



Academi Genedlaethol ar gyfer
Arweinyddiaeth Addysgol Cymru
National Academy for
Educational Leadership Wales

What is the role of educational leadership in delivering the Additional Learning Needs reform in Wales?

Ysbrydoli Arweinwyr - Cyfoethogi Bywydau
Inspiring Leaders - Enriching Lives



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Executive Summary

This report addresses the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms in Wales and is intended for school leaders and related stakeholders. The aim of these reforms is to create a fully inclusive education system, where the needs of children and young people are identified and addressed promptly, fostering an environment where all students can reach their potential.

The ALN system supports children and young people aged 0 to 25 with additional learning needs. The Associates of Cohort 3 of the National Academy for Education Leadership explored the role of educational leadership in delivering these reforms. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the start of this work and also extended the timeline for the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act.

The research involved a wide array of stakeholders, utilised an online survey, and semi-structured interviews, with OB3 Research assisting in surveying school leaders in Wales. The survey sought to explore leaders' understanding of the ALNET Act and their readiness to implement it. Thematic Analysis was used to identify patterns in the data and generate insights from the results.

The survey, live between December 2022 and January 2023, received a total of 730 responses. Key themes emerged from these responses, leading to a series of recommendations.

These recommendations addressed well-being, recruitment and retention, multi-agency partnerships, funding, and Welsh language provision. The focus was on ensuring adequate resources, fostering collaboration, improving pay and job security, enhancing support and training, and ensuring consistency in ALN funding across Wales.

In conclusion, the report calls for all stakeholders within the ALN system to act upon these recommendations to help leaders support children and young people with additional learning needs effectively. Despite challenges and time constraints brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the belief is that collective effort can bring about sustained change in the delivery of the ALNET Act, ensuring an inclusive learning environment for all students.

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1. Audience

This report is for school leaders and all those involved in the wider system of support for children and young people with additional learning needs in Wales, including Local Authorities, Governing Bodies, Estyn, Welsh Government, Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts, Parents, Workforce Unions and Diocesan Authorities.

**For the purpose of this report the Associates in Cohort 3 defined school leaders as Headteacher, Acting Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, ALNCo, Senior Leader and Middle Leader. We acknowledge that there will be other leadership roles within a school setting that may not have been specifically named.*

2. Introduction

The ALN reforms aim to deliver a fully inclusive education system in Wales, where the educational needs of children and young people are identified early and addressed quickly, and where all are supported to reach their potential. Under the new ALN system, planning will be flexible and responsive, our professionals will be skilled and confident in identifying needs and deploying strategies to help overcome barriers to learning, and the child and young person will be at the centre of everything we do.

The National Academy for Education Leadership aims to support all leaders in the implementation of ALN Reforms. It works closely with other middle tier partners and all senior leaders in the sector to further develop leadership skills, confidence and capabilities to fulfil the ALN Act. It strives to develop the skills of the education workforce to listen, identify, and respond to the needs of children and young people when they require extra support to flourish in education.

3. Setting the scene

The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system is the system for supporting children and young people aged 0 to 25 in Wales with additional learning needs.

The Additional Learning Needs Code (“the” or “this Code”) is issued under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (“the Act”). The Act, together with the Code and regulations made under the Act, provides the statutory provision for meeting the additional learning needs of children and young people. It places the learners’ views, wishes and feelings at the heart of the process of planning the support required to enable them to learn effectively and achieve their potential. (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents>)

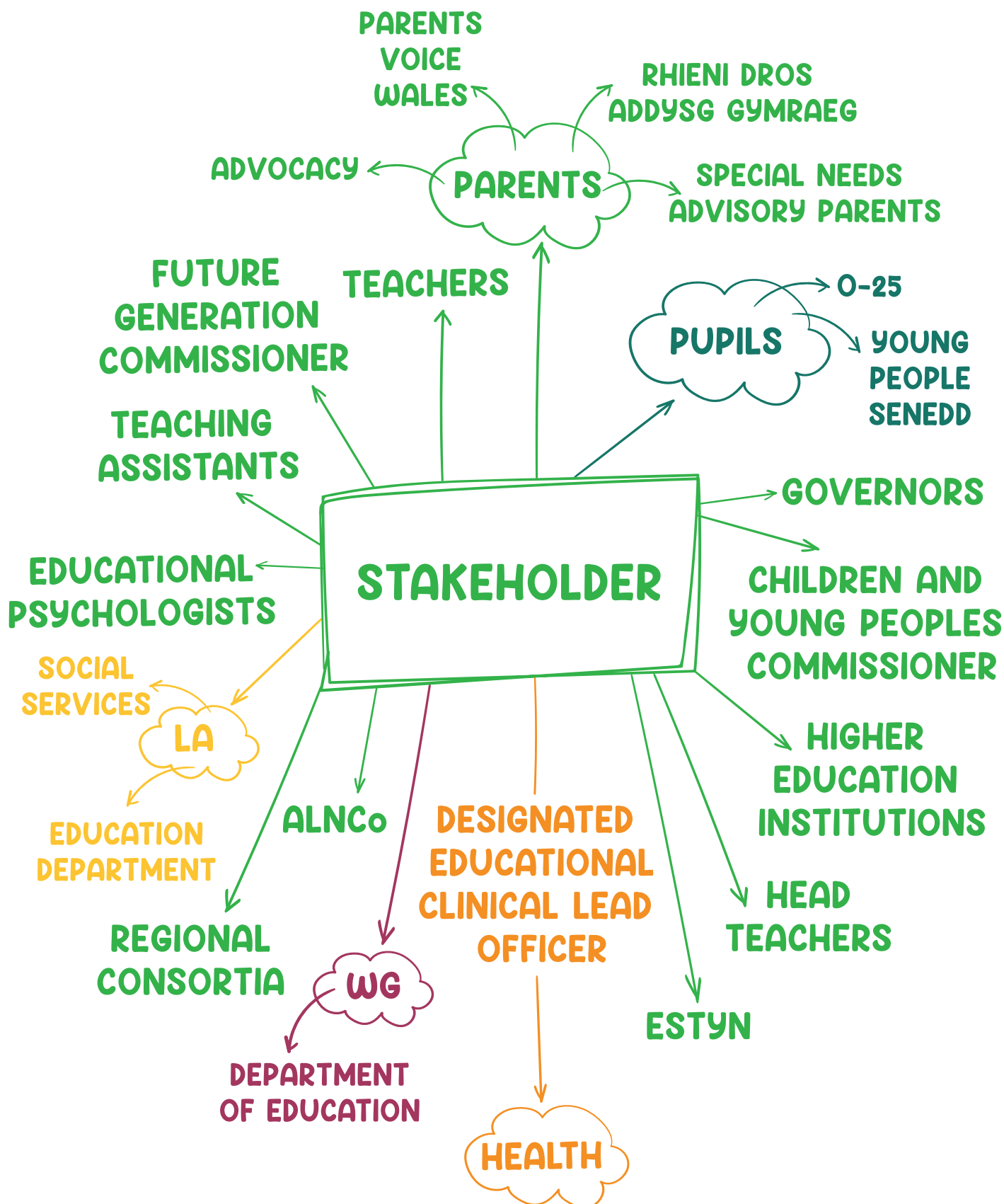
The Associates of Cohort 3 of the National Academy for Education Leadership were tasked with the commission in April 2022 to explore the role of educational leadership in delivering the additional learning needs reform in Wales. The commencement of this commission was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Post-covid, the timeline for the implementation of Additional Learning Needs Educational Tribunal 2019 has also been extended to support schools in their transformation process.

Whilst wanting to ensure that a wide range of evidence was gathered, Associates were aware of constraints, such as time and capacity. Associates have aimed to be realistic with regards to stakeholder input, to reflect as many voices from educational leadership across Wales as would be practicably possible. These included 730 responses to an online survey for school leaders, 12 semi-structured interviews with Designated Educational Clinical Lead Officers (DECLO), Local Authority ALN Officers (LA), Early Years Leads and Advisory Teachers, Cluster Lead ALNCo, Estyn and discussions with Welsh Government.

4. Methodology

Fig.1: Stakeholder mapping activity



The commission's research was broad and inclusive, even though the timeline itself was short.

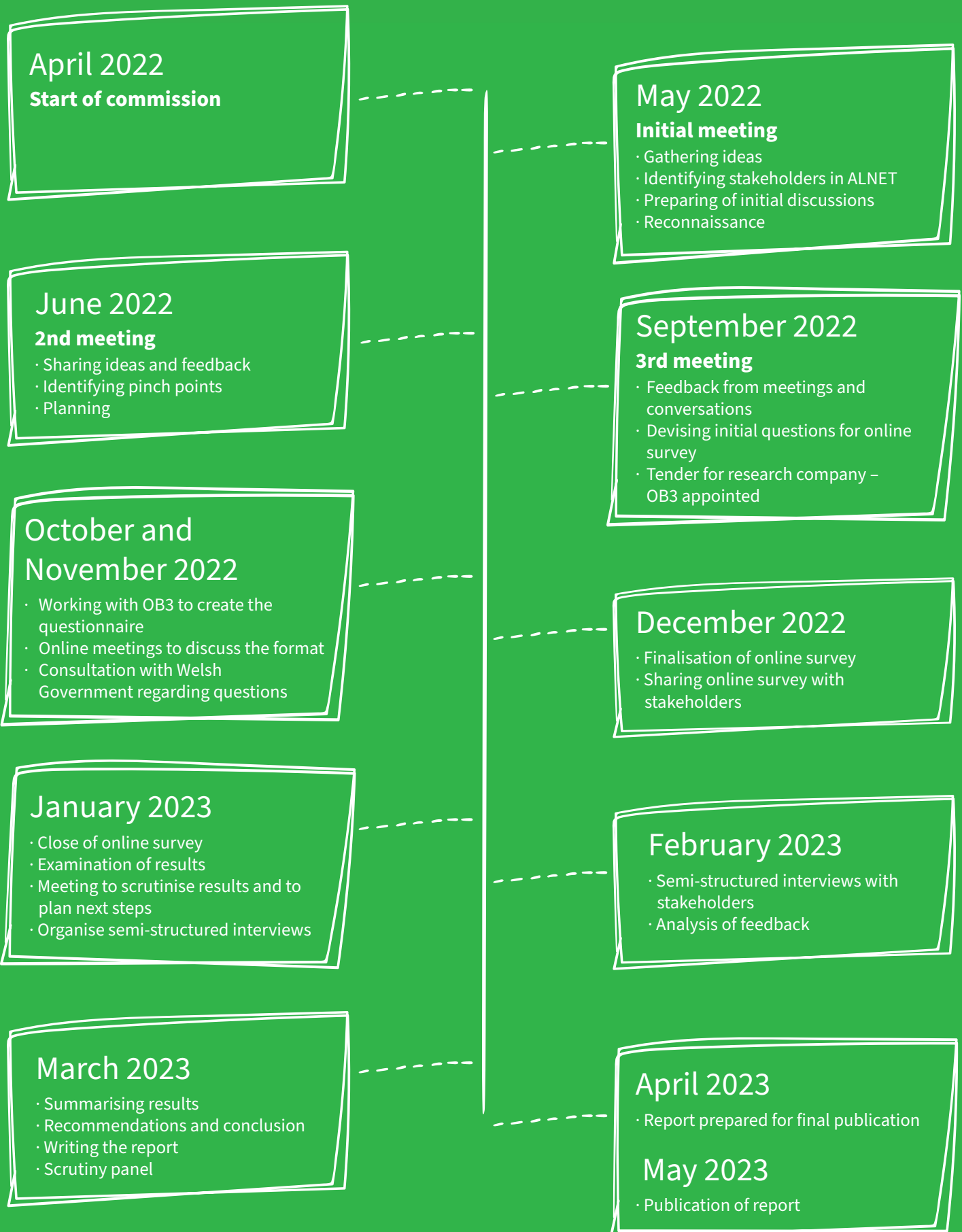
Our first step as a group was to carry out reconnaissance. Extensive background reading was undertaken, including international comparisons, informal discussions from the outset with Welsh Government, and informal conversations with other stakeholders identified in the mapping exercise (see fig.1). This information was used to guide the work and to prioritise the next steps. Discussions were held around the definition of school leadership* within the ALN reform.

From the initial findings, it was decided that the commission needed to consider the voice of a wide audience of stakeholders through an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The Associates appointed OB3 Research to support in surveying school leaders in Wales. A bilingual online survey was created in discussions between the Associates and OB3 research. Associates consulted with Welsh Government to refine the survey questions. The aim was to gather views on leaders' readiness to implement the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) (Wales) Act. The survey itself was designed for completion by representatives such as school heads, senior leaders and Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCo's) across all school settings and set out to explore their knowledge and understanding of the ALNET Act as well as their readiness to implement it.

Together, as Associates, we discussed the results of the online survey and set out to decide as a group what stakeholders would be best for us to interview to address the commission's requirements. The online survey findings were then used to create questions for the semi-structured interviews (See Appendix 4). The semi structured interviews were conducted across local authorities in Wales and included, Designated Educational Clinical Lead Officers (DECLO), Local Authority ALN Officers (LA), Early Years Leads and Advisory Teachers, Cluster Lead ALNCo and Estyn.

Timeline

A timeline giving an overview of our commission work:



5. Initial Findings

5.1 Online Survey Analysis - OB3

For full analysis see Appendix 2

The survey was live between the 14th of December 2022 and 16th January 2023 and was distributed by National Academy for Educational Leadership and its Cohort 3 Associates. A total of 730 survey responses were received 122 respondents completed the survey in Welsh and 608 in English. The survey clearly identified the respondents' role, geographical area, sector of work and primary language.

Local authority	Number	%	Local authority	Number	%
Blaenau Gwent	10	1%	Monmouthshire	13	2%
Bridgend	18	2%	Neath Port Talbot	42	6%
Caerphilly	31	4%	Newport	52	8%
Cardiff	63	9%	Pembrokeshire	20	3%
Carmarthenshire	37	5%	Powys	32	5%
Ceredigion	15	2%	Rhondda Cynon Taf	42	6%
Conwy	7	1%	Swansea	85	12%
Denbighshire	23	3%	Torfaen	15	2%
Flintshire	30	4%	Vale of Glamorgan	16	2%
Gwynedd	44	6%	Wrexham	26	4%
Isle of Anglesey	9	1%	Prefer not to say / Not answered	99	14%
Merthyr Tydfil	1	0%			
Total				730	100%

In total 450 of all survey respondents (62%) identified as ALNCoS in their setting. Most survey respondents work within either a primary (69% or 502) or secondary (18% or 130) school setting. A small number of responses were also received from respondents working within other settings such as a special school, a 3-16 or 3-19 school, a further education / sixth form college or pupil referral unit. No responses were secured from respondents based at a pre-school or a middle school.

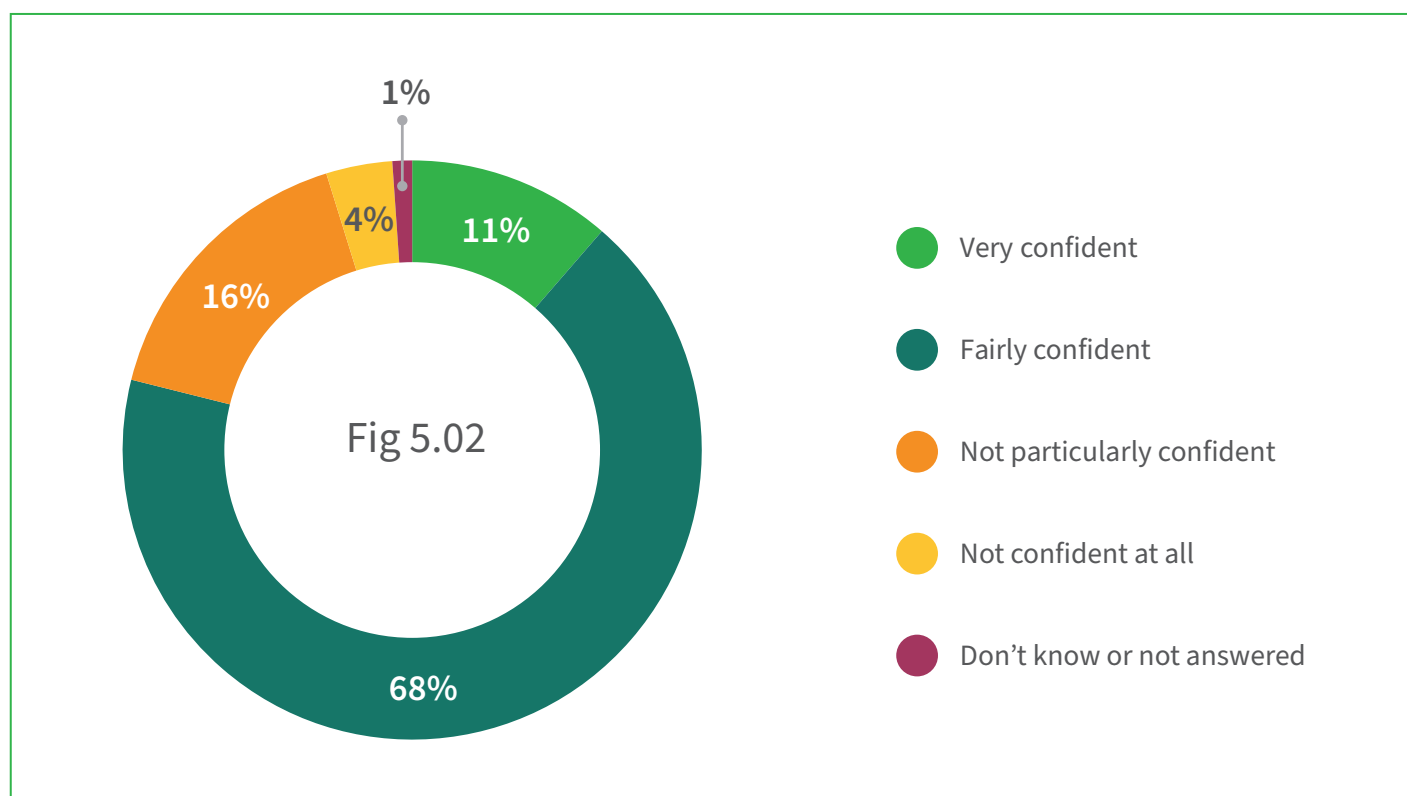
Three-quarters of survey respondents (73% or 513) reported that they were based at English medium educational settings, whilst a fifth were based at a Welsh medium setting (19% or 136). A small number (6% or 42) are based at a bilingual setting.

From these survey responses, emerging themes were identified. These formed the basis of our semi-structured interviews.

Confidence to deliver ALNET

Four fifths of survey respondents are either very confident (11% or 83) or fairly confident (68% or 493) about delivering ALNET whilst a fifth are either not particularly confident (16% or 119) or not confident at all (4% or 27), as shown at Figure 5.02. Respondents who identified their main role as an ALNCo are the most confident about delivering ALNET, with 79% (275 of 326) noting that they are either very or fairly confident to do so.

Figure 5.02: Survey respondents' confidence to deliver ALNET (n=730)



Respondents feel they understand various elements of the ALNET Code for Wales. The survey shows that respondents have a good understanding of the role of the ALNCo and how to involve pupils and their parents/carers in decision making whilst they have less of an understanding about preparing and maintaining an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and securing multiagency contribution to this process.

Support to deliver ALNET

Survey respondents felt generally well supported by their educational setting, local authority and other schools or educational settings whilst they felt less supported by their health service and regional educational consortia, defined as the provision set up by a group of local authorities to deliver school improvement services as set out in the Welsh Government's National Model for Regional Working. *The Curriculum for Wales - How are regional consortia and local authorities supporting schools? Estyn 2022*

A total of 77 survey respondents provided the name of another provider who had supported them in delivering ALNET. In many of these cases, respondents mentioned a specific role or service from within the list of organisations listed, such as ALN advisory teachers, ALN cluster leads, and other ALNCOs. Many respondents noted that they have accessed support from specific health services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS), Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), educational psychologists, and play therapists. A smaller number of respondents noted that they have received support from third sector organisations such as SNAP Cymru, Disability Wales and Barnardo's, whilst a handful have received support from organisations such as Careers Wales and Colleges Wales.

A total of 378 survey respondents noted the support they found helpful in delivering ALNET. An analysis of responses identified 36 main themes, and the vast majority of comments were positive. The responses received suggest that respondents' opinions were more focused and less polarised than for other open-ended survey questions. There were a small number of isolated examples whereby strong adverse views were expressed on matters relating, for example, to the ALNET Act being seen as a financial tool of ALN reform.

Respondents gave ample positive examples of the support they found helpful in delivering ALNET. An overwhelming majority stated that their substantial training had been excellent. Likewise, the support received in cluster group meetings was highly praised and valued:

“The training delivered by the LA has been extensive and detailed.”

“Our Cluster School ALNCO group is an excellent resource and sounding board”.

Respondents reflected upon the comprehensiveness of the training and support received, the quality of information on issues such as the processes involved, the usefulness of the examples and templates shared at training events, the information and sharing of good practice, the opportunity to network and to ask questions and receive advice. They used these sessions to gain the latest guidance on the implementation of ALNET, to develop problem-solving techniques and skills with ‘critical friends’, and to build supportive relationships:

“ALN Cluster meetings where all the ALNCOs from the cluster meet up termly provides a strong and safe network of support to talk through questions and problem solve.”

“Cluster Leads and implementation days. Cluster colleagues - we have built some great supportive relationships.”

Cluster working, in particular, helped respondents to develop a more consistent practice, share good practice and information on latest developments:

“Working with the LA to develop LA based approaches has also been helpful to develop the practice across our cluster. Cluster working has developed a more consistent practice, supporting transition, understanding and maintaining relationships with parents.”

Training on Person Centred IDPs featured notably as something that respondents had considered particularly useful, along with going over specific documents, examples and resources (such as “All About Me” and “Flow Chart Letters”) that helped them prepare to deliver ALNET.

“The ALP Co-ordinators from the Local Authority have been amazing throughout the last year; they have been very approachable and quick to support with IDPs and PCP meetings.”

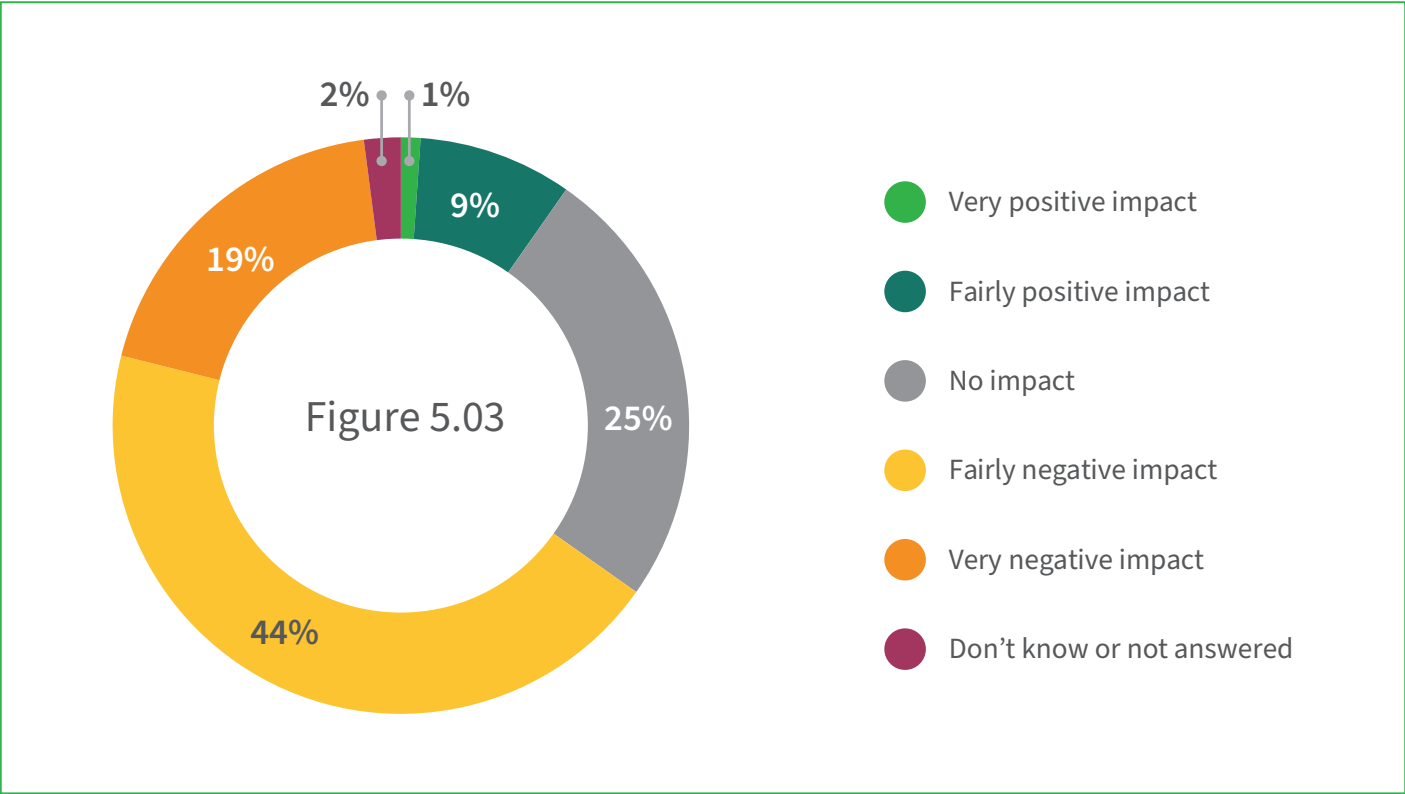
Respondents reflected positively on the local authority support received from various professionals for general and specific support.

The less favourable responses noted time constraints to attend training events due to having to prioritise competing responsibilities and roles, excessive workloads at school, and having to undertake independent reading and research.

Impact on personal well-being

Some two-thirds of survey respondents thought that the implementation of ALNET has had either a very (19% or 139) or fairly (44% or 322) negative impact on their own well-being, and these are more likely to be respondents whose main role is ALNCo. A quarter of those surveyed (25% or 183) do not believe it has had any impact. A tenth of those surveyed believe it has either had a very (1% or 8) or fairly (9% or 63) positive impact on their well-being, as shown at Figure 5.03, and these are more likely to be from further education/sixth form settings.

Figure 5.03 in full report: Impact of implementing ALNET on personal well-being (n=730)



Concerns about the additional workload and responsibilities associated with the role of ALNCo was raised by respondents when answering the final question of the survey, given that this is considered to negatively impact on ALNCos’ health and well-being. Comments made by headteachers, and other senior staff included:

“ALNCos are very stressed [and] overworked, particularly in schools with a high level of pupils requiring additional support.”

“This is an awful time to be an ALNCo. The accountability is overwhelming, and the workload is unsustainable. It doesn’t work!”

“My ALNCo is at breaking point with this reform.”

“This week, all members have cried at some point and said they were frustrated as they couldn’t help the children as they want to! Two members of staff aged between 39 and 45 years have said they want to leave teaching.”

These views were echoed by comments offered by ALNCoS themselves:

“The effect the legislation has had on me personally as ALNCo is drastic. I no longer feel I can do my job properly and it is affecting me in a way I have never experienced before in a 22-year career.”

“I will be honest, I have really struggled trying to lead a large school through the changes. Communication has not been clear and it has been VERY stressful. My mental well-being has taken a real hit. Staff members are panicking, and I find that I can’t help them. My cluster ALNCoS have been the only thing keeping me in this job.”

Educational settings’ understanding and implementation of ALNET

Staff who undertake the role of ALNCo

A wide range of staff undertake the role of ALNCo, with senior leaders (35% or 256) and middle leaders (19% or 142) accounting for over half of all responses. In 29% of cases (or 213), the Head, Acting, Deputy or Assistant Head is expected to undertake the role.

