



**A story of change: Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators narratives of Additional Learning Needs Transformation in Wales.**

**Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) 2021-2024**

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## **Summary**

This thesis will be split into three parts. These parts will form a narrative of the research process, from literature review, to constructing and completing the research before reflecting on the process itself.

### **Part 1: Literature Review**

The literature review locates the narrative nature of this research and includes the context of ALN transformation in Wales. Psychological theories of relevance to the research and how the information shared may be of interest to Educational Psychologists and policy makers in Wales will be discussed ahead of offering a narrative of the literature gleaned from the review. Previous experiences of policy change will be broadly explored within the context of the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Ireland, ahead of offering a local context from within Wales. Academic research and research articles from grey literature and education institutions will be included within this section.

### **Part 2: Empirical Study**

The narrative research paper describes the research process and constructions made from the ALNCo narratives presented in this narrative paper. An insight into the reasoning that guides the research will also be included alongside the methodology adopted for the research and the results, analysis, discussion, and conclusions drawn from the narratives shared by ALNCoS. The narrative will be the researchers' own construction of analysis, keeping the ALNCo narratives as central to the storytelling as possible.

### **Part 3: Critical Review**

The critical review will be presented chronologically through the researcher's narrative. In this review, the inception, design, and process of completing the research will be explored and reflected upon for further meaning making and learning.

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## Abbreviations

**ALNET (Wales) Act (2018)** – Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018)

**ALN** – Additional Learning Needs

**ALNCo** – Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator

**ALP** – Additional Learning Provision

**COMOIRA** – Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action

**EP** – Educational Psychologist

**NHS** – National Health Service

**SEN** – Special Educational Needs

**SENCo** – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

## Key terms

As this research includes terms which may be constructed differently by readers, the following list describes the researcher's interpretation of some of the common language used throughout the thesis.

**Additional Learning Needs** – The learning needs an individual has to require Additional Learning Provision to meet the need.

**Additional Learning Provision** – Provision that is significantly different or additional to what is provided within an education context to meet learning needs.

**Inclusive education** – Education systems that fully include and support children who require additional learning provision to meet their needs within an education institution.

**Narrative** – A broad framework of how a story may be told, including the perspectives shared and the function of what an individual may share.

**Narrative analysis** – The analysis of narratives to understand the lived experiences of individuals. The analysis is a bottom-up interpretation of the language used to share meaning through stories.

**Narrative therapy** – A therapeutic technique supporting individuals to explore their interpretation of an event that supports meaning making of experience.

**Policy** – an agreed set of ideas or a plan of what to do in a particular situation which has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a government or political party.

**Story** – A sequence of events made sense of and shared by an individual.

**Transformation** – The change process of one system into another.



**A story of change: Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators narratives of Additional Learning Needs Transformation in Wales.**

**Part 1 – Literature Review**

Word count: 10172

## 1.1 - Introduction

Systemic change, such as that demonstrated by the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) (ALNET (Wales) Act, 2018), has the power to influence education systems, and those surrounding them. Systems may reciprocally interact with one another, and through these interactions, may support intrapersonal meaning making of change processes (Adams, 2006). To understand the intrapersonal meaning making of systemic change, language may act as the key to sharing the individual experience of change. Through language, information can be shared and exchanged between individuals or groups to make sense of an event (Burr, 2015).

Language has previously been described as how humans make sense of the world around them (Polkinghorne, 1988). According to Reissman (2008), language can offer the opportunity to share information by giving it structure, meaning and a context through which it can be interpreted by another. By giving language a structure, people can share stories of their experience, grounded in their perceptions and interpretation of an event (Edwards, 1997). Due to the complexity associated with the multitude of individual interpretations of an event, taking a meta-perspective and focusing on the process of change may be useful when considering the reciprocal interactions that inform perception (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008).

Change processes may be described as a transactional and reciprocal process that dynamically and bidirectionally affects systems, groups, and individuals (Gameson et al., 2005; Prochaska et al., 2013). As change occurs through systems, the unique impact this can have on an individual is an interesting phenomenon to explore (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). The nature of change can be complex and cyclical, layered with discourse and the nuance of individual, group and systemic experiences (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). As experience is often told by individuals and groups of individuals who may meaning-make in a social world, the narratives that may be formed of change are phenomenological snapshots of events, shifting with each perception and moving with time (Reissman, 2008).

As Additional Learning Needs (ALN) systems in Wales are currently subject to a process of transformation as determined by the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), systems impacted by ALN transformation may be encountering a shift in their ways of working during these reforms (Welsh Government, 2020a). The implementation of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) began the legislative process of ALN transformation in Wales. As a part of ALN transformation in Wales, the statutory role of the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) has been introduced. The role of the ALNCo is described as central to supporting inclusion and involves ensuring that ALN transformation, and the systems supporting it, are co-ordinated to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN (ALN Code for Wales, 2021).

This research aims to capture a phenomenological narrative of ALN transformation while legislative change is occurring.

### **1.1.1 - A narrative approach**

A narrative approach to research holds the importance of language as its premise and investigates how people make sense of their experience through the language that they share to tell their stories (Edwards, 1997; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Exploring how people make sense of events through narrative offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the complexity of interactive change processes.

The essence of the narrative approach will be held throughout this thesis, with the discourse of change and nuance of individual interpretations of the change processes being highlighted. A narrative approach to literature reviewing and critical appraisal will also be held to reflect the fluidity of meaning-making throughout the research process. The individual narratives held in this thesis will be honoured to make sense of the impact that systemic changes, such as ALN transformation, can have on education professionals such as ALNCoS. As ALNCoS a central role in the transformation process, their experience of ALN transformation will be unique within this process of systemic change.

### **1.1.2 - Personal narrative**

Traditionally, in narrative research, a summary of the researcher's autobiographical narrative and personal positioning is offered to share with readers the origins of the research piece (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This research has been informed by personal and professional experiences related to ALN transformation and working within education systems in Wales. To offer a summary of the story that has led to this piece of research, the first person will be used to recognise the personal perspective that has led to the generation of this thesis topic (Reissman, 2008).

ALN transformation has been held within to my practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, and as a Further Education Lecturer. I was previously part of a group of professionals responding to the draft editions of what would later become the ALN Code for Wales (2021). As part of this group, my interest in the ALN transformation began. I invested a lot of time in reflecting on the upcoming ALN transformation and began a process of planning for its implementation within Further Education. It was during this time that I was accepted to work as an Assistant Educational Psychologist and thus, the context in which I could be applying the ALN Code for Wales (2021) had changed. Within my role as a Further Education Lecturer and as an Assistant Educational Psychologist, interpreting the ALN transformation and learning about how systems were implementing the changes was a consistent element of my experience. Furthermore, the ALN transformation continued to feature heavily in my experience when it came to applying to be a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). As the systems were changing, it felt important to recognise the impact this may have on my practice. Reflecting on this experience, ALN transformation was a constant across my transition through systems, from education to educational psychology, and offers a sense of connection to my journey of becoming an Educational Psychologist (EP). Though my understanding of ALN transformation continues to shift as I develop as a practitioner, I hope this research will offer further opportunities to meaning-make on the implementation of ALN transformation in Wales.

### 1.1.3 - Exploring ALNCo narratives

ALNCoS in Wales have been identified by the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) as having a central role in ALN transformation (Welsh Government, 2020a; ALN Code for Wales, 2021). The ALN Code for Wales (2021, c.8) dedicates Chapter 8 to the “Role of the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo)”, reflecting the vital nature of the role to ALN transformation in Wales.

Welsh Government (2020b, c.29) offered a description of the ALNCo role in schools as:

- “(a) identifying a pupil’s additional learning needs and co-ordinating the making of additional learning provision that meets a pupil’s additional learning needs,*
- (b) securing relevant services that will support a pupil’s additional learning provision as required,*
- (c) keeping records of decisions about additional learning needs and individual development plans,*
- (d) promoting a pupil with additional learning needs’ inclusion in the school and access to the school’s curriculum, facilities and extra-curricular activities,*
- (e) monitoring the effectiveness of any additional learning provision made,*
- (f) advising school teachers at the school about differentiated teaching methods appropriate for individual pupils with additional learning needs,*
- (g) supervising and training school learning support workers who work with pupils with additional learning needs, and*
- (h) contributing to in-service training for school teachers at the school to assist the additional learning needs co-ordinator in carrying out the tasks referred to in paragraphs (a) to (e).”*

The ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), the ALN Code for Wales (2021) and Welsh Government (2020a; 2020b) guidance appears to direct ALNCoS to work systematically and collaboratively to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN in education. As ALNCoS hold a central role in coordinating practice informed by the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), their narratives of ALN

transformation may highlight the lived experience of ALN policy implementation in Wales. Though the timescale for implementing the ALN system in Wales has been extended in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Welsh Government, 2022), the experience and process of implementing the changes associated with the transformation process continues at the time of this research. As such, information pertaining to ALN transformation has been shared by Welsh Government and interpreted by ALNCos in education systems for implementation in schools. Therefore, ALNCos are in a position to offer an insight into the lived experience of the ALN transformation process in Wales.

## **1.2 - Psychological lenses**

As this research is located within the context of completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology, psychological lenses and insights will be referenced throughout this research. This research will offer the reader an insight into the psychology of change, and how change has been experienced by ALNCos supporting ALN transformation in Wales. As this research is built upon the foundations of psychology, relevant psychological theory such as Systems Theory and Implementation Science will be held in mind when exploring the processes and experiences of a changing system.

### **1.2.1 - Systems theory**

This research will be relevant to the study of psychology across systems by exploring the impact of legislative change on education professionals. Systemic change is described as relational in nature, whereby parts of a system interact with one another to create a functional whole system (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). Open systems can be described as systems that interact with one another dynamically, where relationships change and affect how the system works and responds to find homeostasis (Wilkinson, 2011). On the other hand, closed systems can be described as systems that are not open to changing contexts and remain fixed in their functioning despite the context around them shifting (Wirick & Teufel-Prida, 2019). The importance of process, person, context, and time is meaningful across all types of systems, as change can be continuous and reciprocal in nature



(Bronfenbrenner, 2000). Models of systems thinking such as Bronfenbrenner's (2000) Ecological Systems Theory may be used to consider the different systems that surround an individual and demonstrate how reciprocal interactions may occur. Though the Ecological Systems Theory was created to consider human development, as schools can be described as "microcosms of a macro-society" (Connor, 2014, p.121), the model may be applied to consider how change processes can impact systems on a micro and macro level (King & Travers, 2017). Koopmans and Stamovlasis (2016) described school systems as complex in nature, reflecting the system being made of many individuals who interact with one another. As school systems can be complex, exploring how they respond to change such as that prescribed by ALN transformation creates a phenomenological opportunity to investigate the experience of whole-system change, and consider the impact this has on key stakeholders in the system, such as ALNCOs.

### **1.2.2 - Implementation Science**

Implementation Science refers to the science of understanding how change is achieved, by exploring how agents of change respond to and perceive the process of change itself (Kelly, 2016). The use of Implementation Science to understand and support the changing of policy has been considered by psychologists historically. Research has previously suggested that policy design was not a predictor of policy success, with the attitudes, beliefs, and values of those implementing change having the most significant impact on the outcome of policy implementation (Kelly, 2016).

Specific psychological theories around Implementation Science such as the Meyers et al. (2012) Quality Implementation Framework has offered guidance on how to support change successfully within systems.

### **Meyers et al., (2012) Quality Implementation Framework.**

Phase One should include:	Phase Two should include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessment in consideration of resources available to support implementation</li> <li>• Exploration of 'Fit' of the proposed intervention for the context and needs</li> <li>• Capacity and readiness work</li> <li>• Decision making about any adaptations required</li> <li>• Review of required capacity-building strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of structures for implementation including implementation teams</li> <li>• Developing the implementation plan in some detail and in close collaboration with the organisation involved</li> </ul>
Phase Three should include:	Phase Four should include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of implementation support strategies (e.g. technical support, coaching, evaluation and supportive feedback)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection and improvement of current and future applications</li> </ul>

*Note: Taken from Kelly, B. (2016). Implementation Science: Applying the Evidence of Effectiveness in Real-World Contexts.*

Bottom-up approaches appeared central to a successful change process. Bottom-up approaches to change can be described as change that comes from those who are directly experiencing and interpreting the system they find themselves within (Eaton et al., 2018). A bottom-up approach to change places the individual in the system as an agent of change and recognises their impact on the system function.

Meyers et al. (2012) appeared to hold the agents of change centrally when considering capacity for change and the meaning of change, within any given context. As each individual responds to the system they find themselves within, their needs to effectively support change are likely to reflect their needs to enact the change process. Systemic change, such as that supported by ALN transformation, spans multiple systems and may impact different parts of a system in different ways. Due to the complexity of systems, this research will remain focused on the statutory implementation process of ALN transformation within the context of education.

### **1.3 - Relevance to Educational Psychology**

Educational Psychologists (EPs) collaborate with systems surrounding children and young people to promote positive change and support inclusion in education and wider society (Welsh Government, 2018). As part of this work, advice and guidance may be offered to ALNCoS, policy makers, other professionals, parents and children and young people (Welsh Government, 2018). To

explore the relevance of this research to educational psychology, elements of the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) will be used.

### The COMOIRA model.



*Note: Taken from Gameson et al. (2005). Constructing a flexible model of integrated professional practice Part 2 – Process and practice issues. Educational and Child Psychology, 22(4), 41-55.*

#### 1.3.1 - Enabling dialogue

As EPs may work with ALNCoS in a variety of ways, exploring the lived experience of ALNCoS during times of systemic change may offer opportunities to enable dialogue. Through reflection, EPs may wonder about the individual experiences of ALNCoS and how this may be impacting their practice. As individuals can reciprocally impact systems, the ALNCo's local authority context and their personal understanding of ALN transformation may shape the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) support offer in their school. As the ALN system in Wales is undergoing change at the time of this research, insights shared by ALNCoS may offer the reader alternative perspectives on the different narratives held by those experiencing ALN transformation. As EPs

work with ALNCos, supporting them to meet the needs of children and young people in their settings, understanding the impact of this change on ALNCos can offer an insight into what may underlie their approaches to ALN transformation in their school.

### **1.3.2 - Systemic thinking**

As EPs themselves also work within systems, offering accounts of systemic change can add context to any meaning-making process. As EPs, recognising what each individual in a system can bring in terms of their own experiences and perceptions to each interaction is an important part of the EP work (Welsh Government, 2018). Holistic frames of reference in regard to intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors are important to hold in mind when considering systems thinking, though due to the complexity of systems, these are held in tandem and not reduced to discrete variables. To explore ALNCo narratives, circular patterns of causality and the punctuation of ALNCo experience can offer information pertaining to individual experiences of systemic change in Wales. Through the narrative offered in this research, readers can begin to construct their own narratives, reflecting on the impact that ALN transformation has had on individuals and the systems in which they work.

### **1.3.3 - Constructions of intention and ability to change**

As supporting positive change is a key role of the EP, it is appropriate to recognise that each individual will hold different constructions around their intention and ability to change during this period of ALN transformation. Exploring the factors and nuanced interpretations of change and what that means for individuals such as ALNCos could be important when supporting their individual needs during the change process. Through exploring and sharing ALNCos narratives in this research, readers may reflect on the ALNCos' narratives of ALN transformation, offering an opportunity to reframe and reconstruct the support opportunities that are possible during this process of change.

## **1.4 - Relevance to Welsh policy**

The ALN transformation process has been planned and created by Welsh Government, with job roles such as ALN Transformation Leads created to support Local Authorities and education systems with the implementation of ALN transformation. The ALN transformation aims to enable an inclusive education system that promotes equity by meeting the needs of individuals in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a). The purpose of ALN transformation is described as supporting a modernised system to support children and young people aged 0-25 who are identified as requiring ALP. As ALN transformation is unique to Wales, the implementation of legislation and its impact on ALN systems and those within them can be explored. This research will highlight the voice of ALNCoS within the system to share their experience of the ALN transformation process so far.

## **1.5 - Literature Review**

A narrative literature review will be used to explore and make sense of existing literature that can offer an insight into experiences shared around transforming education systems. Though some reviews in Wales have offered insights into the new ALNCo role and how the implementation of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) has been experienced, the process of transformation is not yet well recognised in academic literature. Welsh Government, (2021, p.3) acknowledged ‘a severe lack of educational research in Wales’, and recognised this has acted as ‘a barrier to the use of evidence and insights for practitioners and policymakers’. As there is a dearth of literature documenting the experience of legislative change from a Welsh context, literature that can support an understanding of the processes, evidence, and impact of transforming education systems across the U.K. and Ireland will be shared as an opportunity to reflect on previous experiences of systemic change. As the systems in England, Ireland and Northern Ireland use the terms Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCo) to refer to their legislative equivalent of ALN and the ALNCo role, the terms “SEN”, “SENCo” and “ALN”, “ALNCo” will be used to reflect the system in which the research has occurred. As Scotland does not have a current

role equivalent of SENCo or ALNCo, reference to senior leaders who take responsibility for Additional Support Needs (ASN) in their schools will be included where relevant.

### **1.5.1 - Questions of the literature**

As this research is exploratory in nature, specific questions were not held of the literature. A broad search of literature related to ALNCoS or SENCoS and policy in education was identified. The research gathered from this search will then be used to form a narrative of ALNCoS' and SENCoS' experiences of policy, and policy change, in education. A narrative approach will be used to present the exploration, providing a synthesis across the literature included in the review.

### **1.5.2 - Approach to gathering literature**

To structure the narrative, a systematic approach to database searching was used to capture the landscape of research presented thus far. A systemic approach to database searching was used as an initial information gathering method to ensure that a narrative formed could offer a sufficient breadth of relevant literature (Liberati et al., 2009). To gather this literature, key terms were selected and organised into a search algorithm. Previous sources of knowledge and the identification of any other relevant literature when searching for information to inform Part 1 of this research have been documented and included to reflect the narrative shared within this research (Appendix B).

### **1.5.3 - Database searching**

The key search terms were chosen to capture available literature related to policy and how it may impact ALNCoS or SENCoS. The search terms used included “Additional Learning Needs” AND “Additional Learning Needs Coordinator” AND “policy” OR “Special Educational Needs” AND “Special Educational Needs Coordinator” AND “policy”. These search terms were chosen to offer a broad spectrum of ALNCo or SENCo experiences of policy. Specific reference to “change” or “transformation” was purposefully not included as search terms. Through keeping the search terms open, research presented was not limited by systemic change needing to be explicitly acknowledged in research, to capture the complexity of systems continuously experiencing change.

The Scopus, PsycInfo, ERIC and British Education Index databases were chosen to gather information as they store research and articles from relevant disciplines including, though not limited to, psychology, education, and social sciences. From the databases selected, a range of qualitative, quantitative, published, and grey literature could be produced to reflect the diversity of written accounts related to the experience of systemic change in education. A description of each of these databases and the reasoning for using each of them individually can be found in Appendix A. Though other relevant databases could be included such as ASSIA or Overton, a saturation of the literature was found in the increasing duplications of relevant sources of information across the four databases searched (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013).

#### **1.5.4. - PRISMA**

A PRISMA approach to literature searching was used to capture relevant literature connected to ALNCos' and SENCos' experience of policy (Appendix B). A PRISMA approach was used to evidence the process of this literature review and capture a wide range of evidence that could be used to form the narrative presented (Liberati et al., 2009). Though selection bias may be reduced by using a PRISMA approach, the narrative formed remains the researcher's construction of information gathered and may reflect the nuanced complexity of meaning-making across multiple sources of information. Sources of information collected as part of a standardised literature search procedure are documented alongside literature found more dynamically when following curiosity in the research presented. A summary table of the included literature can be found in Table 1.

All sources of evidence were accessible through Cardiff University systems or available in a public domain. Inclusion for eligibility in this research was any source of evidence that explored the ALNCo or SENCos role and its connection to implementing policy or experience of policy in the U.K. and Ireland. Exclusion criteria for the research was any paper published before April 1<sup>st</sup> 2002. This date holds significance, as it notes the statutory introduction of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (2002) that preceded the ALN Code for Wales (2021). Including literature that allowed for experience of policy from the system previous to the ALN transformation

felt important to reflect the context through which change has occurred over time. The research that fit this criterion was included in the total number of sources of evidence, and a narrative of the research in this area was formed. Each piece of research was reflected upon to form a narrative, with a Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) being used to reflectively and reflexively critique the literature (Appendix C). The MMAT was selected as it supports critical reflection of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, allowing the range of research methodologies used by previous researchers in this area to be appraised and considered when forming the narrative.

