

Participation of children, their parents and young people

Additional Learning Needs Code Wales 2021

Local Authorities, local health boards, schools, and further education institutions (FEI) who support children or young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) have new duties in the legislation to:

- ✓ Listen to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and the child's parent or the young person,
- ✓ Understand the importance of the child and the child's parent or the young person participating as fully as possible in decisions
- ✓ provide information and support to the child and the child's parent, or young person, to so they can participate in those decisions.

A Person Centred Planning (PCP) Approach

To help support this participation from children, young people and their families, all schools, FEI's and settings in Pembrokeshire use person-centred practice (PCP).

Person Centred Practice (PCP) is:

- a way of working together and communicating positively with each other.
- The child/young person is at the centre.
- The voice of the child/ young person is key, as is the voice of the family.
- The views, wishes and feelings of those involved are at the heart of decision making

Why the participation of children, their parents and young people is important

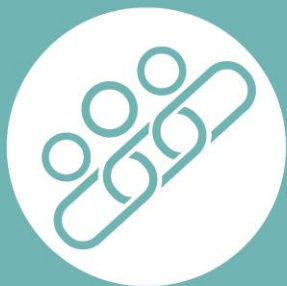
Supporting children, their parents and young people to participate meaningfully will help them to:

- ✓ feel confident that their views, wishes and feelings are listened to and valued, even if they find it difficult to get these across,
- ✓ have an awareness of their rights and the support and services available to them,
- ✓ develop a sense of responsibility for, and control over, their learning.

As a result of this, a child or young person's needs are more likely to be understood and the support they need is more likely to be effective, this should lead to better outcomes for the child or young person.

If a child lacks capacity to understand what it means to exercise their rights, their contribution to the process is still important.

Parents have a fundamental role in helping their child to achieve their potential. The child is far more likely to achieve their outcomes and potential when parents are actively involved and their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account.



Key steps for Local Authorities, schools, and Further Education Institutions (FEIs)

When making any decisions about a child or young person's ALN and the support they need, they should:

- seek the child, their parent or young person's views on how they wish to participate in the decisions **ahead of those decisions being made;**
- **provide information** relevant to the decision to the child, their parent or young person in a way which enables that child, their parent or young person to understand it;
- **encourage** the child, their parent or young person to participate fully in the process;
- use the child, their parent or young person's views **to inform the decisions;**
- ensure the child, their parent or young person **has access to information and advice about ALN**

A school, FEI or local authority should do these things at an early stage in the process and continue to do so as often as necessary to make sure the child, their parent or the young person can be fully involved in the process.

Identify how a child or young person would like to communicate and participate

The starting point for involving children and young people is to understand how the child or young person wants to communicate their views, and to understand any support which may be required for the child or young person to do so. It is essential to understand how the child or young person wishes to participate. See below 'Types of communication suitable for children, their parents and young people'.

Providing information and support

Pembrokeshire's Parent Partnership Service have a team of trained staff who offer families impartial, accurate, local information, advice and support about concerns that may affect children and young people's education, progress and development. This is delivered through a dedicated duty telephone service, leaflets, a website, increased presence on social media, and a range of parental engagement events.

Schools and FEI's must signpost families to Parent Partnership, and can refer directly to the service with consent. Schools can access the service for advice around specific issues to do with ALN and family support.

Local authorities, maintained schools and FEIs must take reasonable steps to promote the impartial Advice and Information service (in the case of schools) to its pupils and their parents and case friends of its pupils, and (in the case of FEIs), its students.

Requirements when making decisions about Additional learning Needs (ALN)

When a school, FEI or local authority is making a decision as to whether a child or young person has ALN, there are requirements on it to do various things, including:

- ✓ notifying a child and their parent that it is deciding whether the child has ALN
- ✓ Considering whether to offer a meeting to the child and their parent or the young person to discuss the process.
- ✓ explain the process to the child and their parent or the young person at the outset and a meeting can be a helpful way of doing that in many cases

The lead up to a decision on whether a child has ALN may be an anxious time for the parents and family and other decisions on a child's ALN may also cause anxiety. It is important that schools, local authorities and FEI's appreciate this



Types of communication suitable for children, their parents and young people

Some children and young people may become anxious in new situations, or feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable, and find it difficult to participate fully or express their views in meetings, or with large numbers of adults.