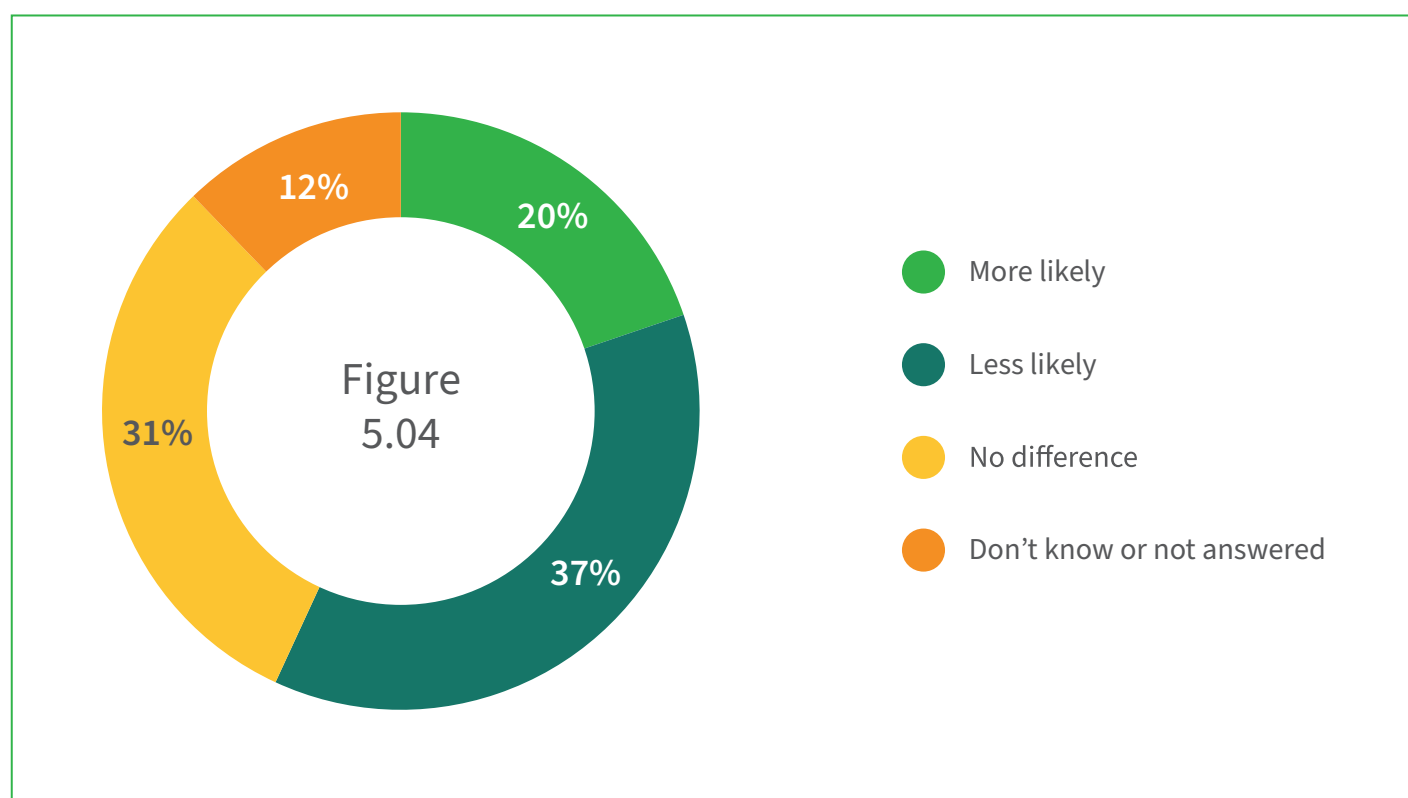
A small number (16) noted that another postholder is expected to undertake the role of ALNCo. These included six responses where more than one person at the educational setting is responsible for the role (in some cases because the setting is a special school and all provision is IDP based) and two cases where the local authority officer undertakes the role.

In a fifth of cases (20% or 143), the ALNCo at the educational setting is the lead ALNCo for the school cluster, whilst most of the remaining cases are not (77% or 541). Some 2% (17) either did not know or did not provide an answer.

Those survey respondents based at school settings (701) were asked if their Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) had transferred to the role of ALNCo. In most cases (78% or 550 of 701), the SENCo had transferred to the role of ALNCo, whilst they had not done so in 14% of cases (or 97). The remaining respondents noted either that this is not relevant for them (6% or 43) or they did not know or provide an answer (2% or 11).

Survey respondents who are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo (a total of 450) were asked if they are more or less likely to stay in the role of ALNCo since the introduction of ALNET. The findings are set out at Figure 5.04 and suggest a mixed picture. The data shows that over a third (37% or 167) are less likely to do so whilst a fifth (20% or 89) are more likely to stay in the role. For just under a third (31% or 139) the change makes no difference and 12% (or 55) did not know or did not answer the question.

Figure 5.04 in full report: Likelihood of ALNCo postholders staying in their role following the implementation of the ALNET (n=450)



Transitioning from school action to school universal provision

Those survey respondents based at a school setting^[2] (a total of 701 respondents) were asked what proportion of learners they have, previously on school activities, that are now part of the school's universal provision. The findings suggest that schools have made varied progress. Whilst a quarter of those surveyed noted that up to 20% of these pupils are on the school's universal provision, (25% or 175) some 15% (or 101) have moved over 80% of these pupils onto universal provision.

Time spent on ALNCo responsibilities

Survey respondents who are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo (450) were asked how much time they spend preparing an Individual Development Plan (IDP). They were asked to specify the total number of hours spent from start to finish, including any meetings attended. Based on data provided by 435 of these respondents, the average time spent equates to 10 hours 36 minutes. This varies from less than an hour to up to 100 hours.

Three-quarters of those who provided data (73% or 318) spend up to and including 10 hours on each IDP. The data suggests that ALNCoS based within primary schools spend more time on average preparing each IDP, at 11 hours 20 minutes each. Those within further education and sixth form colleges spend the least, at under 4 hours each, although some care must be taken when interpreting this data given the low number of respondents who provided data from these settings. Respondents based at special schools and pupil referral units also on average spend less time preparing IDPs, averaging 7 hours each in these settings.

Based on valid data provided by 410 respondents^[1], on average 44% of ALNCo responsibilities are completed during school time. This proportion varies significantly from none to 100%. On average, respondents based in further education/sixth form settings, federations and 3 - 19 schools reported being able to complete a higher proportion of each IDP during school time (at 56% on average across these settings).

Much concern was expressed about the amount of time spent by an ALNCo on paperwork, often at the expense of delivering support to pupils. Amongst the comments offered by survey respondents were:

- “The amount of paperwork now expected is overwhelming.”
- “To keep up with the all the paperwork needed, I am working 70+ hours a week. This is unsustainable.”
- “I am seriously worried as there is more and more paperwork and less support for children and staff.”
- “As ALNCo, I now spend far more time on paperwork than I have ever had to in the past. This reduces the time I can spend making a difference to individual students and consequently is counterproductive. It makes me very sad to think of the students who need help and can't get it.”

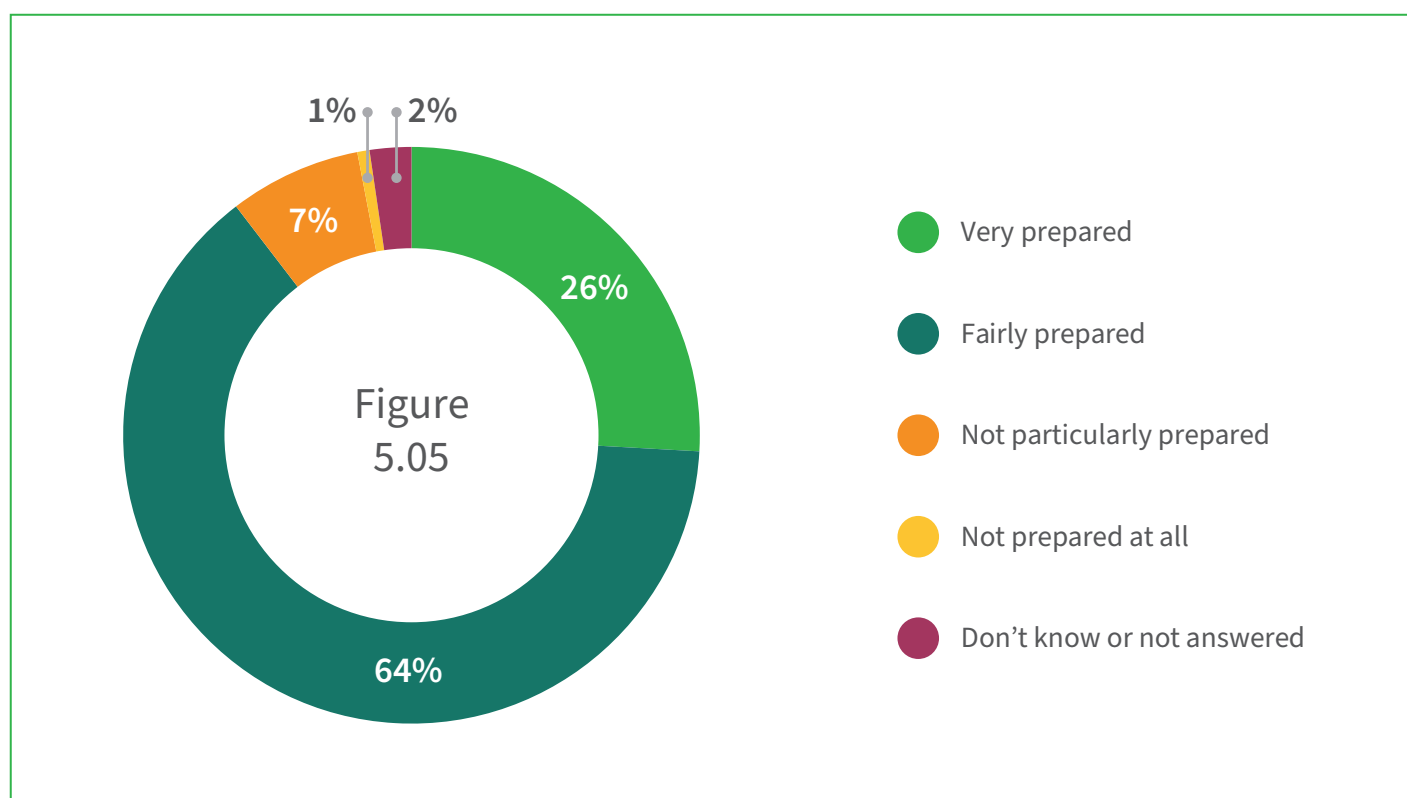
Many comments were offered about the amount of work expected of ALNcos outside of school hours, including:

- “ALNcos are not given the time to fulfil their roles adequately and end up working in their own time out of school hours. Writing IDPs on a weekend is not acceptable but this is what is happening in order to meet strict deadlines.”
- “I am at a school where I teach in the mornings and have the afternoon to do ALNCo responsibilities four days a week. That's a maximum of 15 work hours to do ALNCo responsibilities. That was enough pre-ALNET but now I'm taking a week's worth of my time to write an IDP. There are weeks when I'm ok and weeks when I'm drowning. In general, when I look at my to do list, I'm drowning!”

How ready are educational settings?

The majority of survey respondents believe that their educational setting is either very (26% or 189) or fairly (64% or 465) prepared to deliver ALNET and very few (8% or 59) thought their setting is not prepared, as shown in Figure 5.05. Respondents based at secondary school settings reported being the least prepared, with 15% (19 of 130 secondary school-based respondents) taking the view that their school is not prepared to deliver ALNET, followed by those at a primary setting, at 7% (37 of 497 primary school-based respondents).

Figure 5.05: How prepared are educational settings to deliver ALNET (n=730)



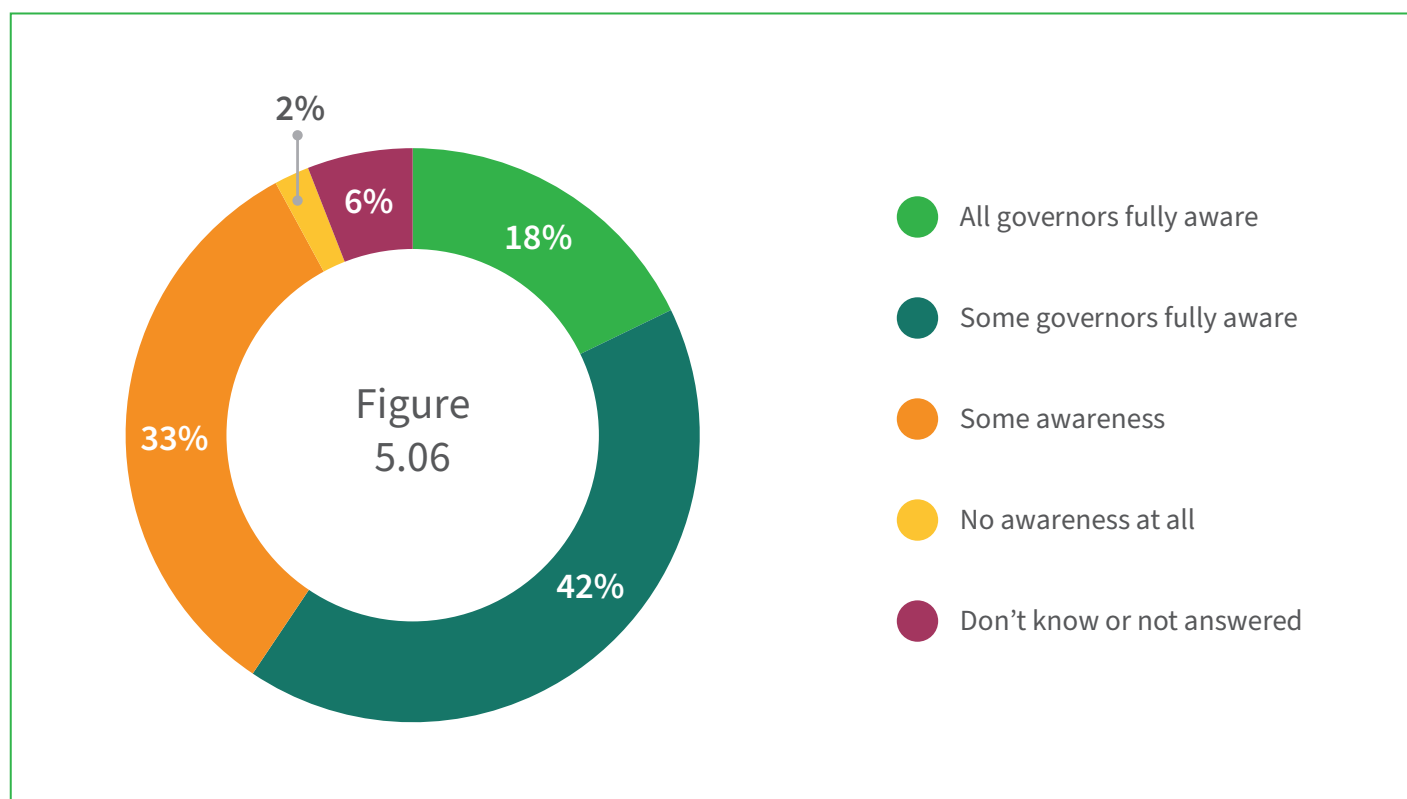
Overall, respondents believe their educational setting to be either very or fairly well equipped to deliver various elements of the ALNET Code for Wales. Respondents believe that their setting is most well equipped to involve pupils and their parents/carers in the decision-making process, whilst they are less confident that their educational setting is equipped to adopt a multi-agency approach to plan and create an IDP.

This position is further reinforced when analysing survey respondents' selection of the statement that best reflects their educational setting's position in terms of development and maintaining IDPs. Just over a third (39% or 284) believe their educational setting to be in a secure position (in that ALNCos and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have very good awareness of the key changes and school-based challenges have been identified and planned for) and half (50% or 366) believe their educational setting to be developing (in that ALNCos and SLT have good awareness). Just under a tenth (9% or 66) believe their educational setting's position to be 'emerging' in that ALNCos and SLT have some awareness. Respondents from special schools and PRUs are the most likely to state that their setting is in a secure position to develop and maintain IDPs whilst secondary school respondents are the least likely to think their setting is in a secure position.

Awareness amongst governing bodies

All schools in Wales have governing bodies with statutory responsibilities including ALNET. Awareness and understanding of their responsibilities under the ALNET legislation is variable. Just under two-fifths of those surveyed (18% or 130) believe that all governors at their educational setting are fully aware, whilst awareness is lower across the remaining survey sample.

Figure 5.06 Awareness of ALNET legislation amongst members of governing bodies (n=730)



Accepting ALN learners from another educational setting

Just over half of those surveyed (52% or 379) noted that their educational setting had experienced challenges when accepting an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) learner from another educational setting. Over a third had not (37% or 268) and the remaining proportion (11% or 83) either did not know or did not answer this question.

In total, 358 survey respondents provided details about the challenges experienced in accepting an ALN learner from another educational setting. An analysis of these responses identified 35 main themes that ranged in both breadth and depth of the issues raised, with some themes invariably overarching.

A principal theme in responses received to this question relates to delayed or missing paperwork, which affects transitions from other education settings affecting Individual Development Plan or ALN statement processes and support, for pupils and institutions. Comments focused on the lack of timely information received from previous educational settings (particularly as pupils transition from pre-school to primary, from primary to secondary, and from secondary to further education) and the sparsity, scarcity, and quality of the paperwork to enable adequate assessments to be undertaken.

“Gaining chronologies from other schools as well as information about ALP and ILP in place which makes decision making difficult. This is especially true for learners moving to our school at school action or school action plus where decision making needs to take place.”

“We don’t get information in a timely manner to make decisions with learners and families/carers about how best to support the learners with ALN coming to college.”

These concerns were often intertwined with failed attempts and difficulties in gaining access to reports or support from external agencies to enable the current setting to make adequate assessment needs and provisions of care that complied with either an existing IDP or evidence required to form a new IDP. The lack of system structure facilitating the transition of pupils from one educational setting to another prevents schools and health agencies from working effectively together to support these pupils when they need it the most. This led to respondents expressing concerns over the inadequacies of IDPs.

“Transferring information; School based IDPs not fit for purpose.”

“Not enough information on the Child Health - not sharing information [...] providing the right support in a timely manner e.g., having to employ additional members of staff.”

“Transfers from LA IDP to school based, as the child was changing authorities. Trying to get Health to attend meetings.”

These issues, respondents stated, invariably affect the adequacy of available funds, and do often exert a vast amount of financial stress to their institutions that they feel is not supported by either school funds, budgets or by local authority budgets. Educational institutions feel unable to accommodate expressed needs and this compromises the integrity of the IDPs.

“People with specific staffing provision in place we do not provide e.g. small group teaching or 1-1 when we do not have sufficient funding.”

“Finding and funding the level of support required when existing budgets and staff are already stretched to breaking point.”

“Staffing is a major issue along with funding, school is struggling to meet the needs of all learners and are stretching staff too far. Budget constraints don’t allow schools to fund the needs of our learners appropriately.”

Respondents also feel, almost without exception, that the issue extends to inadequate staffing levels to maintain an IDP, and physical capacity (especially when adaptations to pupils with profound needs are identified) to accept transfers of learners from another education setting for fear of contributing to the diminishment of well-being and safeguarding issues for staff and pupils. These concerns also relate to a theme of worries over behavioural challenges presented by ALN pupils, some of which were thought to be in unsuitable settings.

“Lack of funding, lack of resources, physical and human, and the well-being of the staff members and ALNCo.”

“Behaviour challenges and a limited staff to deal with this and no additional funding. It becomes a safeguarding issue.”

“We are having pupils who are clearly STF or Special School pupils put into schools when it is not in their interests. Availability of suitable placements.”

Managing parental expectations where provisions were formally provided by previous schools and what could or could not be provided in the current setting are proving to be incredibly challenging issues. These range from parents not being aware that their children are identified as having ALN, having difficulties or reluctance in accepting a diagnosis or statement, being cautious with the information provided about their children having an ALN diagnosis at their new school, or having a diagnosis and statement for their children that the new school does not agree with. This aligns with another main theme: inconsistencies within IDPs.

“Having full time support in Primary no funding for LAS support in the high school. Parents expecting same level of support.”

“Parents choosing to leave specialist provision and access mainstream rather than specialist provision.”

“ALN not identified by the other setting, parents not made aware in the previous setting.”

“Expectation from parents that if there has been dispute regarding level of support from another school that they can arrive, demand support and it will be given despite no evidence to support ALN needs. Pupils moving from other schools but then not attending - struggling to build up the evidence needed for specialist placement.”

This latter theme closely relates to the difference respondents observed between IDP processes for England Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) and Wales IDPs that were problematic in terms of continuation of specialist care and need provisions, and funding:

“Transfer of information from other schools especially from across the border. The responsibility for the statement/IDP for a pupil from LA to LA, especially if they have come from England with an EHCP.”

“Transfer of notes and information regarding the provision being provided by the previous setting. Children transferring with EHCP from England with medical needs and difficulty coordinating the transfer with health board.”

Benefits of implementing ALNET

A total of 440 survey respondents provided a response to a question which asked about the anticipated benefits from implementing ALNET at their educational setting. An analysis of the responses identified a mixed response with 33 themes that could be categorised into three broad groups, which are discussed in turn, namely:

- I. that ALNET will be beneficial to educational settings
- II. that ALNET will not be beneficial to educational settings
- III. uncertainty about the benefits of ALNET to educational settings

I. Benefits of ALNET

For a variety of reasons, respondents feel that there are both immediate and long-term benefits for implementing ALNET at their education settings. Respondents expressed positive views on the Person-Centred Planning (PCP) and one-page profiles elements of implementing ALNET:

“Better understanding of pupils using a person-centred approach.
One-page profiles extremely useful to teaching staff.”

“The PCP process gave pupils and parents agency from the planning stages and is therefore inclusive of parents in contrast to previous systems that fostered better relationships with schools and agencies and better holistic support for parents themselves.”

“Meeting individual needs and ensuring a holistic multi-sensory approach to additional learning provision whilst listening to the contributions of all stakeholders.”

Respondents reflected positively on the transparency and flexibility afforded to IDPs alongside their user friendliness in contrast to previous arrangements.

“IDPs are more pupil centred, user friendly and easier to understand than statements. Support can be more quickly put in place. Parents feel more involved.”

At least 35 examples were provided of how implementing ALNET better addresses children’s needs by providing all parties involved with a clear provision map and bespoke support. There were also many examples of how it promoted early identification and intervention of needs.

Respondents believed implementing ALNET has resulted/will result in greater joined up working through multi-agency collaboration, by providing clear expectations for learners, families, and educationalists. It was argued that this is supported by provisions such as Tyfu¹⁶, a one-stop point for accessible information which will help ensure a more holistic view of support is adopted, especially as the continuation of support is key to some learners to the age of 25. Greater joined-up working will also assist with seamless transitions between all education sectors:

“A more inclusive education for pupils. Plans that will be adopted by other schools when transferring from Primary to Secondary. A better transition from Pre-school to Nursery and from Primary to Secondary.”

“Transition to post-16 learning greatly improved, pupils more involved in their plans.”

Respondents shared their understanding of how implementing ALNET has allowed control over provisions and delivery to be shifted away from local authorities to schools, and this has resulted in greater flexibility and autonomy to individual educational settings.

Respondents highlighted the pedagogical and whole/school-wide system benefits, which have come about via ALNET:

“A greater focus on high quality teaching and learning for all students. Improved classroom practice, with clear targeted support. Accountability of teaching staff at a universal level, rather than referral to ALN. Improved understanding and awareness of students requiring ALP, with shared accountability of review. Increased focus on ALN training.”

Respondents also expressed a perceived benefit that ALNET allowed for moving away from labelling pupils:

“Children who previously would have been identified as having SEN who only require a short-term additional intervention or support, or reasonable adjustment don’t need to be labelled as ALN under ALNET.”

II. No benefits of ALNET

Survey responses stating that little or no benefit would come about as a result of implementing ALNET included evidence ranging from increased workload that is deemed to be unsustainable, unmanageable paperwork and inadequate funding, and an erroneous budget formula that does not work for all schools or is detrimental to schools:

“ALNCo is now non-teaching [job] due to workload, so it’s difficult to see any benefits from a school’s point of view.”

“It is detrimental - huge financial implications, overly bureaucratic, increased pressure and increased workload on ALNCo; lack of support from outside agencies. No EP provision.”

“I feel it will have detrimental effect on the staff /ALNCo. The previous system was providing a good service and support for ALN. The new system is certainly no better if not worse.”

“Without extra funding, I can’t see any benefit. School staff are being trained in specific areas - but this now has an impact on the wider school and their role within the school. Schools don’t have the funding to employ extra staff to replace staff.”

Some also expressed scepticism that ALNET has been developed to reduce the number of provisions rendering pupils at a disadvantage.

“We have always put ALN as a priority and have always supported all learners as individuals at our school, we believe in the new Code of Practice, but it hasn’t changed anything here - we have always worked in a pupil centred approach and have always included families and multi-agencies in decision making. The concerns we have still remain, which are: 1. inconsistencies in implementations between LAs, 2. the lack of support for many ALN issues for school & class teachers.”

“The system of Statements was in need of some improvement and adjustment, but to nowhere near the extent of starting all over again with a new and very complex, work and time intense and complicated system. The rest of ALN provision in the school and referrals to other professionals for pupils is in danger of being compromised due to the workload and time load of the new process. Money could have been better spent on providing direct support for pupils, rather than totally re-vamping the system, translation and legal services, training for LA staff and ALNCo, creation of ineffective DESCO roles etc.”

III. Uncertainty about the benefits of ALNET

Some respondents expressed uncertainty over the benefits of implementing ALNET. This was primarily due to respondents being undecided about ALNET, in part due to its implementation being in its infancy. Only two respondents out of the 440, commented “Not Applicable” to this survey question.

Meeting the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh

A total of 178 survey respondents reported that they were based at a Welsh medium or bilingual educational setting.

The majority (84% or 149) believe that their educational setting is either very (44% or 78) or fairly (40% or 71) well equipped to deal with the needs of ALN learners who want to learn through the medium of Welsh. Most of the remaining respondents think that they are either not particularly (11% or 20) or not at all (3% or 6) well-equipped to do so whilst the remaining few (2% or 3) either did not know or thought this irrelevant to them.

A similarly high proportion (88% or 153) believe that their educational setting is either very (53% or 95) or fairly (33% or 58) well equipped to deliver additional learning provision (ALP) through the medium of Welsh. Very few think that they are either not particularly (10% or 18) or not at all (3% or 6) well equipped to do so.

Of those who require access to ALN resources via the medium of Welsh (a total of 175), just over a third (37% or 65) of survey respondents think that they have adequate access whilst 60% (105) did not think this was the case. The remaining few (3% or 5) do not know.

Just over half of survey respondents (52% or 90 of 174) think that their staff have access to adequate training and support to deliver the requirements of the ALN Act through the medium of Welsh. Some two fifths (43% or 74 of 174) did not think this is the case and the remaining 6% (or 10) do not know.

A total of 138 survey respondents provided further comments on delivering ALNET through the medium of Welsh and these comments covered a total of 22 themes. These included comments offered by respondents based at English medium settings where Welsh is not seen as a priority and an assumption made that if a child would like to be taught through the medium of Welsh that they would attend a Welsh medium school. Some schools acknowledged that parents have the option to choose a preferred language for documentation and that it would be possible to get those translated by the local authority, but that overall, there were not many translations requested.

A key issue raised by respondents relates to a lack of parity in terms of available resources in Welsh, which disadvantages the learner, as they are often translated by staff at schools and are therefore not standardised.

“Delivering ALP through Welsh is very difficult. The vast majority of all resources are only available in English, including training through English and advice from outside agencies is through English. Testing for dyslexia is not available through Welsh, this puts our learners at a disadvantage. Literacy support services are also not available in Welsh to support with specific literacy issues. Welsh reading and phonic schemes are limited, and schools often have to make their own resources to support the individuals.”

Concerns were raised regarding pupils with ALN in Welsh medium schools transferring to English medium schools:

“We must ensure that learners who have chosen Welsh medium do not transfer to English medium as a step to tackling a child’s ALN because Welsh isn’t spoken in the home.”

“My school shares a site with a Welsh medium primary school. In the last four years 21 pupils transferred from either that Welsh school or others in the town. Nearly all of them had been identified as having additional learning needs and would benefit from English-medium education. One might suggest that we have become the ALN department of the Welsh school!”

This theme is further confirmed by another comment placing a value on Welsh medium language ALN investments in schools:

“It would be beneficial if Welsh Medium Education were able to deliver ALNET through the medium of Welsh as there can be an additional burden placed on surrounding English medium schools from learners transferring because schools are unable to meet their needs.”

“There is a lack of resources, training and support available through the medium of Welsh. Pupils who attend Welsh medium education are at a disadvantage. Some pupils are leaving Welsh medium education due to the lack of support available in Welsh.”

Funding Welsh language provision is raised as a concern, even among those schools who have capacity to deliver a Welsh medium service but who nonetheless feel they cannot adequately translate resources and documents. Bilingual schools are also feeling the pressure of implementing ALNET due to a lack of Welsh language skills competencies amongst staff to deliver interventions in Welsh and a view that funding needs to account for Welsh translations.