**Table 1 – A summary of relevant literature**

Author	Type of literature	Country of origin	Number of participants	Research methodology	Main findings
Rosen-Webb (2011)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	9	Qualitative; Semi-structured interviews	SENCOs journey into their role is influenced by career opportunities, values and holding the interests of children in mind.
Dobson & Douglas (2020a)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	88	Qualitative; Survey data (open questions)	An awareness of the systemic factors that influence SENCOs to take the role is important when considering how they interact with policy to guide a career interest in this area.
Dobson & Douglas (2020b)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	618	Quantitative; Survey data, (closed questions)	SENCOs motivations to take the role are informed by wanting to support inclusion, develop quality provision, continue their own professional development and becoming a school leader.
Mackenzie (2012)	Academic - Thesis	England	32	Qualitative; Focus groups,	Emotional experiences that



				(n=20) and Life history interviews (n=12)	occur in the SENCOs life, outside of their role and inside their role, influence why the SENCOs engage and hold their role.
Fitzgerald (2017)	Academic – Thesis	Ireland	12 (n=6 SENCOs and their Principals)	Qualitative; Semi-structured interviews	SENCOs and their principals are committed to the SENCO role, though the relational element of the role is both a challenge and reward to those holding the role.
Fitzgerald & Radford (2017)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	Ireland	27	Mixed methods (postal questionnaire, open and closed questions)	SENCOs role is limited in ability to support change. The lack of operationalisation and lack of recognition of the SENCO role has led to a lack of clarity of where SENCOs sit within a management structure in school systems.
Liasiadou & Svensson (2014)	Academic – Article	England & Wales	N/A	N/A	SENCOs should be empowered in systems to strategically lead on matters of social justice, supporting the principles and practices associated with inclusive education, tackling inequity and inequality in education.
Dobson (2021)	Academic – Thesis	England	See Dobson & Douglas (2020a; 2020b)	See Dobson & Douglas (2020a; 2020b)	Understanding factors that influence SENCOs to take the role, and having a clearer understanding of what the SENCO role entails is important when

					ensuring individuals and the roles they assume are congruous.
Robertson (2012)	Academic – Article	England	N/A	N/A	SENCos continue to work hard to navigate changing policy contexts. SENCos require adequate time to support strategic change, and review is required from policy makers to ensure SENCos have the resources required to support change.
Cole (2005)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England & Wales	59	Qualitative; Questionnaires, open questions.	SENCos are committed to supporting change, despite challenging contexts in schools. Sharing power, through placing SENCos in management roles can support the change they try to achieve.
Tissot (2013)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	146	Mixed methods; Questionnaires and Semi-structured interviews	SENCos not holding leadership positions inhibits their ability to support change in schools. SENCos holding strategic roles is important to support change moving forward.
Pulsford (2020)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	4	Qualitative; Narrative interviews	SENCos are located in hierarchies of power. Relational factors influence male SENCos ability to lead and coordinate practice.
Colum & Mac Ruairc (2023)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	Ireland	4	Qualitative; Narrative interviews	SENCos roles are far reaching and work intensive. Heavy workload and lack of recognition of this

					led to a reluctance of professionals taking this role.
Winwood (2013)	Academic – Thesis	England	<i>n</i> =49 – Questionnaires  <i>n</i> =6 semi structured interviews	Mixed methods; Questionnaire (open and closed questions) and semi structured interviews.	SENCo role is hard to define, with each SENCo finding a way that works for their school. Relationships and direct work with others in the role was valued by SENCos.
Sharpe (2020)	Academic – Thesis	England	6	Qualitative; narrative drawings, focus groups and semi structured interviews.	SENCo role is complex and includes a wide range of responsibilities. SENCos find tension in managing policy change and budget cuts. SENCo role is strategic in nature when supporting other staff members.
Curran & Boddison (2021)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	<i>n</i> =15 – focus group <i>n</i> =1903 – survey	Mixed methods; Focus group and survey.	SENCos find their role is not understood by others. The increasing breadth of the role and the time needed to complete the responsibilities connected to the SENCo role.
Pearson et al., (2015)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	England	227	Qualitative; an open-ended question from SENCo survey 2012 was analysed.	SENCos predicted that after reform, they would have reduced teaching hours to focus on the SENCo role, supporting the building of capacity in schools to meet the needs of children with SEN.
Tysoe (2018)	Academic – Thesis	England	7 ( <i>n</i> =5 reinterviewed at follow up)	Qualitative - Interviews	SENCos find the implementation of procedures associated with

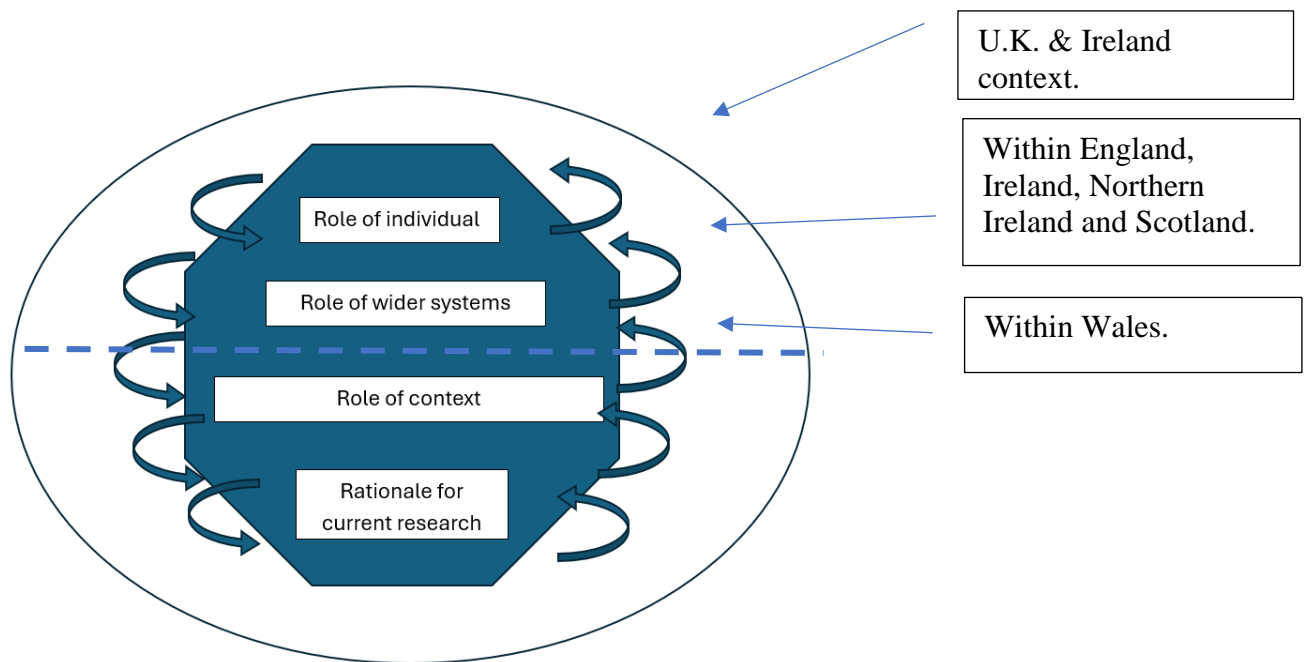
					changing policy time consuming. The time consuming nature of the procedures threatened the SENCos ability to work systemically in role.
Knight et al., (2023)	Academic – Article	Wales	N/A	Critical policy analysis	Each of the four nations, Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, differ in their portrayal of inclusion in comparison to one another, and within their own contexts across differing policy contexts.
Conn & Davis (2023)	Academic – Article	Wales	N/A	Hybrid model for analysis	Collective agency required to support change in systems towards inclusive practices. The conditions for collective agency do not yet appear present in Wales to support these changes moving forward.
Conn & Hutt (2020)	Academic – Peer Reviewed Journal	Wales	8 ( <i>n</i> =4 SENCos; <i>n</i> =4 Policy leads & School-based practitioners)	Qualitative; Semi structured interviews	Professionals welcome the ALN transformation to better meet the needs of learners, though what this means for the future was uncertain – with limited links between policy and practice and the beliefs of individuals influencing their interpretation.
Estyn (2023)	Organisation – Thematic Report	Wales	29 providers of education (inc. schools and Local Authorities)	Mixed methods; Semi structured interviews, focus groups and website checks.	ALN transformation has been challenging for those in the system. ALNCos in

					leadership teams use their position well to support change.
National Academy for Education Leadership (2023)	Organisation – Report	Wales	730 ( <i>n</i> = 326 ALNCoS).	Mixed methods; Survey and semi structured interviews.	The implementation of ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) has had an impact on stakeholder’s feelings of wellbeing. ALNCoS are at risk of being negatively impacted by ALN transformation.

### 1.5.5 - Structure of literature review

A bottom-up approach has been used to structure the literature review, with information synthesised from relevant literature being used to create a narrative. The literature review will begin by exploring the individual factors that may influence SENCo experiences of policy, before considering the impact of wider systems on SENCo perceptions. Once literature from the U.K. and Ireland has been explored, the role of the context influencing the ALN transformation in Wales will be presented. To structure the complexity of literature offered in the area of individual experiences of systemic change, the following diagram illustrates how the narrative will be presented, with considerations from U.K. and Irish contexts being offered before funnelling the research down to consider the context of ALN transformation in Wales.

#### **Researcher’s lens to literature review, reflecting systems thinking.**



## 1.6 - Changing systems in the U.K. and Ireland

This section of the literature review synthesises information from the literature into two parts, the role of the individual and the role of wider systems on SENCo perceptions and experience of transforming SEN systems. This research has been sourced from within Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, and England.

### 1.6.1 - Role of the individual

The role of the individual and how this may impact their experience of SEN policy change in the U.K. and Ireland will be explored. Individuals interact with systems reciprocally to make sense of their environment and respond in ways that make sense to them (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). From the research available, the values and motivations of individuals, and individuals' perceptions of self as agents of change was constructed from the literature.

#### 1.6.1.1 - Values and motivations

Previous research from Rosen-Webb (2011) has suggested that a SENCo's own values shape their role in practice. The researcher found that the values instilled in SENCos by their families and early experiences in teaching, were felt to be central in guiding their personal and professional development. Values that SENCos held, and their associated practices, such as

promoting social justice appeared to impact their motivation to support inclusive education through their role and shape their implementation of policy and what they perceived to be good practice. Though specific values are not alluded to in research, the recognition of individual values guiding practice appeared to be consistent across the available literature in this area (Dobson & Douglas, 2020a). Dobson and Douglas (2020a) reported that SENCOs can struggle to implement policy when it does not align with their values or personal experiences, leading to tension in their roles. The complex interplay of individual factors on deciding to take the role of SENCO was explored by Dobson and Douglas (2020b). The researchers collected survey data from 618 trainee and practising SENCOs exploring why they had taken the role. An exploratory factor analysis of the survey highlighted intersecting motives underpinning the choice to be a SENCO. Dobson and Douglas (2020b) reported that SENCO commitment to inclusion and high-quality provision were outward facing factors that inspired them to take the role, with inward facing factors related to professional development and leadership status also guiding their decision making. In this research, outward facing factors are likened to SENCOs using their skills to support others and inward facing factors are those which have personal benefits for the SENCO, such as career progression. The Dobson and Douglas (2020b) research used quantitative means to explore interactions between factors they identified from the data, and though informative, appeared to reduce the complexities of individuals adapting to and interacting in their different environments.

The interactional nature of how values may impact the implementation of policy could partially account for the diverse interpretations of policy and the discursive nature of its implementation (Kelly, 2016). Individual values are connected to individual motivations, and motivation may inform actions that individuals take (Kaplan & Plum, 2009). Motivation to make a difference in the lives of children and young people has been suggested to be a key attitude related to the SENCO role (Mackenzie, 2012). Mackenzie (2012) explored the multiplicity of personal rewards associated with being in the SENCO role using a life history approach. In this research, SENCOs were found to support other staff members systemically to improve SEN provision across the school system. Mackenzie's (2012) research appeared to suggest that SENCOs were motivated

to make changes that could impact children and young people across their education setting, promoting wider inclusion in schools and positioning the SENCo as an agent of change in schools. The SENCos' personal experiences were constructed as the motivation behind their actions, with emotional connections, both personal and professional informing their practice. Mackenzie (2012) acknowledged that SENCo feelings of efficacy in role was not explored within their research, and as such, limited conclusions around the effectiveness of SENCos promoting wider inclusion through their role could be drawn, warranting further exploration.

### **1.6.1.2 - Agents of change**

As SENCos are positioned as an agent of change, their motivations for change and feelings of efficacy could impact their implementation of policy. Fitzgerald (2017, p.177) explored the SENCo role across six Irish primary schools and found that SENCos were “profoundly committed and personally invested” in supporting children and young people who were identified as having SEN. The relational aspect of the SENCo role was believed to connect the personal investment in supporting children with SEN with the impact of this commitment occurring inside and outside of the SENCo role, in their personal and professional lives. The SENCos from within this research having capacity to facilitate change at a whole school level was described as limited, with reports of SENCos experiencing overwhelm in their role. The overwhelm SENCos reported appeared to be managed in part by evening and holiday working to ease the demand, which had negative connotations for their work-life balance. Further research from Fitzgerald (2017, p.141) documented a feeling of “personal loss” by SENCos, due to the unsustainable nature of their workload. However, job satisfaction for SENCos in this research seemed to be generally high, and was credited to the rewarding nature of working with children and young people with SEN, offering a sense of fulfilment to the SENCos in role (Fitzgerald, 2017). Fitzgerald and Radford (2017) continued exploring the SENCo role in Ireland and used a postal questionnaire to gather qualitative and quantitative information from a purposive sample of 27 SENCos. The findings suggested that SENCos felt they were limited in their ability to affect change, with the magnitude of their role



being underestimated by others. Though, as this research relied on postal returns, non-response bias could be present in the reporting. Therefore, SENCOs who may not share similar experiences could be not included in this research. However, it could be argued from the research presented within this section that SENCOs and their positioning as “an agent of change” may be impacted by the power afforded to them and their ability to support change in role through sustainable working practices.

### **1.6.1.3 - Summary**

Overall, the individual factors such as values, motivations and SENCO perception of their ability to enact change appeared to impact SENCOs’ perception of their role. Though research appeared focused on the role of the SENCO, it appeared that individual factors impact SENCO’s perceptions of policy change (Mackenzie, 2012). However, the influence of systems surrounding the SENCOs are alluded to in the research, though further exploration of the literature is required to consider the role of the wider systems further.

### **1.6.2 - Role of wider systems**

The systems surrounding SENCOs can include their school context and local or national influences on their practice. The influence that systems can have on individuals, and vice versa, may impact the SENCOs perception of SEN transformation across the U.K. and Ireland. The literature available as part of this literature review has been synthesised to consider the interactionist nature between SENCOs and systems ahead of considering the impact of power and workload on SENCOs experiencing SEN transformation.

#### **1.6.2.1 - Interactionalism**

As interactions are circular and reciprocal in nature, systemic considerations which may impact a SENCOs experience have previously been explored. Bronfenbrenner (2000) suggested that proximal and distal systems influence an individual, which, in turn, affects other people around them through a dynamic process of social meaning making. A complex interplay of systemic factors may reciprocally interact with interest in taking the SENCO role in school (Dobson & Douglas,

2020a). Dobson and Douglas (2020a) used deductive analysis to map survey data from 88 SENCOs to Bronfenbrenner's (2000) Ecological Systems Theory. The researchers found that there were intersecting motives as to why teachers may train to be SENCOs, though, the personal experience they bring and desire to change school practice for the better appeared to lead their choice. The researchers also reported that SENCOs can experience dissonance linked to the appropriateness of policy and how to navigate it, suggesting that some SENCOs may find the SEN system challenging to align with in practice. However, it should be noted that the participants of this research were recruited from an opportunity sample of SENCOs completing their National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCo) training and were therefore within the first 3 years of their SENCo practice. SENCOs who are new in role may be in the infancy of finding homeostasis in the system, and thus, this may impact the experience of navigating policy. Furthermore, as the research was deductive, themes were being made sense of in light of previous literature, and thus may not capture the complexity of difference in systems.

As change across schools and local authorities is continuous, Liasidou and Svensson (2014) called for social justice to inform dynamic working practices of SENCOs. The researchers expressed that policy may undermine professional identities and the unique role of a SENCo within a system, causing tension for individuals within the role. A key tension was believed to exist between being a transformative lead in supporting inclusive education while being positioned in a system that valued league tables. The incongruence between an individual approach to meet children and young peoples' needs and the limits of what the system values as an outcome of achievement may explain some of the tension experienced by SENCOs. Dobson (2021) suggested that SENCOs should be supported to think beyond procedure, to recognise the tensions and dilemmas within their practice. However, directives on how SENCOs can be supported to navigate these tensions and dilemmas were not within the scope of the Dobson's (2021) research.

Some tensions and dilemmas that SENCOs may experience have been reported to occur outside of the immediate school system. Systems experiencing tension such as health systems were not perceived to be in a state of readiness to be able to meet the expectations of policy change in

England (Roberston, 2012). As the SENCo role coordinates provision in partnership with health, both systems working together effectively is essential for successful implementation of policy (Robertson, 2012). Services such as the National Health Service (NHS) are experiencing budget cuts, with SENCos having to hold a level of medical knowledge themselves to streamline which children and young people require which services, so they are able to prioritise how to use these systems (Roberston, 2012). Supporting SENCos to seek high quality advice was also framed as important in the Robertson (2012) research, with meaningful input identified as offered from agencies such as Educational Psychology Services and Advisory Teacher Services. However, the limitations of these systems also experiencing budget cuts and how this may interact with the needs of the SENCo when facilitating change was not explored by the researcher.

#### **1.6.2.2 - Impact of power**

The impact of SENCos being in a leadership role is well documented in academic literature. The power associated with being a member of senior leadership teams was found to have a significant impact on the SENCo's ability to support systemic change. Headteacher vision and values had previously been suggested to affect the power that the SENCo held in school, and the inclusive ethos of the school system (Cole, 2005). Support from leadership teams appeared important when promoting whole school approaches, with SENCos who hold management positions alongside their role having more agency in promoting systemic change. Cole (2005) reported that SENCos who had support from their senior managers found the implementation of policy easier, with more opportunities for strategic work to occurring in these contexts. Without a strategic focus, the role of SENCo was perceived to be at risk of being taken up by meeting individual needs, instead of planning more holistically to support needs across school and policy development. Specifically, being supported by senior managers was believed to influence the SENCos' power to effect change in school systems, with Cole (2005) calling for SENCos to be empowered as professional advocates for the inclusion of all children in education.

Over time, the Cole (2005) research was built upon to provide more recent explorations of the impact of power when supporting SENCOs to effect change. Research from Tissot (2013) documented a wide range of experiences related to the power that SENCOs held in post. A total of 146 SENCOs shared data related to their roles, with some SENCOs reporting they were positioned outside of leadership, even when they felt that they were completing a leadership role. The inclusion of the SENCO on a senior leadership team has been perceived as integral to the success of implementing policy (Tissot, 2013). The positioning of SENCOs has continued to be emphasised in more recent literature, with research from Pulsford (2020) finding that a SENCO being positioned as middle management, and not in senior leadership, contradicted the idea of the SENCO as an agent of change. Managing the relationship between being a senior leader and a typical member of staff appeared to cause tensions when trying to support change systemically and amongst peers. The awareness of social positioning and its impact on the SENCO role was concluded to be important when considering the implementation of policy change (Pulsford, 2020). However, the sample in this research consisted of four males, with the primary focus of the research documenting a gendered experience of SENCOs in schools. Therefore, the limitations of this research are connected to its specific focus on the “male” experience and may not represent individuals who identify as a different gender or sex and their experiences of navigating the management responsibilities in the SENCO role.

