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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/your ref P-05-920
Ein cyf/our ref KW/06565/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

8 December 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 18 November regarding petition P-05-920 School Budgeting for ALN.

As you will be aware, funding is provided to local authorities by Welsh Government via the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). This funding is un-hypothecated. Once it is distributed, it is the responsibility of individual authorities to set budgets for their schools and the local provision that they support. This approach to funding supports the Welsh Government's view that local authorities are best placed to deliver services. They do this in line with the requirements and circumstances of their population, to whom they are accountable.

The Welsh Government recognise that local government is at the forefront of delivering public services and we remain committed to providing local government with the best possible funding settlement. The current system for funding education, including special educational needs (SEN) provision, will be unchanged following implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALN Act).

The ALN Act and Code do not increase need nor do they require increased provision to be made. The new system is about improving the way that planning to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN is undertaken. It intends to ensure more appropriate making of provision, early identification of needs and early intervention, with a view to preventing long term issues and costly interventions. With regard to NHS services, under the ALN Act if an NHS body identifies a treatment or service that is likely to be of benefit in addressing the ALN of a child or young person then the duty under the Act (and therefore the cost) falls to the NHS body and not the local authority or school.

In order to cover the administrative costs associated with the transition from the existing SEN system to the new one we have invested £20m of extra funding over this Assembly term. This funding is for our ALN Transformation programme which is also supporting

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

the skills development of the education workforce to help build capacity within the system and ensure learners' needs can be met in a range of education settings.

In 2020/21 we allocated an additional £8 million to help local authorities and further education colleges support high-needs learners. The funding was directed towards those areas local authorities and colleges identified as being of most pressing need. This funding allocation was not recurrent and the Senedd's budget for 2021-22 has not yet been agreed.

In the new ALN system the term ALN will replace the terms 'SEN' and 'learning difficulties and/or disabilities'. In the ALN Act section 2 defines ALN. '*A person has additional learning needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision*'. Section 3 of the Act defines 'additional learning provision' (ALP). The identification of ALN relies on an understanding of the definition of ALN and ALP as set out in sections 2 and 3 of the Act. The ALN Code will provide guidance on the definition of ALN and ALP and on the identification of ALN. The Code will also impose requirements on the governing bodies of maintained schools in Wales, further education institutions in Wales, and on local authorities in Wales, in respect of decisions about whether a child or young person has ALN.

To improve early identification and intervention in relation to ALN and ensure better planning for future provision the ALN Act will mandate a new local authority Early Years ALN Lead Officer role. The role is strategic and responsibilities are expected to include establishing effective collaborative working practices; raising awareness of the ALN system; and helping to ensure the early years workforce has the appropriate skills, mechanisms and tools for preventing the development of ALN and supporting young children with ALN.

The ALN Act also creates a statutory ALN Co-ordinator (ALNCo) role in schools, including pupil referral units, and further education institutions (FEIs). The ALNCo role will replace the non-statutory Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) role currently adopted by most schools and FEIs. ALNCoS will provide a strategic leadership role and will be the first port of call for professional advice and guidance in schools, settings and FEIs.

A significant proportion of the £20 million we are investing in the ALN Transformation Programme funding is being used to support activity to upskill the workforce to better meet the needs of learners with ALN. Working with our ALN Transformation Leads, we are delivering an extensive package of training, core skills development and ongoing professional development for all practitioners. Part of this work involves developing an ALN professional learning offer. This professional learning offer will provide an opportunity for practitioners, particularly ALNCoS, to achieve a deeper skills and knowledge base relevant to the ALN system and assist with the identification of ALN.

For staff in the childcare workforce, we are working with the South East Wales Consortium to develop and pilot a Speech, Language and Communication training pathway. This is aligned with descriptors from the ALN Act and is designed as a tool that childcare practitioners can use to determine their own training needs.

In order to help practitioners make decisions on effective interventions we have published guides which detail effective interventions for learners with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and sensory impairment, in education settings. We have also funded

the development and roll out of the 'Learning with Autism' programme which raises awareness of autism across the whole school community.

We are also working with the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA) to update the Newly Qualified Teacher Additional Learning Needs training pack. The aim of the pack is to support newly qualified teachers, as well as longstanding teachers in understanding their role and responsibility in relation to children and young people with ALN. The training pack covers several areas, including a section on helping children and young people with specific needs.

The school funding review I announced in October 2019 to assess the different levels of funding required, in different circumstances, has now concluded and the report has been published.

The report concludes that a single minimum cost figure is unlikely to be relevant to most schools across Wales. It is therefore not possible to estimate the minimum cost of educating a learner in Wales in a reliable and robust way, or in a way that could be used in a funding system. The review does include a detailed and informative overview of what the current offer looks like for children in Wales, including where the money comes from, who spends the money, how it's changed over time and what pupils get in terms of actual resources for their education.

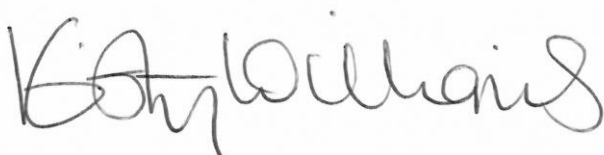
The findings will be used to aid policymakers to determine whether schools in different circumstances have sufficient funding and how to best target any increases in spending both now and in the future to support our education reforms.

The report recommends that the Welsh Government should work with local authorities and other stakeholders to keep the new ALN system under continual review to ensure it is implemented as intended.

The phased rollout of the new ALN system will be monitored and evaluated by Welsh Government. During implementation, the main focus of the work will be to establish the extent to which stakeholders are compliant with the provisions in the Act and to consider the initial effects and impacts of the Act using available data.

The focus of the post-implementation work will be to assess the extent to which the Act has achieved the intended outcomes. This will be achieved through research undertaken with stakeholders, including parents, and using statistics, and will include analyses of costs and numbers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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