“We are a bilingual school and this puts added pressure on the implementation of ALNET in the school. [...]. Interventions are mainly in English. [...] due to less staff having a competent level of Welsh to deliver interventions in Welsh. [...] There are significantly less resources for Welsh interventions. Funding to be able to organise double the amount of resources for all pupils as we have to translate to the Welsh language.”

Another prevalent theme raised by respondents to this question relates to Welsh medium staff recruitment, which was often described as being at a point of crisis.

“Welsh-medium staffing, especially classroom support/assistants, is impossible, over the last three years the only applicants we had were former 6th pupils who are taking a year out. These individuals do not stay and have no experience of the work.”

Skills, expertise, and capacity within educational settings Workforce skills and knowledge

Most survey respondents believe that their educational setting is equipped with a skilled workforce to fulfil the requirements of the legislation, either to a large extent (25% or 185) or to some extent (64% or 470). Less than a tenth think that their educational setting is not equipped.

Despite this, some two-fifths of those surveyed (41% or 302) think that their educational setting has skills or knowledge gaps across their workforce which might hinder them from fulfilling the requirements of the legislation. The same proportion (42% or 304) do not think this to be the case whilst the remaining 18% (or 124) either do not know or did not answer the question.

A total of 247 survey respondents elaborated on the skills and knowledge gaps within their setting. Three key areas were identified.

a. Teaching Assistant Skills

Most respondents quoted difficulties in recruiting and retaining Teaching Assistants as the main reason for gaps in the skill set of staff. This took several forms, but the sentiment was the same, i.e., that the situation is worsening. The main reasons given for this inability to recruit and retain TAs were:

- Lack of respondents to adverts and low numbers being identified.
- Lack of skills to manage learners with ALN – this was especially so with the employment of 1:1s. Very high numbers quoted this reason.
- Poor pay and the ability to find work elsewhere with fewer challenges and more pay. Supermarkets were often quoted as an alternative. Similarly high numbers quoted this reason.
- Little job security. This was also quoted several times especially as hours can be limited to 2hr a day and pupils often move on. TAs are often the first to be made redundant when budgets are trimmed.
- Ability to provide ALP or ALN through the medium of Welsh

Specific quotes around this area were:

“Can’t get TAs to cover 1:1s due to poor pay”

“Many experienced TAs are leaving with early retirement or sickness and no replacements.”

“Employing TAs with suitable skills, knowledge and understanding is a barrier. Employing TAs that are motivated towards working with challenging ALN needs and being paid poorly for it.”

“Staff working with pupils with ALN are leaving in their droves for better paid jobs. Many staff come from agencies with limited experience and poor skills.”

It appears that the inability to attract skilled staff as TAs is inhibiting provision as the needs of pupils cannot be met. Schools move to agency staff and very few are trained.

b. ALNCo Skills

As regards the ALNCo, several respondents noted the role as being unmanageable and the workload overbearing; this results in fewer wanting to do the role. A few stated that the additional pay did not equate to extra pressure.

“The ALN role is unmanageable – nobody wants it and nobody is applying.”

“Little extra pay for the role.”

In summary, work pressure, low pay inducement and perceived lack of skills are putting off staff from applying and this is leading to a skills gap in this area.

c. Funding

Budgets and financial management were also cited by a significant number as reasons for the skill gap. When money is reduced then schools often have choices over teachers or experienced TAs; it is usually the TA who leaves and their skill set with them.

“Financial pressures over the last few years have resulted in voluntary redundancies of key support staff resulting in our capacity to deliver ALP reducing.”

Other concerns raised included:

- Increasing challenging behaviour such as SEBD and ASD making the role less appealing and staff leaving.
- Specialist skills not available such as BSL, hearing impairment skills and VI skills.
- Burnout and workload in TAs and ALNCoS
- Increasing numbers of Early Years children with ALN needs leading to staff pulled from other interventions and then lack of available skills for older pupils.
- Lack of skills leaving University and College. Newly qualified staff are not taught ALN in enough depth and then cannot replace those who are leaving the profession. One respondent felt that Initial Teacher Training providers should devote more time to this area.

Recruitment and retention

Some two-thirds of those surveyed (65% or 472) reported that their educational setting has faced issues recruiting and retaining staff with the right skills and expertise to deliver ALNET whilst a quarter (25% or 186) have not. The remaining tenth (10% or 70) either do not know or did not answer the question. A total of 425 survey respondents provided further details about these issues.

The key reason cited for recruitment and retention issues is a lack of suitably experienced or qualified staff applying for vacancies. This occurs in both English medium and Welsh medium schools where a lack of suitably experienced Welsh speaking candidates is noted.

“No assistants to be found locally / very low level assistants looking for jobs.”

“Welsh speakers - not enough organisations train through the medium of Welsh and therefore the staff do not come through. Lack of funds - where more provision is needed due to the specific needs of learners.”

“Recruiting suitable, skilled and experienced assistants is a nightmare. Their wages are horrible. McDonald’s workers are paid higher. Disgraceful considering how important the work is and that they are professional staff.”

In many cases a significant factor identified for recruitment and retention issues is cited as low salary and higher paid jobs in other sectors.

“A Teaching Assistant’s salary does not attract people with the necessary experience or skills. Many people that have Teaching Assistant qualifications have sought employment in other sectors, such as retail, due to better pay.”

“The pay for teaching assistants is way below what they are worth and what they are expected to do. We cannot recruit or keep staff as they would get paid more in a far less stressful job, e.g. retail.”

A lack of funding to retain staff, or recruit staff to fulfil the school ALN requirements is noted.

“The current funding crisis, which will result in a reduction of staff.”

“We have no money to recruit.”

A minority of comments refer to workload and unreasonable expectations for the role of the ALNCo, particularly as the role is not well-remunerated for the level of responsibility.

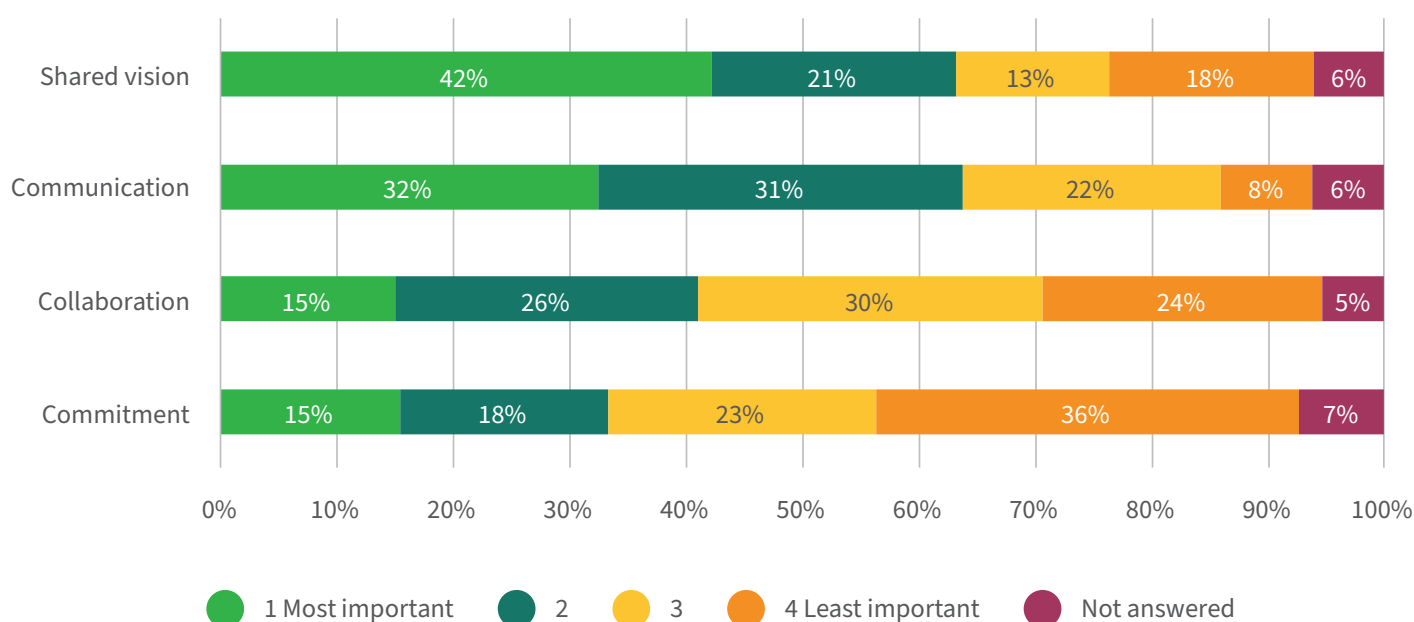
“The role of the ALNCo has increased and the budget does not cover this additional responsibility. ALNCos are coming under a great deal of pressure due to the new system. This makes it very difficult to retain ALNCos or to persuade staff to take on this role. The financial benefit to staff does not cover the additional responsibility they are taking on.”

“No financial reward for taking on additional responsibilities regarding ALNET.”

Educational leadership characteristics

When asked to rank the four characteristics of effective educational leadership^[7] in delivering the ALNET reform in Wales in order of importance, survey respondents identified shared vision, closely followed by communication, as the most influential with collaboration and communication noted.

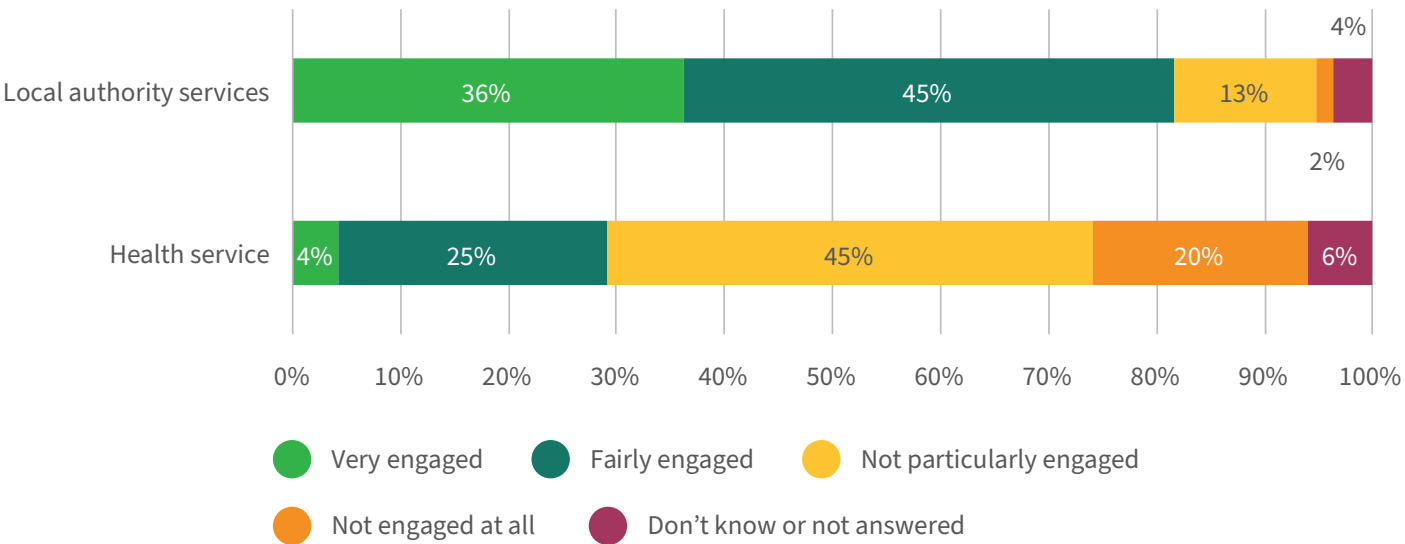
Figure 5.07: Ranking of educational leadership characteristics (n=730)



Engagement with key partners

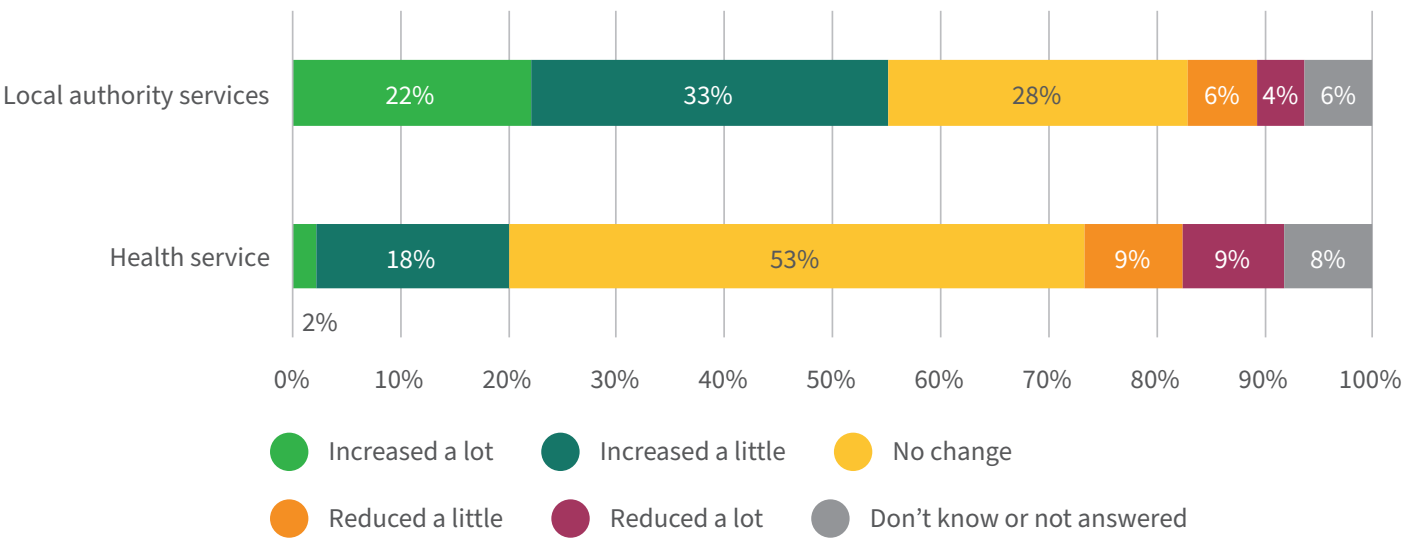
Survey respondents were asked to comment on their engagement with key partners such as the health service and local authority services. As shown at Figure 5.08, most survey respondents believe that local authority services are either very or fairly engaged in the delivery of ALNET whilst engagement levels across the health service is much lower.

Figure 5.08: Engagement of key partners in the delivery of ALNET (n=730)



Furthermore, the survey findings suggest that whilst local authority services have generally become more engaged since the introduction of ALNET, engagement from the health service has not changed much with only 20% (or 146) of the view that their engagement has increased over time.

Figure 5.09: How engagement of key partners has changed since the introduction of ALNET (n=730)



A total of 336 survey respondents provided details on the issues, which their educational setting has experienced in engaging with these key partners. The analysis of responses identified several main themes, some of which apply to both health and local authority services whilst others are specific to an individual partner.

Common engagement themes

The emergent themes for this question demonstrates that respondents gave a great deal of consideration to their responses, with these being highly engaging and unrestrained comments. In terms of consensus on adverse issues experienced, respondents reported on key partnerships not having any capacity to engage with educational settings. This is not related to the commitment of staff within these partnerships, but comes from systemic issues; for example, part-time and flexible working arrangements, services being paused or stopped, services being affected by high rates of sickness and job vacancies.

“A lot of staff work part-time which holds things up and makes them uncontactable when you need them. Massive changes in staff and high sickness levels have left jobs vacant and services have not had the capacity to deal with pupils’ needs in a timely manner.”

Work backlogs is a common theme and respondents speculated that the COVID-19 pandemic accounted for services being stretched because of an exponential increase in poor mental health and well-being amongst children.

“Both services are stretched to the limit and are therefore finding it extremely difficult to meet the demands, especially after COVID. The needs of children have increased exponentially, particularly in relation to well-being and mental health. Staff are also noticing a huge increase in the need for speech and language support following the pandemic, but SALT are unable to meet the demands.”

These factors would suggest why respondents experience severe communication issues, with key partnerships being uncontactable, unable to respond to communications, attend assessments, reviews and meetings or turn around reports in expected timeframes.

Engagement with health services

In addition to the common issues highlighted above, respondents reported a number of adverse separate issues they experienced when engaging with health services. Some of these were thought to stem from the fact that health providers are not covered in the same way as educational settings by the legislation:

“While an IDP will be a legally binding document for all education establishments it will not be for health.”

“Health do not present as partners in the implementation of this legalisation. That is a direct result of the way the legislation has been written.”

There was also a general feeling that Covid restrictions continued to impact the way health services operate within education.

Respondents recounted a number of issues engaging with health partners, including:

- difficulties accessing Occupational Therapists (OT), Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) and Education Psychology (Ed Psych) services causing lengthy delays to services
- reports being sent by health providers by post rather than uploaded to the Tyfu portal
- assessments not being conducted in Welsh or reports not being translated where required
- progress on referrals not being communicated back to educational services
- not sharing information, particularly SLT services
- specialist health services being greatly reduced or no longer in existence, which has had bearing upon workloads and waiting times

Respondents expressed concerns that health services do not understand the contemporary context in which to assess children or engage with educational services/parents:

“NHS staff have no idea or very little [awareness] of ALNET. Very little input with children on waiting lists.”

Respondents also noted concerns regarding the consistency and how current the information shared with parents with regard to Autism Assessment and Diagnosis (ASD), particularly in relation to the referral process. Some respondents identified other issues, for example, referrals being rejected, waiting lists being closed, cases being discharged quickly and educational concerns being dismissed. Referral processes are also considered time consuming for ALNCoS (filling in S20/65 forms).

Engagement with local authority services

- In addition to the common issues highlighted above, respondents reported on several adverse issues they experience when engaging with local authority services, including:
- that local authorities often fail to give definitive answers, thereby placing the onus back onto schools
- that some local authorities have become less collaborative and supportive in their approach and are adopting more of a monitoring role
- a failure on the part of local authorities to understand neither the workload implications of ALNET upon educational settings, nor the unsustainable volume of paperwork ALNCoS are expected to undertake
- local authority representatives not attending reviews nor spending face to face time with pupils
- local authorities not giving attention to Welsh medium schools

- communication difficulties such as not knowing who their local authority link officer or specialists' teams are to request advice, or if they did, being unresponsive to emails and phone calls
- online systems not being used effectively by local authorities

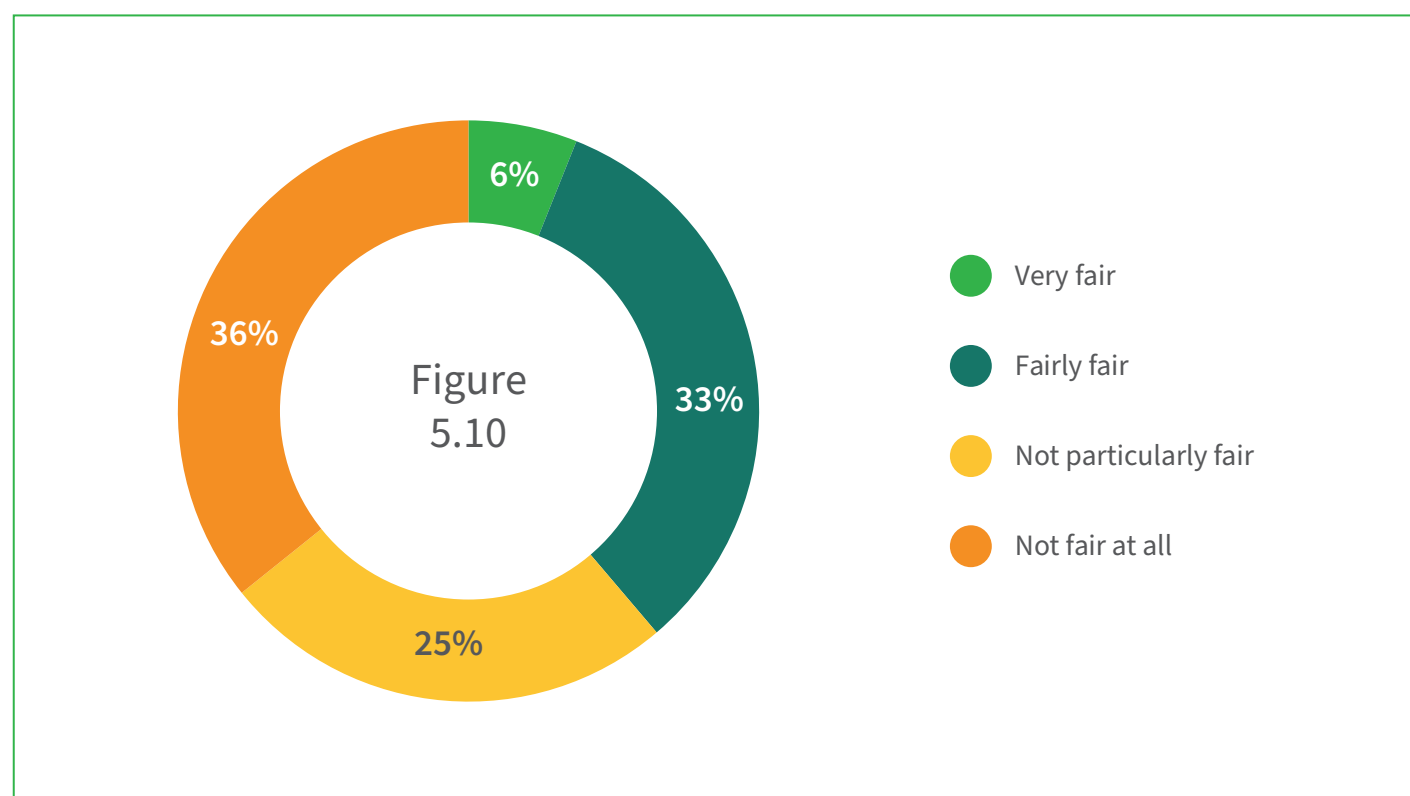
Funding to educational settings

Just over half of surveyed headteachers (53% or 124 of 236) had been informed of how much funding their educational setting will receive from their local authority to deliver ALNET. This compares with two-fifths of all survey respondents (40% or 288) who had been informed of how much funding their educational setting will receive. Survey respondents based in the CSC consortium region seem to be slightly more informed than those in other regions about their level of funding for ALNET but no clear pattern emerges at a local authority level.

Two-fifths of survey headteachers (40% or 95 of 236) understand how their local authority has determined how much funding each educational setting will receive to deliver ALNET whilst the remaining three-fifths (60% or 141) do not know.

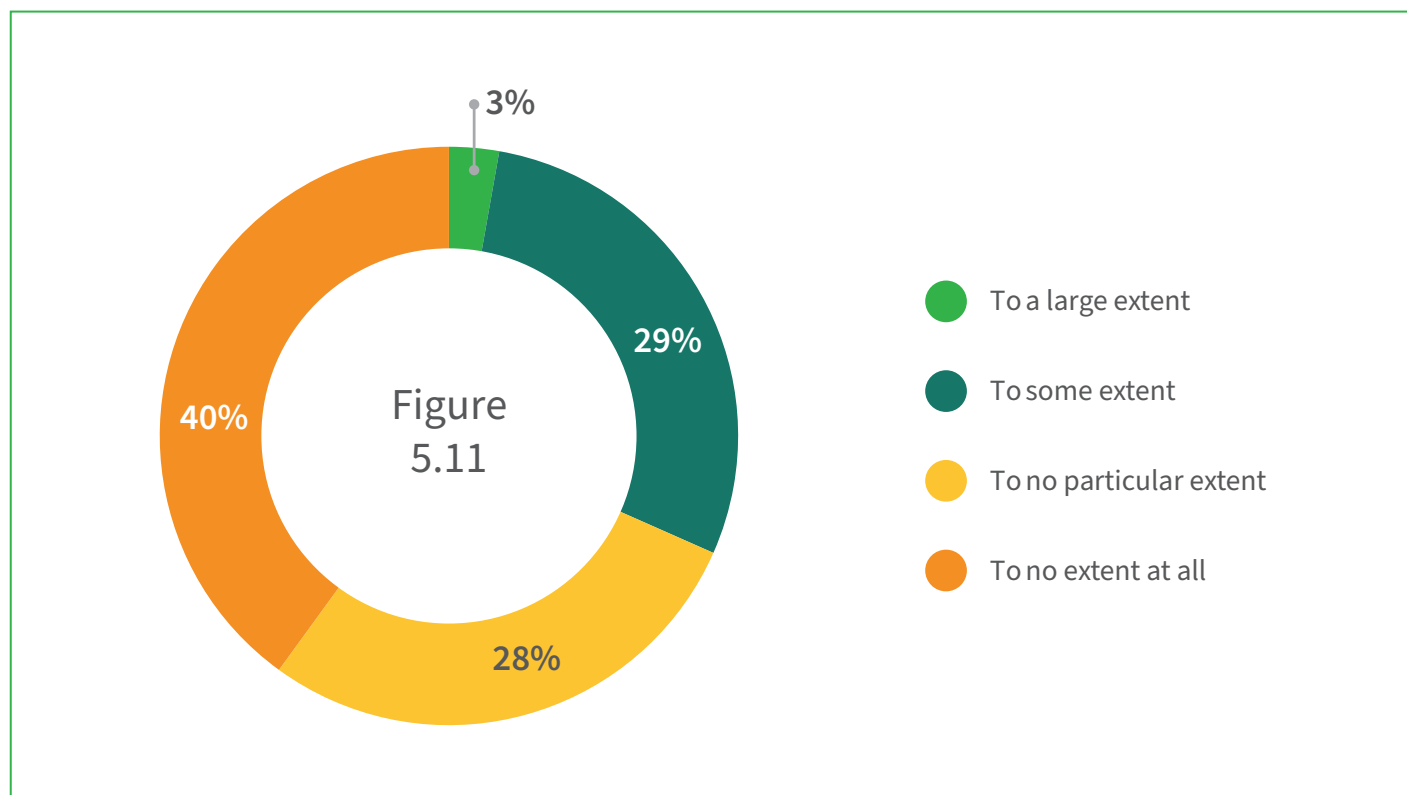
Of the 165 headteachers who expressed an opinion, two-fifths of those surveyed think that their local authority funding formula for allocating funds to deliver ALNET is either very (6% or 10) or fairly (33% or 54) fair. The remaining three-fifths (61% or 101) do not think that the funding formula is fair, as shown at Figure 5.10.

Figure 5.10 Whether local authority funding formula for allocating funds to deliver ALNET is fair (n=165 headteachers)



Of the 215 headteachers who expressed an opinion, two-thirds (68% or 147) do not think that their educational setting will have the necessary funding to fulfil the requirements of the legislation whilst a third (32% or 68) do, as set out at Figure 5.11

Figure 5.11 Whether educational setting will have the necessary funding to fulfil legislation requirements (n=215 headteachers)



Qualitative comments provided throughout the survey strongly suggest that respondents believe ALNET is under-funded and that for ALNET to work it needs to be funded appropriately. Comments include:

“Adequate funding will be a barrier to delivering ALNET.”

“Schools are being stretched to breaking point more than ever before. Staff are trying their best to deliver ILP but the funding isn't there. We have a number of high end pupils in our school, pupils that require continuous 1:1 support for 32.5 hours, which then takes away support for those children who require ILP.”

Several argued that funding to release ALNCo from class is currently insufficient and that this, coupled with a lack of supply staff, makes it challenging to implement ALNET:

“As ALNCo and class teacher it is exhausting yet we can't afford for me to be covered any more than I currently am. This places more burdens on staff and the children.”

“At the moment it doesn't look like enough funding is being allocated to schools - there is not enough funding to finance ALNCoS and offer non-teaching time to undertake the work.”

Comments relating to local authority formulas for funding ALNET concentrated on the issue that current arrangements do not take pupil needs into consideration:

“Funding should be individual child centred and not generalised with a formula.”

“Block funding from our LA, without consideration of need, will mean unfair allocation of resources in our case and will lead to staff cuts.”

In one case, it was argued that feedback from educational settings on proposed funding formulas had led to:

“The LA reviewing the funding formula by consultation.”

Some respondents argued that current funding models disadvantages schools with low numbers of Free School Meals (FSM) pupils:

“There is insufficient financial support for the need, especially in schools in relatively affluent areas, partly because eFSM is being used as an indicator entirely erroneously, partly because there is insufficient funding for education anyway.”

“Funding is a challenge for us, as a two-form entry school with limited FSM in a catchment area which is not deprived. Despite not having the level of deprivation that other schools have, we still have a significant number of children with very complex needs and children with ALN who require support from full time one to one support.”