The navigation of leadership and management roles can look different depending on the system a SENCO finds themselves within. Research from Colum and Mac Ruairc (2023) reported that a distributed leadership model appeared to lend itself to successfully supporting SENCOs to implement policy change and enable systemic change across school contexts. Distributed leadership is defined by the importance of teamwork, and interacting between individuals in a system, rather than the function of their roles. Distributed leadership focuses on the relationships between people, rather than particular “actions” that are taken (Spillane, 2005). Colum and Mac Ruairc (2023) used a Foucauldian lens and considered how distributed leadership impacts SENCOs. The research explored how the leadership model affects the implementation of policy in Ireland. The findings

suggested that when a SENCo is in a position of leadership and is able to be active in the decision-making processes to support the inclusive practice of others, positive change was enabled across the whole school context. The researchers found that distributed leadership was useful when supporting this systemic change, though recognised that nuance in how distributed leadership is conceptualised and demonstrated in practice could lead to variability in experiences, impacting the generalisability of distributed leadership as a concept more widely.

Variations in hierarchical education systems appeared to be observed in the research (Tissot, 2013; Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017; Colum and Mac Ruairc, 2023), with the positioning of the SENCo depending on their school context and individual experience. Within hierarchical systems, SENCos having the support of school leadership teams has been found to be critical in supporting systemic change and inclusive practice within the school system (Fitzgerlad & Radford, 2017). Fitzgerald and Radford (2017) gathered qualitative and quantitative data to explore the SENCo role in Ireland. The researchers held questions surrounding the SENCo role and investigated if there was a policy/practice gap in how the SENCo role is enacted. Fitzgerald and Radford (2017) shared that when SENCos had a dual role within senior leadership teams, they perceived themselves as more effective in supporting change. This suggested that SENCos in leadership have more power to support change. The researchers also shared that the magnitude of the SENCo role was possibly underappreciated by systems more generally, with the time taken for SENCos to manage their role yet to be operationalised. As the time taken for SENCos to undertake their role and uphold their responsibilities was not explored in this research, further research may be required from governmental systems to reflect the breadth of the role ahead of operationalisation occurring.

### **1.6.2.3 - Impact of workload**

In the literature, workload appeared to impact a SENCo's perception of ability to implement policy, and their experience of policy change. Limited support systems and not having the time needed to meet the responsibilities they held were themes shared by SENCos that led to a feeling of overwhelm (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2017). The legal nature of the SENCo role has also been found

to be overwhelming, having an impact on SENCOs' feelings of responsibility in their duties (Winwood, 2013). The SENCO meeting their legal responsibilities of the role was believed to have a high impact on their admin duties, limiting their role to affect wider systemic change. Winwood (2013) reported that SENCOs who were able to develop the skills of the wider workforce to promote systemic change appeared to have fewer admin tasks, though, the factors needed to support this change were not explored. The research appeared to suggest that supporting the wider network of staff in a school to align policy with practice created a more systemic approach to meeting need. The complex interplay of variables that could impact a SENCOs workload were acknowledged in this research, and recognition of the individual experience was held. However, the researcher identified that further work was needed to investigate the time SENCOs need to support other staff members, so they can share their knowledge to support children across the school system.

Tensions in post were also reported by Sharpe (2020) who conducted a qualitative study using a narrative approach to data collection and thematic analysis to analyse six SENCOs' perceptions of their role via drawings. Data gathered from a focus group and semi structured interviews was triangulated, with researcher analysis constructing that managing the implementation of government policy was found to be challenging, with tensions arising due to funding cuts and the demands of the SENCO role. Sharpe (2020) also found that there was a blurring of the SENCO role, with some needs falling into a social care element of supporting parents. The social care element of the role was believed to impact the SENCOs' workload, though relationship formation and empowering parents appeared a valued aspect of the role. As previous research from Robertson (2012) suggested, this may reflect the systems experiencing budget cuts and the support they are able to offer, therefore reflecting the increased breadth of the SENCO role, filling these gaps.

Curran and Boddison (2021) explored the SENCO role in England, post-SEN transformation, using a mixed method design of an online focus group and a national survey. Curran and Boddison (2021) reported that SENCOs often held additional responsibilities in school, such as Safeguarding Lead or Children Looked After lead. Approximately half of SENCOs surveyed

felt their role was understood by senior managers, though researchers caveated the size of schools may impact this. The size of the school was believed to have an impact, as schools that have a larger workforce may have less contact time with the SENCo, in comparison to schools with a smaller workforce. This may impact the validity of the quantitative data, as it suggests that different contexts hold different tensions, and as such, drawing data and conclusions across the systems may not represent the nuance of context. Across the dataset, the researchers also reported that time for SENCos to complete their duties was variable, with roles most commonly ranging between 0.5 and 3.5 days out of a teaching timetable to complete the SENCo role. A total of 74% of SENCos in the research reported feeling frustrated that they did not have enough time to carry out their role and associated responsibilities. The SENCos shared that the majority of the time spent in role was given to paperwork associated tasks. Curran and Boddison (2021) found that half of SENCos in the sample worked an additional 9 hours a week to manage the role and 74% of SENCos felt that did not have the time they needed to ensure that SEN children and young people could access the provision they needed. This research offered conclusions drawn from a national survey of 1903 SENCos, demonstrating its scope in mapping out the experience of being a SENCo since SEN transformation in England. Based on this research, time afforded to SENCos appeared highly variable, though how this time is spent was not explored at this magnitude.

Pearson et al., (2015) explored SENCos' predictions of their role after changing policy contexts in England and found that SENCos believed that schools would become more inclusive, and their role would be more in line with leading these inclusive changes from a systemic perspective. Some SENCos predicted that their paperwork would decrease as they support staff to meet needs more holistically through high quality pedagogy and inclusive education. Others appeared to believe their role would intensify with bureaucracy increasing and intensifying their workload. Pearson et al. (2015) reported that SENCos expected to have a less direct role in teaching children with SEN as the policy implementation would support these children and young people to be included in the traditional classroom space with appropriate intervention and high-quality teaching promoting inclusion. In contrast to what SENCos reported as their expectations, Tysoe

(2018) found that the implementation of the new legislation in England had led to the focus of the SENCo role on carrying out administration tasks, which threatened the SENCos' wider role of supporting children and young people in school, systemically.

#### **1.6.2.4 - Summary**

The research from Pearson et al. (2015) and Tysoe (2018), suggested that some SENCos may be experiencing dissonance between what they believed the transformation would be and their lived experience of the transformation process. It appeared that SENCos were hopeful of a more strategic role (Winwood, 2013), and though it is supported in policy, workload implications from supporting implementation of new systems have created barriers to this work (Curran & Boddison, 2021). Feelings of dissonance can be uncomfortable and may reflect some of the tensions that have been reported by SENCos in their role (Dobson & Douglas, 2022a). Facilitators of SENCos power in the system appeared to come from holding a leadership role or having support from a senior leadership team to enact change (Tissot, 2013; Colum & Mac Ruairc, 2023). However, as the research offered from within these U.K. and Irish systems are all at different phases of their own transformation processes, bridging the exploration of literature to consider the Welsh system offers the opportunity to explore experiences of systemic change processes, while ALN transformation is occurring.

### **1.7 - Changing systems in Wales.**

Literature published from within Wales was synthesised and constructed to consider the impact of national, political, and local contexts on the current process of ALN transformation. The literature available from within a Welsh context offered an opportunity for meaning-making from the system in which this research is located.

#### **1.7.1 - Role of context**

Context can offer sense-making opportunities when considering wider systemic impacts on individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). The role of context in this literature review appeared to offer a



boundary for the conditions of change to be considered from within Wales. As Wales has been experiencing the statutory process of change since the introduction of ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), recent research has been published to explore the experience of transformation on groups of stakeholders, including those in the ALNCo role.

#### **1.7.1.1 - National context**

Implementing policies that support the inclusion of children and young people in education has been encompassed in the role of the ALNCo in Wales (ALN Code for Wales, 2021). Recent research from Knight et al. (2023) explored the differing U.K. nations portrayal of “inclusive” education, offering insights specifically for Welsh policy. Researchers found that there was a lack of coherence in policies relating to inclusive education across the four nations and within their own policy contexts. To support meaning-making in this article, inclusion was broadly defined as the act of removing barriers to participation in education and the wider culture for children and young people (Knight et al., 2023). The researchers used critical policy analysis to explore messages associated with inclusive education in policy documents across the U.K contexts. Policy in Wales was perceived to be in line with a deficit approach to children and young people’s needs, and thus was not congruent with the hope of promoting wider systemic change. The ALN Code for Wales (2021) was critically evaluated by Knight et al. (2023) in light of suggesting improvements for teaching and learning to support young people with ALN. Knight et al. (2023) commented on a lack of guidance describing what change towards inclusive education looks like in practice. As processes of change can be complex in nature (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008) guidance that meets the needs of those implementing change is believed to be essential for the successful implementation of policy (Kelly, 2016). Though policy in Wales appeared to promote a whole setting approach to inclusive education, Knight et al. (2023) suggested that the concept of inclusive education was symbolic in nature. As inclusive education will be defined differently across different contexts, this could pose a challenge to ALN transformation, as there is no set guidance or shared language to detail what inclusive education means in practice. Though the implementation of policy into practice is

meaning-made on a systems and individual level, applicable guidance from systems communicated through clearly defined, shared language, appeared as important when promoting inclusive education (Knight et al., 2023).

### **1.7.1.2 - Political context**

Conn and Davis (2023) explored how policy and practice may produce differing outcomes for inclusion depending on the political system they are applied within. Conn and Davis (2023) suggested that though changes in policy are occurring, changes in practice are not synonymous. The researchers argued that collective agency is required for meaningful change to occur and used the Kingdon (1984) policy window to explore Welsh education systems' readiness for change. The Kingdon (1984) policy window described three streams: the problem stream, which requires a policy remedy to an ongoing issue; the policy stream, which is the policy that outlines solutions to the problem stream; and the politics stream, which describes the overall political/ public motivation for change and/or social action. The researchers suggested that the marketisation of the education sector (politics stream) and policy that places emphasis on meeting individual needs (policy stream) does not take into account the complexity of inclusion and systemic variation in education institutions. Therefore, the researchers suggested that the conditions are not yet in place for successful implementation of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), or the shift towards inclusive education. This may pose an ethical dilemma when supporting change in systems, as arguably conditions need to meet the needs of individuals to support them to make change (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). Conn and Davis (2023) concluded that collective agency, or the collaboration of those within systems, is needed to support education systems to be more inclusive. Though the research from Conn and Davis (2023) and Knight et al. (2023) focused on the political underpinnings of change processes, the impact of how language is shared and communicated through policy documents remained important across their research. Furthermore, insights from Conn and Davis (2023) considered the conditions needed for social action to provide meaningful opportunities for systemic change in Wales.

Conn and Hutt (2020) acknowledged the implementation of ALN transformation in Wales has co-occurred with wider educational reforms, with the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales in compulsory education systems. Research from Conn and Hutt (2020) found that the new Curriculum for Wales offered a flexible curriculum for children and young people with ALN, with the focus being on quality teaching practices and supporting individual need. The eight participants, including two ALNCoS, in this research were identified as key professionals who held a knowledge of curriculum reform and ALN transformation and were approached by the researchers directly. The researchers reported that supporting a change in mindset was viewed by professionals as central to ALN transformation and the Curriculum for Wales. Though, it was recognised that the individual interpretation of inclusive practice and pedagogy could lead to inconsistency in practices described as “transformative”. This could align with the Knight et al. (2023) consideration that explicit guidance is needed to meet practitioners needs in this area, to support systemic change. There was variation between the content of participants responses in this research, with Conn and Hutt (2020) reporting differences in the beliefs of participants regarding the effectiveness of educational reform in supporting inclusive practice. As this research used content analysis to interpret the participants data, the underlying connections or themes that could unpick the difference in these professionals’ views was not within the scope of the research. Furthermore, with the sample of participants being approached directly to take part in the research due to their experience of education transformation in Wales, it could be suggested that their differing positions and roles in systems may lead to some of the discourse reported. Therefore, it may again be argued that the differences in experience and the attitudes or beliefs of individuals may impact the interpretation, and successful implementation, of ALN transformation in Wales.

### **1.7.1.3 - Local context**

Estyn (2023) reviewed the progress of schools and local authorities in implementing the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) and how it is being used to support children and young people with ALN in Wales. Estyn (2023) used a mixture of focus groups and semi-structured interviews to

explore the successes and challenges that schools and local authorities were facing during the transformation, and recognised the power differential in this process by sharing with participants that they were there to listen, and not assess provision. From the information collected, Estyn (2023) reported that ALNCos used their positions effectively to support those identified as ALN in school and worked well with parents to support a child centred support process. However, Estyn (2023) found that the consistency of applying the ALN Code of Practice for Wales (2021) across schools was an issue, as what was legally classified as ALP differed significantly. Though systemic influences can explain some of the variation, and factors such as funding and level of need in the local area may impact the ALP available in a school, it appeared greater consistency is being sought by Estyn.

Estyn (2023) commented on the enthusiasm of the ALNCos that they engaged with as part of the research process and noted that there has been a significant increase in workload when managing the transformation, mirroring some of the findings found in the wider U.K. and Ireland context. Estyn (2023, p.8) recognised that the ALNCo post was a “considerable change” to the SENCo post, with ALNCos having an increased responsibility and workload in comparison to their previous role. However, the Estyn (2023) report did not expand further on the differences between the ALNCo and SENCo role, so there are limitations on what is known about these differences in practice. Estyn (2023) also shared that ALNCos who held senior leadership posts were able to use their position to support a strategic approach to ALN transformation in school, with those who were not part of these teams, not always feeling well supported when implementing change. Though, Estyn (2023) did recognise that the results could only be generalised to the sample of schools and local authorities from which they had gathered this data.

Building on the information gleaned from Estyn (2023), the National Academy for Education Leadership Wales (2023) published a review exploring the role of educational leadership in delivering ALN transformation in Wales. The review gathered quantitative data from a survey of 730 stakeholders in the ALN transformation process, with qualitative data offered from twelve interviews to capture a more in-depth insight into the perceptions and opinions of stakeholders on

ALN transformation to date. Examples of stakeholders who were included in this research were children and young people, their parents/carers, ALNCoS and EPs. The range of stakeholders considered in this research is a strength, with the majority of stakeholders holding the role of ALNCo in a range of mainstream and specialist settings. All respondents of the survey were asked about the impact of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) on their wellbeing, with 63% sharing that it had a “fairly” or “very” negative impact in their wellbeing. As a high proportion of the respondents are ALNCoS, this could suggest that new legislation has had a negative impact on the emotional state of the ALNCo workforce. However, as the survey does not distinguish on job role across this question, limited conclusions may be drawn. Within this research, quotes shared from the qualitative data, such as “ALNCoS are very stressed [and] overworked” (p.11) and “This is an awful time to be an ALNCo” (p.11) offered an insight into how some ALNCoS are feeling in post. One of the key themes reported in the research was that the wellbeing of leaders such as ALNCoS was at risk, as was the likelihood that the ALNCo would stay in post long term. These findings suggest that ALNCoS are experiencing a significant amount of tension in their role, enough for it to impact their personal life and consider a change of job. Within the National Academy for Education Leadership in Wales (2023) research, the challenges of coordinating other services such as healthcare services was reported as challenging, mirroring the assertion from earlier research in England (Robertson, 2012) as was funding the provision needed for some learners who were identified as requiring specific types of ALP, or ALP through the medium of Welsh. This research clearly highlights some of the challenges ALNCoS are facing during ALN transformation, though, further research exploring individual accounts of ALN transformation could offer context around these experiences and explore how individuals have informed their perceptions of the transformation process.

#### **1.7.1.4 - Summary**

The recent reports from the National Academy for Education Leadership Wales (2023) and Estyn (2023) offer an insight into the impact of ALN transformation on ALNCoS, with themes and insights from a wide range of stakeholders adding to the evidence base of implementation

experiences. The literature appeared to suggest that ALNCoS are facing challenges to their wellbeing during ALN transformation, due to tensions in navigating a different role and trying to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN across increasingly stretched systems that offer support. Systemic research considering the content of policy documents and messages portrayed within them (Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight et al., 2023) suggested that wider systemic conditions for successful implementation of policy may not yet be in place to support ALN transformation in Wales, which may offer an insight into the challenging nature of implementation reported by ALNCoS in the literature.

## **1.8 – Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research**

The literature considered in this review offers a narrative of experiences connected to systemic change. The literature is constructed to suggest that individual factors, interactionist factors, such as those associated with school systems and, political, national and local factors can impact the experience of systemic change. These factors may reciprocally interact with one another to influence an individual's perception of change. From the available literature, it appeared that individual's perceptions of systemic change impacted how they may perceive their systems and interpret legislation relevant to their own context (Dobson & Douglas, 2020). This has been constructed by the range of experiences reported in the research, though some commonality of experience can be generated between them. The impact of how individuals interact with the systems surrounding them, such as the management structures found in SENCo or ALNCo school systems (Colum & Mac Ruairc, 2023; Estyn, 2023; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2017) and the impact that systemic change has on workload appeared to influence the perception of change (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2017; National Academy for Education Leadership, 2023; Sharpe 2020). Research from within the Welsh context offered a pertinent insight in regard to locating this research, with information from research published by Estyn (2023) and the National Academy for Education Leadership (2023) connecting experiences such as the impact of leadership structures in school having an impact on experiences of implementing policy, and the challenge of navigating systems

wider than school systems when coordinating provision, and the variation in what that may look like for each individual system, based on perception and mediated by individual experiences.

### **1.8.1 - Rationale for the current research.**

Based on the information presented within this literature review, there are a wide range of experiences connected to systemic change in education. Literature from Ireland and U.K. contexts have offered a broad overview of the experience of SENCOs navigating transforming systems, with a range of interactive factors influencing the experience of policy transformation. Factors such as individual attitudes and motivations (Dobson & Douglas, 2020b), power dynamics (Pulsford, 2020; Colum & Mac Ruairc, 2023) and workload (Radford & Fitzgerald, 2017; Sharpe 2020) were synthesised within this review, though the complex interplay between systems across these factors cannot be underestimated (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008; Meyers et al., 2012).

Based on the research presented in this literature review, it would be reasonable to suggest that ALNCOs and SENCOs are not a homogeneous group due to the differences between national contexts. However, systemic change appeared to connect the ALNCO and SENCO experience. As ALNCOs in Wales are currently experiencing the process of ALN transformation, the unique phenomenological context to explore their experiences of this change process has been presented. Though research that has gathered ALNCO feedback on the process of ALN transformation so far (Estyn, 2023; National Academy for Education Leadership Wales, 2023), an in-depth analysis of the lived experience of individual ALNCOs remains underrepresented in academic literature. Therefore, this research will explore ALNCO narratives of ALN transformation in Wales, considering the individual context for meaning-making in a systemic change process.

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**A story of change: Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators narratives of Additional Learning Needs Transformation in Wales.**

**Part 2 – Research Paper**

Word count: 9573

## 2 - Abstract

Systemic change, such as that demonstrated by the implementation of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) has the power to influence education systems, and those surrounding them. ALNCOs currently hold a central role in coordinating policy and provision in light of the ALN transformation prescribed by the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) and as such, are in a unique position within this process of change.

Though previous research has considered themes drawn across large samples of ALNCOs in Wales, the experience of ALNCOs during ALN transformation has yet to be explored on an individual level in academic literature. This research presents an in-depth narrative analysis of two ALNCO participants, exploring their experience of ALN transformation in Wales. This exploration was facilitated by narrative interviews exploring the individual experience of ALN transformation. The Gee (1991) poetic structures approach to narrative analysis was used to analyse each ALNCOs' narrative, with key elements from their insights presented to readers. From the narratives gathered, the ALNCOs were constructed to share stories of uncertainty regarding the ALN transformation process, and the perceived vulnerability of school systems when trying to meet children and young people's needs at this time of change. The impact of the legal nature of ALN transformation and school leadership systems were also explored from within these narratives and interpreted within the wider literature of systemic change in education systems. Conclusions and implications for practice are shared with EPs and policy makers highlighting the lived experience of ALNCOs during ALN transformation. Future directions for research in this area are also presented, encouraging further development of academic literature to promote evidence informed practice within Wales.



## **2.1 - Introduction**

In light of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), the systems surrounding children and young people such as early years settings, schools and Further Education Institutions (FEIs) are assisted through a new statutory process to work together and support those identified as requiring ALP. Under the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), the roles and responsibilities of education institutions and education professionals are outlined in the ALN Code for Wales (2021) with the aim of providing guidance to professionals when supporting children and young people with ALN (Welsh Government, 2020).