Consideration must be given to how to support an individual child or young person to participate, including;

- the language and methods of communication and engagement, and in the case of a young person, whether and how they wish to involve others in those communications.
- Opportunities to attend a part or whole of meeting
- Gathering views before a meeting- even when it is not appropriate for a child or young person to be present where a decision is being made, their views, wishes and feelings must still be taken into consideration when the decision is being made.
- Making use of PCP approaches and tools including 4+1, Appreciation tool, Good Day, Bad Day etc,
- If an Individual Development Plan is prepared or maintained for the child or young person, their views, wishes and feelings should be recorded in the relevant section of the IDP

Preparing a child and their parent or a young person for a meeting

The school, FEI or local authority responsible for making a decision about ALN, or for preparing or reviewing or reconsidering the IDP, should work with the child and their parent or the young person to help them prepare for the meeting.

Young people's consent

Young people (aged 16+ in education years 12 and above) have the right not to agree to/ consent to some decisions being made about their Additional Learning Needs. The school, local authority or FEI must explain the consequences of consenting or not doing so and to record these matters relating to consent. This includes information which explains their rights, the consequences of having an IDP or not having one, the steps likely to be involved in making decisions, preparing an IDP or maintaining one and how they will be carried out.

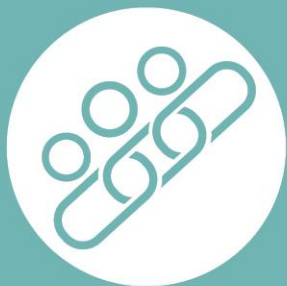
Where a young person does not give their consent to a decision on ALN or an IDP, this does not mean that their ALN should not be met, where possible, by a maintained school or FEI in which they may be enrolled.

Young people must be given the opportunity to discuss any concerns they might have and clarify anything they might be uncertain about.

A decision to withhold consent is not irreversible; the young person is entitled to change their mind at any time

Transition for young people aged 16 + approaching the end of compulsory schooling,

When a child with an IDP is approaching the end of compulsory schooling (year 11), a school or local authority that maintains an IDP should explain to the child and their parents what may happen to their IDP when the child becomes a young person.



In Year 11, schools and local authorities should explain to child and their parents:

- ✓ who will maintain the IDP (e.g. from a school to an FEI)
- ✓ explaining the rights of young people to consent or object to ALN decisions and IDPs.

The school or local authority should seek the child's view on consenting to the IDP continuing to be maintained once the child becomes a young person (which is when the child ceases to be of compulsory school age). This should be discussed during a review in year 11 and form part of transition planning.

Where a young person lacks capacity, the person's representative can consent and exercise other rights on the young person's behalf.

Some parents might need support in seeing their children as partners in decisions relating to their education. Parents may need support in appreciating that their child may, over time, begin to form their own views about their education, support and how they wish to participate in decisions about their ALN. These views may differ from those of their parents. With support, parents may come to understand that this is an important step on their child's journey to increased independence and will help them to take control of their learning.'

Remember- Involving and supporting Parents of children with ALN is a requirement within the ALN Code

- ✓ The duty on schools, local authorities and FEI's to involve and support children and young people, **applies in the same way to involve and support the parents** of children.
- ✓ **Parents hold key information** and play a critical role in their child's development and education. They have unique knowledge about their child which will contribute to the shared view of the child's needs and the best way of supporting them.
- ✓ **Parents have a right to participate** in decisions about their child's education and a positive attitude towards including parents can contribute towards **better decision making and outcomes for the child**.
- ✓ **Different parents will require differing levels of support**. They need to feel confident that they will be listened to and their input valued.
- ✓ Some parents may require support that **goes further than signposting to information and advice**; for example, they may experience difficulties with accessibility and understanding. Local authorities, maintained schools and FEIs should provide support to parents to enable them to participate as fully as possible in meetings.

Pembrokeshire Parent Partnership Service

pps@pembrokeshire.gov.uk
01437 776354

www.pembsinclusionservice.wales

Facebook: Inclusion Service Pembrokeshire