Others argued that the funding formula discourages settings from supporting pupils via their universal provision, rather than via ALN provision:

“The vast differences in universal provision (UP) across Wales means that schools such as ours with a wide ranging UP, will receive less funding as we have dropped from 51% ALN to 30%. These children were previously on an IEP and School Action. We do not want to reduce our UP offer as I feel it is what schools should provide but there is too much inconsistency and little guidance on how this is monitored from school to school.”

Some survey respondents explained why they did not understand the level of funding in place at their setting or the formula for determining this:

“We have a large staff number to support ALN and robust systems in place but this is mainly at TUP level. We have only given IDPs to our more extreme pupils. This has resulted in a reduction of ALN pupils on PLASC. No one has told me if I am filling in my costed provision map correctly and if PLASC plays a part in funding decisions. I feel lost and when I ask fellow ALNCos’ advice, I am met with confusion and no clear answers as everyone believes something different. We need clarity.”

5.2 Semi-structured interview analysis

The following narrative is the analysis of the responses given to a set of questions (Appendix 4) that were generated from the survey. The questions have been synthesised into the following headings:

- Early Years Provision
- Support for identified skills and capacity gaps for ALN in the Early Years Settings
- Support for Early Years Settings
- Transition
- Welsh language provision for pupils with ALN
- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Workload and well-being
- Funding
- Multi-agency contribution

Early Years Provision

In analysis of the survey, it was noted that there were no responses from leaders or ALN leads in settings that were only pre-school or nursery settings; this included those in the maintained or non-maintained sectors. Associates recognise that there is a range of early years’ provision across Wales for pre-school children, including school based, and where this is the case school leaders did include their views on early years ALN provision. However, Associates felt that it was important to have a broader understanding about provision for ALN in the early years, particularly in those settings that are only for pre-school, and used the semi-structured interviews to gather information.

Responses within the semi-structured interviews suggest a range of factors that resulted in lack of responses from settings that were only pre-school completing the survey. Comments indicate that, in the first instance, there may have been issues around the survey reaching the correct people in the settings or that frequent staff changes may have led to setting leads not getting the communication. They also suggest that staff working part-time, with little opportunity for non-contact, may have created time constraints impacting on the completion of the questionnaire. Associates also recognise that leaders in these settings may not have regarded themselves as school leaders and decided the questionnaire was not relevant to them.

Comments made by LA Early Years officers and Cluster leads included:

“This is interesting. Early years organisations often have committees of volunteers and then they employ people to lead. Wages are generally low and don't equate to the work involved.”

“A high number of the settings are working under difficult time constraints. The leaders have 14 hours per week of which 10 are in direct contact with the children.”

“It is disappointing as we have worked hard to forge relationships with childcare settings. Pre-school settings do not require an ALNCo. We encourage settings to have a lead ALN practitioner although many settings do not have one. Was the survey shared with childcare providers?”

Support for identified skills and capacity gaps for ALN in the Early Years settings

Respondents indicate that most Early Years ALN teams are offering a range of support within maintained and non-maintained settings and bespoke training opportunities are common practice. Local Authority leads and officers regard this as a very supportive process that includes access to drop-in sessions, training menus and informal consultations and discussions for support.

Comments made by LA Early Years officers and Cluster leads included:

“Staff are benefitting from the EY training offer, which includes ALN and is repeated. There are termly consultation meetings to discuss ALN issues (ALN LA advisor).”

“There is an extensive menu of support the LA offers ... however there is also a lack of guidance and information from WG.”

“A robust training menu, specifically designed for pre-school settings. Training throughout the year at different times to accommodate ... Setting visits to support settings with their universal provision.”

Support for Early Years Settings

A summary of responses suggests issues pertinent to pre-school provision. Respondents identified the recruitment of support workers, who are often asked to work irregular hours on short term contracts leading to high staff turnover. Local Authority officers also underlined that early years' settings are not required to have an ALNCo and they are not in place across every setting, although they recognise that having an ALN lead practitioner is desirable.

Responses show that as a result, Local Authority Early Years ALN Lead officers regard themselves as crucial to providing support for pre-school settings in the maintained and non-maintained sectors.

“LA are very supportive, and it is definitely a working relationship. People are available to offer support and immediate advice. We are all learning together ... the support on a school level has been outstanding.”

“My role is school-facing and I would hope staff feel they have had good support. Implementation and funding has been made available to support transformation and the team try to be as accessible as possible.”

“We have run numerous training sessions around ALNET which have been well attended by our non-maintained settings. There have been further trainings written and developed around requested topics in relation to ALN ... as much training and support sessions in the evening as possible to allow maximum attendance.”

“Settings can also attend termly ALN consultations to seek more in-depth advice and support. The Early Years ALN team will sometimes provide additional bespoke support and training if needed ... finding staff and the funds to cover training have been a barrier. The drop-in sessions have been useful and well received, many settings appreciate listening to the experiences of other practitioners and a few settings will contact each other for advice and support.”

Transition

Responses from Local Authority ALN officers, including Early Years teams, indicate a range of issues and challenges around transition. These include lack of consistency, for example, in some Local Authority Early Years teams there is a case worker to support families in transition, but this practice is not always available. Respondents also identified that county to county transfers can be further complicated by funding. Further lack of consistency and variation is acknowledged in provision from county to county, setting to setting and school to school, particularly around what universal provision means.

Additionally, lack of training around transition is identified; however, respondents make it clear that plans for this are in place or being considered by Local Authority Officers.

Respondents indicate that there are tools and documents available to support effective transition but acknowledge that there are still some further developments possible. For example, respondents suggest creating a transition protocol with additional guidance and resources.

Respondents also acknowledge other issues including delays in uploading information, difficulties in sharing information across settings and managing parental expectations on transition.

“It is difficult because there is no consistency between ULP. Primary go to IDP quicker than secondary. Hopefully, things will improve over years.”

“There are delays in uploading information ... and also delays in gaining access ... been examples of SALT asking the settings to upload reports rather than doing this themselves. The issue overall seems to be that transfer of info is not being completed in a timely manner.”

“Transition training is something we may consider as a LA ... the school move can be an issue – settling. ALNET has strengthened ‘big moves’ with a detailed plan but other smaller moves not so well supported.”

“Transition can be a challenge and I do recognise this ... but often it is felt that non-maintained settings and the information they have aren’t valued by receiving school due to the changes in set up due to the national minimum standards for childcare providers.”

“Early Years is a big issue. Each sector needs to know its role and what can be offered. LA has invested money to resolve this and systems now aligned more to reduce impact. Parent expectations in each sector need managing better ... county to county transfers are difficult due to different funding models and different levels of Universal Provision.”

Welsh language provision for pupils with ALN

In analysis of the survey the majority of school leaders in Welsh medium settings identified they were at least fairly well-equipped to support pupils with ALN in school. Associates felt that it was important to have a broader understanding about provision for ALN in Welsh medium settings. Responses to the semi-structured interviews identified a particular lack of parity in terms of available resources in Welsh. For example, Early Years settings feel they do well with their assessments through the medium of Welsh, but identify that there is a lack of other professionals, such as Speech Therapists, to complete their assessments through the medium of Welsh.

Associates noted that there were comments offered by respondents based at English medium settings where Welsh is not seen as a priority and there is recognition that some schools may not have fully understood the relevance of the question. Some schools acknowledged that parents have the option to choose a preferred language for documentation and that it would be possible to get those translated by the local authority, but that overall, there were not many translations requested.

Comments made by LA Early Years officers and Cluster leads included:

- “This varies across the county and is a challenge without the ALN. The settings are doing well with assessing, but there is a need for Welsh language support from other partnership agencies, e.g. SALT using English programme with a Welsh speaking child.”
- “This very much depends upon the individual settings and setting staff. In the more rural settings, they may not have encountered as many ALN cases.”
- “I think Welsh settings can identify ALN – possibly harder to determine language needs as many children in Welsh medium settings are from English speaking homes.”

Recruitment and retention of staff

In analysis of the survey, the key reason cited for recruitment and retention issues is a lack of suitable experienced or qualified staff applying for vacancies. Responses to the semi-structured interviews identified further concerns around retention and recruitment due to the levels of pressure for ALNCOs. For example, they acknowledge that preparing a good quality IDP takes time; however, there is general recognition that as the process embeds, the time required will be less.

Responses to the interview questions also identified that in addition to issues of pay and conditions, such as hourly pay rates, there are also concerns to the quality and suitability of teaching assistants available for recruitment; for example, poor levels of literacy and numeracy.

Comments made by LA Early Years officers and Cluster leads included:

- “This is a major issue – ALNCOs’ workload – why would I want to be an ALNCO?”
- “TAs’ huge issues - they can work in a supermarket for more ... but as TA they may be asked to complete medical procedures such as using epi pens etc.”
- “There is a general recruitment issue in the non-maintained sector. It can be challenging to find any additional staff, but especially staff with ALN experience or knowledge. Recruitment of specialist staff for ALN is a challenge.”
- “Staff often do not have specific training for the different ALN issues.”
- “Yes, it is a concern. Some is to do with pay grade offered, some to do with job security and some linked to funding models.”

Workload and Staff Well-being

Analysis of responses to the survey identified concerns about the additional workload and responsibilities, particularly those associated with the role of ALNCo, and the impact on personal well-being. Responses identified a range of issues which may have had a negative impact on school leaders, particularly ALNCo well-being, recognising that a proportion of ALNCo work is done in own time, that the statutory aspect of ALNET causes stress and anxiety and that many ALNCos are working in isolation. For example, ALNCos may already have a teaching commitment and be under pressure in considering Curriculum for Wales in addition to managing whole school change in the ALNET transformation process. Responses from Local Authority officers identify the need to provide further opportunities for training, including online menus, to all school-based staff and to support staff in understanding roles and responsibilities. Several positive steps are also identified by Local Authority respondents, including cluster networking for ALNCos, stress management support and improved communication to reduce anxiety and stress in the workplace.

In addition to other issues impacting personal well-being and workload, responses to the survey identify that the average time taken for writing an IDP is 10 hours. Associates asked Local Authority officers to respond to why they felt this was happening and what could be a solution. There is acknowledgment of the time taken, the pressure of working within a legal process and a suggestion that a workload time study for ALNCos be completed.

Comments made by LA Early Years officers and Cluster leads included:

“An IDP involves a lot of preparation and personal-centred work to be in the position to prepare plan. Is this the whole process - meeting the parents etc? Time to prepare will vary according to needs. If that’s 10 hours of high quality personal-centred work with lots of engagement with pupil and parents, well then yes, a good use of time. “

“Time is the big issue here – have WG completed a time study of the workload of ALNCo? Well-being support for ALNCos is essential.”

“Completing any ALN paperwork often means that practitioners are completing the paperwork in their own time.”

Funding

In analysis of responses from the survey and the semi-structured interviews, funding - including fair funding and transparency - is identified on many occasions. For example, responses from Local Authority Early Years teams identify that Early Years settings are not always able to provide the support required due to funding levels. However, there are also examples of grant funding being used effectively, for example, a Cluster Leads (ALNCo) project funded through the LA Transformation Grant, is identified as having a positive impact on implementation of ALNET and offers a valuable networking opportunity.

Comments made by LA Early Years officers and Cluster leads included:

“Funding is always going to be an issue. In the present economic climate this is difficult. Early Years setting staff are, in my opinion, not paid sufficiently for the role they asked to do.”

“The hard fact is that there isn’t enough money, but we can make it fair. Currently we are looking to have full funding out to schools which will negate the need to go to panel to request further funding. This will be fair but will not be enough and some ULP should be included in this.”

“Budget focus group reported recommendations on ALN Formula Funding to Schools Budget Forum. No one size fits all – demographics of counties so different.”

“The majority of ALNCo don’t know what funding is; therefore how can they manage the funding?”

“As regards fairness – will we ever get it right and is lack of knowledge of fairness linked to lack of understanding of process?”

“Very individual needs-led, with money allocated to severity of child-need rather than a generic formula as in other LAs – this reduces ambiguity and increases fairness of system. Overall, though – not enough money to deal with the increasing needs of the schools.”

Multi-agency working

Analysis identified that most survey respondents believe that local authority services are either very or fairly engaged in the delivery of ALNET and suggest that whilst local authority services have generally become more engaged since the introduction of ALNET, other services have not. However, respondents reported on other key partnerships, such as the health service, not having any capacity to engage with educational settings.

Research, initial reconnaissance and semi-structured interviews identified that within ALN reform, the DECLo is a strategic role and involvement is directly with the Local Authority, rather than the schools. Collaboration is being built upon infrastructure that already exists, such as Health & LA ALN steering groups, and Post-16 groups. Section 65 of the Act outlines the need for Health and the LA to liaise.

Associates wanted to find out more about the roles and responsibilities of the DECLos and the impact of key partnerships. All of the DECLos interviewed identified the need for health and education to work together and for there to be a shared understanding. Issues identified by respondents included acknowledgement that there is poor alignment of statutory compliance timescales for Health and Education and Section 20 of the Act references this. There is also currently a shortage of professionals, particularly in Speech and Language. Health is having to prioritise involvement where their involvement will have the greatest value.

Responses identify that, when asked, only a few respondents were competent in preparing and completing IDPs, and also indicate that Early Years setting experience showed inconsistent support from other agencies, with some areas receiving excellent support and other areas less so. Additionally, they highlight the need for a better understanding of the Health Services role in constructing IDPs, that is, if the medical or health need impacts on learning, then Health should be included in the development of the IDP. A further issue is the lack of consistency, therefore communication, in shared electronic information. Some professionals are not yet using the LA electronic ALN systems, and systems used by different partners are not compatible. Confidence issues were also identified by respondents, in that upskilling is required to support the setting staff in attending meetings with professionals.

“Difficult to get agencies to come to meetings ... lots of this depends on relationships and organisation ... I’ve developed my relationships with key individuals and therefore find communication easier and more effective.”

“Settings are not consistently receiving information from the multi-agencies. There are gaps in attendance of TAFs. JAM meetings are held, but the wider representation of agencies does not go forward to the TAF meetings. Confidence issues exist and upskilling is required to support the setting staff in attending meetings with professionals.”

“I am not too surprised as this is a new process and ALNCoS are very conscious that it is a statutory document – the legal implications and concerns around creating a legal document have been an issue ... LA are trying to work closely with Health colleagues ... there are some noted issues ... Health is quoting work force capacity but there have to be questions about why this has not been thought of before.”

“We have had challenges with Health which are being worked through continuously.”

“Settings very frustrated that they do not consistently receive information from the multi agencies ... in particular speech and language reports that are not shared with the setting. Many settings do not have the information from SALT in a timely manner; this makes them feel unable to add contributions and suggestions to IDPs.”

“Health is the most difficult to engage with, but we meet regularly with DECLO to support process. This is also being done regionally with better understanding as a result.”

6. Key themes

Associates consider the role of the leader as a strategic one to plan, manage and deliver its duties and responsibilities in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with ALN.

<https://www.gov.wales/the-additional-learning-needs-code-and-regulations>

Following the analysis of the survey and semi-structured interviews, policy and document scrutiny, Associates identified the following key themes as areas of particular concern to leaders in fulfilling their role of delivering Additional Learning Needs reform in Wales.

Well-being of leaders – Rationale: Many of those who responded to the survey felt the implementation of the code has had a negative impact on their own well-being, especially where the respondent was the ALNCo.

“It makes me want to resign and has affected my well-being and mental health.”

“It will ensure I will leave this profession.”

“ALNET has resulted in an explosion of responsibility, workload and work related stress for the person in the ALNCo role. Reform was desperately needed, but the statutory requirements were watered down in the final Act to recommendations, which has resulted in schools implementing the changes by increasing the workload of a person who was already working at full capacity.”

“The theory has worth but the system has been rolled out before anyone was ready ... I have never experienced stress like it due to a total lack of confidence in what I am doing.”

“I am concerned that the legality of an IDP puts a huge strain on the ALNCo writing it and the concern over possible tribunal is always at the back of an ALNCo's mind.”

“I now find myself being a secretary, diagnostician, solicitor, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist plus more. I work in an area where parents have limited literacy skills and find myself having to complete forms with them which also contributes to workload.”

Recruitment & Retention – Rationale: While in many cases the SENCo has transferred to the role of ALNCo, when asked whether they would remain, a minority (over a third) stated they were less likely to do so.

“Every ALNCo that I know is trying to get out of the job.”

“I feel it is impossible to be both an effective ALNCo and Class Teacher. ALNCo role consumes a great amount of my teaching week and I find it is unfair on both myself and the children that I teach.”

The issue of recruitment and retention of teaching assistants is cited by many respondents for a range of reasons, including pay and conditions and a lack of available experienced or trained staff, including those within the Welsh sector.

“The lack of Welsh teaching assistants. We have lost 4 experienced Welsh teaching assistants/LSAs to jobs outside of education due to low salary that they get paid as level 3 TA. We are struggling to recruit any to replace them.”

“Appointing staff with specialist experience is almost impossible. Appointing inexperienced staff and training them is still very difficult.”

“Welsh-medium staffing, especially classroom support/assistants, is impossible, over the last three years the only applicants we had were former 6th pupils who are taking a year out. These individuals do not stay and have no experience of the work.”

Multi-agency / education setting partnerships – Rationale: While most respondents acknowledge the capacity issues faced in the health services, a key issue cited was the lack of engagement and support from the health sector. Associates identified a clear misalignment of health involvement from the Act and requirements of schools to support delivery of ALN to meet the needs of children and young people.

“Health do not present as a partner in the implementation of this legislation. That is a direct result of the way that the legislation has been written.”

“Lack of support from outside agencies, particularly Health - lengthy delays. No clear, timely route to accessing specialist support and provision.”

A further partnership issue identified by over half of respondents is transition between educational settings. A range of themes were cited including:

- i. Issues with sharing of information between settings including health, transfer from schools in England, transition between different phases of education.

“Plans not shared in a timely manner or ALN need not fully disclosed.”

“Funded IDPs have not been transferred across county boundaries, nor with moves from England. These have also been varying in their level of need, with some 'out of county' IDPs coming with a much lower threshold of ALN.”

ii. An inability to deliver the level of support written into IDP by other settings for various reasons including lack of funding or staff with adequate skills or experience.

“Unable to provide ALP^[4] that has been decided by another setting. This could be due to staffing, funding or not having the resources available in our setting.”

“Finding and funding the level of support required when existing budgets and staff are already stretched to breaking point.”

Funding – Rationale: Amongst respondents just under half had yet to be informed how their setting would be funded to implement ALNET moving forward. Only a very few believe they will receive the necessary funding to deliver the requirements of the legislation. Several respondents commented that local authority funding formulas do not take pupil needs into consideration.

“Funding should be individual child centred and not generalised with a formula.”

“Block funding from our LA, without consideration of need, will mean unfair allocation of resources in our case and will lead to staff cuts.”

“Low level skilled staff due to budget constraints.”

A further significant issue raised by respondents was linked to the role of the ALNCo. Responses highlighted two main themes; firstly, funding to ensure the workload relating to the role of the ALNCo can be completed by the ALNCo during school hours and secondly, to ensure that pay for the ALNCo is commensurate with the level of responsibility included in the role.

“There is a need to consider ALNCo salaries – the salary does not reflect their workload and responsibility.”

“I believe the ALNCo should be a distinct role on its own leadership scale and money allocated into the budget to reflect this. Also, to reflect the release time that is required for the ALNCo to be out of the classroom.”

“At the moment it doesn't look like enough funding is being allocated to schools - there is not enough funding to finance ALNCos and offer non-teaching time to undertake the work. Agencies complain they have a shortage of staff and as a result children do not receive the support they need in time.”

“What is expected of them [ALNCos] is hugely demanding often for very little extra money if any at all and no matter how much time and support is given to them it is never enough. ALNCos are class teachers, and they find trying to juggle the role of class teacher and ALNCo not possible.”

“There is a need to consider ALNCo salaries.”

Meeting the needs of learners through the medium of Welsh – Rationale: There is a very contrasting picture in this area with half feeling well-equipped to meet the needs of learners through the medium of Welsh. In addition, only a third of respondents in the sector felt they had adequate training and support; however, over half did not think this was the case. Respondents note a wide range of issues faced by Welsh medium schools.

“Welsh medium provision is inequitable. Very often the only provision for WM pupils is to move to English medium provision.”

“There is a lack of resources, training and support available through the medium of Welsh. Pupils who attend Welsh medium education are at a disadvantage. Some pupils are leaving Welsh medium education due to the lack of support available in Welsh.”

“My school shares a site with a Welsh medium primary school. In the last four years 21 pupils transferred from either that Welsh school or others in the town. Nearly all of them had been identified as having additional learning needs and would benefit from English-medium education. One might suggest that we have become the ALN department of the Welsh school!”

“Delivering ALP through Welsh is very difficult. The vast majority of all resources are only available in English, including training through English and advice from outside agencies is through English. Testing for dyslexia is not available through Welsh, this puts our learners at a disadvantage. Literacy support services are also not available in Welsh to support with specific literacy issues. Welsh reading and phonic schemes are limited, and schools often have to make their own resources to support the individuals.”

7. Recommendations

Well-being - To improve well-being, there is evidence to suggest that leaders require:

1. Adequate resources to ensure that leaders can fulfil their role within the working hours of the setting. In addition, resources including funding, time and appropriately trained staff.
2. An increased opportunity for developing networking and collaboration. Where good practice is identified in both the survey and the semi-structured interviews, there are examples of effective networking which needs further development e.g. A Cluster Leads project funded through the LA Transformation Grant.

Recruitment & Retention – To support leaders with recruitment and retention within settings, leaders require:

1. Recognition that staff involved in supporting learners with ALN, including the ALNCo and teaching assistants, will require access to better pay and work conditions, including dedicated release time, that reflect the importance of their role. This will require funding.
2. Professional learning opportunities that are easily accessed for all staff. For example, staff have highlighted the benefit of extensive training menus provided by some LAs, that include blended approaches and flexibility.

Multi-agency / education setting partnerships – To effectively support children and young people with additional needs, leaders require:

1. Clarity of the roles and responsibilities within ALNET, for example, how health professionals and social services support schools.
2. A review of transition processes within ALNET.

Funding – To ensure leaders can provide support for learners with ALN:

1. There should be a consistent and equitable funding mechanism that is transparent.
2. A review of the funding needed to fulfil the statutory requirement of ALNET.
3. Where innovative practice has been identified, it should be shared, for example, the effective use of the transformation grant in the implementation process identified by LA officers.

Welsh medium – To support leaders to deliver equitable provision for children and young people with ALN in Welsh medium settings:

1. Increase the availability of Welsh speaking staff including multi-agency to support children and young people with ALN.
2. Develop Welsh medium resources to support assessment and the needs of learners, for example a centralised resource bank to share existing good practice identified in the survey.

8. Conclusion



This commission has canvassed the views of leaders across Wales. 730 detailed responses were captured by the survey and detailed semi-structured interviews across a range of stakeholders. It provides a detailed landscape of the current provision across Wales and highlights the commitment that school leaders have made to the transformation and implementation of provision for children and young people with ALN in their schools and settings. This work has identified significant and important themes. However, whilst there are positive aspects, there are troubling themes emerging and these are reflected in the recommendations of this commission.

We call on all tiers within the ALN system to consider these recommendations building on good practice to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. We believe that these recommendations will provide a road map for leaders to fulfil their duties in regard to supporting children and young people with additional learning needs to ensure an inclusive ethos.

9. References

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10. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Full Survey Report

Appendix 2 - Associate Qualitative Analysis of Question 6

Appendix 3 - Semi-structured Interview Questions

Appendix 4 - Methodology for semi-structured interview analysis

Appendix 5 - Semi-structured interview analysis

Appendix 1

January 2023

Survey of school leaders

**A report to the
National Academy for
Educational Leadership
Wales**

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2. Profile of survey respondents
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5. Meeting the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh
6. Skills, expertise, and capacity within educational settings
7. Engagement between educational settings and key partners
8. Funding to educational settings
9. Final observations

Annex A: Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act Web survey

1. Introduction

- 1.1 OB3 Research was appointed by the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales to support its Associates to undertake a survey of school leaders in Wales.
- 1.2 OB3 Research worked with a group of Associates to design a bilingual online survey which would gather views on leaders' readiness for the implementation of the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) (Wales) Act. The survey was intended to form one element of the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales's research with school leaders and complement semi-structured interviews and focus groups with leaders held by the Associates. The survey (set out at Annex A) was designed for completion by school heads, senior leaders and ALNCOs across all school settings and set out to explore their knowledge and understanding of the ALNET Act as well as their readiness to implement it.
- 1.3 The survey was live between the 14th December 2022 and 16th January 2023 and was distributed by the National Academy for Educational Leadership and its Research Associates. A total of 730 survey responses were received. Of these 122 respondents completed the survey in Welsh and 608 in English.
- 1.4 This report is structured as follows:
 - Chapter 2 presents the profile of survey respondents
 - Chapter 3 considers survey respondents personal understanding and confidence of ALNET
 - Chapter 4 sets out the findings on educational setting's understanding and implementation of ALNET
 - Chapter 5 explores how well-equipped educational settings are to meet the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh
 - Chapter 6 considers the skills, expertise, and capacity within educational settings to deliver ALNET
 - Chapter 7 presents the findings of the survey on engagement between educational settings and key partners
 - Chapter 8 reviews how funding to deliver ALNET is viewed by survey respondents
 - Chapter 9 sets out some final comments offered by survey respondents on ALNET.

2. Profile of survey respondents

2.1 The survey asked respondents to indicate their main role at their educational setting. Just under half (49% or 355) of all survey respondents had some headship or principal responsibilities whilst most of the remaining respondents identified their role as an ALNCo (45% or 326). A small number of respondents selected another role, and these included an ALNCo assistant, governor, and specialist teaching facility managers.

Table 2.1: Role of survey respondents

Role	Number	Proportion
Headteacher/Principal	237	32%
Acting Headteacher/Principal	12	2%
Deputy Headteacher/Principal	61	8%
Assistant Headteacher/Principal	43	6%
Executive Headteacher/Principal	2	0%
Senior leader	11	2%
Middle leader	13	2%
Teacher / Lecturer	8	1%
ALNCo	326	45%
Teaching Assistant	1	0%
Other	16	2%
Total	730	100%

2.2 The 404 survey respondents who did not identify their main role as an ALNCo were asked if they were expected to undertake the role of ALNCo at their educational setting, in addition to their main role. Of these, a third (31% or 124) stated that they did. In total therefore, 450 survey respondents (62%) are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo at their setting.

2.3 Most survey respondents were working within either a primary (69% or 502) or secondary (18% or 130) school setting, as shown at Table 2.2. A small number of responses were also received from respondents working within other settings such as a special school, a 3-16 or 3-19 school, a further education / sixth form college or pupil referral unit. No responses were secured from respondents based at a pre-school or a middle school.

Table 2.2: Survey respondents' type of educational setting

Type	Number	Proportion
Pre-school	0	0%
Nursery	5	1%
Primary	502	69%
Secondary	130	18%
Middle school	0	0%
A 3-16 or 3-19 school	20	3%
Federation	8	1%
Further education / Sixth form college	15	2%
Special school	28	4%
Pupil Referral Unit	8	1%
Other	14	2%
Total	730	100%

- 2.4 Nearly two-fifths of survey respondents (39% or 252 of the 645 who were based at a nursery, primary, secondary or 3-16/3-19 school) noted that there was specialist teaching provision at their school.
- 2.5 As shown at Table 2.3, three quarters of survey respondents (73% or 513) reported that they were based at English medium educational settings whilst a fifth were based at a Welsh medium setting (19% or 136). A small number (6% or 42) were based at a bilingual setting.

Table 2.3: Survey respondents' language category of educational setting

Language category	Number	Proportion
English medium	513	73%
Welsh medium	136	19%
Bilingual	42	6%
Dual stream	5	1%
Not applicable	2	0%
Prefer not to say / Not answered	32	4%
Total	730	100%

- 2.6 The number of pupils based at the educational settings of survey respondents varied, as shown at Table 2.4. A quarter of those who responded (25% or 166) were based at an educational setting with over 500 pupils whilst around a tenth (11% or 83) were based in a setting with up to 100 pupils.