ALNCoS hold a central role in coordinating policy and provision within the ALN transformation (ALN Code for Wales, 2021). The ALNCo role is a statutory role under the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018), and thus, ALNCo's have a legal responsibility to identify whether a young person has ALN and ensure their access to appropriate ALP. The direct nature of the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) impacting ALNCoS provides an opportunity to explore how ALN transformation in Wales is being experienced.

Previous research in Wales has demonstrated that ALNCoS are navigating a new role under ALN transformation and are working to support systemic change across their school contexts (Estyn, 2023; National Academy for Education Leadership, 2023). Though the recent research from Estyn (2023) and the National Academy for Education Leadership (2023) offered a broad consideration of the ALNCo experience during ALN transformation to date, an in-depth exploration of ALNCo narratives have yet to be represented in academic literature.

### **2.1.1 - Research aim**

As the lived experience of ALN transformation in Wales for ALNCoS has yet to be represented in academic literature, this research aims to explore individual ALNCo narratives of the systemic change associated with ALN transformation. Though narratives are nuanced and complex, meaning will be made to offer an in-depth exploration of ALNCo experiences of ALN transformation in Wales.

### **2.1.2 - Research question**

As this research is exploratory, preconceived assumptions and hypothesis will not be tested (Butler & Copnell, 2016). To guide the research process, an open research question conjectured from a position of curiosity has been created. This research question asks:

*“How has ALN transformation been experienced by ALNCoS in Wales?”*

This question was kept in mind when designing the research, though processes remained open to ALNCo dialogue and followed the information that they chose to share, in line with an exploratory and narrative approach.

### **2.1.3 - Epistemological and ontological position**

Narrative research relies upon interpreting story, the nuance of individual perspectives and how they are made sense of (Reissman, 2008). To respect the individual nature of story, and the unique experience of individuals, the ontological perspective that the research will take is relativism. The relativist perspective promotes the value of each individuals’ construction of reality (Reissman, 1993). As a person’s reality may be constructed through their unique interpretation of events, taking a relativist perspective recognises the individuality of experience (O’Grady, 2016). A relativist perspective will respect each ALNCo’s lived experience of ALN transformation, which will then be shared with others through a hermeneutic process of interpretation throughout this research paper (Reissman, 1993). The relativist lens will work in harmony with the narrative approach, by reflecting subjectivity and phenomenological relevance to this thesis topic, inviting ALNCoS to share their narrative of ALN transformation.

To honour the subjective, individual realities of each person directly interacting in the research process, the epistemological perspective of social constructivism will be taken. A social constructivist perspective recognises that an interpretive experience occurs through linguistic and social discourse (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Through social constructivism, individual’s narratives about an event such as ALN transformation may be made sense of and shared with others through

language (Reissman, 1993). As language occurs in a wider context of meaning-making, social constructivism takes into consideration that to share a story with another when using language relies on collaborative co-construction (Reissman, 2008). Though story is perceived by individuals, through interacting and listening, to ourselves, and others, a narrative can be produced. The diversity of individual experiences and the narratives shared by ALNCoS will be championed throughout the research.

## **2.2 - Research methods**

### **2.2.1 - Ethics**

Ethics form the foundation upon which this research has been designed. As ALNCoS and other education professionals in Wales may currently be experiencing shifts in practice and are possibly taking the time needed to adapt to these, this research has been designed with the context of change in mind.

As ALNCoS are currently experiencing the change process, as an ethical precaution, safeguards were put in place in case any ALNCo required follow up support. ALNCoS were asked to share the name of the local authority in which they worked in case locally accessible support services were needed to be shared. Through a narrative approach, the control of what information is shared is within the power of the ALNCoS. However, as the change process is ongoing, it felt important to be able to signpost further support should any ALNCo need it.

The research proposal and associated documents were considered and accepted at Cardiff University School Research Ethics Committee (SREC), in line with engaging with an ethical review process ahead of conducting research (British Psychological Society, 2021). The ethical considerations that have informed the decisions made through the research will be acknowledged at each stage of the research process.

### **2.2.2 - Inclusion criteria**

When determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research, decisions were informed by considering the ALN transformation as a process while recognising the experience that will be

captured in this research is phenomenologically situated within a change process. The inclusion criteria can all be justified by their specificity to the role of ALNCo in Wales under the ALN Code for Wales (2021). The following inclusion criteria was generated for the participants of this research:

- ALNCoS who practice in Wales.

As the research refers to Welsh ALN transformation and is linked to Welsh Government and education systems, it felt appropriate to limit the ALNCo sample to those practicing within Wales.

- ALNCoS to have been in role on or before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

The ALNCo experience of ALN transformation also informed the decision to include ALNCoS who have been in their role since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. As the role of the ALNCo became statutory from January 2018, ALNCoS in role at this time will have experienced the process of transformation from its statutory beginning.

- ALNCoS currently practicing in their job role on a part time or full-time basis.

The inclusion of ALNCoS who are practising in their job role on a full or part time basis in the research allows for the nuance of those holding the ALNCo role as part of a dual role, shared role or as a dynamic part of their wider role in a school system to be heard.

### **2.2.3 - Exclusion criteria**

The exclusion criteria forms in part, semantic opposition to the inclusion criteria, with the addition of Assistant ALNCoS.

- Assistant ALNCoS

Though some responsibilities may be delegated to an assistant ALNCo, this role is not currently a statutory role under the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018). As Assistant ALNCo is not a statutory role, and responsibility of abiding by the ALN Code of Practice as part of ALN transformation remains with the ALNCo, the decision was made to exclude this group of professionals from this research.

#### **2.2.4 - Recruitment**

ALNCOs were recruited through a two-phase recruitment process. The first phase of the recruitment involved sharing information sheets including a link to a consent form (Appendix D) with the Principal EP acting as chairperson of the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologist – Wales (NAPEP – Cymru). From the chairperson of NAPEP - Cymru, the information sheets were sent to all Principal EPs in Wales. Principal EPs were asked to share the recruitment email and information sheets either directly with ALNCOs in their local authority or to EPs who would then be in the position to share it with the ALNCOs they work with (Appendix E).

One ALNCO consented to take part in the research, though they did not engage in the interview when offered. A dearth of interest from ALNCOs to take part in the research led to further reflection on the barriers that ALNCOs may be facing when being asked to share their narratives of change. After waiting a period of approximately 3 months to allow ALNCOs time to engage with the offer, a new recruitment strategy was devised that took into account the emotional impact of sharing a personal narrative. A relational offer was chosen as a second phase of recruitment after reflecting on the impact the ALN transformation may have on ALNCOs wellbeing, and the challenge they could have found in sharing their experience with a researcher who was not known to them. The second phase of recruitment used relationship-based recruitment, with the researcher contacting ALNCOs they worked with, or had previously worked with to invite them to take part in the research.

The awareness of power dynamics when planning recruitment was an important factor when considering the process. As the recruitment messages were coming from individuals ALNCOs may know such as their link EP, Principal Educational Psychologists in their Local Authority, or the researcher, the possibility of power dynamics impacting recruitment needed to be considered. To attempt to address the power differential, the recruitment email to these ALNCOs made it clear that they were under no obligation to take part if they did not wish to do so (Appendix F). This recruitment email was sent to six possible participants, known to meet the inclusion criteria. As part of the recruitment process, an ALNCO who took part in the pilot phase of the research was one of

the six ALNCoS invited to share their narrative. The ALNCo who took part in the pilot agreed to participate in the research, as did one other ALNCo the researcher held a relationship with. The other ALNCoS either declined ( $n=2$ ) or were willing to take part, but not available during the data collection phase ( $n=2$ ).

### **2.2.5 - Sample**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the research. Purposive sampling was used as the characteristics that met the inclusion criteria was explicitly linked to individuals who hold the role of ALNCo in a school in Wales since the statutory introduction of the ALNET (Wales) Act in January 2018. Sampling ALNCoS was directly linked to the objective of exploring ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation in Wales. The sample number was capped at six ALNCoS and this quota was shared on the consent form.

### **2.2.6 - Informed consent**

The information sheets contained an in-depth explanation of what the ALNCoS could expect from the research process, and what the aims of the research included in order to gain informed consent (Appendix D). The consent forms were password protected to protect the identity of those who received an information sheet. When ALNCoS felt they had enough information to consent to participate, interview dates were scheduled to suit the ALNCoS' availability. The online interviews were marked as "private" to protect the ALNCo's identity in the research process.

### **2.2.7 - Participants**

The participants in this research consisted of two ALNCoS known to the researcher. These ALNCoS will be referred to in this research as ALNCo 1 and ALNCo 2. These ALNCoS work within schools in the Southeast of Wales. The ALNCoS worked within different contexts, with ALNCo 1 in role at a mainstream secondary school and ALNCo 2 in role at a primary school Learning Resource Base. ALNCo 2 also holds the role of Deputy Headteacher and works with another ALNCo in school who manages the mainstream ALN responsibilities.

### **2.2.8 - Pilot**

The Arnstein (1969) ladder of participation was held in mind for this research, and ALNCo voice in structuring and designing the research was held centrally in the research process. The ladder of participation offered an opportunity to reflect on who the research is for, and how the power dynamics and researcher perception could impact the research process. As the research invites ALNCoS to share their narratives, opportunities to move beyond tokenistic research and move towards partnership and co-production felt important (Rosen & Painter, 2019).

To ensure that the interview question and interview space held would be supportive of holding ALNCo narratives, the researcher sought guidance from a member of the target population to inform reasoned action when designing the interview. An invite to ALNCoS with whom the researcher and their supervisor had a relationship with was sent via email (Appendix G). In the email, ALNCoS were asked if they would be willing to offer feedback on a piece of research focused on ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation and offered contact details if they would be open to sharing their thinking. One ALNCo responded and offered their time to discuss the research with the researcher.

In the discussion held between the researcher and ALNCo, helpful ways of framing the research were co-produced. One element that stood out from this discussion that has informed the design of the research is the use of a structure to support narrative storytelling. The ALNCo shared that key elements of a story may need to be highlighted to support ALNCoS to think of the whole transformation process, due to the commencement of the transformation process occurring over several years. This feedback informed the use of the life history grid to support ALNCoS to structure their narratives.

### **2.2.9 - Life history grid**

The life history grid was used when co-constructing what the ALNCoS would like to share in their interviews. A life history grid is a methodological tool which may help individuals shape a narrative that they wish to share (Appendix H) and have been used with success in other narrative research to support participants to structure the sequence of their narrative (Reissman, 2008; Walsh,

2017). This tool was chosen as it was believed to promote participant voice and offer opportunities to reflect on experiences that have occurred over time (Wilson et al., 2007). The life history grids constructed by the ALNCo 1 and ALNCo 2 can be found in Appendix I and J respectively.

#### **2.2.10 - Narrative interview**

Narrative interviews aim to place the individual sharing their stories in the centre of the research process (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). To ensure that safety was promoted in this space, ALNCoS were empowered to lead on what they wanted to share with the researcher (Thurnberg, 2022). The ALNCoS were able to direct what was shared in the interview, with the researcher enabling dialogue by creating a safe space and facilitating the “telling” of the narrative. The narrative interview was held over Microsoft Teams. These interviews were chosen to take place online to enable participation from ALNCoS across Wales, and to place the power of choosing when (during the working day or outside of the working day) and where (at work, at home, or elsewhere) the interview would take place, supporting fluidity and flexibility for each ALNCo in the research process. A script was created based upon the conversations with an ALNCo in the pilot phase of the research to facilitate an ALNCo-centred space and enable dialogue (Appendix K).

#### **2.2.11 - Narrative therapy**

An interview space that offers safety and enables dialogue may become therapeutic in nature (Birch & Miller, 2000). As ALN transformation continues in Wales, the interview could offer an opportunity for ALNCoS to check in with their own feelings and explore or reflect on their experiences so far. Though this research is not offering narrative therapy, some therapeutic benefits may be felt by ALNCoS as they explore their experience of a change process (Alexander et al., 2018).

### **2.3 - Method of analysis**

#### **2.3.1 - Narrative analysis**

Narrative analysis aims to preserve and construct an individual’s perception of events (Reissman, 1993). The data was analysed in line with the Reissman (2008) interpretation of Gee’s



(1991) poetic structure approach to narrative analysis, with stanza and strophe being coded and grouped to form parts. Elements of the text were chosen for further in-depth analysis to demonstrate Gee’s (1991) methodology, where a deeper level of understanding was needed to develop stanza and strophe.

### 2.3.2 - Transcription

Reissman (2008, pg.11) stated that transcriptions are “incomplete, partial and selective”.

Raw transcripts were taken from assistive software on Microsoft Teams and then listened to several times to support accurate word transcription and to become familiar with the data collected.

Dialogue offered from the researcher was excluded from the transcription to provide an ideal realisation of the text, unfractured and in a narrative format (Reissman, 2008). After transcription took place, the process of data analysis commenced.

### 2.3.3 - Process of data analysis

The process of data analysis reflected the five levels of Gee’s (1991) poetic structures approach to narrative analysis. The five levels of this process have been explored in table format, along with the methodology used to support the analysis. Examples of the analysis shared in the table can be found in Appendix L and Appendix M.

#### A representation of the analysis process.

<i>Level 1 – Micro and macro analysis of the narrative to identify stories based upon the emphasis that the ALNCo places on sentence structure or specific words.</i>			
Micro analysis			
Analysis type	Description	Code	Method
Pitch	The emphasis placed on specific words to convey meaning.	<b>Bold</b>	The micro analysis was the first phase of analysis completed. The transcript was listened to multiple times for words that were pitched for emphasis and for ALNCo sentences to be recognised and punctuated.
Glide	The words that are not emphasised by pitch and are used to share the story context.	Standard text	
Idea units	Pitch and glide together create an idea unit. Idea units convey a specific message.	A forward slash (/) symbol at the end of an idea unit	
Lines	Lines are numbered to organise the data.	Lines are numbered.	

Macro analysis			
Analysis type	Description	Code	Method
Stanza	A stanza refers to a group of text that is believed to be connected to a specific story.	Numbered heading (Stanza 1, Stanza 2, etc)	The macro analysis was informed by the micro analysis, using a bottom-up method to data analysis. The micro analysis informed which text would be grouped to form stanza. Stanzas were then paired to form strophe, and strophes were then grouped to form parts. Typically, stanza followed a chronological structure, though there were some “split strophe” present in the data. Split strophe are groups of related stanza that are connected by the same story, though not chronologically explored.
Strophe	A strophe is made of related stanza, that are connected by the same story.	Numbered heading (Strophe 1, Strophe 2, etc)	
Parts	A part refers to strophe that are thematically related. These parts form the main elements of the overall narrative.	Numbered heading (Part 1, Part 2, etc)	

*Level 2 - Analysis of the narrative to explore ALNCo's feeling of comfort and level of fluency when sharing their experience.*

Analysis type	Description	Code	Method
False starts	Starting a sentence and then changing the natural continuation of the sentence. For example, “We knew that there was <b>going</b> , that were going to be changes”.	<b>Red text</b>	ALNCo's comfort in telling a story, or their uncertainty when sharing, was analysed to infer meaning from what they were choosing to say. For example, an ALNCo had begun to tell a story and in the middle of telling it, re-framed what they wished to offer to the researcher. This reframe was then explored as part of the analysis, and the function of it considered and reflected upon when inferring meaning from the data.
Repairs	Occur after a false start to continue sharing a story. For example, “We knew that there was <b>going, that</b> were going to be changes”.	<b>Purple text</b>	
Hesitations	Hesitations or breaks when talking such as “um” or a pause.	<b>Blue text</b>	

*Phase 3 – Analysis of the narrative shared and consideration of which elements of the narrative ALNCo's would like to communicate through the research.*

Analysis type	Description	Code	Method
Mainline	A mainline plot is central to the narrative and conveys a message about what the individual choses to share in terms of content.	<u>Text underlined</u>	ALNCo's stories were further analysed with the key elements of their stories underlined to promote emphasis when considering what they wanted to communicate using their words to the researcher. The mainline was noticed and underlined to communicate what the ALNCo
Non-mainline	A non-mainline plot is the information around the mainline that may provide	Standard text	

	context or share information around the way that information is presented, positioned, or offered.		shared as important in their narratives.
<i>Phase 4 – An analysis of the positioning of the ALNCo and other individuals or systems they discuss in their narratives.</i>			
Analysis type	Description	Code	Method
I/We/You	Terms such as “I”, “we” and “you” could refer to an individual, the researcher, or a group/collective the ALNCo feels they belong within.	<b>Green text</b> (As the gender of whom the ALNCo referred to is not being analysed within this research, the code green was given to consider positioning more generally).	This phase of analysis was used to position the ALNCo and others they referred to in their narratives. When analysing the ALNCo position, double or triple hermeneutics are offered in the narrative so consideration of whether the ALNCo is positioning themselves in an ingroup or outgroup supported the meaning-making.
They/he/she	Gendered terms such as “he” or “she” and neutral terms such as “they” could refer to other individuals or systems.		
<i>Phase 5 – An analysis of the narrative holistically as a whole. The parts of the narrative are re-visited and reflected upon to support sense making across the data set occurs.</i>			
Analysis type	Description	Code	Method
Interpretation of the narrative as a whole.	The text is interpreted hermeneutically, with meaning making occurring across all parts of the data set.	N/A	At this point of the process, the ALNCoS were invited to discuss the researcher’s analysis. The interpretation that had occurred was shared with the ALNCo who took part, and their feedback on this interpretation acted upon where required.

*Note: The process of data analysis was informed by the work Reissman (2008), Emerson and Frosh (2004) and Walsh (2017).*

Once data analysis had been completed, an interpretation of the analysis was formally considered and written to share with readers of this research. ALNCoS were offered a debrief form to conclude their involvement in the research (Appendix N).

## **2.4 - Interpretation of ALNCo narratives**

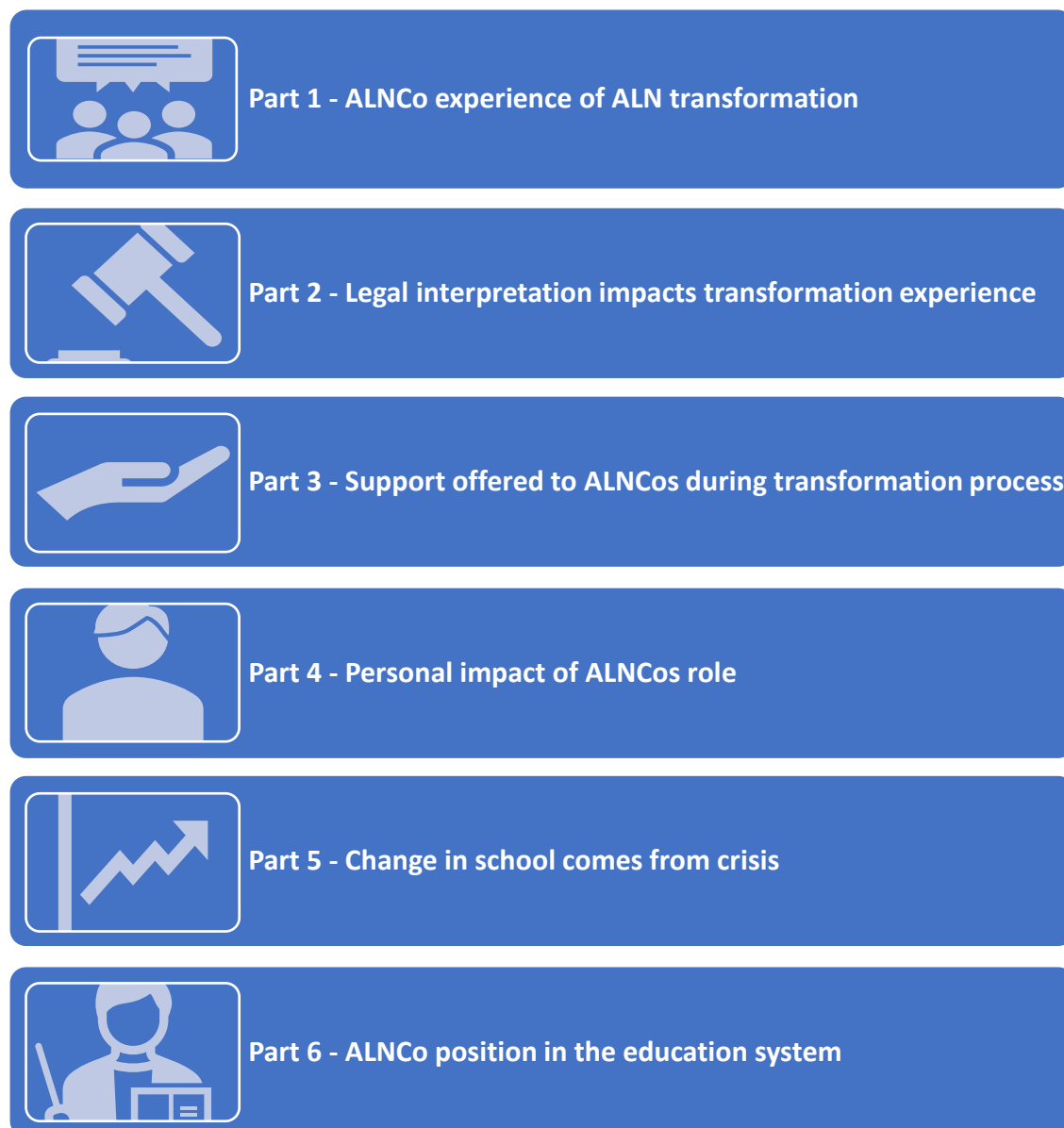
The stanzas and strophes that make the parts of the ALNCo narratives included in this analysis section have been constructed by the researcher and reflect a bottom-up approach to

information gleaned from the ALNCo narratives. A mixture of stanzas and strophes will be used to demonstrate the constructed parts of the ALNCo's narrative. The direct quotes presented in this section have been analysed using Levels 1-5 of Gee's (1991) methodology to inform the meaning making offered.

