

Wales passes Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill

The Welsh Government's aim to transform the additional learning needs system so it provides better support to those children and young people who need it most has achieved a key milestone tonight [12/12/17] after the National Assembly for Wales passed the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill.

Welcoming the news, Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams, said:

"Today is an historic day for education in Wales. Nearly a quarter of learners in Wales will experience some form of additional learning need (ALN) during their early years or education and this Bill places them at the very heart of our system. It focusses on identifying their needs as early as possible and working with them and their families to plan the right support.

"Once the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill receives Royal Assent, expected in January 2018, it will pave the way for a radical new approach; driving improvements in standards to ensure all learners are supported to meet their full potential."

The Bill will be backed up by an ambitious wider programme of reforms, which the Education Secretary provided more details on yesterday [11/12/17] by outlining her proposals for how the new additional learning needs system would be implemented in Wales.

The new Bill, which affects nearly every education setting in Wales and focusses on the needs of children and young people aged 0 to 25, means:

- The replacement of the terms 'special educational needs' and 'learning difficulties / disabilities' with the new term, 'additional learning needs';
- The creation of a single statutory plan, the Individual Development Plan (IDP) for learners;
- Increased participation of children and young people, ensuring they are at the centre of the planning and decision making process;
- Prioritising high aspirations and improving outcomes, focusing on the child or young person's achievement of their full potential;
- Providing a simpler and less adversarial process, ensuring learners' needs are at the centre and are continually met;
- Creating new statutory roles within health and education to ensure collaboration and integration so that learners' needs are met;
- Focussing on earlier disagreement resolution, with disagreements resolved at the most local level possible;

- The introduction of clear and consistent rights of appeal where disagreements can not be resolved at a local level;
- The introduction of a strengthened Code, which will sit alongside the Bill, with mandatory requirements and statutory guidance to support the primary legislation.
- The Bill also supports the Welsh Government's wider vision of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050 by including a series of strategic duties aimed at driving progress towards a truly bilingual additional learning needs system.

Further information about the proposed implementation plan for the [new additional learning needs system in Wales can be found here](#).

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[Animal welfare to be strengthened in Wales](#)

Maximum animal cruelty sentences in Wales are set to increase to five years and the Cabinet Secretary has written to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the issue of introducing legislation on an England and Wales basis.

Currently the maximum sentence in England and Wales for an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is six months, in addition to unlimited fine and ban.

Officials from England and Wales will now work together on the introduction of the Bill. The UK Government today submitted a draft Bill for the consideration of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee and intends to introduce the Bill as soon as Parliamentary time permits.

Cabinet Secretary said:

"We have always been clear the way we treat animals is an important reflection of the values of our society. Animals should be protected from pain, injury, fear and distress, and those who commit the worst acts of animal cruelty should face tough punishments.

"That is why I have written to the Secretary of State on the issue of introducing legislation on an England and Wales basis. Increasing the sentence to five years imprisonment will maintain a comparative sentencing regime across England and Wales and will bring clarity for enforcement agencies, the Courts and the public alike.

"It will also bring the maximum sentences for animal cruelty in England and Wales in line with Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the Scottish Government's plans in this important area."

The draft Bill published today sets out the government "must have regard to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings in formulating and implementing government policy".

Cabinet Secretary added:

"Our position on sentience has been very clear. We fully agree that animals are sentient beings and we will continue to promote and enhance animal welfare, both now and after we have left the EU.

"The issue of sentience not being of the face of any UK Bill was a concern for us and our stakeholders, particularly the British Veterinary Association. Therefore the inclusion of this sensitive element in this UK Bill will provide confidence and regularise the position.

"I will be meeting with the Secretary of State later this week and am pleased he is now backing up his messages on the importance of animal welfare and animal sentience with decisive action. I look forward to these discussions."

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animal welfare and animal sentience with decisive action. I look forward to these discussions.”

New targets for Wales to be officially TB Free

Interim targets, covering 6-year periods, will be set for each of the TB Areas. These targets will specify overall reductions in herd incidence as well as the transfer of Spatial Units from higher incidence areas to lower incidence areas.

This means, for example, the Low TB Area will expand over time, to cover land currently classified as Intermediate, and High TB Areas will shrink as their Spatial Units are reclassified to the Intermediate areas. At the end of each 6-year period, progress will be assessed and milestones set for the following period.

Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths said:

“We have made good progress in recent years towards eradicating TB in Wales. There has been a significant reduction in incidence across Wales and I am determined we continue that improvement.

“The 6-year regional milestones I am announcing today are key to delivering this. If achieved, Wales will become Officially TB free between 2036 and 2041.

“These milestones stress the urgency of the task at hand and reflect my ambition to see important progress in each region during each period. They will help convey the need for immediate action, to focus minds and to drive the progress necessary to achieve our collective goals.

“We have enhanced our TB Eradication Programme this autumn and the regional approach to TB eradication is intended to help us achieve our targets. We now need to focus on protecting the Low TB Area from disease incursion and driving down disease in the Intermediate and High TB Areas. We will continue to build our programme as we progress towards our goal of a TB free Wales.

“Meeting our targets will not be easy. They are intended to be ambitious and to stretch us. Achieving them will require the cooperation and dedication of everyone involved. I am challenging us all, in Government, APHA, industry and our veterinary

colleagues, to commit everything to ensure we eradicate this dreadful disease as soon as possible.”