Table 2.4: Survey respondents' size of educational setting

Number of pupils	Number	Proportion
Up to 50	17	2%
51-100	66	9%
101-150	87	12%
150-300	211	30%
301-500	136	19%
500+	166	25%
Prefer not to say / Not answered	47	6%
Total	730	100%

- 2.7 The survey was completed by respondents from across Wales, with the counties of Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, and Gwynedd accounting for the greatest number of responses received. Only one response was received from a respondent working in Merthyr Tydfil and the counties of Conwy, Anglesey and Blaenau Gwent also returned fairly low numbers of completed responses. However, it is important to note that 14% of respondents (99) did not wish to disclose their local authority area, as shown at Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Survey respondents' local authority of educational setting

Local authority	Number	%	Local authority	Number	%
Blaenau Gwent	10	1%	Monmouthshire	13	2%
Bridgend	18	2%	Neath Port Talbot	42	6%
Caerphilly	31	4%	Newport	52	8%
Cardiff	63	9%	Pembrokeshire	20	3%
Carmarthenshire	37	5%	Powys	32	5%
Ceredigion	15	2%	Rhondda Cynon Taf	42	6%
Conwy	7	1%	Swansea	85	12%
Denbighshire	23	3%	Torfaen	15	2%
Flintshire	30	4%	Vale of Glamorgan	16	2%
Gwynedd	44	6%	Wrexham	26	4%
Isle of Anglesey	9	1%	Prefer not to say / Not answered	99	14%
Merthyr Tydfil	1	0%			
Total				730	100%

2.8 Responses were received from across all consortium/regional areas with broadly equal numbers from across the four regions (when combining the responses for Partneriaeth and Mid and West Wales). Nearly a fifth of survey respondents (18% or 128) did not disclose their region or consortium area.

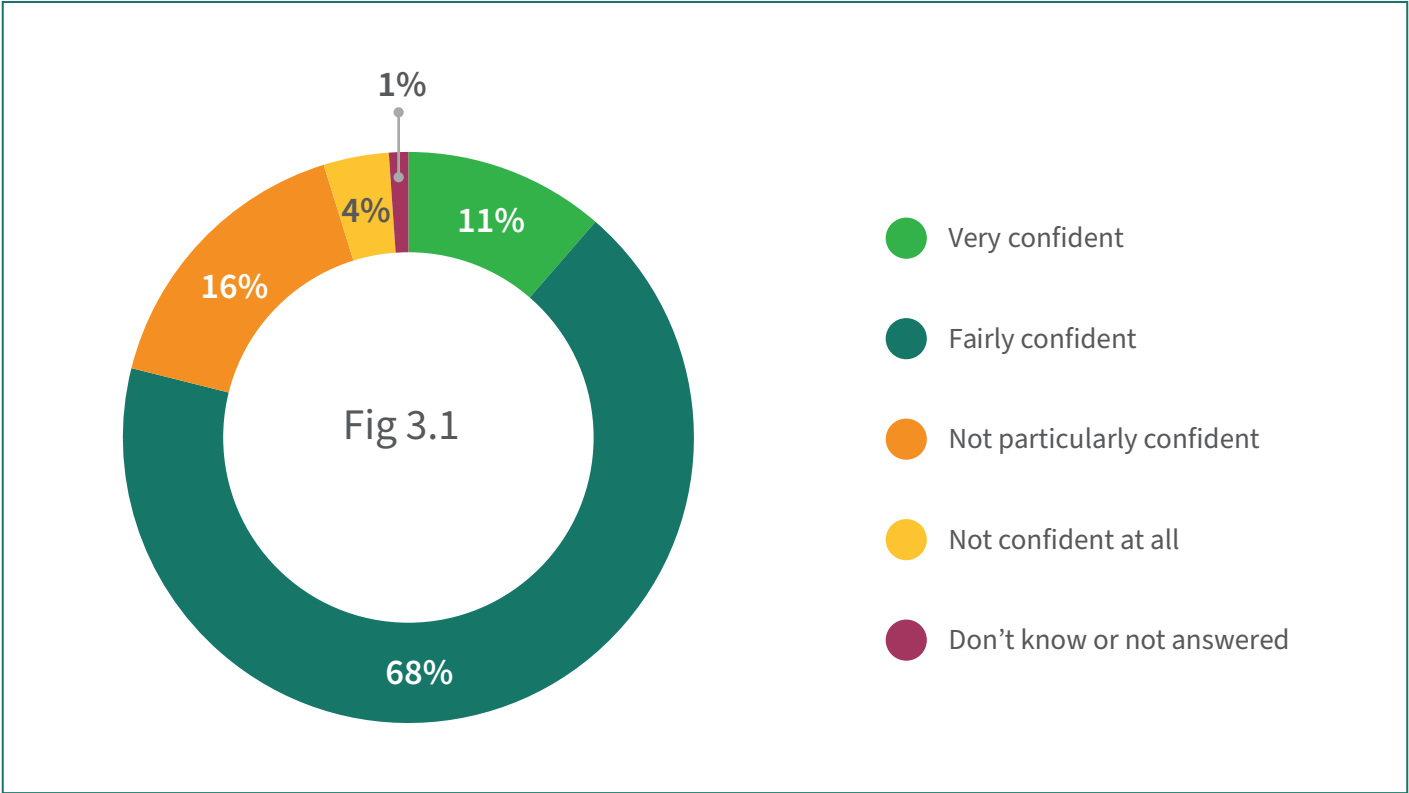
Table 2.6: Survey respondents' regional location of educational setting

Region or consortium area	Number	Proportion
CSC	140	21%
EAS	127	19%
GwE	154	23%
Partneriaeth	136	20%
Mid and west Wales	45	7%
Prefer not to say / Not answered	128	18%
Total	730	100%

3. Personal understanding of ALNET

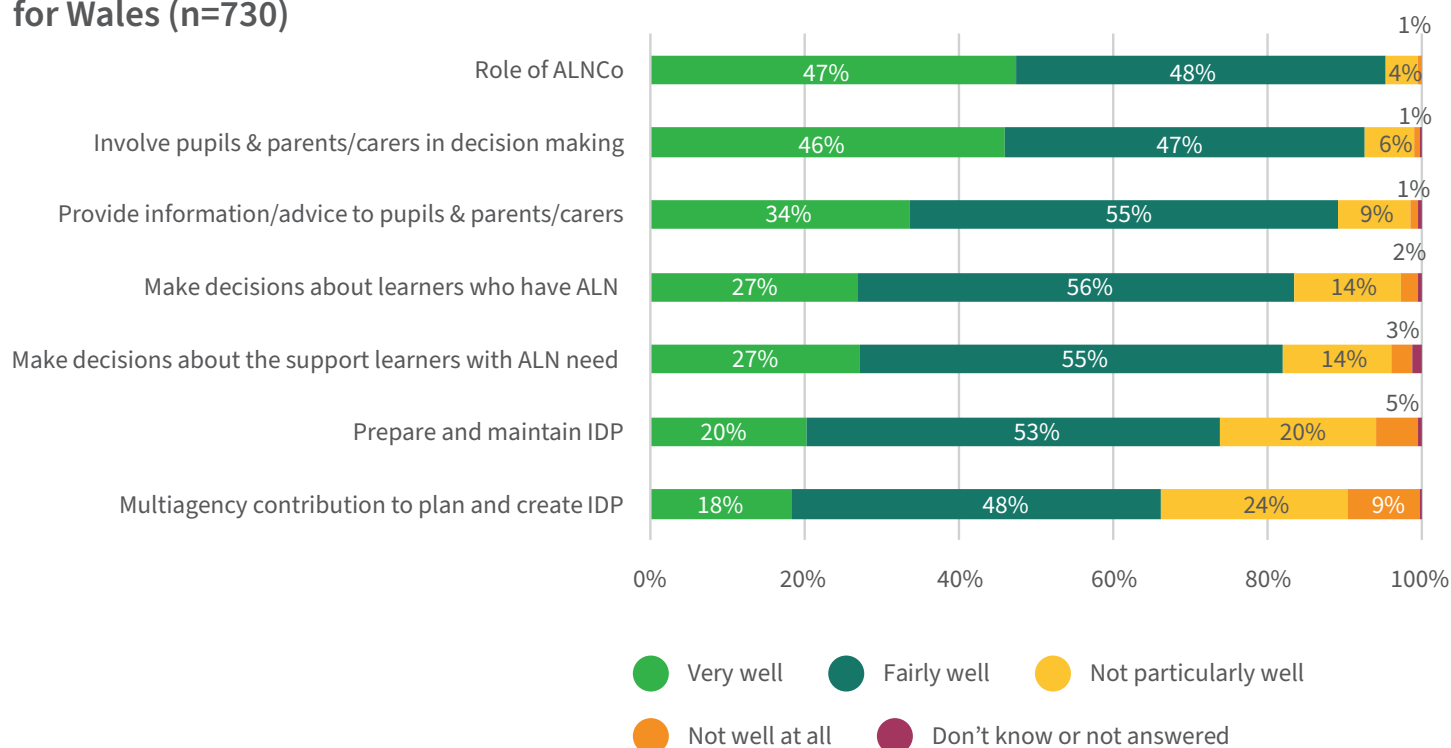
3.1 Most survey respondents were either very confident (11% or 83) or fairly confident (68% or 493) about delivering ALNET whilst a minority were either not particularly confident (16% or 119) or not confident at all (4% or 27), as shown at Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Survey respondents’ confidence to deliver ALNET (n=730)



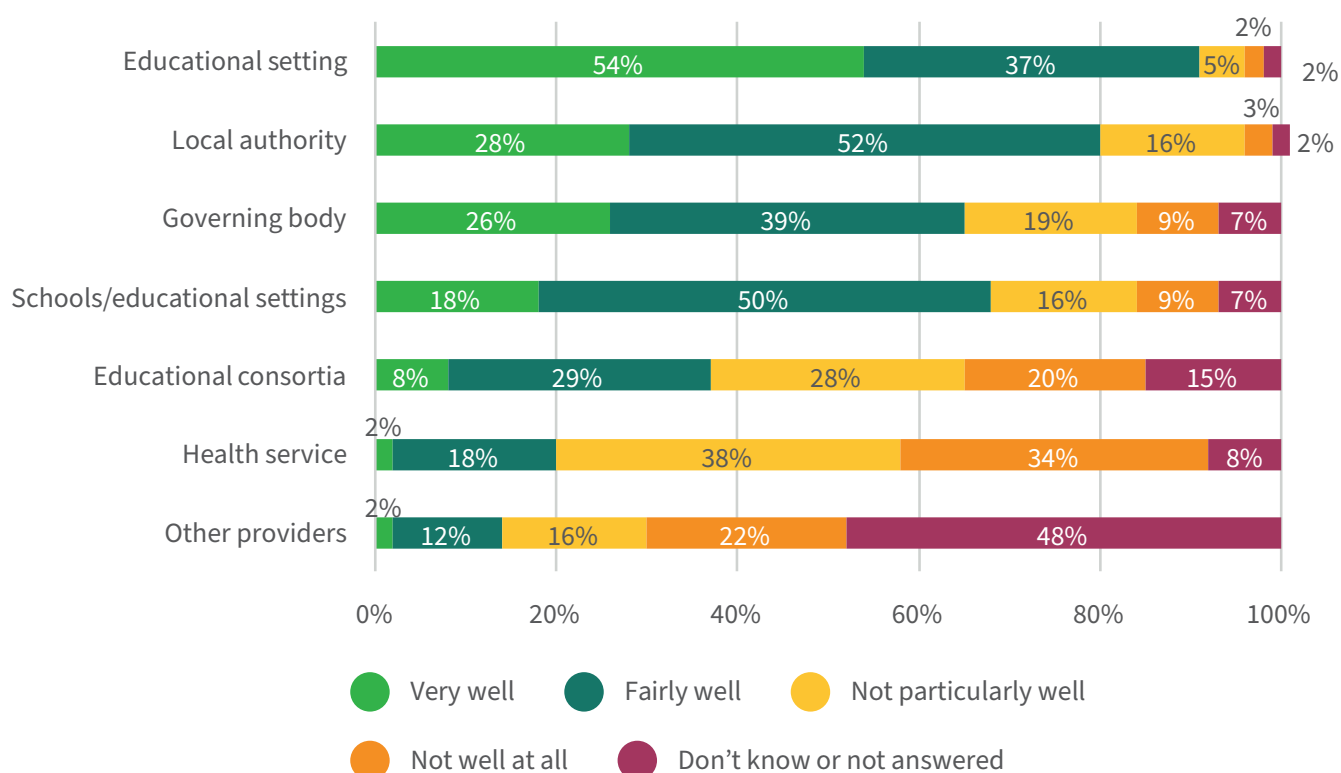
3.2 Figure 3.2 sets out how well survey respondents felt they understand various elements of the ALNET Code for Wales. It shows that respondents have a good understanding of the role of the ALNCo and how to involve pupils and their parents/carers in decision making whilst they have less of an understanding about preparing and maintaining an IDP and securing multiagency contribution to this process

Figure 3.2: Survey respondents' understanding of various elements of the ALNET Code for Wales (n=730)



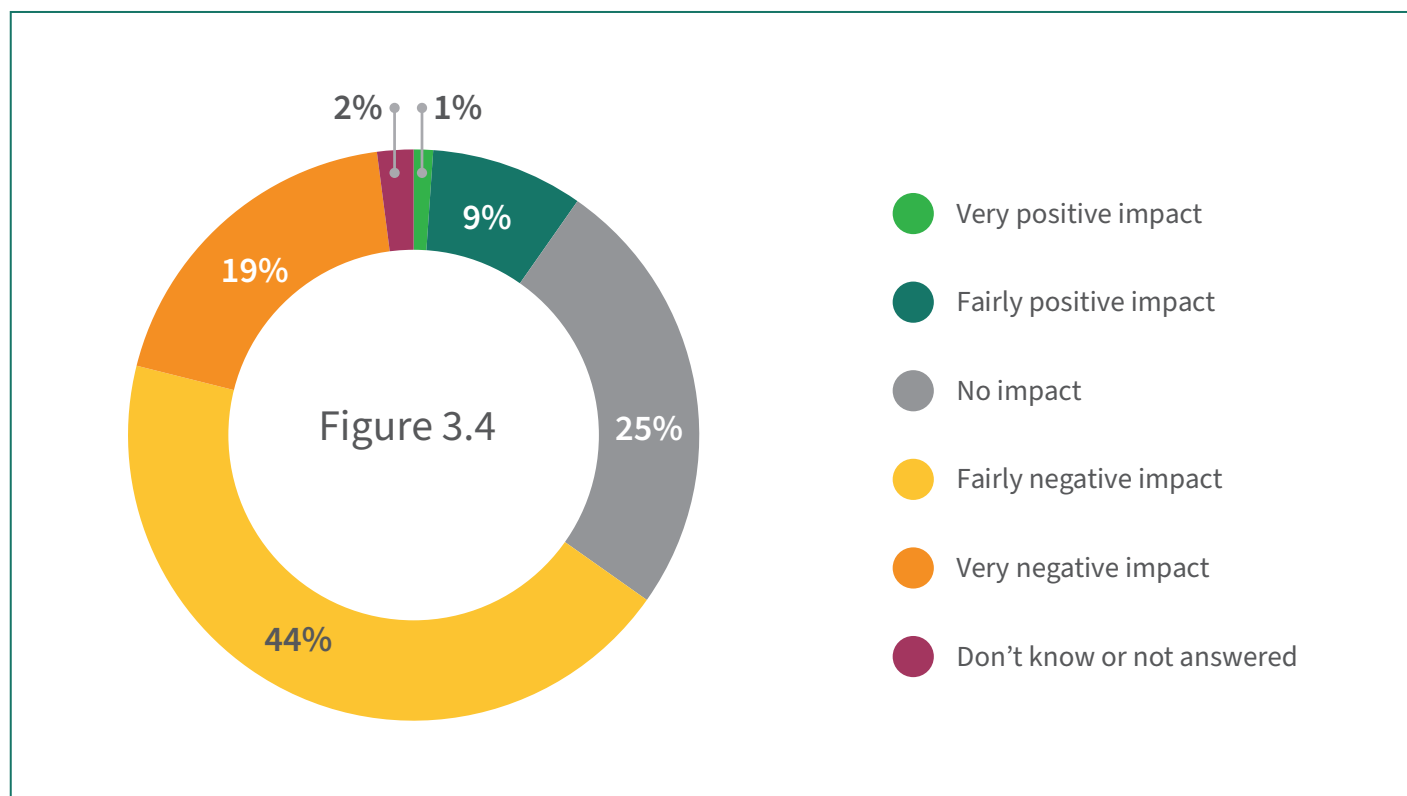
3.3 As shown at Figure 3.3, survey respondents felt generally well supported by their educational setting, local authority and other schools or educational settings whilst they felt less supported by their health service and educational consortia. Very few felt well supported by other providers, although this proportion was skewed by the number of respondents (48% or 325) who had not accessed support from any other providers.

Figure 3.3: Survey respondents' views on support provided by organisations (n=730)



- 3.4 A total of 77 survey respondents provided the name of another provider who had supported them to deliver ALNET.
- 3.5 A total of 378 survey respondents noted what support they had found helpful to deliver ALNET.
- 3.5 Some two-thirds of survey respondents thought that the implementation of ALNET had either a very (19% or 139) or fairly (44% or 322) negative impact on their own well-being. A quarter of those surveyed (25% or 183) did not believe it had any impact whilst a tenth believed it had either a very (1% or 8) or fairly (9% or 63) positive impact on their well-being, as shown at Figure 3.4.

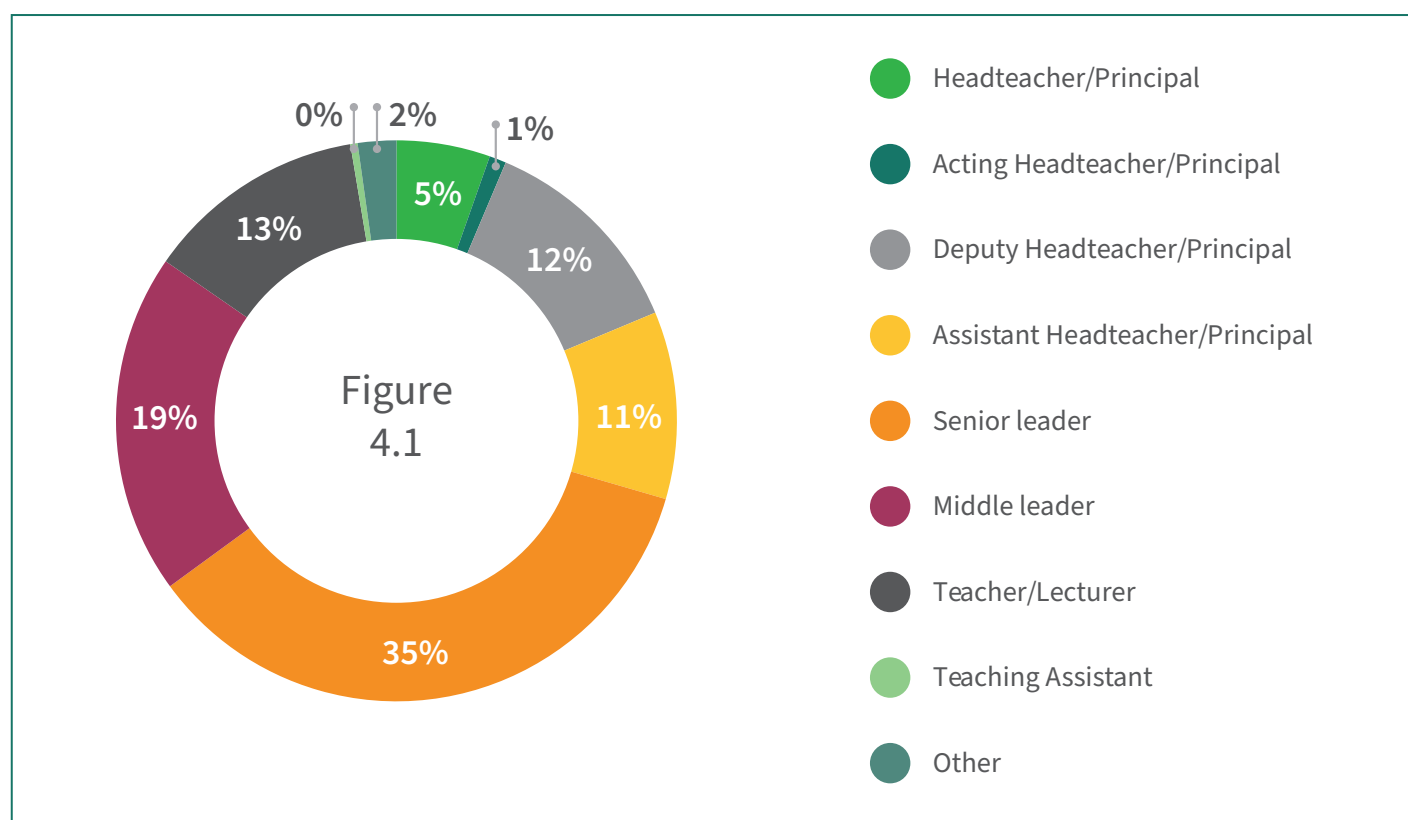
Figure 3.4: Impact of implementing ALNET on personal well-being (n=730)



4. Educational settings' understanding and implementation of ALNET

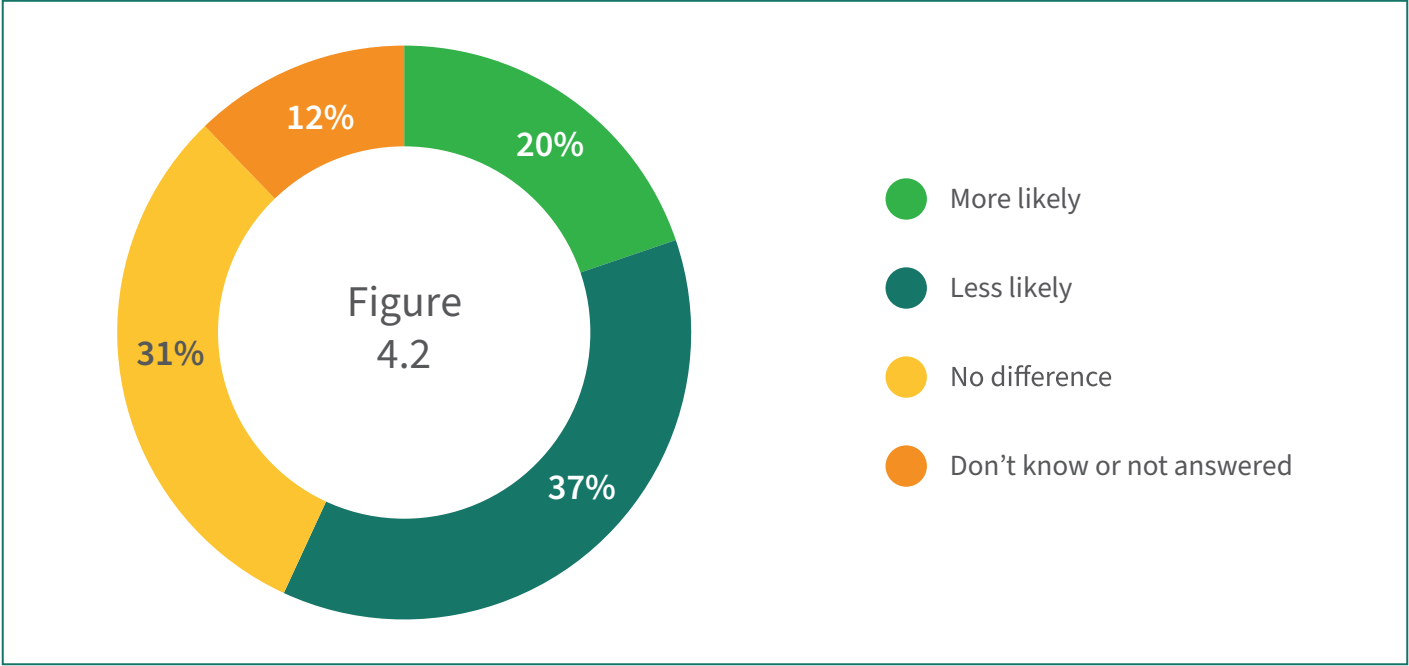
4.1 As shown at Figure 4.1, a wide range of staff are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo, with senior leaders (35% or 256) and middle leaders (19% or 142) accounting for over half of all responses. In 29% of cases (or 213), the Head, Acting, Deputy or Assistant Head is expected to undertake the role.

Figure 4.1: Staff who are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo (n=730)



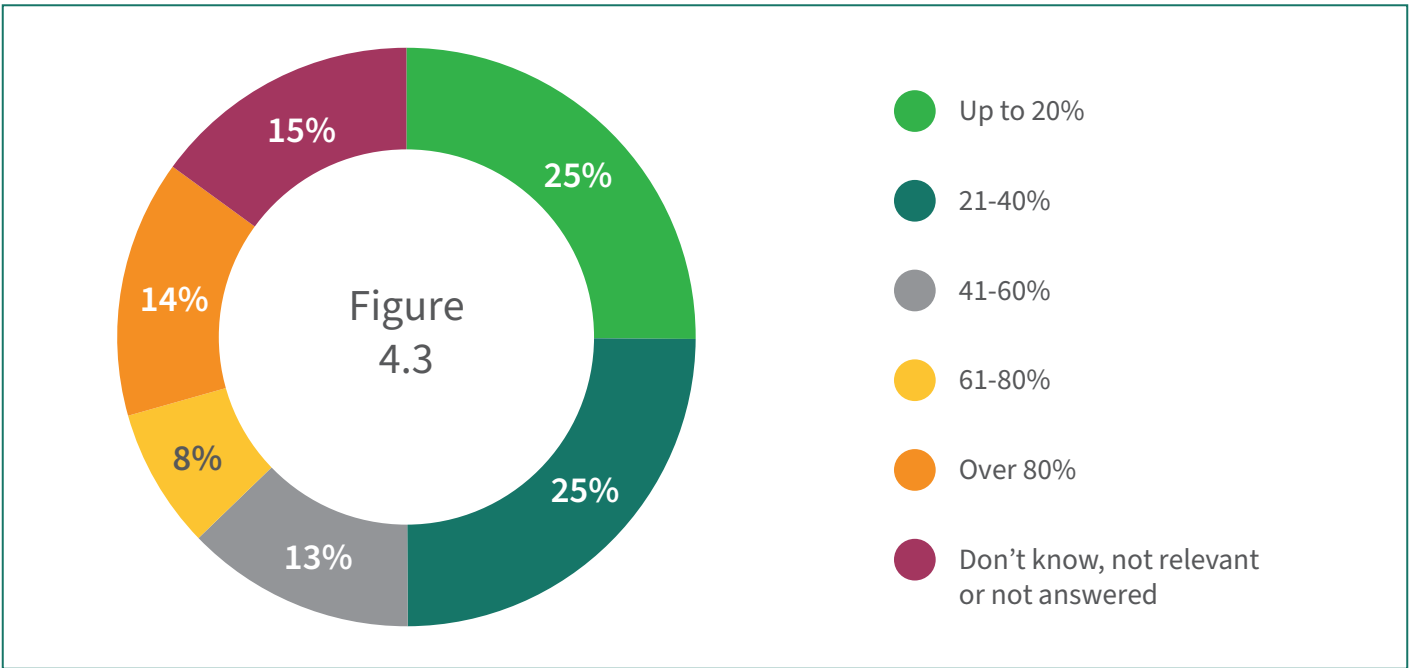
- 4.2 A small number (16) noted another postholder was expected to undertake the role of ALNCo. These included six responses where more than one person at the educational setting was responsible for the role (in some cases because the setting was a special school and all provision is IDP based) and two cases where the local authority officer undertakes the role.
- 4.3 In a fifth of cases (20% or 143), the ALNCo at the educational setting is the lead ALNCO for the school cluster whilst most of the remaining cases are not (77% or 541). Some 2% (17) either did not know or did not provide an answer.
- 4.4 Those survey respondents who were based at school settings (701) were asked if their SENCo had transferred to the role of ALNCo. In most cases (78% or 550 of 701) the SENCo had transferred to the role of ALNCo whilst they had not done so in 14% of cases (or 97). The remaining respondents either noted that this was not relevant for them (6% or 43) or did not know or provide an answer (2% or 11)
- 4.5 Survey respondents who are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo (a total of 450) were asked if they were more or less likely to stay in the role of ALNCo. The findings are set out at Figure 4.2 and suggest a mixed picture. The data shows that over a third (37% or 167) are less likely to do so whilst a fifth (20% or 89) are more likely to stay in the role. For just under a third (31% or 139) the change makes no difference and 12% (or 55) did not know or did not answer the question.