### 2.4.1 - ALNCo 1

ALNCo 1 shared a narrative that was constructed as six parts (Appendix O). The raw transcript of ALNCo 1's narrative is evidenced in Appendix P. These parts occurred chronologically in the data and reflected areas of discussion from the life history grid. A visual representing the six parts of ALNCo 1's narrative is presented below.

#### **A visual representation of the parts constructed from the ALNCo 1's narrative.**



*Note: The quotes that informed the Parts included in this infographic are analysed below.*

#### **2.4.1.1 - Part 1 – ALNCo experience of transformation process**

The ALNCo began their narrative sharing the local change process, offering context around ALN transformation within their local area. The ALNCo suggested that the information shared around the ALN transformation initially was “too ambiguous” and that those leading on the transformation “wouldn’t actually be pinned down”.

*Stanza 5 – Ambiguous change process*

“You know, I I went with other colleagues, other ALNCoS, and it was, you know, most well. Everyone I spoke to, everyone that, that, I came into contact with felt that it was too ambiguous, that they didn't, wouldn't actually be pinned down.” (Line 24-26)

The ALNCo positioned themselves in the majority of ALNCoS, sharing that in their experience they are not alone in feeling that the information shared was ambiguous. The ALNCo also showed emphasis on the word “actually”, demonstrating their lived experience of trying to “pin down” what the transformation meant for them in practice. The idea of trying to “pin down” the process was further referred to by the ALNCo in their narrative shortly after this extract, suggesting that they were looking for information that was more specific from “they” who, within this context, are positioned to mean Welsh Government. The false start and repair between “didn’t” and “wouldn’t” also suggested some element of choice about the information Welsh government had shared, as if the ALNCo perceived that some information has been held back or kept from them, in their experience of the transformation process.

#### **2.4.1.2 - Part 2 – Legal interpretation impacts transformation experience.**

The impact that the legal language and pressure of terms such as “must” in the ALN Code of Practice for Wales (2021) was also shared within the ALNCo’s narrative.

*Stanza 26 – ALNCo feels pressure.*

“That that language puts another l-layer of pressure on you. Um because you know you are doing everything t-that you can do and that should be done, and yet, you you just you know it's always there in the background, isn't it? It's always in the background.”  
(Lines 171 – 174)

The notion of a legal “must” was repeated throughout the narrative and was felt to be interpreted by the ALNCo as a perception of legal threat. This threat appeared to be amplified by other services involved in the support of children and young people not being able to meet the needs the ALNCo expected them to meet, in line with their perceived legal obligations. The hesitation when discussing the “layer” of pressure and the use of “you” appearing to refer to the ALNCo themselves could suggest there is a significant amount of pressure felt by the ALNCo with the new legal status of ALN transformation. The legal status appeared to have an impact on this ALNCo, and the level of concern regarding the feeling of threat was impacting their perception of ALN transformation.

#### **2.4.1.3 - Part 3 – Support offered to ALNCoS during transformation.**

The ALNCo shared a story of the support offered to them during transformation. The support was described in relation to the support they had from Welsh Government.

*Strophe 16 – Non-productive support process.*

I know a lot of people felt the same and it wasn't really very productive. It was almost like a box ticking exercise (Line 204-206)

Throughout this part, there appeared to be less false starts and hesitations than in the previous parts. The ALNCo was fluid in their dialogue, which has been interpreted to suggest they had given thought to this process of support previously. Within this section, the mainline plot shared the ALNCo's perception of support available during ALN transformation. The ALNCo positioning their narrative as aligning with “a lot of people” appeared to serve the function of suggesting strength in the perception about to be shared. There was pitched emphasis placed on the

term “have” from the ALNCo, as if they were role playing that support was given to them from Welsh Government’s perspective. The ALNCo positioned themselves as part of a group when referring to “a lot of people” in their narrative. Based on the surrounding text and sense making within this part, this could have formed a function of positioning in what appears to be a hierarchical system, with reference to Welsh Government as “the top” in their continuing narrative. The “top” appeared to reflect a hierarchy of power in the system, with the Welsh Government positioned as the holder of information.

#### **2.4.1.4 - Part 4 – Personal impact of ALNCo role**

The role of the ALNCo appeared entangled amongst the data, with the complexity of systems and reciprocal interactions between them being most prevalent in the middle section of the ALNCo’s narrative. The importance of the ALNCo forming connections with other people was believed by the ALNCo to be integral to the successful implementation of ALN transformation. However, success during transformation appeared to come at a personal cost to the ALNCo.

*Strophe 23 – Success at cost to ALNCo*

You know, and and people, and that's the problem, isn't it? You can be a victim of your own success, can't you? (*Lines 283 – 292*)

The cost to the ALNCo was analysed to be personal and professional in nature, with the ALNCo sharing that they felt a “victim” of their own success. The ALNCo is positioned as alone in this part of the narrative, with the success their “own” and “victim” being in its singular format, suggesting the ALNCo themselves is in this position. Based on surrounding context within this part, the success the ALNCo has found in the transformation process does not appear to be sustainable for them personally, as the ALNCo shared that they consider leaving their role “a lot”. The ALNCo reiterating that it is a thought that comes to them often served a function of demonstrating the significant nature of the personal cost they were experiencing in their current role, and the impact it

has on them. Though feelings and emotions were not named nor explored, this section seemed to suggest an element of unsustainability around how the role makes the ALNCo feel, with multiple, complex factors appearing to impact the ALNCo's perception of the role.

#### **2.4.1.5 - Part 5 – Change in school comes from crisis.**

The ALNCo shared the context for change is systems and described the support available from schools as a “lottery”. The “lottery” was positioned on a school-by-school basis, with direct links to how senior leaders and headteachers viewed the role of ALNCo. Other ALNCoS were positioned within this lottery, with some ALNCoS being afforded additional support such as an assistant ALNCo to meet the high level of demand in school, though, this was shared to not be the case in the ALNCo's current experience. The ALNCo shared that in their system, there was a lack of understanding about ALN transformation in senior leadership teams, and for these teams to be involved in the processes, problems would first need to occur.

*Stanza 71 – Problems in practice needed for SLT to engage.*

“No. No I don't feel valued. I feel like, you know, I think they'd be engaging with me if there was a problem. Something wasn't do- happening or something was right.” (*Lines 406-408*)

The ALNCo appeared to believe that engagement from senior leaders comes from problems in the system. It was suggested that even if the system is not being experienced in a state of homeostasis for the ALNCo, providing it was functional, it would not be changed based on the feedback they shared. In this section of dialogue, the ALNCo repairs the dialogue from “I feel like” to “I think”, seemingly moving away from the difficult to manage internal feelings, such as the lack of value they feel school holds for them, towards external process-related factors. The movement away from going further in-depth into the ALNCoS experience of the system could again be hypothesised to reflect earlier elements of the narrative, with moving away from discussing the lived experience being used as a defence mechanism against the powerful feelings it conjures.



#### 2.4.1.6 - Part 6 – ALNCo position in education system

The ALNCo shared that sometimes they feel they have to guide other professionals in meetings in order to keep in line with ALN processes. The ALNCo's positioned themselves within the ALN transformation process as important, with their knowledge and understanding supporting others within the system.

Strophe 45 – ALNCo guides systems.

“You know, we're in meetings and I'm trying to manoeuvre around conversations and guide the conversation in a particular way because I know actually that what they're saying is – (pause) you know, we really we need to be thinking about this or doing this.” *(Lines 490-493)*

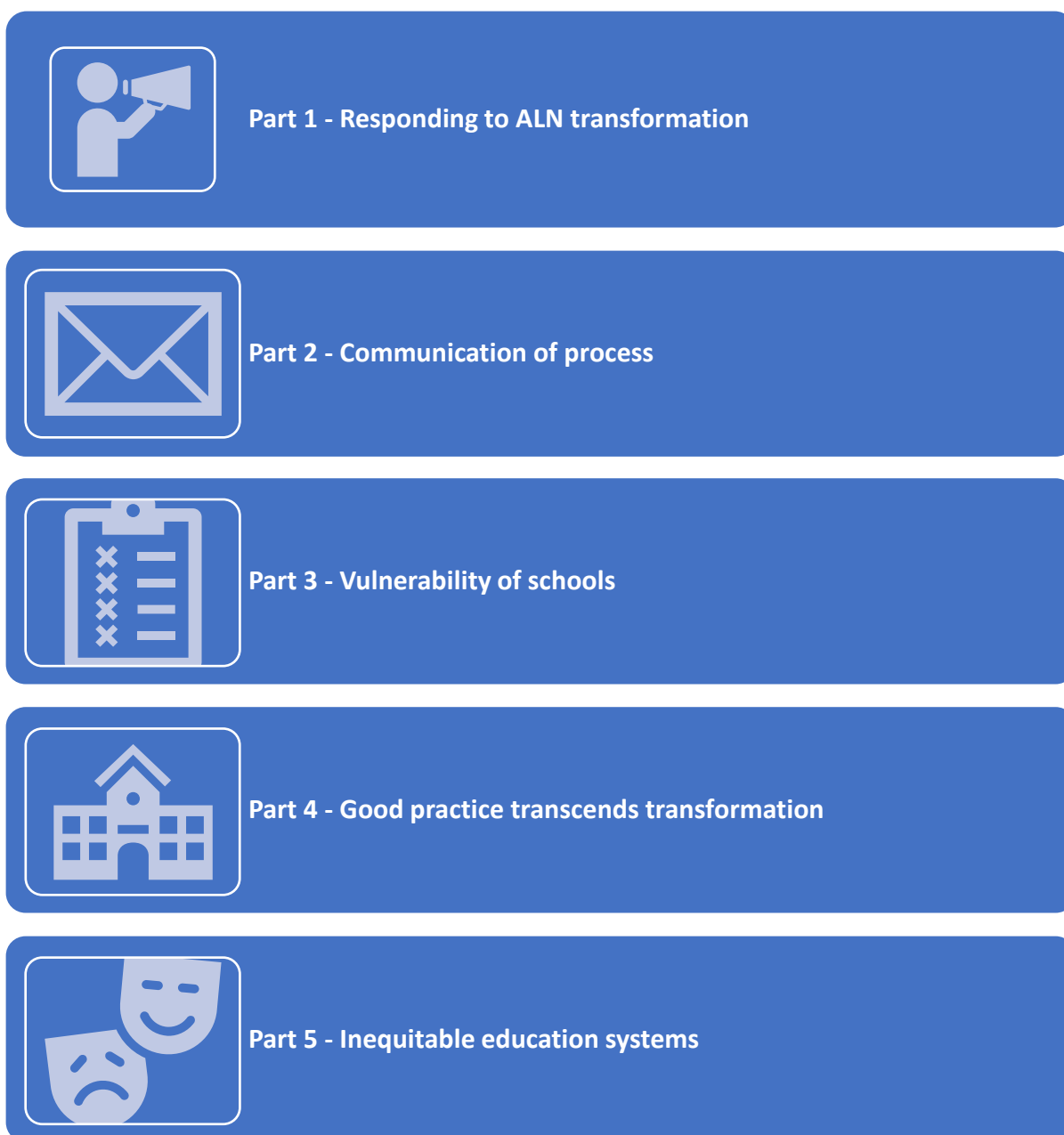
In the narrative, the ALNCo described needing to “manoeuvre” and “guide” conversations during meetings with others. These terms suggest that there is conscious effort for the ALNCo to guide systems through the ALN transformation process. The ALNCo paused in their narrative, with the pause appearing to offer time to reframe what they were planning to share. During this reframe, the ALNCo moved the focus from those they were describing back onto their role in the process, as a guide of the process that needs to be followed. The ALNCo positioned themselves as a guide to other systems, suggesting that the ALNCo feels these systems may not have the level of understanding the ALNCo holds in regard to ALN transformation. The ALNCo appears to take an active role in supporting others' understanding, promoting the ALN transformation process in their school system.

Overall, the impact of the ALN transformation on ALNCo 1's personal experience of change can be constructed from the narrative. The ALN transformation impacting the ALNCo's workload, and their place in the school system mediating the amount of change work they were able to hold felt noticeable. The personal sacrifice of the ALNCo to make the ALN transformation possible in school appeared to be necessary for their school system to function during this time, with the legal nature of the transformation adding to their feeling of pressure.

## 2.4.2 - ALNCo 2

ALNCo 2's narrative was constructed to split into five parts (Appendix Q). A raw transcript of ALNCo 2's narrative can be found in (Appendix R). These parts occurred chronologically in the data and reflected areas of discussion from the life history grid. A visual representing the parts of the ALNCo narrative is presented below, with the analysis presented in this visual being explored further in this section.

**A visual representation of the parts constructed from the ALNCo 2's narrative.**



*Note: The quotes that informed the Parts included in this infographic are analysed below.*

### **2.4.2.1 - Part 1 - Responding to ALN transformation.**

The ALNCo began their narrative with a description of the initial information sharing around the ALN transformation process. The ALNCo shared context around how information about ALN transformation was received, and their perception of the information offered.

*Strophe 2 – Information around transformation changeable.*

Um and - there was lots of - I'm gonna say information or misinformation. There was lots of words and things being thrown around, but not an awful lot of it concrete um or people didn't quite really know what it meant or what it would actually look like in practice. (*Lines 5 - 8*)

The ALNCo placed emphasis on terms such as “misinformation”, “words”, and “things”, suggesting that the meaning and understanding associated with the messages being shared were not understood. The description of messages not being “concrete” also suggested that information shared was sought to be specific, with clear guidance of what it would look like in practice. Within part 1, in light of the uncertainty felt, the ALNCo appeared to draw upon their confidence and competence as an experienced member of staff and deputy headteacher within this system, to lead and implement their interpretation of ALN transformation with an ethical lens to decision making informing their school-based implementation.

### **2.4.2.2 - Part 2 – Communication of process.**

The ALNCo placed a significant amount of emphasis on the communication of changing systems and terminology to parents during the transformation process in their narrative. The ALNCo shared that letters were sent to parents in a prescribed format, which was believed to cause confusion for parents. This confusion was then mediated by the support and time offered by schools to explain this process to parents.

*Stanza 35 – Relationships mediate confusion.*

But that's because we've got the relationship with our, not all of them, but the majority of our parents, because we sit in on every meeting. So, almost because of that ethos and the way that we have worked, it made those conversations generally easier. (*Lines 127-130*)

The relationships appeared as the mainline plot when describing what makes the difference in successful communication. The most emphasised mainline plot within this part of the narrative was to support parents to understand the transformation process. Relationship formation being a result of school “ethos” suggested that relationships are embedded within practice, and thus, appear to be outside of prescribed process to this ALNCo. School ethos was mentioned often throughout the narrative, and values of inclusion and meeting the needs of each child appeared to underlie decision making and interpretation of the transformation process. The ethos and relationships formed with parents appeared to enable dialogue, and supported partnership working with the families of children who are identified as having ALN.

#### **2.4.2.3 - Part 3 – Vulnerability of schools**

The ALNCo positioned schools as vulnerable, explaining that expectations on schools remain high, with schools having no option other than to function with the resources they have. The ALNCo described the expectation placed on school systems to function under “different standards”. This could suggest that schools are treated differently in terms of expectation, and they do not have the option of reducing offers of support despite not being able to resource support as they wish to.

*Stanza 67 – Different expectations on schools.*

It it just seems to be different standards um yeah, that's that's genuinely what I feel. I think its there's lots of things coming back on schools. (*Lines 297-298*)

The term “genuinely” in relation to feelings suggests a strong belief from the ALNCo, and honesty in how they perceive other services to be more protected than schools. Similarly, the term “coming back on school” suggested an element of responsibility that is believed to be held by

others, now falling under schools' responsibilities. In the narrative, the ALNCo suggested that a lot of the demand that would be placed on these services is redirected to the ALNCo to manage reduced capacity from others, and that the ALNCo role, therefore, needs protecting. The ALNCo appeared to have to set their own job role boundaries to protect themselves from the threats of other services adding to their already stretched system.

#### **2.4.2.4 - Part 4 – Good practice transcends transformation.**

The ALNCo appeared to hold beliefs around good practice being independent of ALN transformation. Good practice in the ALNCo's school was positioned to precede the changes in legislation and occur alongside the ALN process.

*Stanza 72 - School meets need regardless of Act.*

... some of my frustration with the act is - if you were doing good practice. The Act - does the act really make a difference? And I'm not convinced it does. Um and yes, there are some finer bits in terms of ages. I get that bit, but fundamentally a child has a need. We - our job is to meet that need. (*Lines 334-341*)

The “frustration” refers in part to the ALNCo's perception of good practice lying outside of legal boundaries. The ALNCo appeared to believe that good practice existed before the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) was brought in, and shared that some school systems are more advanced in showing this practice than others. “Good practice” was positioned by the ALNCo to be a whole school approach to supporting inclusion, with the ALNCo sharing that this is outside of a legal obligation, and more a “job” for schools. This idea of meeting “need” to be schools’ “job” suggests inclusion is foundational to what the ALNCo believes is good practice. The legal obligation was not believed by the ALNCo to address what would be semantically opposed as “bad practice”, or non-inclusive practice, by the meaning gleaned from the ALNCo's narrative. The ALNCo appeared frustrated with the lack of inclusive practice across systems and did not believe legislation or ALN transformation challenges these systems to promote inclusion.

#### 2.4.2.5 - Part 5 – Inequitable education systems

The ALNCo offered a powerful account of perceived unfairness for children and young people with ALN, with the quality and offer of support given to them based on the systems that surround them. These feelings were further cemented by a powerful final stanza in the narrative, around equity and quality of practice for children with ALN.

*Stanza 118 – System not equitable for children.*

You already now got cause I've seen them, IDP's of different standard, quality, whatever word you want to call it. So all that thing about children have an equitable thing, they're already not, no. (*Lines 689 – 691*)

This powerful last statement offered some element of summary to the ALNCo's narrative, with emphasis on quality of support available to supporting children and young people with ALN varying across schools. The focus on describing “standard” and “quality” or “whatever word you want to call it” suggested the frames currently used to promote equity are open to interpretation and, in the ALNCo's experience, are not currently consistent across the education system. The ALNCo appeared to focus on supporting inclusion for all children during the ALN transformation, and used a moral and ethical lens when making decisions to inform whole school practice is supporting children and young people who have been identified as having ALN with as much equity as possible given funding constraints.

Overall, systemic influences on inclusion were widely considered throughout the narrative. The ALNCo appeared to hold their school ethos and ability to make decisions as Deputy Headteacher to lead school through their narrative, both having an impact on how they have navigated the ALN transformation so far.

### 2.5 - Discussion

This discussion forms part of the researcher's narrative and interpretation of the data holistically, in light of previous research and what may be reflected upon from the ALNCo

narratives. These narratives will be held separately, with commonality and difference between them being explored when appropriate.

