literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. In the majority of schools, there are clear plans to further build and strengthen TA 'specialisms' to support both in-class and in small group/1:1 interventions.

All ALNCOs reported the challenges regarding cluster work this year, again due to staff absences and release time, although it was fully recognised that these meetings are incredibly valuable. All clusters have set their meetings for the forthcoming academic year and will be meeting face-to-face to ensure opportunities for high quality professional dialogue.

Objective 3

'Develop robust and consistent practices to inform early identification of need using a graduated response, resulting in effective provision mapping'

Provision mapping, in line with the graduated response, has strengthened across all settings since the Autumn term. All are subject to at least termly reviews and the provisions within the Universal tier have developed considerably. It is noted, however, that provisions cannot and should not be pigeon-holed into specific tiers, but should be determined by a school's own justifications and allocated accordingly. For example, ELSA can sit within both Universal and Targeted tiers, as this is very much based upon a school's staffing structures.

Objective 4

'Ensure teaching responds to the needs of individual learners; Develop effective systems for monitoring the progress and achievement of learners with ALN'

The development of provisions at the Universal tier has started to translate effectively into classroom provision. Teaching staff have a comprehensive understanding of what provisions are available within their settings and ALNCOs are developing the confidence to challenge and coach staff when identifying and implementing provisions. Tracking and monitoring processes have continued at a whole school level, with progress reviews by all schools being undertaken at least termly.



Objective 5

'Develop arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness of interventions'

There continues to be further developments with regards to interventions being implemented across BG schools to support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional skills. Commonly identified interventions include: THRIVE, ELSA, Catch -up literacy and numeracy and COMIT. There has been a noticeable increase in schools offering specific wellbeing provision to support those ever-increasing emotional wellbeing concerns across all settings. However, due to funding constraints, these highly worthwhile provisions are being withdrawn during the next academic year and concerns have been raised regarding the impact of this regrettable but necessary change.

As noted earlier, the challenges being seen in the early years are placing significant strain on the availability for interventions across settings. It was noted by many schools the difficulties in deciding whether a young learner does indeed have an ALN or whether the exhibited behaviours are as a consequence of social deficits due to the pandemic. Such determinations will take time and again this places further constraints on the school's human and financial resources.

Objective 6

'Undertake moderation of IDPs to secure a consistency of approach and understanding by all'

Confidence levels with regards to the preparation and construction of IDPs have developed throughout the year with ALNCOs. The Barriers matrix has proven to be a useful tool in their development. In many primary settings, the matrix has been shared with teaching staff to develop and support their own planning and understanding of needs.

The number of IDPs across school settings continues to be variable with one school reporting over 10 IDPs (ex of a resource base) whilst others reporting none. There is the full recognition that schools will have differing numbers of learners with ALN. Discussions with the LA ALN Lead regarding IDPs have been incredibly valuable and have supported ALNCO confidence.

All schools identified the want and need to have IDPs checked and agreed in the early stages of educational transformation. This would help build confidence levels and secure a greater knowledge and understanding of the IDP requirements. The cluster meetings were recognised as a forum for this moving forward, with schools having the opportunity to present anonymised IDPS for the other schools to act as 'critical friends'.

There is still some confusion with regards to the IDPs for learners placed with LA maintained resource bases. Clarity is needed as to who is accountable for owning and maintaining the IDP in this case. Further clarity is also required with regards to the legislation with regards



to IDPs and how the LA will support schools with this to avoid any resulting tribunal scenarios.

Moving forward & Possible LA Action Points

Firstly, YGTCS would once again like to thank all participating schools for their valuable time and honest contributions during a year which has been extremely challenging for all.

The key action points identified are as follows:

- **LA Action Point 1** – Address the highly variable time allocation for ALNCOs to fulfil their now statutory roles.
- **LA Action Point 2** – An additional area of concern, although not necessarily under this remit of Priority 2 but naturally impacting on later years, are the significant concerns with those learners in the early years setting.
- **LA Action Point 3** - There is still some confusion with regards to the IDPs for learners placed with LA maintained resource bases. Clarity is needed as to who is accountable for owning and maintaining the IDP in this case. Further clarity is also required with regards to the legislation with regards to IDPs and how the LA will support schools with this to avoid any resulting tribunal scenarios.
- **LA Action Point 3** - Designate roles for an ALN Reform Lead and ALN Reform Champions (similar to Merthyr model e.g. full or part time secondments for ALNCOs), to lead cluster work, support schools, monitor ALPs and QA IDPs)