Figure 4.2: Likelihood of ALNCo postholders staying in their role following the implementation of the ALNET (n=450)



4.6 The survey respondents who were based at a school setting¹ (a total of 701 respondents) were asked what proportion of learners they have, that were previously on school action, are now part of the school's universal provision. The findings are set out at Figure 4.3 and suggest that schools have made varied progress. Whilst a quarter of those surveyed noted that up to 20% of these pupils are on the school's universal provision (25% or 175) some 15% (or 101) have moved over 80% of these pupils onto universal provision.

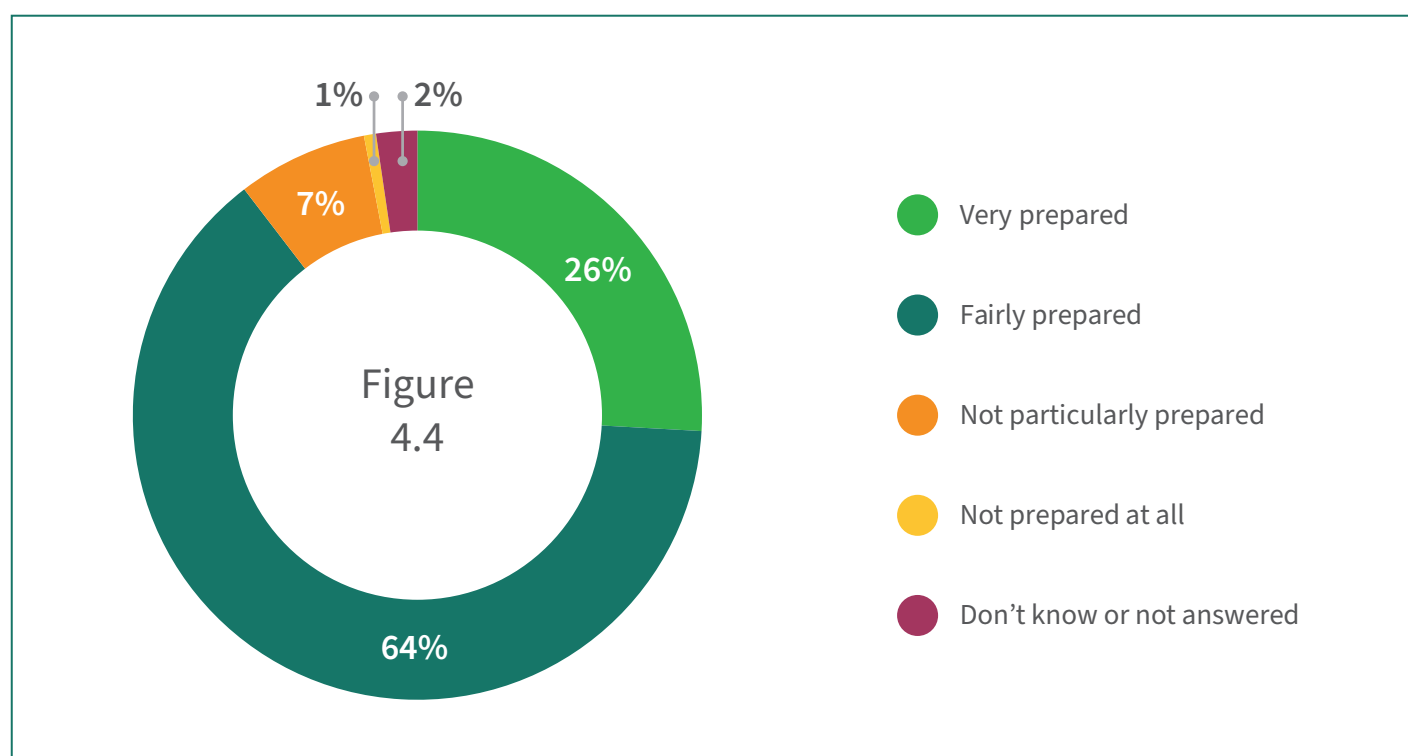
Figure 4.3: Proportion of learners previously on school action who are now part of school universal provision (n=701)



¹ i.e. those based at a nursery, primary, secondary, 3-16 or 3-19 school, federation, special school and pupil referral unit

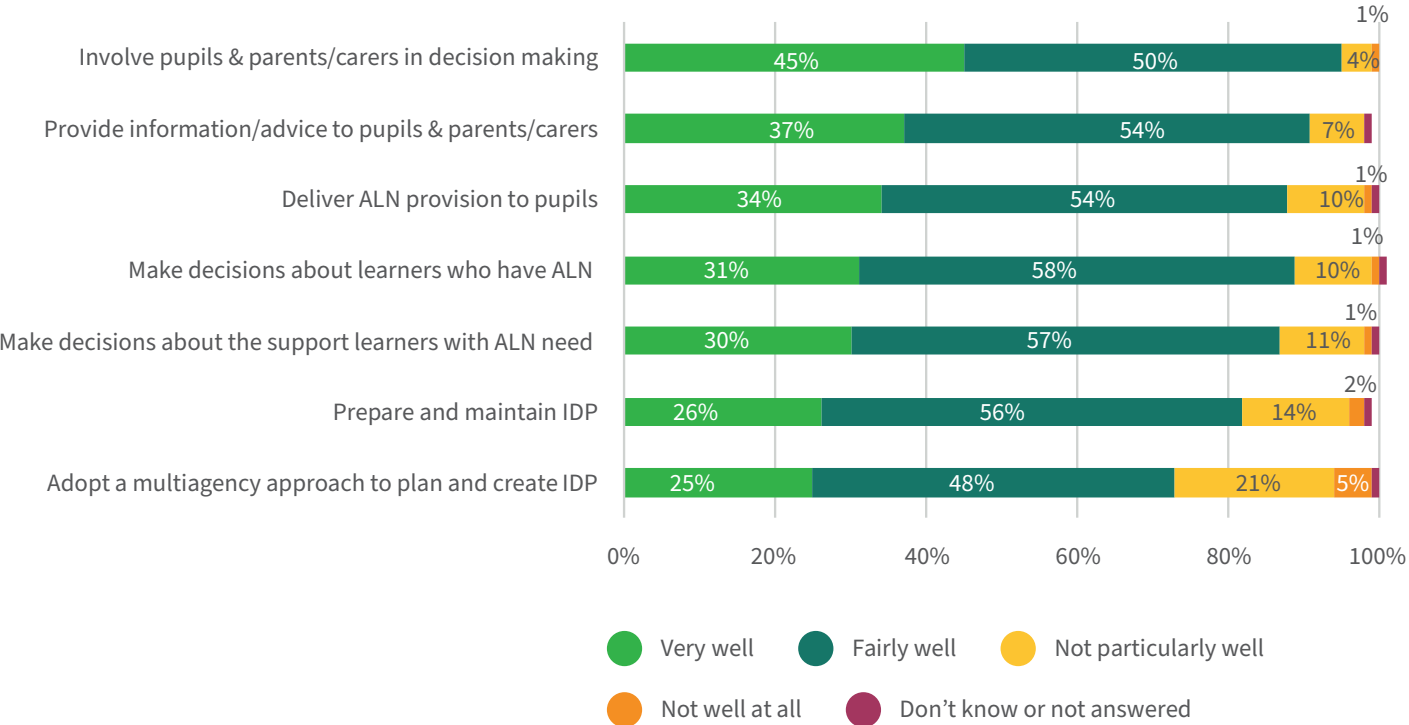
- 4.7 Survey respondents who are expected to undertake the role of ALNCo (450) were asked how much time they spend preparing an Independent Development Plan (IDP). They were asked to specify the total number of hours spent from start to finish, to include any meetings attended. Based on data provided by 435 of these respondents the average time spent equates to 10 hours 36 minutes. This varies from less than an hour to up to 100 hours. Three-quarters of those who provided data (73% or 318) spend up to and including 10 hours on each IDP.
- 4.8 Based on data provided by 420 respondents, on average around a third of ALNCO responsibilities (36%) are completed during school time. This proportion varies significantly from none to 100%. Some of the data entered by survey respondents to this question possibly needs to be removed from the analysis as it appears that respondents have entered the number of hours spent rather than provide an approximate proportion of their time spent on all ALNCo responsibilities during school time.
- 4.9 The majority of survey respondents believed that their educational setting is either very (26% or 189) or fairly (64% or 465) prepared to deliver ALNET and very few thought their setting was not prepared, as shown at Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: How prepared are educational settings to deliver ALNET (n=730)



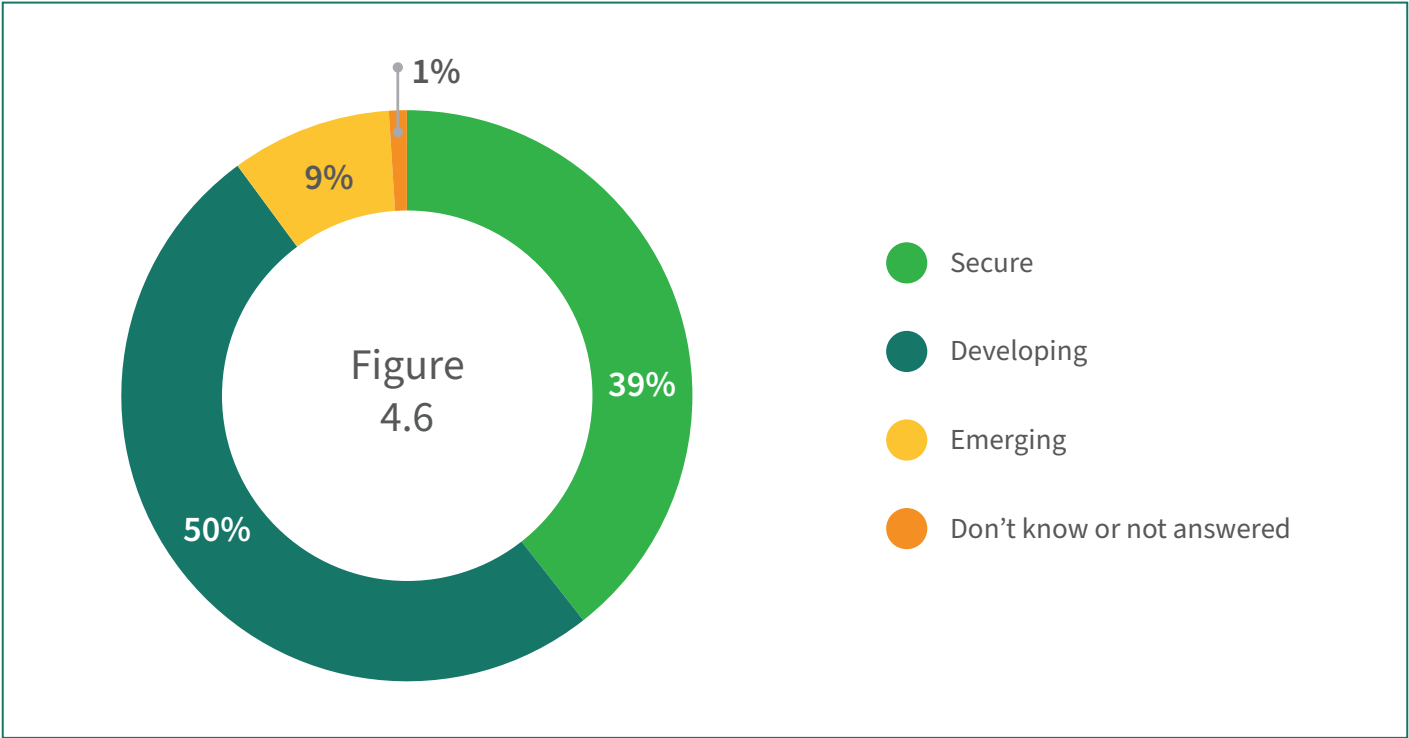
- 4.10 Figure 4.5 suggests that overall, survey respondents believed their educational setting to be either very or fairly well equipped to deliver various elements of the ALNET Code for Wales. Respondents believed that their setting is most well equipped to involve pupils and their parents/carers in the decision-making process whilst they are less confident that their educational setting is equipped to adopt a multiagency approach to plan and create an IDP.

Figure 4.5 How equipped are educational settings to deliver elements of the ALNET Code for Wales (n=730)

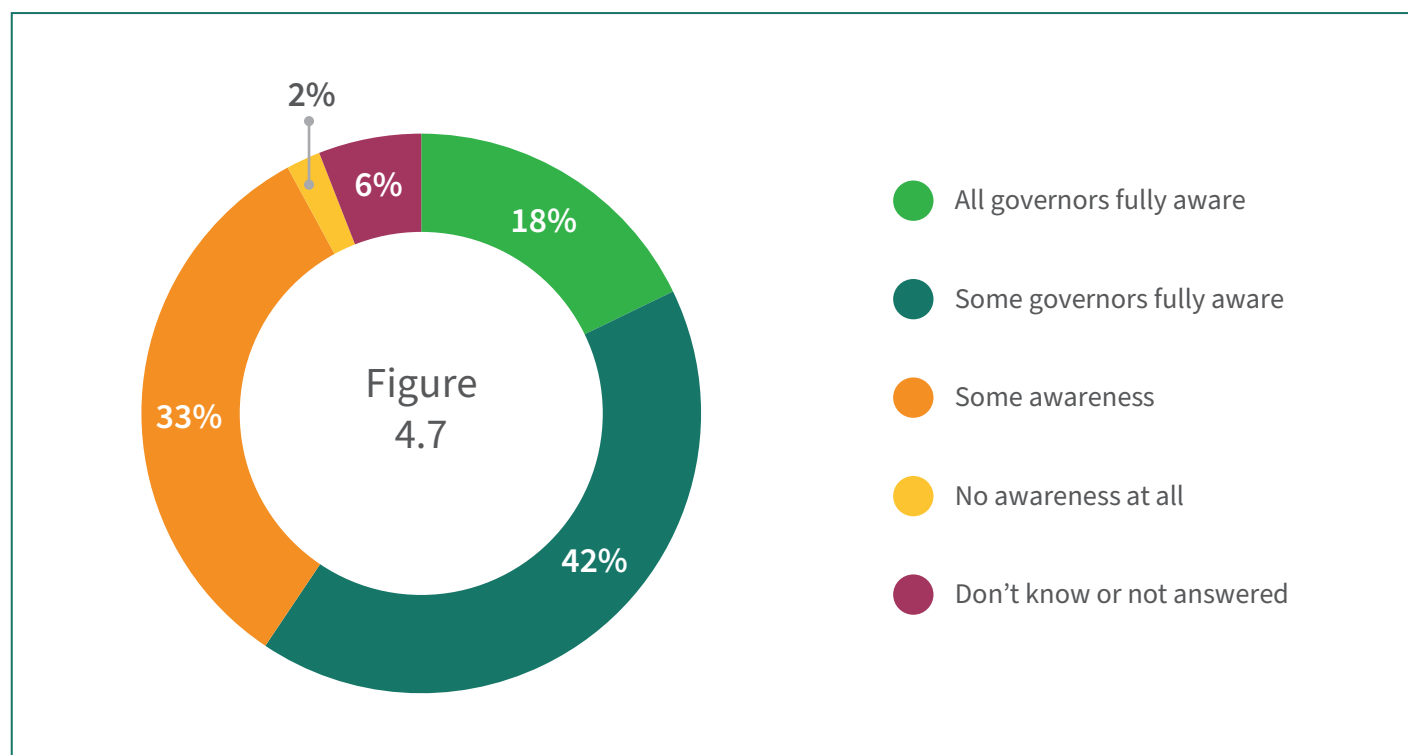


4.11 This position is further reinforced when analysing survey respondents’ selection of the statement which best reflects their educational setting’s position in terms of development and maintaining IDPs, as illustrated at Figure 4.6. Just over a third (39% or 284) believed their educational setting to be in a secure position (in that ALNCoS and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have very good awareness of the key changes and school-based challenges have been identified and planned for) and half (50% or 366) believed their educational setting to be developing (in that ALNCoS and SLT have good awareness). Just under a tenth (9% or 66) believed their educational setting’s position to be ‘emerging’ in that ALNCoS and SLT have some awareness. The remaining respondents (1% or 14) either did not know or did not provide an answer.

Figure 4.6 Educational settings position to develop and maintain IDPs (n=730)



4.12 Awareness of their responsibilities under the ALNET legislation amongst governing bodies was thought to vary. Just under two-fifths of those surveyed (18% or 130) believed that all governors at their educational setting are fully aware whilst awareness is lower across the remaining survey sample, as shown at Figure 4.7.



4.13 Just over half of those surveyed (52% or 379) noted that their educational setting had experienced challenges when accepting an ALN learner from another educational setting. Over a third had not (37% or 268) and the remaining proportion (11% or 83) either did not know or did not answer this question.

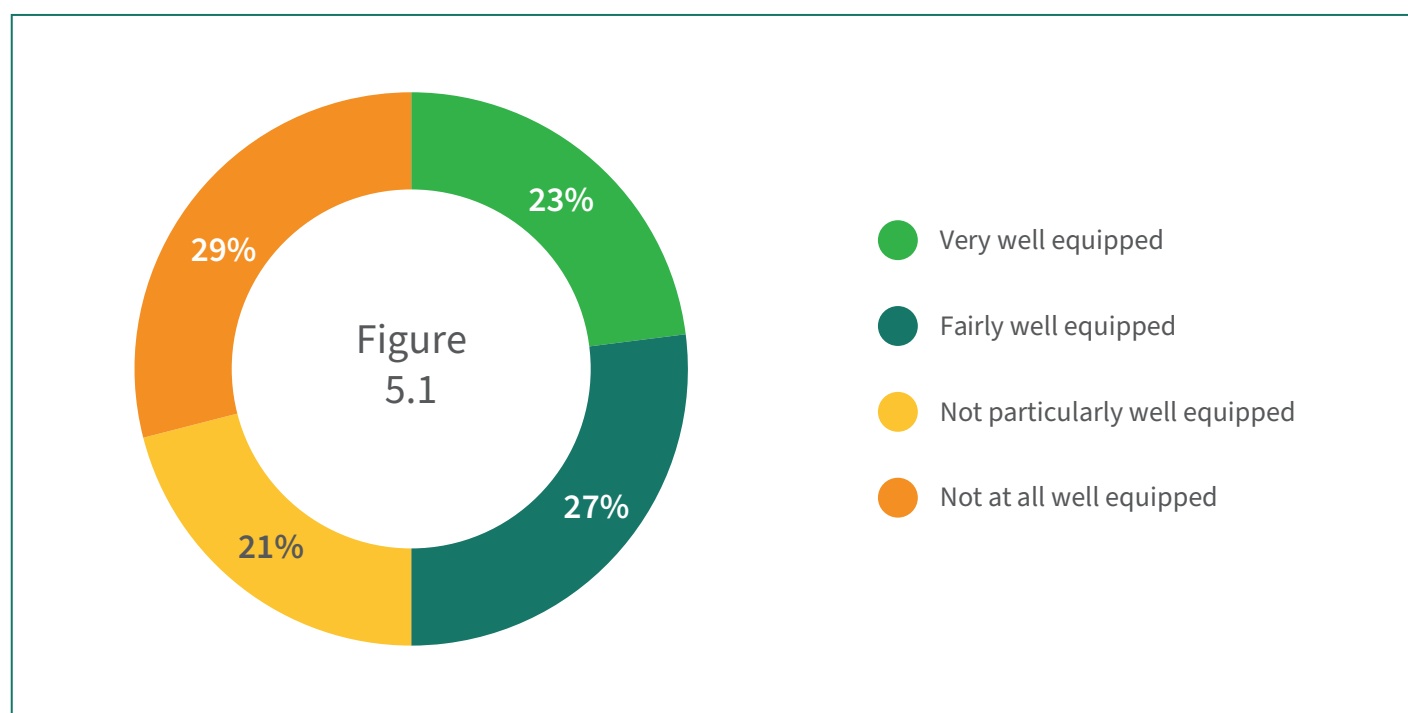
4.14 In total, 358 survey respondents provided details about the challenges experienced in accepting an ALN learner from another educational setting.

4.15 A total of 439 survey respondents identified benefits which they anticipate from implementing ALNET at their educational setting.

5. Meeting the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh

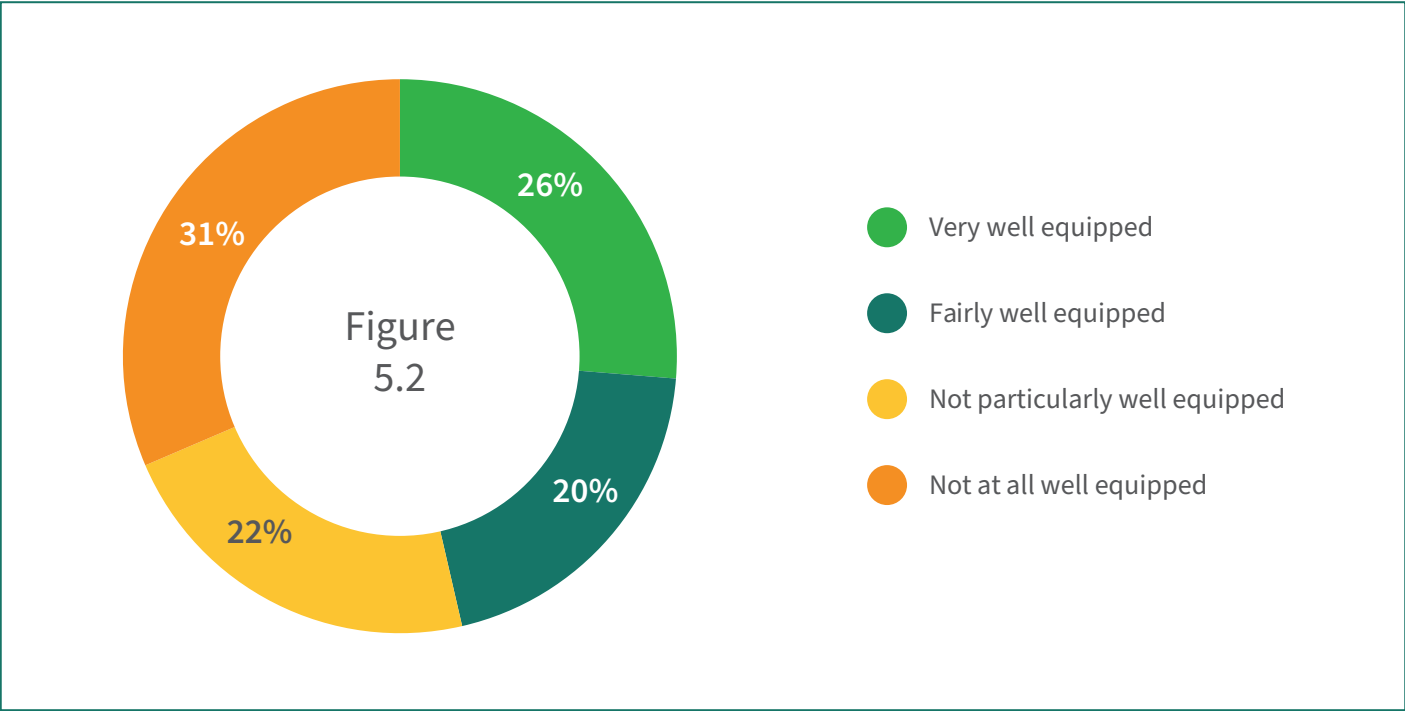
- 5.1 Just over half of all survey respondents answered some questions relating to ALN through the medium of Welsh. The findings suggest a very contrasting picture in terms of how well-equipped educational settings are to meet the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh.
- 5.2 Whilst half (50% or 198 of 396) believed their educational setting was either very (23% or 90) or fairly well (27% or 108) equipped to deal with the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh, the other half thought that they were either not particularly (21% or 82) or not at all well-equipped (29% or 116) to do so.

Figure 5.1: How well equipped are educational settings to assess the needs of learners who might have ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh (n=396)



- 5.3 In the same way whilst just under half believed that their educational setting was either very (26% or 201) or fairly (20% or 78) equipped to deliver additional learning provision (ALP) through the medium of Welsh, over half thought that they were either not particularly (22% or 86) or not at all (31% or 122) well equipped to do so.

Figure 5.2: How well equipped are educational settings to deliver ALP through the medium of Welsh (n=388)

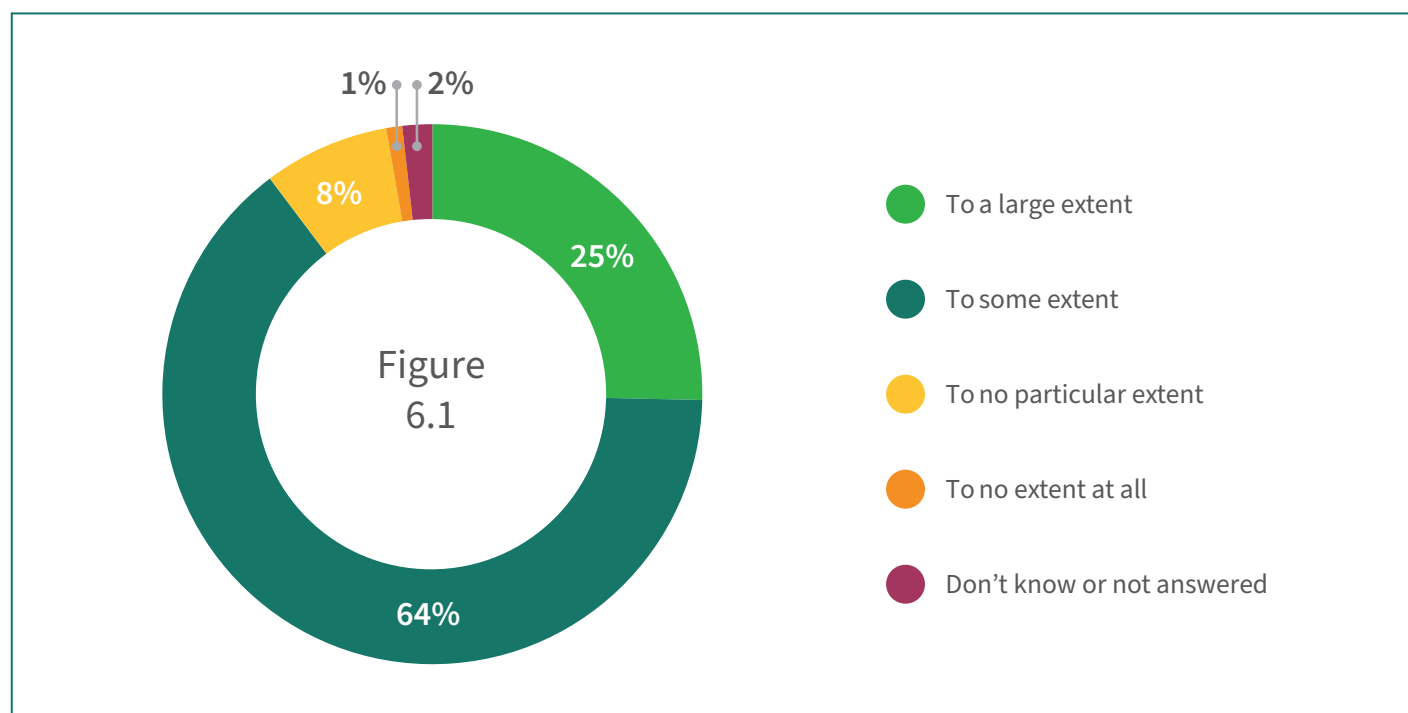


- 5.4 Of those who require access to ALN resources via the medium of Welsh (a total of 364), only just over a fifth (23% or 85) of survey respondents thought that they had adequate access. Two-thirds of the remaining respondents (66% or 240) did not think this was the case. A tenth (11% or 39) did not know.
- 5.5 A third of survey respondents (31% or 112 of 360) thought that their staff had access to adequate training and support to deliver the requirements of the ALN Act through the medium of Welsh. Over half (56% or 202 of 360) did not think this was the case and the remaining 13% (or 46) did not know.
- 5.6 A total of 166 survey respondents provided further comments on delivering ALNET through the medium of Welsh.