The ALNCos appeared to begin their narratives similarly, with reference to the information shared from Welsh Government. The feelings of uncertainty and element of unknown during the transformation process were constructed as present in the ALNCos' narratives. ALNCos appeared to seek clear and consistent messages at the beginning of the transformation process, though this did not seem to be found by either of the ALNCos. The messages associated with ALN transformation were shared by Welsh Government to groups of ALNCos, and thus, the nuance of language may impact the interpretation of messages, with the discourse experienced by individuals being interpreted differently (Conn & Hutt, 2020). Research from Knight et al. (2023) found a lack of coherent guidance across policy documents relating to ALN transformation in Wales which may also offer an explanation into why ALNCos find the messages "changeable" or "ambiguous". The inconsistency could be made sense of in the vast nature of ALN change across Wales, with the reliance on Welsh Government to provide direction, which was not in line with what ALNCos felt to be "concrete" or "clear". In the absence of specific guidance, ALNCos appeared to have individually meaning-made what ALN transformation means for them with the nuance and discourse of language being interpreted within the complexity of their school systems.

The positioning of the messages shared from Welsh Government to ALNCos suggested that information was shared through a top-down process from Welsh Government. According to Kelly (2016), bottom-up approaches to implementation have the greatest impact on successful policy change, with the values of those making the change being considered. Factors such as ALNCo values may impact the interpretation and implementation of policy. The importance of values, specifically linked to inclusion, was constructed from ALNCo 2's narrative, with the whole school "ethos" guiding their implementation of ALN transformation. Rosen-Webb (2011) reported that the values of individuals may reciprocally interact with the systems surrounding them to inform a unique understanding of policy such as that associated with ALN transformation. These values may develop from experience within the ALNCo roles in education, and may underlie their perceptions

of ALN transformation, based on whether the practice aligned with these values. In ALNCo 2's narrative, principles of social justice such as equity was raised as inconsistent across systems, with inclusion being held as central to their practice. The interpretation of ALN transformation in light of ALNCo values may explain some of the difference in practice across systems and between these two ALNCos, though promoting inclusion appeared to be a fundamental within both of their practices.

The complexity of interacting systems was constructed across the data, with feelings of threat particularly prevalent. The threat was perceived differently by the ALNCos with ALNCo 1 internalising the threats of the system and questioning their own practice to seek reassurance, and ALNCo 2 locating the threat within the system, positioning it as vulnerable. The threat to the system was perceived to influence change across both ALNCo narratives. The term "crisis" was used causally to affect change in the system by ALNCo 1, with homeostasis of the system needing to be disrupted significantly for change to be made. Power dynamics appeared to influence the ALNCos ability to affect change in systems, with the amount of power afforded to them being associated with their place in a hierarchical system of leadership in schools. The importance of power to affect change in schools had been well documented in recent research (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2017; Colum & Mac Ruairc, 2023), with research from Colum and Mac Ruairc (2023) demonstrating that when those who are agents of change are in leadership positions in schools, processes supporting change were enabled across the whole system. Promoting ALNCos to positions of power in school, if they did not hold these positions already, was also suggested by Welsh Government to support ALN transformation (ALN Code for Wales, 2021). The two ALNCos' perception of their power differed significantly.

The role of senior leadership in supporting ALN transformation was constructed from both ALNCo narratives, though the position they found themselves within was quite different. ALNCo 1 described senior leadership to hold high expectations of the ALNCo role, though they appeared to position themselves outside of the senior leadership team. Though the ALNCo held strategic position within the system, the conditions for their action were held by a higher level of



management, positioned as the senior leadership team. The positioning of the ALNCo appearing in a middle management role could impact the level of agency they have in affecting change in the system and may impact their perception of control in their own role (Pulsford, 2020). Therefore, the power the ALNCo is perceived to hold and the power shared by other senior leaders with an ALNCo could impact their ability to affect change systemically to meet the demands of ALN transformation. In contrast to ALNCo 1, ALNCo 2 positioned themselves as holding power in the system, reflected in their role as Deputy Headteacher. As Deputy Headteacher and ALNCo, ALNCo 2 held control for resourcing and responding the ALN transformation, leading a whole school approach to support its implementation. Pulsford (2020) reported that senior leadership support moderated the success of implementing policy, which appeared to be reflected in the differential experiences in narrative presented within this research. The empowerment of ALNCo 2 fostered a whole school ethos, creating a shared language for communication across the school system. The importance of individuals joining together to meet the individual needs of children and young people may work towards collective agency, establishing one of the conditions for meaningful systemic change (Conn & Davis, 2023). It appeared that through collective agency, ALNCos can be empowered to make changes at a whole school level that can support inclusion for all children and young people. However, the complex interplay of systemic factors, even amongst the two ALNCos included within this research, suggested that wider systemic factors may impact ALNCo efficacy in supporting change in line with the ALN transformation process.

The importance of language was discovered in both sets of data, with the language of “must” in the ALN Code for Wales being perceived by one ALNCo to add pressure to their role. The term “must” was shared in the ALN Code for Wales to signify a legal duty for the ALNCo to complete, which has statutory implications for meeting the needs of children and young people who require ALP. The legality of ALN transformation was raised by both ALNCos in their narratives, with legal connotations to what was described as “good” practice believed to be open to interpretation, in line with what the National Academy of Education Leadership (2023) findings. The concept of “good” practice appeared difficult to define across ALNCos as their perception of

good practice reflected their own individual ideals and experiences around supporting children and young people who may require ALP. Though what may be defined as good practice changes across systems, the legality of supporting good practice is positioned within both narratives to be unnecessary. Process that did not meaningfully impact practice was reported in the literature to increase admin and procedural tasks, whereas shifts in practice appeared to support systems to move closer to inclusion (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2017). Reflecting on the powerful account of ALNCo 2's perception of inequitable systems, the beliefs and values underlying process and practice, and whether it supports inclusion, appeared to be important to this ALNCo when following the ALN transformation process.

The importance of other systems functioning to meet the demands of ALN transformation was constructed from the data. In both narratives, the lack of knowledge or capacity of other services to support practice in line with ALN transformation appeared to hinder the ALNCo's ability to meet need across their school. The feelings of frustration and exasperation associated with the lack of support available from other services appeared to place additional workload demands on the ALNCo (Robertson, 2012). As these services and the functioning of them was positioned outside of the ALNCo control it appeared to have an emotional impact on the ALNCo as they were unable to impact change or coordinate provision from within these systems. Estyn (2023) recognised the challenge that coordinating multiple systems posed for ALNCo, with the challenges facing these systems felt across education. Systems having the ability to change in response to ALN transformation remains important, with ALNCo relying on these systems to function so they can complete their statutory duties as prescribed by ALN transformation. Resourcing and budgets were referenced by both ALNCo, with each of them raising concerns around the constraints placed upon them by these factors when supporting ALN transformation. The impact of budget cuts on transforming systems was reported by Sharpe (2020) when considering the system in England, and it appears ALNCo in Wales are facing similar challenges. The ALNCo role being suggested to have grown during the transformation, especially when coordinating services outside of education, and the budgets schools are allocated were suggested to be challenging to manage when investing in

change. Budgetary demands across systems and access to funds appeared to limit ALNCo's ability to coordinate and explore ALP as they felt was needed to align with the expectations placed on schools as part of ALN transformation.

The role and responsibilities of the ALNCo were also explored further in the data. The role of ALNCo appeared dynamic to the systemic context for change, with the impact of the role being experienced differently by each ALNCo. The dedication of both ALNCo's in supporting children and young people through ALN transformation was evident, supporting research relating to the hard work of education professionals in meeting children's needs (Fitzgerald, 2017). The dedication of the ALNCo's could sometimes be felt to impact their own wellbeing when becoming a "victim" of their own success, with a "personal cost" being paid to ensure that process and practice is meeting children and young people's needs. The ALNCo positioning themselves after needs have been met for the children and young people on the system suggests that their own needs in role may not be considered. The conditions for success of ALN transformation across both ALNCo's appeared to be hard work and a continuous to do list, with prioritising and boundarying what they are able to do important to protecting them in role. The underlying emotional impact of the role was actively avoided by ALNCo 1, with thinking about the responsibilities they held possibly being too uncomfortable to unpack and manage within the space afforded for the interview. The impact of ALN transformation on ALNCo wellbeing was well documented in the National Academy for Education Leadership (2023) report, with findings suggested from the ALNCo's in this research appearing to support previous research suggesting that the ALNCo role is unsustainable as it currently is conceptualised. The construction for each of the ALNCo's around the role of ALNCo and the boundaries they set appeared to be different, with ALNCo 1 prioritising and ALNCo 2 boundarying their work. The hard-working nature of the ALNCo is constructed from both narratives, with responsibilities that are important to carrying out their role taking up a lot of time in their working day. The ALNCo's supporting effective communication and enabling dialogue with parents and other professionals appeared to underlie their role in supporting change in systems. The workload associated with this building of relationships may not be captured as part of statutory

responsibilities but appeared important to the ALNCo's themselves and the successful implementation of policy (National Academy of Education Leadership, 2023).

The relationships that transcend processes of change may influence how ALN transformation is framed and understood. Both ALNCo's referenced the importance of relationships, whether that be with children and young people, parents, staff members or other professionals. To support the implementation of ALN transformation, ALNCo 2 shared the importance of supporting parents and staff members to understand the processes they are part of in the transformation of the ALN system, and that these relationships are what makes the difference when supporting others. The reciprocal impact of relationships across systems to communicate process and access ALP for children and young people identified as ALN may mediate the perceived success of ALN transformation in Wales, as how groups of people work together to identify and meet children and young people's needs forms the foundation of the systemic change (Kelly, 2016). When considering relationships, and enabling dialogue between them, the impact of how individuals work together in a system to meet the needs of children and young people who require ALP is important. Estyn (2023) recognised that senior leaders in school could use their position to support a strategic approach to ALN transformation, though how this can be mediated through relationships was not explored. From the analysis of the ALNCo narratives, relationships such as those between senior leaders and their colleagues, can impact the implementation of change. Evident from the differing constructions shared by ALNCo 1 and ALNCo 2, the culture and ethos of change in systems can depend on positionality and interpersonal relationships. As positive relationships are more likely to support meaningful change over time, the relationships between those in the system, and how they are viewed and positioned, may mediate the change experience for ALNCo's in schools. Therefore, it may be argued that considering the psychology of change, specifically, the interpersonal relationships that support change, can support effective implementation of policy across a system.

The impact of ALN transformation for each ALNCo appeared to be individually meaning-made within their school context, supporting assertions from Implementation Science and COMOIRA suggesting that change is specific to an individual's context and belief system

(Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008; Kelly, 2016). For example, within their narrative, ALNCo 1 told stories of uncertainty and feeling that they needed to check their interpretation of ALN transformation to ensure they were practicing in line with their legal and, more personal, moral expectations. ALNCo 2 told stories of misinformation, and being guided by their own their own ethical decision making when changes needed to be made. Though both ALNCo's were navigating the same legislation and policy, they appeared to be informed by their own belief systems during implementation. Implementation Science can offer a lens through which to view these differences with curiosity. Though each ALNCo finds themselves in a different position in their school system, their individual interpretation of the messages shared by Welsh Government, and the words written into Law, appeared to inform their reasoned action. The interaction between individual ALNCo's beliefs, and their implementation of ALN transformation can build on the work published by Estyn (2023) and the National Academy for Education Leadership (2023) by making the differences between ALNCo's and the systems they find themselves within salient when planning support for the ongoing implementation of change in school systems. The difference of experience between ALNCo's demonstrates that the psychology underpinning change, such as systems thinking and enabling dialogue between individuals, can not be underestimated when planning and supporting the implementation of ALN transformation.

### **2.5.1 - Implications for EP practice**

As EPs may work at a number of levels, the implications will be considered on an individual, group, and systemic level. On an individual level, this research may offer an opportunity for EPs to reflect on their experience of collaborating with ALNCo's and encourage EPs to find an opportunity to check in with their ALNCo's. ALNCo's found the process of being listened to therapeutic, demonstrating the importance of enabling dialogue with ALNCo's. By listening to ALNCo's' experiences, the sharing a story or narrative around their experience may offer the EP insight into the ALNCo's' values and attitudes, and the areas in which they may require further support. The opportunities afforded to ALNCo's to share their experience may support the EP to co-

construct a narrative around what ALN transformation means to them, and how perception guides others that they work with towards inclusion for children and young people in their school context.

Within groups such as those in a school system, EPs could use their skills to empower ALNCoS and senior leadership teams to create the conditions for meaningful change. As the use of whole-school approaches and support from senior leadership teams appeared instrumental in promoting positive change in the ALNCo narratives, systems work could be offered to facilitate a systemic approach to the implementation of ALN transformation. Additionally, opportunities for reflection and sharing psychology with those who are agents of change in schools may support systems to recognise the importance of cultural change in response to ALN transformation, with meaningful and sustainable conditions for practice being implemented in schools.

EPs may also support wider systems such as Welsh Government to create the conditions for systemic change in a psychologically informed manner, to guide reasoned action and respond to the needs of ALNCoS across Wales who are working to implement policy. The application of psychologically informed models of change such as COMOIRA and Implementation Science may offer opportunities for Welsh Government to strategically consider the impact of transformation across systems and plan bottom-up support for systems that respond to the needs of those implementing change during ALN transformation.

### **2.5.2 - Strengths and limitations**

A strength of this research is found in the ALNCo experiences of taking part in the interview. Both ALNCoS were offered an opportunity to comment on the experience, so changes to interview procedure could be made with fluidity in response to feedback (Reinhartz, 1992). Each ALNCo offered comment around the experience, with one ALNCo 1 sharing that they “really enjoyed that [the interview]” and “I really feel like you’re the first person ever to listen to me” (Appendix S). The feedback offered by ALNCo 2 suggested a therapeutic element to sharing their stories, alluding to the experience as “a big therapy session”. Though narrative inquiry, narrative analysis and narrative therapy are inherently different and involve different types of methodology and practice, the therapeutic benefit to feeling heard remains present in the storytelling experience.

The sharing of ALNCo narratives in Wales is also a strength of this research. Although qualitative data has been gathered from surveys and interviews regarding ALNCo experiences of ALN transformation, this research is the first of its kind to invite ALNCoS to share narratives around their experience in Wales. As a dearth of literature around changing systems in Wales has been reported (Welsh Government, 2021) this research can add to a growing research base around the impact of implementing policy and transforming systems in education in Wales.

A limitation of this research is the lack of ability to generalise the findings to contexts outside of the individual ALNCo experience. Though the aim of the research was to look at individual ALNCo perspectives in depth, the scope of this thesis does not reach beyond the individual experience of ALN transformation in Wales. As alluded to throughout the thesis, complex systemic factors may impact the lived experience of ALN transformation for ALNCoS, and capturing the extent of these complexities in literature remains a challenge.

Furthermore, as the interviews were gathered online, micro gestures and nonverbal communication which convey socially interpreted meaning when in person may have been missed or misconstrued by the researcher due to the lack of physical proximity when listening to ALNCo narratives. Though an effort was made to check the researcher's understanding of narratives with each ALNCo, taken for granted knowledge and the hermeneutic process create opportunities for differing interpretations of the data.

### **2.5.3 - Future directions**

Future directions for research could begin with an exploration of the experience of the ALNCo role in Wales. As the ALNCo role is a new statutory role in response to ALN transformation, experiences of the role in practice may add to a wider picture of the expectations placed on ALNCoS in response to the implementation of policy and the wider system context in which their role functions. The power afforded to the ALNCo in their role could be a further area of research development, with the agency afforded to them impacting the reach of their role within a school system. As the academic literature of policy transformation in Wales is beginning to be documented in published articles (Conn & Davis, 2023, Knight et al., 2023), further research

exploring the lived experiences of those implementing or developing ALN policy could inform future directions for good practice in supporting transforming education systems.

## **2.6 - Conclusion**

In conclusion, ALNCo narratives in this research told a story of hard work and dedication to support the implementation of ALN transformation in Wales. ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation in Wales tell their story of change, with the changing systems leading to feelings of uncertainty and frustration when process and practice do not connect meaningfully. Systems being underfunded in education and health services appear to perpetuate challenges associated with meeting the needs of children and young people, their parents or carers and education professionals such as ALNCoS. The resources allocated to these systems appear to not currently meet the needs of the ALNCoS in this research, with systems not currently at a state of readiness to work collaboratively. The role of the ALNCo appears to be impacted by the stretch of resources within the systems, both emotional and financial in nature. The impact of leadership and senior leadership teams and the agency afforded to ALNCoS in their role appeared to mediate some of the tension around supporting systemic change across schools, though further exploration of the role of the ALNCo and their positioning within schools could offer an insight into the effectiveness of systemic change such as ALN transformation. EPs may offer their knowledge of psychology and psychologically informed practice to support systems and individuals to make sense of the ongoing ALN transformation process and plan for meaningful support and implementation systems of the future.

## **2.7 - Dissemination**

This research will be shared with those on the Cardiff University Doctorate of Educational Psychology course and available on Online Research @ Cardiff (ORCA). The findings from the research will be shared with the ALNCo's who shared their narratives and offered to Welsh Government to add to the literature of impact when transforming systems. This research may also be submitted for publication in journal articles or online forums where the findings are of interest.



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**A story of change: Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators narratives of Additional Learning Needs Transformation in Wales.**

**Part 3: Critical Appraisal**

Word count: 7996

### **3.1 - Introduction**

This critical appraisal will take a narrative approach to exploring the research process. The narrative approach used supported meaning-making and exploration of the decisions made in the research process. Though meaning-making is dynamic and cyclical, a chronological structure will be used to support the communication of the narrative (Reissman, 1993). Throughout the critical appraisal, a reflective and reflexive approach will be used to consider the informed and reasoned action that has guided the research process, and the development of the researcher throughout the process. An exploration of the contribution to knowledge this research can offer will occur throughout this narrative and at the end of the appraisal, reflecting on the research piece as a whole. The first person will be used to locate the researcher within the narrative, and the researchers' own perceptions, values and beliefs will be explored throughout the critical appraisal process. COMOIRA will be used to support reflection throughout the narrative (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008).

#### **3.1.1 - Construction of thesis proposal**

This thesis was created in the context of the training process to become an Educational Psychologist through Cardiff University. When considering a thesis topic, deciding on what to commit the in-depth nature of the research towards felt like a challenge. To support the decision-making process, an approach inspired by free association was used to choose a thesis topic. Free association involves verbalising the thoughts that come to mind, unfiltered and uncensored and recording the vocalisations (Lothane, 2018). Once I had completed this task, I reflected on my vocalisations and identified six elements that I felt were important to me, my development as a researcher, and the role of an EP/TEP.

The six key terms that came to me through free association included "Narrative", "Additional Learning Needs", "Wales", "Change", "COMOIRA" and "Supervision". The first term, "narrative", led me to consider the importance I placed on following a methodology that had sparked interest and curiosity for me. After learning about narrative approaches in university, the

complexity of the method aligned with my personal feelings of the complexity of language; specifically, the power it holds in shared constructions, the ways in which it may be perceived, and its ability to change and adapt to those who use it. The terms “Additional Learning Needs”, “Change” and “Wales”, I perceived to be connected, which offered me an opportunity to reflect on what united them or could hold them together as a research piece. Though these terms offered a wealth of options, my interest in the ALNET (Wales) Act (2018) connected as an area of practice that I felt could offer direction to this research piece. The terms “COMOIRA” and “Supervision” offered me a comfortable lens through which I could explore and seek support to aid the research. As COMOIRA underlies my personal practice as a TEP and is a lens that I felt comfortable using when exploring and reflecting, it felt appropriate to carry this through my research and allow it to guide my thinking and meaning making. Finally, as supervision is a process which I value greatly, it feels important to recognise its influence on the perspectives I take and the support received to take a meta-perspective of cyclical, bi-directional, and transactional processes of change. These terms were held together to consider the possibilities of a thesis topic. When creating the focus for the research, my role in the production of knowledge as a researcher felt important. When constructing the focus, I found myself wondering about “the gap” that this research could fill. Through supervision, with my research supervisor and peers, I reframed trying to find “the gap” as an opportunity. This opportunity was to build on existing literature, offering a new perspective through which, systemic change could be considered. From this reframe, I reconstructed my role in the production of knowledge to offer something different, an alternative lens, to broaden understanding and support readers of the research to reflect on the impact of systemic change, such as ALN transformation.

Reflecting on the process of constructing a thesis topic, a narrative approach was used to form a cohesive story to position my thinking and decide on a way to take the piece of research forward. As “narrative” was the first term I made meaning from during the free association, the narrative approach to research appeared to be the underlying thread that brought this research

together. The narrative approach supported me to make sense of the research process and offer others a narrative of the sense made.

### **3.1.2 - Ethical influences on the research**

When creating the research parameters and protocol, engaging with an ethical review process was central to informing the design of the research. The BPS (2021) shared that engaging with an ethical review process should be ongoing throughout the research process and thus, amendments were made when necessary to reflect the changing nature of the research.

The protection of participants was something I held in high regard when planning this research. Reflecting on the experience of being a TEP, ALNCos are positioned as our key point of contact and thus, recognising how busy they are in coordinating provision in the changing landscape of support in Wales felt an important ethical consideration. When designing the research, I was conscious not to overwhelm ALNCos by framing the research participation as optional with an “invite” to share their experiences if they wished to do so. However, I was also conscious that ALNCos may have felt they should engage due to the power dynamic that may be felt within the system. To promote a more equal dynamic in the research, asking advice from a prospective participant to inform the decision-making processes felt important (Wallace & Giles, 2019).

### **3.1.3 - Collaborative approach to constructing the research**

A collaborative approach to constructing the research felt important as I am an “outsider” to the ALNCo community. After reflecting on the previous experience of my Small Scale Research Project (SSRP), one element of my practice I wanted to develop was a more participatory approach to research. Participatory research is believed to support social action, moving from tokenistic research to research that reflects the needs of those taking part (Havadi-Nagy & Muntean, 2017). Therefore, I wanted to ensure I sought advice and guidance on designing the research from someone within the ALNCo community to inform a meaningful research process.

An ALNCo my supervisor held a relationship with offered their time to discuss this research in response to a group email inviting ALNCos to be a part of this participatory process. As ALNCos



are a non-homogenous group, the research process being informed from someone who had experience of working as an ALNCo allowed for a reflective space to consider the process and review approaches suggested to gather data. The insights offered by the ALNCo offered development opportunities for the questions prepared to facilitate data gathering and the use of the life history grid to help ALNCos structure their narratives. Using a participatory method felt important when considering my role as a researcher in the production of knowledge. As I am “outside” of the ALNCo community, creating research that reflects the community it aims to represent was an essential part of the process. Holding integrity in the research process is recognised by the BPS (2021) as a principle of psychological research. Therefore, including ALNCos within this process would ensure their voices were heard and respected from the initial phases of research inception, to the final conclusions that could be drawn (BPS, 2021). On reflection, asking an ALNCo for their thoughts and suggestions for the research process was invaluable, and contributed to my own understanding of what support participants may need to enable dialogue through research.

### **3.2 - Conducting the research**

Reflecting on the experience of writing a thesis, the research process was the most enjoyable element. The process reflected in this thesis felt hard to capture, though, I feel the meaning made from information shared by ALNCos has offered invaluable insights into the systemic nature of change.

#### **3.2.1 - Ontology and epistemology**

The theoretical framing for this research comes from relativism and social constructivism. A relativist stance aligned with my personal belief that lived experiences are unique in nature and are interpreted and made sense of within an individual’s construction of reality. Relativism also allows for an exploratory lens to be held, with curiosity leading the research process, instead of a more realist lens which would seek an answer or universal truth (O’Grady, 2014).

As this research holds the perspective that the experience of ALN transformation is subjective and individual, the epistemological approach taken was social constructivism. When considering the epistemological approach, it felt important to reflect on the meaning-making of language occurring through social processes. When designing the research, I wondered about taking a social constructionist, social constructivist, or constructivist lens to the process. The social constructionist lens aligned with my own practice as a TEP and the use of COMOIRA, though, epistemologically, I was looking for an approach that highlighted the ALNCoS' perspectives through social processes at a more individual level. The distinction between constructivism and social constructivism was an area of reflection and learning for me, as I felt both could be used appropriately within the research. The sociolinguistic nature of words and language guided my choice of using social constructivism as the meaning I was taking from the words and narratives shared would be reflected in the analysis and write up of this research (Adams, 2006). Though constructivism offered the individual level of meaning making in the research, the social constructivist lens allowed a recognition of the researcher role in the process, and supported the process to remain exploratory.

The theoretical positions of relativism and social constructivism also offer the opportunity to recognise the limits of representation that are occurring within this research (Reissman, 1993). As this research occurs within the context of education systems in Wales, a recognition of the cultural impact through which meaning-making is occurring feels important. As meaning making is occurring through my own lens as a researcher, the position of privilege I find myself within education systems will impact how information is made sense of and interpreted (Eddo-Lodge, 2020). As a white woman, interpreting narratives of two other white women within Welsh education systems, the importance of recognising the limitations of this research and its lack of generalisability outside of the context in which it has been created feels important.

### 3.2.2 - Literature searching

The literature search felt the most difficult task of the research process. On reflection, there were a number of reasons available to explain the feeling of tension I associated with the process. Firstly, the literature search felt like an enormous task. Literature related to policy is vast, and the thought of making sense of legislation felt uncomfortable. When reflecting on this tension, I wondered if it was my role as a researcher to make sense of this legislation, producing a synthesis of legislative change for a reader. Reflexively, my role in interpreting legislation and offering it as a synthesis felt inauthentic, not aligning with the underlying processes of change I was interested in. After taking this to supervision and being supported to take a meta-perspective, I felt I had become stuck in trying to explain the ALN transformation, instead of exploring the experiences and process of transformation. After accessing supervision, the focus of my literature view had shifted, and the new position felt more comfortable to support a psychologically informed exploration of process in the literature.

The next tension I experienced was around creating a question of the literature. Despite reframing, reflecting, and reconstructing what a “question” for the literature looked like, I struggled to create a question, or questions, that captured what I felt was needed to explore the process of transforming systems. After revisiting my SSRP and reflecting on this process, I wondered if I was again being tempted to offer an explanation instead of an exploration. Remaining meta to this tension felt important, and I wondered what was positioning me to favour an explanatory perspective, instead of exploratory. On reflection, the nature of legislation offers guidance, and arises from a “problem solving” approach. The problem-solving approach is reflected in ALN transformation processes as the transformation itself was designed to address previous challenges in the SEN system and offer a modernised approach to supporting young people with ALN in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). As my interest aligned with a more exploratory approach, balancing the direct nature of legislative change and the process of change itself had to be held in tandem to support exploration of process, and not explanation of how Wales had come to

commence the process of transformation. This supported me to take an exploratory approach to the literature review, being led by available research in this area.

A further tension experienced was around locality of available academic research. As there has been a dearth of research in Wales since devolution (Chaney, 2012) and as systems in the U.K. have recently experienced transformation, it felt appropriate to include research from outside of Wales to explore experiences of transformation processes. Though the Welsh context remains central to the research, the meaning-making opportunities shared by others through research from within the U.K offered a wider lens through which to consider systemic change. Though excluding research from outside of the U.K. felt uncomfortable due to the diversity of experience which could be shared, remaining focused on the scope of the research was required to reflect the wider legislative system in which the transformation has occurred.

When exploring literature around ALN transformation, I noticed that I held ALN transformation in high regard, with faith in the systems implemented and belief in the principles of person-centred practice when supporting need. However, when I was reading the literature around the differences between the systems, I was at times disappointed that the language used within legislation did not reflect much difference in the definition from “SEN” to “ALN” in Wales. When reflecting on the change process, ALN transformation did seem to hold a more dynamic meaning, with the necessity of ALP informing a more socio-cultural context of ALN being present. However, the legal definition of ALN within the legislative context still used a deficit and within-child perspective. When reflecting on the transformation, the modernised system didn’t seem to permeate some long-held perceptions of ALN captured in legislative documents (Knight et al., 2023.). Though I believe in the values underpinning ALN transformation, and the child-centred principles held in practice, I did find myself wondering how much change can occur when legislated terminology remains fixed.

### **3.2.3 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation**

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the research was informed by ALNCoS who were in post when experiencing the statutory introduction of the ALNCo role under the ALN transformation. After reflecting on the process of change, and the complexity of ALN transformation, I wondered whether I could have opened the recruitment more broadly to all practicing ALNCoS in Wales. As the change process is ongoing and complex, the interactive and dynamic nature of change exists outside of commencement dates and thus, ALNCoS who were new in post and experiencing the transformation could also have offered an interesting and valid perspective of their experience of ALN transformation in Wales. Though I feel justified in creating clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, an element of exclusion for ALNCoS did feel uncomfortable, and I wondered about the differing narratives of those who have joined the ALNCo role during transformation, prior to its statutory commencement. On reflection, I wondered if considering the differing experiences would have created another element of curiosity for the research.

### **3.2.4 - Recruitment of ALNCoS**

The recruitment of ALNCoS is an area in which I feel I learnt a lot from this research process. Initially, I held an assumption that recruiting up to six ALNCoS in Wales would be possible through contacting Principal EPs in Wales as gatekeepers. In practice, recruitment through this method proved unfruitful. Though ALNCoS across Wales who met the criteria were invited to take part in the research, initially, only one ALNCo volunteered to be contacted to take part in the research process. When an interview was offered to this ALNCo, they did not continue to engage with the research process and thus, did not take part in the research. Contextual factors that may have impacted this ALNCoS' feelings of openness and ability to participate in the process could be conjectured, though respecting the ALNCoS' right to engage and disengage with the research at will felt necessary.

After further reflection on the lack of uptake from ALNCoS, I wondered whether a more relationship-based method would have been appropriate from the outset of the research. Recruiting

through relationships and using existing networks has been found to be a facilitator of recruitment processes (Garnett & Northwood, 2022). Initially, I wanted to avoid asking ALNCOs who I had a relationship with if they were interested in the research process, as I was aware the power dynamic may influence how they felt about taking part in the research. Though, on reflection, I wondered whether sharing a narrative around change may require the safety of a relationship to explore. Therefore, this reframe offered an opportunity to recruit based on relationships which provided opportunity to enable dialogue with possible participants. On reflection, recruiting through relationships supported a sense of safety when asking ALNCOs to share their narrative of ALN transformation. As a relationship was held between each ALNCO and I, it felt more natural when they were sharing their narratives with me. The relationship held with each ALNCO also supported the data analysis phase as I felt more familiar with their tone, pitch, and communication style. This mediated the decision of holding the interviews online as I felt there was still a personal connection in the space, despite not being in close physical proximity.

### **3.2.5 - Sample size**

The sample size hoped for in this research has fluctuated throughout the process. Originally, including up to six ALNCOs in the research was the recruitment aim. The number of participants aimed for was based upon approximately four to six participants being common in narrative research due to the in-depth nature of the analysis and collaboration between participant and researcher (Haydon et al., 2018). The small sample size for narrative research felt achievable, but after very little interest in the first phase of recruitment, and when time was running out to enable an in-depth analysis and write up process, a more realistic number of three participants was planned. On reflection, I believe I left the initial phase of recruitment open for too long after receiving a lack of interest from ALNCOs to take part in the research. I wondered whether my tendency to slow a process down to allow systems time to function may have impacted the speed in which I responded to the initial lack of interest in the research. Therefore, what I was bringing in terms of my own perception of process was possibly delaying the need to rethink my recruitment strategy. In future

research, I would like to be more open to changing a strategy if the lack of engagement in research offers data that suggests change may be needed. Reflecting on COMOIRA and considering my intention and ability to change in this area, I feel that now I have had this experience, reflection followed by a proactive response to feedback will be important in my future practice.

After changing the recruitment strategy, two ALNCos were interested in taking part in the research. The sample size was a topic often mentioned in supervision. Discussion was often held around whether one, two or three participants was “good enough” to contribute to knowledge. When considering the role of a researcher in the production of knowledge, I wondered if the amount of data I was collecting was linked to my original consideration of sample size. The idea that more data would lead to more knowledge is something that I now notice, when reflecting, was misguided and possibly a symptom of nervousness around what is “good enough” for a thesis. Moving forwards, I now align my role as a researcher in the production of knowledge to be centred around inspiring thought, and not offering masses of data for consideration alone.

### **3.2.6 - The narrative interviews**

The narrative interviews took place online to support participation of ALNCos across Wales. The thinking behind holding the interviews online involved reflecting on the workload of ALNCos, and wanting to offer a space that could be informed by ALNCo preference in accessing the research. Furthermore, holding interviews online helped to overcome some of the geographical challenges with accessing an interview to support participation (de Villiers et al., 2022). As online working has become more of a social norm, access to other people’s calendars has been a useful tool to support collaboration. However, protecting these participants identities then meant ensuring this space was not able to be accessed by anyone else who had a shared access to their calendar. Therefore, all online interview spaces were protected as “private” for the ALNCos, to ensure that their identities and decision to participate in the research was protected.

The life history grid was used in the interviews in response to the feedback offered from the ALNCo in the pilot phases of the research. In the pilot, the ALNCo shared that as transformation

has been ongoing for a number of years, it may be challenging to consider retelling their narrative without taking a moment to check in with their prior thinking and planning what to share in the interview space. The use of the life history grid aimed to offer participants opportunities to reflect on what is important for them to share (Lalanda Nico, 2016), and, though the life history grid has been used previously to order autobiographical and biographical narratives, in this research it was used primarily as a tool for co-production.

In the interview, an interview script was used to contract how the space would be held. Within this script, ALNCo's were offered an opportunity to ask any further questions they may have, and plan a structure for the interview that would enable them to communicate their personal experience of ALN transformation. Though I perceived ALNCos to hold the power in this research, this could have been perceived differently by the ALNCos themselves (Thunberg, 2022). When holding the interview space, ALNCos were invited to share their narratives, supporting the sharing of power in this instance. Lakeman et al. (2013) suggested that interviewers having a background in psychology may support the generation of rich narrative data. Within the research process, I felt my experience as a TEP supported me to feel comfortable with holding a position of curiosity in the research and maintaining an exploratory frame for the ALNCos to share their narratives. The ALNCos sharing personal reflections and insights into their perceptions was one of the most interesting parts of the research. However, as part of the thesis proposal process, an interview schedule was suggested as a "back up" in case ALNCos needed support to share their experiences. Reflecting on the research experience so far, planning ahead of time to support participation, safe spaces for exploration and the enabling the dynamic nature of dialogue felt important to take forward in my practice.

When transcribing the interviews and listening to my own contributions in the process, I wondered whether my personal interest in the perceptions, emotions, and beliefs that informed ALNCo narratives may have biased some of the nonverbal feedback and verbal contributions offered in an interview space. There were occasions when reflecting where I wondered if my contributions could have fractured the narratives that ALNCos were offering. Fracturing the data by



offering an exploratory comment could have impacted what the ALNCos chose to share (Reissman, 2008). However, as the theoretical underpinnings of narrative analysis recognise that the sharing of a narrative occurs in a cultural, historical, and social context, there is some element of reciprocal communication that feels important to provide authenticity in the research.

As I value the relationships held with these ALNCos, protecting those relationships was held in mind above the research process, with the “feeling” of the space providing containment and safety held with high importance. The interview space offering a sense of safety for exploration was reflected in the feedback from ALNCos. The ALNCos both alluded to a therapeutic element of this interview space, and though narrative therapy is different to a narrative interview, a consistent element present is the exploration of an event, and the meaning making that can come from reflecting on what has happened and the impact it had on an individual (Thunberg, 2022). On reflection, I believe the relationships we held enabled dialogue and supported authenticity in the narratives shared.

### **3.2.7 - Analysing the narratives**

Analysis of the narratives was felt to be the most interesting part of the research process. A lot of exploration was used to inform the decision to use the Gee (1991) poetic structures approach to analysis. Other approaches to narrative analysis, such as Labovian analysis, were considered as possible methods of analysis (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Labovian analysis focuses on the six main parts of a narrative, labelled as abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Labov, 1982). Though Labovian analysis offered a clear structure to split a narrative into sections, the communicative intent and function of the way a story is told was not included in its methodology. Other approaches, such as the Burke (1969) analysis of narratives, offered some consideration around the function of a narrative and considered how language is punctuated to support inference. Burke (1969), similarly to Labov (1982), used a pre-prescribed approach to categorise the information shared into a narrative, splitting them to explore acts, scenes, agents, agency, purpose, and attitudes. Though the Burkean method offered an element of considering

rhetoric and discourse, a more bottom-up approach to narrative analysis was sought and held in mind for this research.

During a supervision session, a thesis was suggested to offer insight into alternative narrative approaches (Walsh, 2017). It was within this research where the Gee (1991) poetic structures approach to narrative analysis was first introduced to me. After researching the approach, I found that Gee (1991) recognised that the narratives are shared through a social process, while remaining focused on the constructivist nature of an experience being shared. The Gee (1991) poetic structures approach to analysis allowed for what felt to be an in-depth bottom-up approach to be taken with the ALNCOs narratives. Furthermore, I felt the Gee (1991) approach allowed me to apply my skills as a TEP to analyse and understand the micro level changes in intonation, and the data that can be gathered through hesitation, repairing false starts and repetition of specific words or terms in a narrative. It was during this process that reflection felt key, and tuning into the way words were used, and their function led my understanding of the data. On reflection, tuning into the way words were used and interpreting them to form a wider understanding on the impact of ALN transformation on ALNCOs formed part of my role in the production of knowledge. The narratives shared by ALNCOs informed my knowledge and understanding of their lived experiences of ALN transformation, ready to support me to make connections to previous literature where relevant, and consider the unique nature of the experience to each individual.

As the process of analysis was so in-depth, specific elements of the data were chosen to explore the level of complexity throughout the narrative parts. These extracts of in-depth exploration were informed by the stanza and strophe that I believed offered key elements of the narrative within the parts found. During the analysis, I struggled with what I was “bringing” in terms of perception, and the interpretation I was holding of the data. I often reflected on whether or not the data was informing the stanza and strophe I was forming, and at times I wondered if it was “okay” to allow my thinking and meaning-making as a TEP to provide a deeper understanding to the data than what was available as “surface level” in the narrative. On reflection, as language is being interpreted through a relativist and social constructivist lens, the objectivity of a written word

is released, and the possibilities of hermeneutic interpretation were allowed to occur. According to Reissman (2008, p.8) “Representational decisions cannot be avoided, they enter at numerous points in the research process”. A reflective diary was used to capture reflections, curiosities and noticed biases was used to provide challenge to social, cultural, or historical influences that were impacting the contextual meaning-making process (Barrett et al., 2020). These reflections were then shared in supervision to support me to identify my own taken for granted knowledge. Through supervision and reflection, I wondered whether the interpretation I was creating was part of what I could offer as a researcher to the process. This interpretation was connected to the unique meaning making of data, and the meta-perspective that can be offered through psychologically informed thinking. After reflecting on this, I felt more comfortable in creating stanza, strophe, and parts from the data, and though the ALNCo narratives were held centrally during the meaning-making, accepting the hermeneutic process and working with it instead of against it, allowed for more fluidity in the process.

When analysing the data, a challenge I did not foresee was the influence of regional accents on the way participants spoke and punctuated their narratives. The ALNCoS had different accents though, both, I perceived as “strong”. After analysing ALNCo 1’s narrative, I noticed that in comparison, ALNCo 2 had a shorter, more direct sentence style, leading to a greater number of stanzas being constructed. The coding of the ALNCo 2’s responses felt easier to construct because of the “direct” nature of their stories, with fewer false starts and hesitations occurring. Though ALNCo 2’s narrative felt easier to punctuate in terms of stanza, part of the interest in analysing the micro and macro components of the narrative came from these nuances in the language used to share their perceptions. The impact of accents and the assumptions of what is “standard” and “non-standard” could impact the interpretation of a narrative (Oliver et al., 2005). Reflecting on the impact of an accent is not something I had foreseen until completing this narrative method of research, but it is an area of consideration that I will take forward in my research practice.

On reflection, the possible positioning of myself as an “outsider” to the ALN community but “insider” within the ALN system more broadly could be impacting the function and depth of

information shared by ALNCoS in their narratives. Research shared by Berger (2015) explored some of the benefits and challenges of being an “insider” in the research process. One challenge I connected with was the projection of bias informing my meaning making. As I have knowledge of ALN systems in my role as a TEP, some taken for granted knowledge may impact the meaning made from ALNCo stories and narratives. Through reflection, and the bottom-up nature of the analysis, I tried to maintain criticality in my thinking, though, the risk of misinterpreting an ALNCoS experience could remain. However, being an “insider” could also support implied meaning making and offer recognition to areas of nuance that someone outside of the system may not recognise as meaningful (Berger, 2015). Though there are pros and cons to the position I found myself within, holding an awareness and openness to reflecting on these considerations felt important.