6. Skills, expertise, and capacity within educational settings

- 6.1 The majority of survey respondents believed that their educational setting was equipped with a skilled workforce to fulfil the requirements of the legislation, either to a large extent (25% or 185) or to some extent (64% or 470). Fewer than a tenth thought that their educational setting was not equipped, as shown at Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Extent to which educational settings are equipped with a skilled workforce to fulfil the requirements of the legislation (n=730)

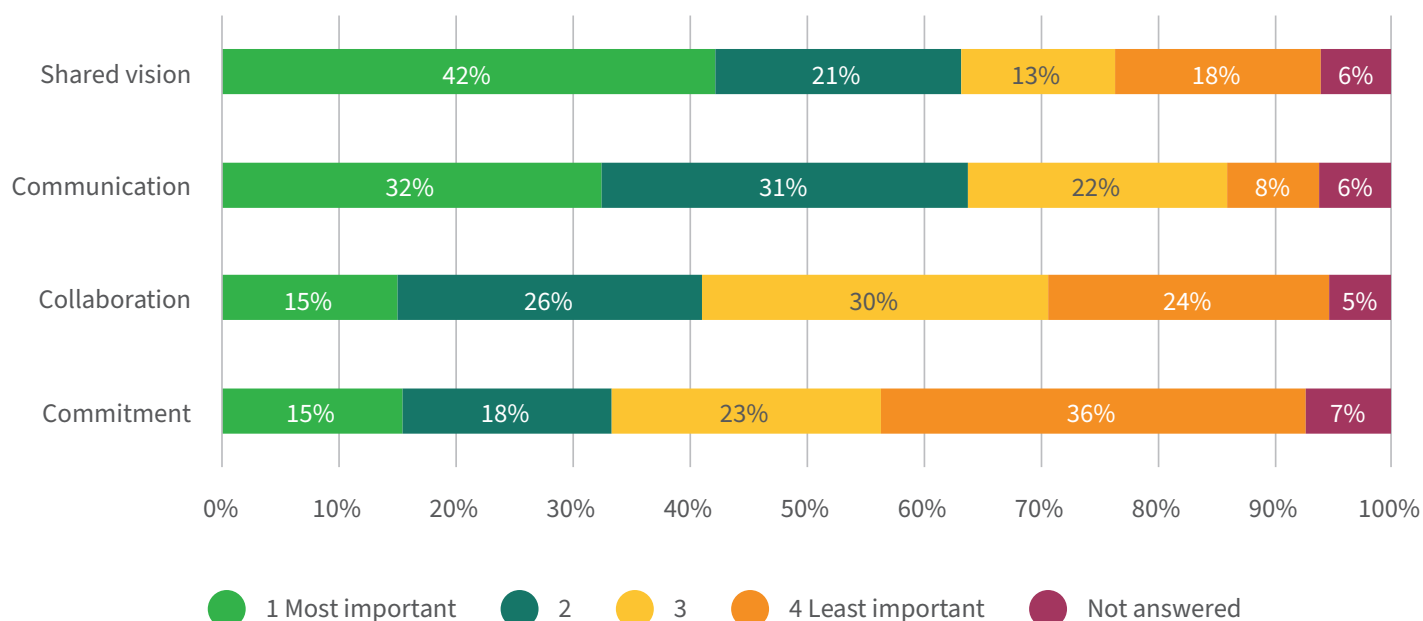


- 6.2 Despite this, some two-fifths of those surveyed (41% or 302) through that their educational setting had skills or knowledge gaps across their workforce which might hinder them from fulfilling the requirements of the legislation. The same proportion (42% or 304) did not think this to be the case whilst the remaining 18% (or 124) either did not know or did not answer the question.
- 6.3 A total of 247 survey respondents elaborated on the skills and knowledge gaps within their educational setting
- 6.4 Some two-thirds of those surveyed (65% or 472) reported that their educational setting had faced issues recruiting and retaining staff with the right skills and expertise to deliver ALNET whilst a quarter (25% or 186) had not. The remaining tenth (10% or 70) either did not know or did not answer the question. A total of 425 survey respondents provided further details about these issues.

6.5 Survey respondents were asked to rank the four characteristics of effective educational leadership¹ in delivering the ALNET reform in Wales in order of importance. The four characteristics were ranked in the following order of importance:

- Shared vision with 42% (or 308) choosing this as their most important characteristic
- Communication with 32% (or 237) selecting this as their most important characteristic
- Collaboration with 15% (or 110) selecting this as their most important characteristic and a quarter (24% or 175) selecting this as their least important characteristic
- Commitment with again 15% (or 113) selecting this as their most important characteristics but a third (36% or 265) selecting this as their least important characteristic.

Figure 6.2: Ranking of educational leadership characteristics (n=730)

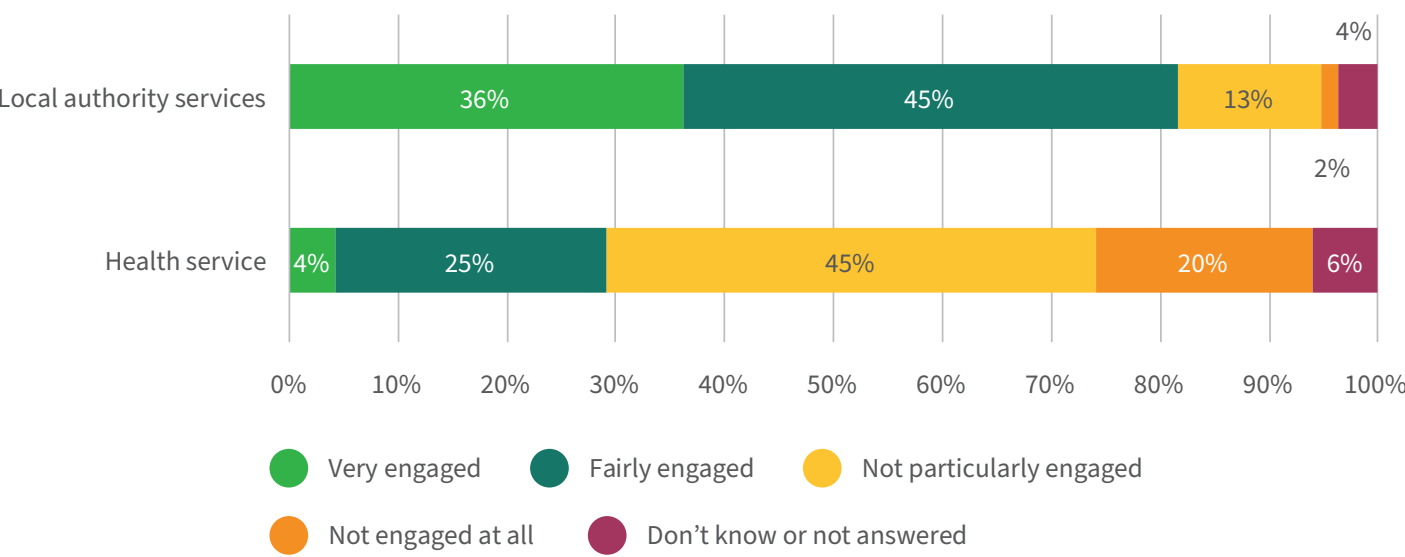


1 As set out by the National College of School Leadership

7. Engagement between educational settings and key partners

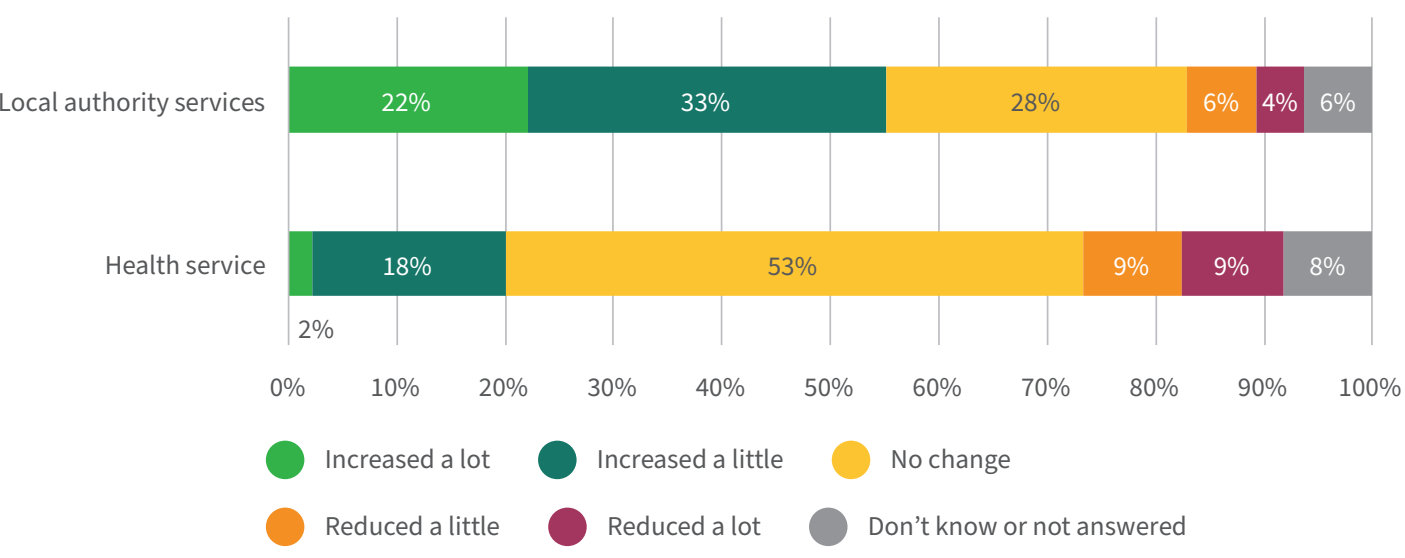
7.1 Survey respondents were asked to comment on the engagement between their educational setting and key partners such as the health service and local authority services. As shown at Figure 7.1, most survey respondents believed that local authority services were either very or fairly engaged in the delivery of ALNET whilst engagement levels across the health service was much lower.

Figure 7.1: Engagement of key partners in the delivery of ALNET (n=730)



7.2 Furthermore, the survey findings suggest that whilst local authority services have generally become more engaged since the introduction of ALNET, engagement from the health service has not changed much with only 20% (or 146) of the view that their engagement had increased over time.

Figure 7.2: How engagement of key partners has changed since the introduction of ALNET (n=730)

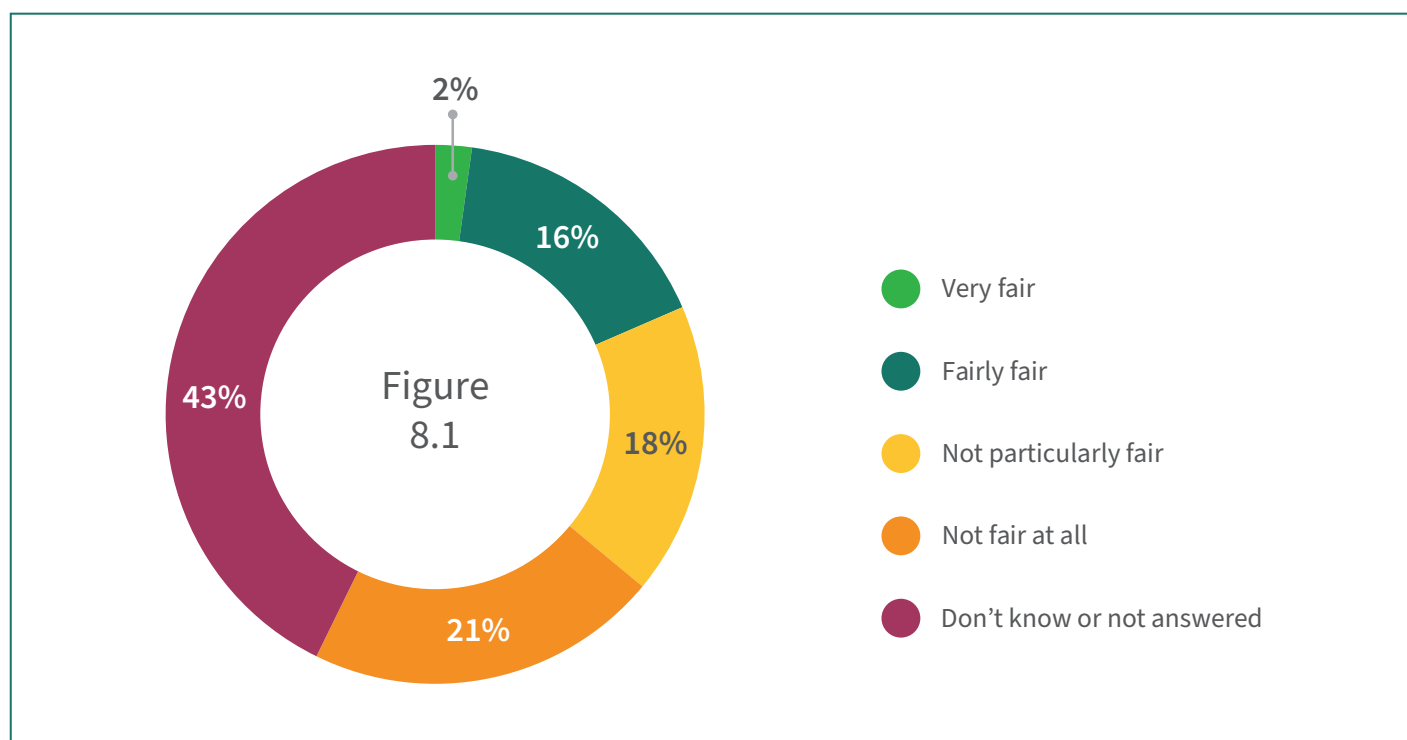


7.3 A total of 338 survey respondents provided details on the issues which their educational setting had experienced in engaging with these key partners.

8. Funding to educational settings

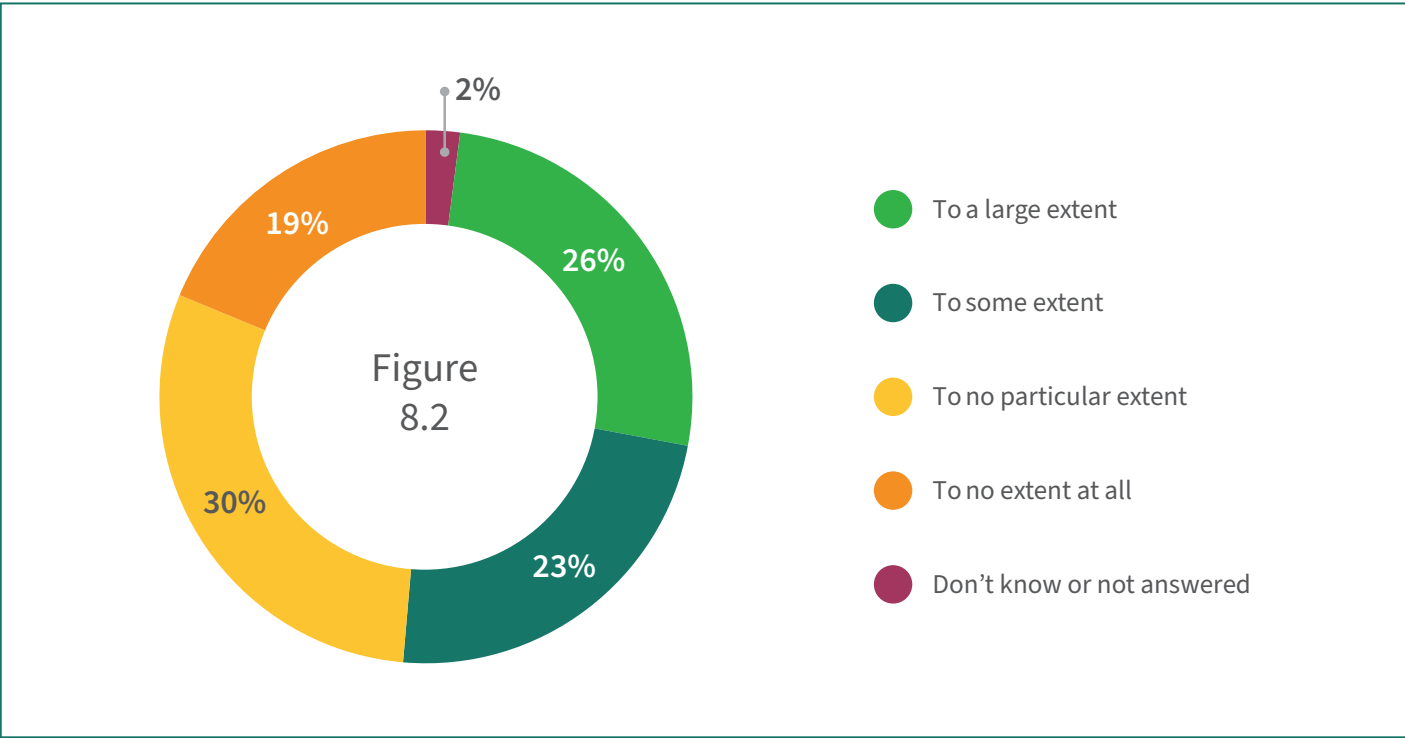
- 8.1 Of those survey respondents who could answer the question (503 of 730), just over half (57%, or 288 of 503) had been informed how much funding their educational setting would receive from their local authority to deliver ALNET. The remaining 215 (43%) had not been informed at the time of completing the survey.
- 8.2 A third of all survey respondents (32% or 237 of 730) understood how their local authority had determined how much funding each educational setting will receive to deliver ALNET whilst the remaining two-thirds did not know.
- 8.3 Whilst a large minority did not know (42% or 312) most of the remaining survey respondents (39% or 283) did not think that the funding formula adopted by their local authority for allocating these funds to educational settings was fair, as shown at Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1 Whether local authority funding formula for allocating funds to deliver ALNET is fair (n=730)



- 8.4 Over half of survey respondents (53% or 389) did not think that their educational setting would have the necessary funding to fulfil the requirements of the legislation whilst just over a quarter (28% or 204) did, as set out at Figure 8.2. A fifth (19% or 137) either did not know or did not answer this question.

Figure 8.2 Whether educational setting will have the necessary funding to fulfil legislation requirements (n=730)



9. Final observations

9.1 A total of 470 survey respondents described ALNET in one word. Figure 9.1 sets out the 50 most used words by these respondents, in either Welsh or English. Most of the common words used, such as challenging, stressful, consuming and confusing have negative connotations although a smaller number of respondents cited more positive words such as progressive, aspirational, and person-centred.

Figure 9.1: A word cloud describing ALN in one word



9.2 A total of 284 survey respondents provided other comments about ALNET.

Annex A: Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act Web survey

OB3 Research is supporting a team of National Academy for Educational Leadership Associates to conduct research amongst educational setting leaders across Wales about the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (ALNET Act).

We would be grateful if you could please complete this short survey to tell us about your understanding of ALNET and the progress being made by your setting to implement the legislation.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and your responses will be considered in confidence. Any personal data provided will be anonymised and will not be attributed in any way to you or your educational setting.

A1. A hoffech lenwi'r holiadur yma yn / Would you like to complete this questionnaire in:

- ☐ Saesneg / English
- ☐ y Gymraeg / Welsh

B1. What is your role?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headteacher / Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acting Headteacher / Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> ALNCo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Headteacher / Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher / Lecturer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Headteacher / Assistant Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching assistant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Headteacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior leader | |

[If other] Please specify:

B2. What type of educational setting do you work in?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre school | <input type="checkbox"/> Federation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery | <input type="checkbox"/> Further education / sixth form college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary | <input type="checkbox"/> Special school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary | <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil Referral Unit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A 3-16 or 3-19 school | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

[If B2=Is a school] B3. Do you have any specialist teaching provision at your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

[If B1=Not ALNCo] B4. Are you expected to undertake the role of ALNCo at your educational setting?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

These first set of questions focus on your personal understanding of ALNET and how confident you feel about implementing the legislation.

C1. How confident do you feel about delivering ALNET?

- ☐ Very confident
- ☐ Fairly confident
- ☐ Not particularly confident
- ☐ Not confident at all
- ☐ Don't know

C2. How well do you understand the following elements of the ALNET Code for Wales?

	Very well	Fairly well	Not particularly well	Not well at all	Don't know
The role of the ALNCo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing information and advice to pupils, and their parents/carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involving pupils, and their parents/carers, in decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making decisions about learners who have ALN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making decisions about the support that learners with ALN need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparing and maintaining an Independent Development Plan (IDP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multiagency contribution to planning and creating an IDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C3. How well have you been supported by the following organisations to deliver ALNET?

	Very well supported	Fairly well supported	Not particularly well supported	Not supported at all	Don't know / Not relevant
Your educational setting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your governing body	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational consortia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other schools or educational settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please specify these other providers who have supported you to deliver ALNET:

.....

C4. What support, if any, have you found helpful to deliver ALNET?

C5. What bearing, if any, has the implementation of ALNET to date had upon your own well-being?

- ☐ A very positive impact
- ☐ A fairly positive impact
- ☐ No impact
- ☐ A fairly negative impact
- ☐ A very negative impact
- ☐ Don't know

These next set of questions focus on your educational setting's understanding and implementation of ALNET.

D1. Who within your educational setting is expected to undertake the role of ALNCo?

- ☐ Headteacher / Principal
- ☐ Acting Headteacher / Principal
- ☐ Deputy Headteacher / Principal
- ☐ Assistant Headteacher / Principal
- ☐ Executive Headteacher
- ☐ A senior leader
- ☐ A middle leader
- ☐ A teacher / lecturer
- ☐ A teaching assistant
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Don't know

[If other] Please specify:

[If B2=school setting] D2. Is your ALNCo a lead ALNCo for your school cluster?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

[If B2=school setting] D3. Has your SENCo transferred to the role of ALNCo?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Not relevant

[If B1=8 OR B4=1] D4. Following the implementation of the ALNET, are you more or less likely to stay in the role of ALNCo?

- ☐ More likely
- ☐ Less likely
- ☐ No difference
- ☐ Don't know

[If B2=school setting] D5. Approximately, what proportion of learners do you have, that were previously on school action, are now part of the school's universal provision?

- ☐ Up to 20%
- ☐ 21 - 40%
- ☐ 41 - 60%
- ☐ 61 - 80%
- ☐ Over 80%
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Not relevant

[If B1=8 OR B4=1] D6. How much time, on average, do you spend preparing an Independent Development Plan (IDP)?

.....

[Please put in the total number of hours you usually spend preparing one IDP from start to finish, to include any meetings attended]

.....

[If B1=8 OR B4=1] D7. How does the amount of time you spend preparing an IDP differ to that spent on preparing school action plans?

- ☐ An IDP takes much more time
- ☐ An IDP takes slightly more time
- ☐ An IDP takes the same amount of time
- ☐ An IDP takes slightly less time
- ☐ An IDP takes much less time
- ☐ Don't know

D8. Approximately, how much of your ALNCo responsibilities are you able to complete within school time?

.....

[Please put in an approximate proportion of the time you spend on all ALNCo responsibilities which you undertake at school during school time]

.....

D9. How prepared is your educational setting to deliver ALNET?

- ☐ Very prepared
- ☐ Fairly prepared
- ☐ Not particularly prepared
- ☐ Not prepared at all
- ☐ Don't know

D10. How well equipped is your educational setting to deliver the following elements of the ALNET Code for Wales?

	Very well	Fairly well	Not particularly well	Not well at all	Don't know
Provide information and advice to pupils, and their parents/carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involve pupils, and their parents/carers, in decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making decisions about learners who have ALN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making decisions about the support that learners with ALN need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare and maintain an IDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopt a multiagency approach to plan and create an IDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver ALN provision to pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D11. Which of the following statements best describes your educational setting's position in terms of preparing and maintaining Individual Development Plans (IDPs)?

- ☐ Secure: ALNCo and SLT have very good awareness of key changes, and school based challenges are identified and have been planned for
- ☐ Developing: ALNCo and SLT have good awareness of key changes, and action planning is being considered
- ☐ Emerging: ALNCo and SLT have some awareness of key changes, and actions are at an early stage
- ☐ Don't know

D12. How aware are members of your governing body of their responsibilities under the ALNET legislation?

- ☐ All governors are fully aware
- ☐ Some governors are fully aware
- ☐ Some awareness
- ☐ No awareness at all
- ☐ Don't know

D13. Has your educational setting experienced any challenges when accepting an ALN learner from another educational setting?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

[If D13=1] D14. What were these challenges?

D15. What, if any, benefits do you anticipate from implementing ALNET at your educational setting?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

The following set of questions focus on how well equipped your educational setting is to meet the needs of learners who want to learn through the medium of Welsh.

E1. How well equipped is your educational setting to assess the needs of learners who might need ALN who want to learn through the medium of Welsh?

- ☐ Very well equipped
- ☐ Fairly well equipped
- ☐ Not particularly well equipped
- ☐ Not at all well equipped
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ This is not relevant to our educational setting

E2. How well equipped is your educational setting to deliver additional learning provision (ALP) through the medium of Welsh?

- ☐ Very well equipped
- ☐ Fairly well equipped
- ☐ Not particularly well equipped
- ☐ Not at all well equipped
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ This is not relevant to our educational setting

E3. Does your educational setting have access to adequate ALN resources via the medium of Welsh?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ This is not relevant to our educational setting

E4. Do staff at your educational setting have access to adequate training and support to deliver the requirements of the ALN Act through the medium of Welsh?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ This is not relevant to our educational setting

E5. Do you wish to make any further comments on delivering ALNET through the medium of Welsh?

The following questions ask about the skills, expertise and capacity which you have within your educational setting to deliver ALNET.

F1. To what extent is your educational setting equipped with a skilled workforce to fulfil the requirements of the legislation?

- ☐ To a large extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To no particular extent
- ☐ To no extent at all
- ☐ Don't know

F2. Does your educational setting have any skills or knowledge gaps across your workforce which might hinder you from fulfilling the requirements of the legislation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

[If F2=1] What are these skills or knowledge gaps?

F3. Does your educational setting face any issues recruiting and retaining staff with the right skills and expertise to deliver ALNET?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

[If F3=1] What are these issues?

F4. What do you consider to be important characteristics of effective educational leadership in delivering the ALNET reform in Wales?

[Please drag and drop these National College of School Leadership characteristics into the empty column, in order of importance where 1=most important and 4=least important]

	1 Most Useful	2	3	4	5 Least Useful
Shared vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The following questions cover engagement between your educational setting and key partners in delivering ALNET.

From your experience, how engaged are the following key partners in the delivery of ALNET?

	Very engaged	Fairly engaged	Not particularly engaged	Not at all engaged	Don't know
Health service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

G1. In what way, if at all, has engagement between your educational setting and the following key partners changed since the introduction of ALNET?

	Increased a lot	Increased a little	No change	Reduced a little	Reduced a lot	Don't know
Health service	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority services	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

G2. What issues, if any, has your educational setting experienced in engaging these key partners?

These next set of questions ask about the funding made available to your educational setting to deliver ALNET:

H1. Has your educational setting been informed how much funding it will receive from the local authority to deliver ALNET?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

H2. Do you understand how your local authority has determined how much funding each educational setting will receive to deliver ALNET?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

H3. Do you think that the funding formula adopted by your local authority for allocating funds to educational settings to deliver ALNET is:

- ☐ Very fair
- ☐ Fairly fair
- ☐ Not particularly fair
- ☐ Not at all fair
- ☐ Don't know

H4. To what extent do you consider that your educational setting will have the necessary funding to fulfil the requirements of the legislation?

- ☐ To a large extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To no particular extent
- ☐ To no extent at all
- ☐ Don't know

H5. Finally, if you had to sum up ALNET in one word, what single word would you choose?

.....

H6. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about ALNET?

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The following questions are optional, but we would be grateful if you could complete as many of them as possible as they will help us to develop a profile of survey respondents. Your responses will remain confidential and any information provided will not be used in a way which could identify participants or educational settings.

J1. What language category is your educational setting?

- ☐ English medium
- ☐ Welsh medium
- ☐ Bilingual
- ☐ Dual stream
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

J2. How many pupils are at your educational setting?

- ☐ Up to 50
- ☐ 51-100
- ☐ 101-150
- ☐ 150-300
- ☐ 301-500
- ☐ 500+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

J3. Within which local authority is your educational setting based?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blaenau Gwent | <input type="checkbox"/> Monmouthshire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridgend | <input type="checkbox"/> Neath Port Talbot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caerphilly | <input type="checkbox"/> Newport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiff | <input type="checkbox"/> Pembrokeshire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carmarthenshire | <input type="checkbox"/> Powys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceredigion | <input type="checkbox"/> Rhondda Cynon Taf |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conwy | <input type="checkbox"/> Swansea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denbighshire | <input type="checkbox"/> Torfaen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flintshire | <input type="checkbox"/> Vale of Glamorgan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gwynedd | <input type="checkbox"/> Wrexham |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Isle of Anglesey | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merthyr Tydfil | |

J4. Within which consortium or region is your educational setting based?

- ☐ CSC
- ☐ EAS
- ☐ GwE
- ☐ Partneriaeth
- ☐ Mid and west Wales
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Analysis of answers to Q 6.3 regarding reasons for skills gaps in providing ALN

Three key areas identified from the open responses to this question.

1. Teaching Assistant Skills

Most respondents quoted difficulties in recruiting and retaining Teaching Assistants as the main reason for gaps in the skill set of staff. This took several different forms but the sentiment was the same that the situation is worsening. The main reasons given for this inability to recruit and retain TAs were;

- Lack of respondents to adverts and low numbers being identified.
- Lack of skills to manage learners with ALN – this was especially so with the employment of 1:1s. Very high numbers quoted this reason.
- Poor pay and the ability to find work elsewhere with fewer challenges and more pay. Supermarkets were often quoted as an alternative. Similarly high numbers quoted this reason.
- Little job security. This was also quoted several times especially as hours can be limited to 2 a day and pupils often move on. TAs are often the first to be made redundant when budgets are trimmed.
- Ability to provide ALP or ALN through the medium of Welsh

Specific quotes around this area were;

“Can’t get TAs to cover 1:1s due to poor pay”

“Many experienced TAs are leaving with early retirement or sickness and no replacements.”

“Employing TAs with suitable skills, knowledge and understanding is a barrier. Employing TAs that are motivated towards working with challenging ALN needs and being paid poorly for it.”

“Staff working with pupils with ALN are leaving in their droves for better paid jobs. Many staff come from agencies with limited experience and poor skills.”

“High level medical needs – not enough trained staff.”

It appears that the inability to attract skilled staff as TAs is inhibiting provision as the needs of pupils cannot be met. Schools move to agency staff and very few are trained.

2. ALNco Skills

As regards the ALNco, several respondents noted the role being unmanageable and the workload overbearing. This results in fewer wanting to do the role. A few stated that the additional pay did not equate to extra pressure.

“The ALN role is unmanageable – nobody wants it and nobody is applying.”

“Little extra pay for the role.”

One respondent stated that ALNcos often feel inadequate compared to other professionals and thus are put off. Another stated that unless the ALNco is the Deputy Head then the role is impossible.

In summary, work pressure, low pay inducement and perceived lack of skills are putting off staff from applying and this is leading to a skills gap in this area – where are the future ALNcos?

3. Funding

Budgets and financial management were also cited by a significant number as reasons for the skill gap. When money is reduced then schools often have choices over teachers or experienced TAs. It is usually the TA who leaves and their skill set with them.

“Financial pressures over the last few years have resulted in voluntary redundancies of key support staff resulting in our capacity to deliver ALP reducing.”

Other concerns

- Those raised in the responses included.
- Increasing challenging behaviour such as SEBD, ASD etc. making the role less appealing and staff leaving.
- Specialist skills not available such as BSL, Hearing impairment skills and VI skills.
- Burnout and workload in TAs and ALNcos.
- Increasing numbers of Early Years children with ALN needs leading to staff pulled from other interventions and then lack of available skills for older pupils.
- Lack of skills leaving University and College. Young staff are not taught ALN in enough depth and then cannot replace those who are leaving the profession. One respondent felt that Initial Teacher Training providers should devote more time to this area.

Semi-structured interview for Officers in charge of Maintained and Non-Maintained EY settings

“What is the role of educational leadership in delivering the Additional Learning Needs Reform in Wales?”

Date	Interviewee name or Anonymous	Interviewee Sector	Interviewee Role	Associate

1. In our survey there were no responses from leaders or ALNCoS in Pre-school settings. What is your view on this?
2. In our survey, respondents felt that there was not a good level of multi-agency contribution to planning and preparing IDPS. What do you understand to be the experience of maintained and non-maintained EY settings?
3. 378 survey, respondents noted that they had support which they found helpful in delivering ALNET. Are you aware of any examples of such support in the EY settings?
4. Just over half of our responses said that they experienced challenges when accepting an ALN learner from another setting. Have you any details around these challenges around transition in the EY settings?
5. How do you support any skills gaps or capacity issues in regard to ALN in EY settings?
6. Have you identified any issues in recruiting and retaining staff with the right skills to deliver ALNET?
7. How well equipped are settings to assess the needs of learners who may have ALN and want to learn through the medium of Welsh?
8. The average time spent to complete an IDP is 10 hours 36 mins. How has this impacted on staff workload, work life balance and well-being in the EY settings?
9. Would you consider that the EY settings have the necessary funding to fulfil the ALNET legislation requirements?
10. Do you have any further comments that you wish to make around ALNET and EY?

Methodology for Semi-structured Transcript Analysis - Thematic Analysis

Methodology for Semi-structured Transcript Analysis - Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is the first qualitative method that should be considered because it “provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis” (p.78). An added benefit, principally from the perspective of learning and teaching, is that it is a method rather than a methodology (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Clarke and Braun, 2013). Contrasting to other numerous qualitative methodologies, it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective. This makes it a flexible method, a considerable advantage given the multiplicity of factors in schools and the research aim and objectives.

Thematic analysis identifies themes or patterns in the data and uses these themes/patterns to address the research question. Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic themes “... within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written” (p.84). In contrast, the latent level looks beyond what has been said and “... starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies -that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (p.84).

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis specifically relates to the process of identifying, examining and recording patterns in data sets that are related to a specific research question and describe a specific phenomenon. Thematic analysis offers an appropriate methodology. It allows for the analysis of a large amount of data from multiple participants to be analysed and synthesised into a meaningful account. It provides a structured methodology for identifying key themes within a data set and is not overly constrained by aligning with any one epistemological position (Boyatzis, 1998).

The Associates discussed the information gathered from the interviews and the online survey. Based on the results, recommendations were agreed.

Semi-structured interview analysis



Semi-structured interview analysis

The following narrative is the analysis of the responses given to a set of questions (appendix 6) that were generated from the survey. The questions have been synthesised into the following headings:

- Pre-school
- Multi-agency contribution to IDPs
- Support for Early Years Settings
- Transition in the Early Years
- Support for identified skills/capacity gap for ALN in the Early Years settings
- Recruitment and retention of staff to deliver ALNET
- Welsh medium assessment of needs for ALN
- IDP and time taken to write them
- Funding for ALNET in Early Years

In total there are 15 detailed responses. These responses are anonymous and are coded to the job title only. No reference to name or which Local Authority are given. For example, an LA ALN code refers to an officer with responsibility for ALN in a local authority. Table 1 indicates the code. P denoted the participant and their response. In this section DECLO responses are not included as their interview questions are different.

Table 1: Code for job type in the semi-structured interviews

Code	Job type
ALN LA	ALN manager, advisor
DECLO	Health
EY LA	Early Years advisor or service manager.
Other	Estyn, LA Head of Service, Consortia
ALNCO	Singularly or group.

Pre-school

Participant responses:

- P: “This is interesting. Early years organisations often have committees of volunteers and then they employ people to lead. Wages are generally low and don’t equate to the work involved. Possibly, Inspectorate CSIW, Estyn – a paper heavy for a role that pays so little ...” (ALNCo, cluster).
- P1: How was it distributed to pre-school settings? Only directed to schools? How did we direct it to nursery settings ... nursery settings do not have ALNCOs (ALN LA advisor).
- P2: A high number of the settings are working under difficult time constraints. The leaders have 14 hours per week of which 10 are in direct contact with the children (ALN LA advisor).
- P3: The LA ALN team only have a presence in the Flying Start settings. Pre-school settings do not require an ALNCo. We encourage settings to have a lead ALN practitioner although many settings do not have one (EY LA).
- P4: The RIs may have been a better group to send the survey to as the leaders of settings change quite a lot. The setting leads may also not have seen the relevance of the survey to them (EY LA).
- P5: It is disappointing as we have worked hard to forge relationships with childcare settings. Pre-school settings do not require an ALNCo. We encourage settings to have a lead ALN practitioner although many settings do not have one. Was the survey shared with childcare providers? (EY LA).

P6:

- Time constraints- they have a lot of paperwork to complete at the moment
- Confidence in knowing what to say
- Lack of time and need to prioritise tasks
- Lack of time, they have so much going on and most will want to give a considered response or not say anything (EY LA group response).

P7: There is a programme for support for all pre-school settings. There is an early years ALN lead officer. Did the questionnaire come from the right directions? They have their own regulatory body and therefore questionnaire maybe did not reach the right people (ALN LA).

P8: Most of our pre-school settings are part -time. The reasons for this could be many:

- Workload, with a part- time leader and assistant, they are pretty much flat out working with the children - unaware of the relevance of the survey to the frequent staff changes may mean that setting leads are not getting the communications ... there are recognised communication issues in existence between EY providers and the LA. The issue for the settings is how do they provide the support required? (ALN LA).

P9: Not a surprise to setting response being low. In past very difficult to engage with but getting better. Lots of training now in place for pre-schools to increase knowledge and LA officer in place to ensure this. Problem is that ALNCo is not a statutory role in EY (ALN LA).

P10: Not a surprise that this sector under-represented as they are on a journey which is not as developed as schools. ALNCo role is not statutory in EY so LA take this role and all IDPs are LA maintained ones. Questions exist around EY children coming through the system and common question is "When should a child trigger an IDP?" (ALN LA). Multi-agency contribution to IDPs not too good? Why? Views

P: Difficult to get agencies to come to meetings ... lots of this depends on relationships and organisation ... I've developed my relationships with key individuals and therefore find communication easier and more effective (ALNCo cluster).

P1: We have got people who are competent but whether they feel they are a different matter. Would expect people not to be 100% competent because it's so new.

P2: Settings are not consistently receiving information from the multi-agencies. There are gaps in attendance of TAFs. JAM meetings are held, but the wider representation of agencies does not go forward to the TAF meetings. Confidence issues exist and upskilling is required to support the setting staff in attending meetings with professionals (EY LA advisor).

P3: I am not too surprised as this is a new process and ALNCoS are very conscious that it is a statutory document – the legal implications and concerns around creating a legal document have been an issue ... LA are trying to work closely with Health colleagues – there are some noted issues ... Health is quoting work force capacity but there has to be questions about why has this not been thought of before (EY LA).

P4: All referrals go into the multi-agency team meeting; from there a profile is taken to an LA panel, then assessment visits are arranged as required. Following this the reports go to the Duty to Decide panel, they may recommend a pause to assess further for reasonable modification (EY LA).

P5: We have had challenges with Health which are being worked through continuously. Non-maintained settings have support from several different professionals and the LA will lead on the organisations of meetings and preparing and writing of IDPs (EY LA).

P6: ... settings very frustrated that they do not consistently receive information from the multi-agencies ... in particular speech and language reports that are not shared with the setting. The TAF meeting where many agencies are involved do not appear to be part of the ALN education system ... Many settings do not have the information from SALT in a timely manner; this makes them feel unable to add contributions and suggestions to IDPs (EY LA group).

P7: Our experience is that our ALNCoS in particular are growing in confidence with writing these plans effectively. We note areas for further development – improving the quality of outcomes and further upskilling class teachers to write/contribute to the IDP. ALNCoS are still nervous. Confidence is an issue (ALN LA).

P8: These results are not reflected in the Headteacher perception survey (ALN LA).

P9: LA supporting through training offered via drop-in sessions and use of Cluster Champions to advise and QA IDPs ... regards multi agency, Health is the most difficult to engage with but we meet regularly with DECLO to support process. This is also being done regionally with better understanding as a result (ALN LA).

P10: Doesn't believe that it represents situation in this authority. A strong cluster-based approach to IDP creation with Cluster Champions and Cluster Forums for ALN. PCPs have been used for a while ... understanding of capacity issues in NHS to cover this. Not there yet (ALN LA).

P11: No comment made.

Support for Early Years Settings - Comments

P: Agree. LA are very supportive, and it is definitely a working relationship. People are available to offer support and immediate advice. We are all learning together ... the support on a school level has been outstanding (ALNCo cluster).

P1: Positive percentage expect it to be higher in XXX based on feedback from clusters. Just done a questionnaire regarding Welsh Gov. Document and feedback states that support from LA has been excellent (ALN LA Advisor).

P2: Staff are benefitting for the EY training offer, which includes ALN and is repeated.
There are termly consultation meetings to discuss ALN issues (ALN LA advisor).

P3: My role is school facing. I would hope staff feel they have had good support. Implementation and funding made available to support transformation and the team try to be as accessible as possible (EY LA).

P4: There is a very supportive process. EY settings have access to:

- a drop in session every Friday
- a training menu
- an open-door policy for support (EY LA).

P5: We have run numerous training sessions around ALNET which have been well attended by our non-maintained settings. There have been further trainings written and developed around requested topics in relation to ALN ... as much training and support sessions in the evening as possible to allow maximum attendance.

P6: Settings can also attend termly ALN consultations to seek more in-depth advice and support. The EYALN team will sometimes provide additional bespoke support and training if needed ... finding staff and the funds to cover training have been a barrier. The drop-in sessions have been useful and well received, many settings appreciate listening to the experiences of other practitioners and a few settings will contact each other for advice and support (EY group).

P7: Reflects what we hope is the support given.

P8: This is reflective of the Headteacher perception survey ... Responses were that between many and most felt supported.

P9: Really positive and linked to support. Will we ever get this above 80% as always, a question over what is ALP and what is ALN. Can LA ever give enough? (ALN LA)

P10: LA pleased with this response as it believes that this reflects situation ... Heads' forum in the LA felt far less supported by Welsh Government on this issue (ALN LA).

P11: NC.

Transition in the Early Years - Views and comments on processes

P: Interesting – it is difficult because there is no consistency between ULP. Primary go to IDP quicker than secondary. Hopefully, things will improve over years (ALNCo cluster).

P1: Encourage and promote enhanced transition arrangements ... a transition toolkit.
The school to which they have moved to, have to provide support for them ... should have a contingency plan, interventions and shared support when possible (EY LA advisor).

P2: There are delays in uploading information ... and also delays in gaining access ... been examples of SALT asking the settings to upload reports rather than doing this themselves. The issue overall seems to be that transfer of info is not being completed in a timely manner (EY LA advisor).

P3: Transition training and this is something we may consider as a LA ... the school move can be an issue – settling. ALNET has strengthened 'big moves' with a detailed plan but other smaller moves not so well supported (EY LA).

P4: Most information on pupils, particularly around communication and ASD can be an issue for schools in planning for these children's needs; however, the Key Message document outlines the new process which is proving helpful (EY LA).

Transition between pre-schools from 2-year-old settings, Flying Start to pre-school is good ... transition or children who have been referred to the LA before they are 2 have received good transition into their early years setting (EY LA).

- P5: Transition can be a challenge and I do recognise this ... but often it is felt that non-maintained settings and the information they have aren't valued by receiving school due to the changes in set up due to the national minimum standards for childcare providers (EY LA).
- P6: Some settings are sometimes slower than others to upload ... however, when the child transfers the new setting does not always have access to the information in a timely manner and cannot always respond in time ... many settings would agree with the response above (EY LA advisor group response).
- P7: Creating transition protocol/guidance/resources etc. (ALN LA).
- P8: The difficulties in these cases, if out of county, are there is less knowledge about the child. There are case workers who support transition (ALN LA).
- P9: EY is a big issue. Each sector needs to know its role and what can be offered. LA has invested money to resolve this and systems now aligned more to reduce impact. Parent expectations in each sector need managing better ... county to county transfers are difficult due to different funding models and different levels of Universal Provision (ALN LA).
- P10: Universal provision differs across LAs which leads to difficulties. There needs to be a national expectation level to alleviate this. Transition between phases is due to provision on offer and parent expectations (ALN LA).
- P11: NC

Support for identified skills/capacity gap for ALN in the Early Years settings.

What is out there?

- P: Tricky, national initiative to help with raising awareness e.g., Autism Wales. Yes, there is a gap. Differentiation continues to be difficult (ALNCo Cluster).
- P1: A gap in what? LA have put in a lot of support. Bespoke support through to training program own LA training and promoting National LA Training. Personal Centred Training etc. (ALN LA advisor).
- P2: Any new setting leaders and staff are asked about their ALN experience and signposted to relevant on-line training (EY LA).
- P3: There is an extensive menu of support the LA offers ... however, there is also a lack of guidance and information from WG – more information on technical guidance (EY LA).
- P4: This training survey has given good feedback. There is ongoing training for SALT/ASD/NDS/the graduated approach/Down's Syndrome/transition plus the weekly drop-ins (EY LA).
- P5: A robust training menu, specifically designed for pre-school settings. Training throughout the year at different times to accommodate ... Setting visits to support settings with their universal provision (EY LA).
- P6: We provide training and on-site support with a focus on inclusion which supports the setting to meet the needs of the children who are at ULP (EY LA group).
- P7: Increase central support to build school-based capacity. Capacity in LAs so different – some LAs with massive teams and others with very small teams (ALN LA).
- P8: Surprised at this percentage as had felt that schools were more confident, so this is useful information (ALN LA).
- P9: There needs to be comprehensive training for all ... schools must invest in this. LA has indicated funding for year rather than pupil which creates greater certainty for schools to invest in staff for the long term (ALN LA).
- P10: LA has seen this trend and is trying to upskill staff. Additional practitioners need support and regular training. Concern over the quality of staff coming into school for the pay offered – not all fully literate or numerate yet expected to work in greater detail with wider range of children (ALN LA).

Recruitment and retention of staff to deliver ALNET - Comments noted

- P: Recruiting at L1 – because of pay (ALNCo cluster).
- P1: Concern for all not just LA (ALN LA advisor).
- P2: There is a recruitment issue right across the sector due to terms and conditions, the hourly pay rates and the difference in the non-maintained as opposed to maintained settings (EY LA).
The rate that Action for Children pays for 1:1 support is not enough to pay for the level of expertise required. Also, these are often 30 minute per day slots which are difficult to recruit to (EY LA).
- P3: This is a major issue – ALNCOs workload – why would I want to be an ALNCO?
- ALN: TAs huge issues - they can work in a supermarket for more ... but as TA they may be asked to complete medical procedures such as using epi pens etc. (EY LA).

- P4: This is dealt with by settings, however my observations are that recruitment is an issue (EY LA).
- P5: There is a general recruitment issue in the non-maintained sector. It can be challenging to find any additional staff, but especially staff with ALN experience or knowledge. Recruitment of specialist staff for ALN is a challenge. There is a large turnover in staff in our settings and this sometimes proves difficult to keep on top of who has received the appropriate training.
Recruitment in EY is a huge issue now. Staff often do not have specific training for the different ALN issues (EY LA group).
- P6: Yes, this is an issue (ALN LA).
- P7: This is a huge concern...rurality makes it very hard, especially in the North (ALN LA).
- P8: Yes, it is a concern. Some is to do with pay grade offered, some to do with job security and some linked to funding models.
- P9: A big problem in an area of deprivation (ALN LA).
Welsh medium assessment of needs for ALN, provision available (not all respondent provided an answer)
- P: This varies across the county and is a challenge without the ALN. The settings are doing well with assessing, but there is a need for Welsh language support from other partnership agencies, eg SALT using English programme with a Welsh speaking child (EY LA advisor).
- P1: This very much depends upon the individual settings and setting staff. In the more rural settings, they may not have encountered as many ALN cases (EY LA).
- P2: We have 1 Flying Start setting that is through the medium of Welsh and a handful of Clych's. All settings have equal access to training, grant funding and resources to assess (EY LA).
- P3: The Welsh medium setting that I support is very inclusive. The Welsh medium settings I have are very equipped and experienced to identify children with ALN. However, I am not sure that following this there is support through the medium of Welsh, i.e. SALT support through Welsh.
I think Welsh settings can identify ALN – possibly harder to determine language needs as many children in Welsh medium settings are from English speaking homes (EY LA group).

IDP and time taken @ over 10 hrs ... your views

- P: Yes if the information gathered is of good quality. But it must reach the child. If people start cutting corners to save time, then they will become less effective. We will inevitably need to dilute the process because of the lack of time, and this is a shame (ALNCo cluster).
- P1: An IDP involves a lot of preparation and personal-centred work to be in the position to prepare plan? Is this the whole process - meeting the parents etc? Time to prepare will vary according to needs. If that's 10 hours of high quality personal-centred work with lots of engagement with pupil and parents, well then, yes, a good use of time (ALN LA advisor).
- P2: Setting Leaders have 3.5 hours of non-contact time to do all of their administration. Record keeping and assessment of emerging and identified needs takes a lot of time. Unless there is a setting manager or supernumerary member of staff, paperwork is a big concern (EY LA).
- P3: Time is the big issue here – have WG completed a time study of the workload of ALNCo? Well-being support for ALNCo is essential.
- P4: As the LA complete the IDPs for the settings this may not be relevant. (EY LA)
- P5: The Local Authority write the IDPs for all EYs settings. (EY LA).
- P6: completing any ALN paperwork often means that practitioners are completing the paperwork in their own time (EY LA).

Many settings find this onerous and non-contact time is not enough to complete all tasks. Demands of ALN in EY settings can have a negative impact on staff well-being – not because they do not want children with ALN but because they want to do their best and feel that getting support in place takes too long with too much paperwork beforehand. Many settings find that they do not have enough time to complete all the paperwork well enough. Some settings feel that they are always “catching up” (EY LA group).

- P7: It is also difficult to specify the time an IDP can take as it is dependent on such a broad range of factors. Where pre-planning systems are in place the time taken should reduce for the majority. It should also be remembered that an IDP is only required for the most complex children that require ALP over and above robust universal and targeted support (ALN LA).
- P8: This is difficult, because the process is in statute. If you don't give the time to fulfil that IDP then you are technically breaking the law, meaning that the school, as well as the LA, could be at risk of tribunal. Hopefully as we become more au-fait with the process, this time will improve (ALN LA).
- P9: Staggered that it takes this long – does this include all of process including PCP meetings etc? It is time consuming and takes time, but staff will get quicker and process will be slicker (ALN LA).

Understanding is vague about the funding for ALNET in Early Years to fulfil requirements - Views

- P: Not a surprise. We must fight for conversations with leadership for financing departments. We receive a lump sum. I know how the lump sum is reached. We discuss high end pupils and general provision. There is room for more transparency (ALNCo Cluster).
- P1: Very early days for primary as the delegated budget only started a year ago. People's understanding is developing, encouraging ALNCOs to work closely with SLT to understand the school budget. The process of budget followed a process of consultation (ALN LA advisor).
- P2: No, not at all. The EYDG pot of additional money helps, if they have this.
Funding is staffing led, so regardless of the number of children with ALN, there are still only two members of staff for 16 children (EY LA).
- P3: The majority of ALNCOs don't know what funding is therefore how can they manage the funding (EY LA)?
- P4: Funding is always going to be an issue. In the present economic climate this is difficult. EY setting staff, in my opinion, are not paid sufficiently for the role they are asked to do (EY LA).
- P5: We work very hard to work with these settings so that they do participate with us, but if they choose not to then our hands are tied. For those that do work with us, they have access to additional funding as and when it is needed.
- P6: No – in my opinion the workforce is very willing to try to meet every child's needs. However, many of the staff work in other places/poor wages etc.
No, not on top of all the other priorities and training they are expected to implement.
No – there should be funding specifically for ALN ... Definitely not, many settings would agree with the statements above (EY LA Group).
- P7: Budget focus group reported recommendations on ALN Formula Funding to Schools Budget Forum. No one size fits all – demographics of counties so different (ALN LA).
- P8: The hard fact is that there isn't enough money, but we can make it fair. Currently we are looking to have full funding out to schools which will negate the need to go to panel to request further funding. This will be fair but will not be enough and some ULP should be included in this (ALN LA).
- P9: As regards fairness – will we ever get it right and is lack of knowledge of fairness linked to lack of understanding of process? Thinks that their system is fair and has been voted for by Heads, noted differences in funding for ALN and Physical Medical difficulties – this can create unfairness.
- P10: Very individual needs-led with money allocated to severity of child need rather than a generic formula as in other LAs – this reduces ambiguity and increases fairness of system. Overall, though – not enough money to deal with the increasing needs of the schools.

11. Associates

Simon Roberts

Simon has been the Headteacher of Maesybryn Primary School for 13 years. He is currently seconded to Central South Consortia as an Improvement Partner. As an Associate, Simon has undertaken endorsement training, facilitated innovation workshops, and has collaborated with Professor David Egan. Currently working cohort 3 on their ALN commission, Simon enjoys being part of a national body which inspires leaders and wants to support the Leadership Academy as an organisation which supports educational leaders across Wales.

Simon was born in Zambia and lived in Africa for the first three years of his life. After university, he spent six months working in French Guiana where his flat overlooked Devil's Island. His French is still passable but restricted to holidays in France each year. Simon is also a keen runner.

Sharon Hope

Sharon is Headteacher of Clase Primary School in Swansea. She has a wealth of experience mentoring and supporting aspiring leaders, newly appointed headteachers, and working alongside colleagues offering school-to-school support. Sharon is a Commissioned School Improvement Adviser in Swansea and a Regional Facilitating Coach on a range of national leadership programmes, including the Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme. She is also a representative on the ALN Strategic Board and ALN Cross Phase groups in Swansea.

In her role as an Associate, Sharon has contributed to cohort 3's commission and engaged in coaching and professional learning. The opportunity to build professional relationships through networking with excellent leaders across Wales has led to the development of projects in her own school and helped her to support the development of leaders in her region.

Olwen Corben

Olwen is Headteacher at Ysgol Glanrafon in Mold. Olwen has experience as an NPQH Assessor and an Estyn Peer Inspector.

In her role as an Associate, Olwen has participated in projects including the Leadership Unlocked webinars and mindfulness training. She became an Associate for opportunities to learn, collaborate with Headteachers from across Wales and to be challenged to think differently. Her aspirations are for the Leadership Academy to be recognised across Wales as a quality organisation supporting leadership, collaboration and schools as learning organisations.

Kerina Hanson

Kerina Hanson is Headteacher of Pennard Primary School in Swansea. She has experience as an Estyn Peer Inspector, is Secretary of Swansea Headteachers Association and past President of the National Association of Headteachers Cymru.

In her role as an Associate, Kerina has contributed to the Enquire, Innovate & Explore project that linked to the four purposes, well-being and developing emotional literacy through story. She is also undertaking research into cohort 3s commission. Kerina has welcomed the opportunity to input into research and development of leadership in Wales, especially with a view to promoting equity for all schools. She sees the Leadership Academy playing a key role in raising the profile of leadership in Wales and making leaders and their achievements more visible.

Dr Joe Cudd

Joe is an executive Headteacher of Ysgol Pen Rhos and Ysgol Pen Tip Primary Schools in Llanelli. Joe has 14 years' experience as a Headteacher.

Joe has been involved with a number of projects with the Leadership Academy including the development of a pan-Wales well-being survey for school leaders, facilitating events and is currently working with cohort 3 on ALN reform across Wales. He has been recently appointed as Attainment Champion, a new role providing peer-to-peer support to schools and inform key policy on educational attainment.

Dr Llinos Jones

Llinos is Headteacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin in Carmarthen. Llinos is a representative on several specialist groups including CYDAG (the association of Welsh-medium education schools), WJEC Headteachers' reference group, Welsh Government's Welsh in Education workforce steering group, to name a few.

Llinos joined the Associates for the opportunity to develop as a leader and to connect with colleagues across Wales. She has participated in a number of events including the Leadership Academy's first online conference, Leadership Unlocked webinars and innovation workshops.

Alison Ellis

Alison is Executive Headteacher of Maesyrhandir CP School and Brynhafren CP School in Powys. Alison is a representative on several specialist groups including the ALN Steering Group, Early Years ALN Workstream Group and the Specialist Centres Headteachers Group.

As an Associate, Alison has participated in endorsement and mindfulness training and is currently undertaking research into cohort 3s commission. She has relished having the opportunity to hear from and engage with prominent educational leaders and building relationships with colleagues across Wales. Alison is looking forward to building her capacity to support other leaders effectively and to become more involved in research projects.

Catrin Thomas

Catrin is currently a Deputy-Headteacher of Ysgol Bro Preseli, a newly formed 3-19 school in Pembrokeshire. Previously, she was the Headteacher at Ysgol Gynradd Aberaeron during which time she also spent a period seconded to Ceredigion Council as Curriculum Co-ordinator. Catrin has experience as an Estyn Peer Inspector, has chaired Headteachers' Networks and is an NPQH assessor.

In her role as an Associate, Catrin has facilitated a variety of activities including innovation workshops, Head-To-Head sessions and Leadership Unlocked webinars. She is also collaborating with fellow Associates in cohort 3 on their commission. Catrin joined the Associates to connect with leaders from Wales and further afield.

12. Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many school leaders and stakeholders who gave their valuable time to support this commission in conjunction with the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales team.



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