When data was being analysed, I realised that due to the narrative approach I was taking and the depth of analysis offered from the Gee (1991) poetic structures approach, one participant would have absolutely been “good enough” to contribute to knowledge. The level of complexity and discourse available from within a one-hour interview astounded me, and the rich data and analysis opportunities presented in one narrative was “enough”. As the level of depth gleaned from narratives is vast, if I was to repeat the process, I would have focused on analysing the narrative of one ALNCo and exploring it “in full”, possibly beyond the scope of this thesis. I spent time, individually and in supervision, reflecting on the tension around not being able to explore the whole narratives in as much depth as I would have hoped for. I wondered about the framing I was using when applying the Gee (1991) poetic structures approach to data analysis, and on reflection, I noticed I was using textbooks as a guide. These textbooks (Reissman, 1993; Reissman, 2008; Emerson & Frosh, 2009) offered case study approaches to data analysis, exploring method and meaning making throughout. As the function of a thesis is different to exploring research methodology in a textbook, adaptations needed to be made to make the research achievable and within the scope of the thesis.

### **3.2.8 - Discussion of the narratives**

The discussion of the narratives felt an intricate balance between respecting the individual narratives and my own hermeneutic process of meaning-making in light of the research previously accessed for the literature review. When constructing the research process, I wondered about holding separate discussion sections for each narrative to reflect the individual experiences of the ALNCos being held separately. However, after the analysis phase, and on reflection, I realised that working with the hermeneutic process was part of the contribution I could make as a researcher, drawing links from both narratives to infer meaning beyond the narratives themselves. Synthesising this information formed part of the unique contribution I felt I could offer as a researcher, exploring connections where relevant and taking a meta perspective to reflect on the individual experience of systemic change. During this process, allowing my interpretation to lead the meaning making felt at times uncomfortable, and again I needed to revisit the reflections held when interpreting data, and sit with the hermeneutic process.

In the research, remaining meta to the individual nature of narratives and making sense of transforming systems created a cyclical “trap” for me at times, getting stuck between two systems, trying to find an equilibrium. However, after reflecting on the scope of the research, and focusing on the process of transformation, I was able to reconstruct my thinking and focus on drawing meaning from what I had learnt from the ALNCos and applying it to offer a new perspective and interpretation of the ALN transformation process. From this interpretation, I was able to produce an account of the research process and its connection to wider literature that could contribute to the production of knowledge on the impact of ALN transformation, and the wider impact of systemic change itself.

### **3.2.9 - Reflecting with ALNCos**

After completing the analysis and discussion phase of the research, I wanted to check in with the ALNCos before submitting a final draft of the thesis. The ALNCos were aware that they would be offered an optional “check-in” when they agreed to participate in the research. One

ALNCo engaged with the opportunity to check in, with the other sharing that due to time constraints they were unable to access this opportunity.

Reflecting with ALNCoS felt an important element of the participatory research process. During the research process, I wondered about analysing the ALNCo narratives and inviting them to organise it into “parts” for interpretation. When considering this level of participation, again I wondered about my role as a researcher, and my desire to protect these participants from sparing any additional time that is so precious to them within the role. As participatory research occurs on a spectrum (Ride, 2015), in this instance, I felt like it would be another demand on the ALNCoS time. Reflecting on my role as a researcher, I felt it was my responsibility to make sense of the process, ready to share and check my interpretation of the narratives with the ALNCoS. It was at this phase of the research, close to the end, that I become more comfortable with my developing identity of “researcher” and the power of being “with” or “alongside” the participants in terms of the approach to research, instead of completing a research process “for” them (Giampapa, 2011).

When preparing for “check in”, I wondered if the ALNCo would be accepting of my interpretation, and the level of analysis I had applied to their narrative. As narratives are individual, and I was analysing their personal experiences, it felt almost “private”. I wondered how I would feel if someone intricately interpreted what I said and how I said it, with the level of depth drawing out the possibility of novel interpretations, or misinterpretations of stories shared. Preparation to share the process of interpretation eased some of the tension I held around my role as a researcher in making sense of ALNCo data. Sharing this process with the ALNCo and naming some of the tension around research expectations was a strategy explored during supervision. After accessing supervision to unpick this tension and recognising my development as a researcher before holding these conversations, a script was created to set expectations, framing the sharing of information, and reflecting on the narratives more generally with the ALNCoS.

### **3.3 - Disseminating the research**

The dissemination of the research is, in part, an ethical consideration to ensure that the ALNCoS’ narratives are heard by others, with the sharing of their experiences offering hope for

future change. To disseminate the research, initially, a summary will be shared with other TEPs as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course. After feedback has been sought, and any amendments of this thesis are addressed after viva, a summary of this research will be offered to the ALNCo participants and Welsh Government. I felt giving ALNCos a summary of the research is important to empowering their position in the research process. If ALNCos wish to share the research with any other professionals or ALNCos, it will be within their power to do so. Though this research is not generalisable to all ALNCos, opportunities to reflect on an in-depth analysis of two ALNCo narratives with meaning making opportunities across wider systems being offered may be useful. As Welsh Government are already aware of this research taking place, sharing a summary with them feels important to offering transparency of the research process and promoting a growing body of academic literature around the experience of ALN transformation.

### **3.3.1 - Contribution to knowledge**

This thesis can offer a contribution to knowledge across systemic levels. As the research is built upon considering the impact of systemic change on an individual level, the knowledge gleaned from considering change as a dynamic and interactive process can be explored (Bronfenbrenner, 2000).

Firstly, this research offers a contribution to knowledge by sharing a construction of two ALNCos' lived experiences of ALN transformation in Wales. The constructions shared in the research tells stories of uncertainty and pressure, with stretched systems felt to be relying on ALNCos' hard work and dedication to support children and young people who require ALP. This importance of recognising individual experiences during times of change felt significant as ALNCos are key stakeholders and central to the ALN transformation process. Therefore, how ALNCos feel and function during ALN transformation may impact their perception and practice when planning support for children and young people who require ALP. By exploring ALNCo narratives, a unique contribution was offered through the sharing of experiences connected to the ALN transformation process, by those who have held the statutory role in introducing it into

schools. This research recognised ALNCoS as individuals, and placed importance on valuing and listening to each ALNCo in the process, acknowledging the individual experience of ALN transformation. The power in exploring ALNCo narratives in depth has demonstrated the personal nature and impact of change and how it may be felt by individuals within the system. By offering ALNCoS space to share their experiences, the therapeutic nature of sharing their narratives indicated that space for reflection, supervision or feedback could be useful for ALNCoS in the future. As the ALNCo participants both commented on the therapeutic nature of the space, this could demonstrate the need for more spaces similar to this to be created, where ALNCoS can share their experiences and feel listened to by others within the wider ALN system. This research demonstrated the power of enabling dialogue, empowering others to share their experiences of change (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). Therefore, this research contributes to the consideration of human factors in the change process, seeing each ALNCo in this research, and outside of it, as an individual with differing perceptions, understandings, and needs during ALN transformation.

Secondly, this research can offer knowledge to the systems surrounding ALNCoS, such as school systems and local government. The research highlighted the importance of support for ALNCoS in schools when implementing changes associated with ALN transformation. A construction perceived to be shared by both ALNCoS in their narratives was connected to school culture and senior leaders having an impact on the implementation of transformation processes in school. The ALNCoS were constructed to have different experiences of support offered from their respective systems, and the impact this was having on the ALNCoS ability to support change during ALN transformation felt palpable. The importance of considering schools as systems in their own right, responding to wider change such as that enacted through ALN transformation felt important to recognise as part of this research. The research has demonstrated how ALNCoS experiences may be impacted by the support in the school system surrounding them and may contribute to the knowledge base when reflecting how important leadership can be when supporting changes processes.



Both ALNCos were constructed to suggest that, in their experience, change occurred in systems when threat was perceived. This appeared to suggest that early intervention and proactive approaches to problem solving are not yet occurring in some systems. Though this research cannot generalise outside of the two individual ALNCos who shared their narratives, it felt important to recognise that multiple, complex, interactive factors may influence how open and able school systems are to change throughout this time of transformation. Therefore, the findings of this research could contribute to knowledge on the importance of systemic change to protect ALNCos' statutory duties, though systems such as Welsh Government offering further support and guidance in this area.

Thirdly, considering systemic change on a wider level again, this research contributes to knowledge around processes of systemic change, recognising the complexity of transforming systems. Differing systems that may interact with one another and cause ripples felt across multiple systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2000), something which is evidenced within this research. The impact of services being stretched was discovered to be felt by both ALNCos in this research and appeared to impact how they perceived ALN transformation. Taking a meta-perspective in how this can contribute to knowledge, it suggests that there are still areas for development across education, health, and social care services to support early intervention and promote inclusion through diverse means to meet the needs of children and young people.

Furthermore, the constructions shared in this research may support others, such as education professionals and policy makers, to reflect on the impact that systemic change such as ALN transformation can have on an individual. This research can also support policy makers to reflect on the lived experience of the transformation process and raise awareness of psychologically informed and supported change processes supported by evidence. Models such as that provided by COMOIRA and Implementation Science can form a guide to systems to promoting bottom-up support that can take a holistic view of systems as a whole, and consider the individual needs within them. By raising awareness of psychologically informed change processes, hopefully, programmes of support for systems and the individuals within them during times of transformation can be further

considered and developed. Therefore, through the insights offered in this research, the bridge between policy and practice can be reflected and acted upon to inform future transformation processes in systems.

Though this research can contribute to knowledge about systemic change, in theory and in practice, it is important to recognise the context the research sat within. The ALN transformation in Wales is unique and specific to the Welsh context. Exploring the ALN transformation process as a Welsh researcher living and working in Wales, this research can contribute to a growing picture of the systemic shifts and change introduced to work towards a more inclusive education system in Wales. As there has been a dearth of published academic literature exploring systemic change in the previous SEN system, this research can contribute to, what will hopefully be, a growing body of literature, exploring the change processes of ALN transformation. Individuals reading this research can reflect on the process of ALN transformation in Wales, and consider the support offered to ALNCos now and in the future. The snapshot experience of ALN transformation presented in this research can form part of a wider contribution to knowledge once ALN transformation has concluded, and the system is fully operational. With this in mind, I hope this research will one day offer one piece of an endless puzzle in the lived experiences of ALN transformation and wider processes of systemic change.

### **3.3.2 - Reflections from the process**

When reflecting on the process, it would feel inauthentic to suggest that this has been anything other than hard work. The long nights, evenings, and weekends where space was created to complete this process was, at times, gruelling. Though as a TEP I feel I should know better than to become burnt out, and take breaks for self-care and to promote wellbeing, the lack of resource available due to placement demands, financial demands and family demands made this a tricky process. Though one day, I hope to look back on this thesis with pride, at times I feel like I am holding onto the “ideal” or “perfect” thesis in my mind. Though I feel I have come far enough in

my practice to be content with the concept of “good enough”, distance is needed to gain a more meta perspective on the process so far.

Throughout this process supervision has felt invaluable. A lot of the confidence I have in this research has come from the reassurance and support of supervisors, and the guidance and reflections they kindly shared with me. Though the function of supervision can be multifaceted, the reflective space was often used to share process and unpick some of the tensions I felt. Throughout the thesis, emotions have been used as data to inform decision making (Arnold et al., 2021). Though there are elements of the process that on reflection, I felt I could change or develop further, given the time taken and the dynamic nature of conducting research over time, I am comfortable with what this research has become.

Personally, I feel I have accomplished something that at times I doubted. The perseverance and motivation to continue going when times were tough has supported me to build a feeling of resilience and grit. Though I hope to never have to experience quite this level of challenge again, it feels good to know that I can achieve what feels like the impossible at times. Professionally, I feel empowered in my own decision making, and I am noticing myself trusting my own thinking, and becoming more accepting of my own limitations with a continuing safe space for exploration and reflection through supervision, I cautiously look forward to the viva process, and listening to other people’s reflections on this work.

### **3.3.3 - Conclusion**

In conclusion, this thesis reflected an exploration of ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation in Wales. Throughout the process of creating this research, I felt I have learnt a lot about my role as a researcher, and a lot about myself as a practitioner. As a researcher, ethical practice and participatory research is something I now hold as central to any research process I take forward. I hope to continue to be informed by the values underpinned by participatory research such as honesty, integrity, and inclusion. As a practitioner, I hope to take the lessons I have learnt from this thesis process forward into my practice, and any further pieces of research I complete.

Reflecting beyond this thesis, and on my development as researcher, I feel after each piece of research I have undertaken as a TEP, there have been development opportunities ready to inform my future practice. From this thesis process, I would like to take forward the idea of research being “good enough” and remain led by the process, being reflective and reflexive, to create a piece of research that can offer an additional perspective to continually growing research bases.

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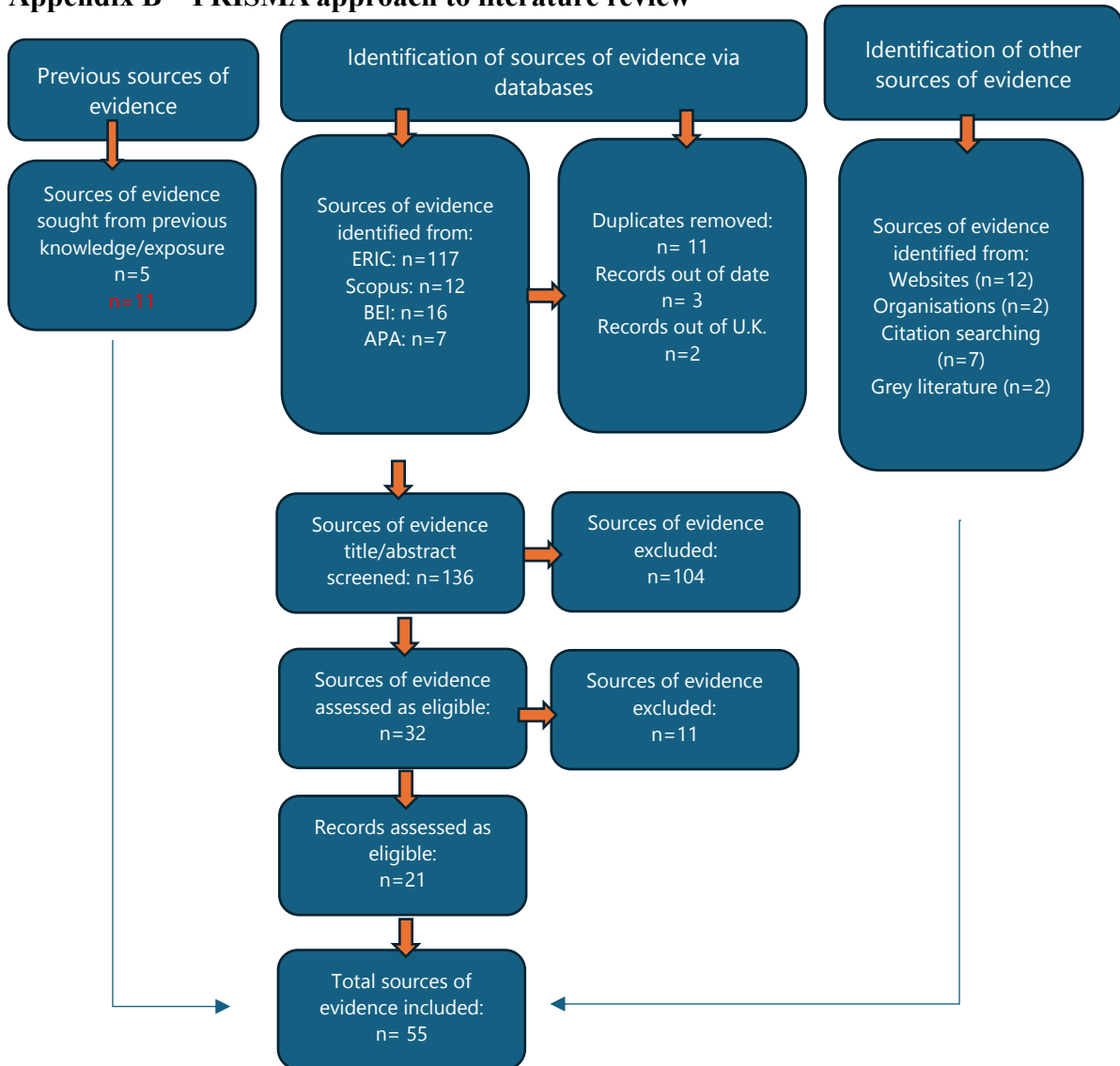
## 4 - Appendices

### Appendix A – Databases used with reasoning.

Database	Description (as taken from database)	Why selected?
ERIC	ERIC is a full-text database of education research and information. ERIC is an acronym for Education Research Information Centre.	ERIC holds information related to education policy and is a central database for education research to be published upon across the world.
APA Psycinfo	APApsycinfo holds published psychology information indexed relevant across behavioural and social sciences under the American Psychological Association.	APApsyinfo offers a psychological lens which may not be captured across other areas of education research across the world.
British Education Index	British Education Index includes research pertaining to educational policy and administration, evaluation and assessment, technology and special educational needs from journals and theses.	BEI is holds education information gathered by policy makers in the UK and thus was directed at an area of exploration directly related to the research.
Scopus	Scopus offers research from around the world in the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and arts and humanities.	Scopus offers a multidisciplinary cross section of research which could offer a wide lens through which to gather information across disciplines.



## Appendix B – PRISMA approach to literature review



**Appendix C – Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) Checklist. An example of two research articles from the literature review are presented below.**

Category of study design	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	1. Are there clear research questions?	X	X	X	All research included provided clear research aims.  All research included collected data relevant to the research questions.
	2. Do the collected data to address the research questions?	X	X	X	
Article for quality review	Knight, C., Conn, C., Crick, T., & Brooks, S. (2023). Divergences in the framing of inclusive education across the UK: a four nations critical policy analysis. <i>Educational Review</i> , 1-17. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09646460.2023.2244444">Divergences in the framing of inclusive education across the UK: a four nations critical policy anal (tandfonline.com)</a>				
1. Qualitative	1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X			Qualitative approach appropriate to research question. Clear rationale for methodology given with critical lens discussed.
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	X			Qualitative data collection methods were clearly shared and documented in the research.
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	X			Findings adequately derived from the data, clearly linked to research questions.
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	X			Examples of text given and interpreted in the research. Results are clearly supported by data shared.
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative	X			Clear coherence between qualitative data sources, collection,

	data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?				analysis, and interpretation. Critical lens initially discussed held throughout the research with clear links to interpretation of results.
<b>Article for quality review</b>	N/A – No quantitative randomised controlled trials research found in the literature search				
<b>2. Quantitative randomised controlled trials</b>	2.1. Is randomization appropriately performed?				
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?				
	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?				
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?				
	2.5 Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?				
<b>Article for quality review</b>	N/A – No qualitative non-randomised research only research found in the literature search				
<b>3. Qualitative non-randomised</b>	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?				
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?				
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?				

	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?				
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?				
<b>Article for quality review</b>	N/A – No quantitative descriptives only research found in the literature search				
<b>4. Quantitative descriptive</b>	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question				
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?				
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?				
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?				
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?				
<b>Article for quality review</b>	National Academy for Education Leadership Wales. (2023). <i>What is the role of educational leadership in delivering the additional learning needs reform in Wales.</i> <a href="#">NAEL REPORT V3.indd</a>				
<b>5. Mixed methods</b>	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	<b>X</b>			Rationale for utilising mixed methods is discussed. Reasoning related to reaching a wide range of stakeholders and informing the question content of semi-structured interviews.

	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	X			Quantitative and qualitative data is provided to make sense of data across themes.
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	X			The outputs are interpreted together with the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data.
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?		X		The divergences or inconsistencies between data are shared though not synthesised as to why they may occur. However, this was not within the intended scope of the research and thus, the research still meets its aims.
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	X			The difference components appear to adhere to the quality criteria for each tradition of the methods involved.

## Appendix D – Information sheet for ALNCo participants



### Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) Information Sheet

*ALNCo narratives of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation in Wales*

You have been invited to take part in the following research. Please read this information sheet and decide if you would like to participate.

#### **1. What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of the research is to explore ALNCo's experiences of ALN transformation in Wales. This research will invite ALNCo's to share their narratives on the ongoing ALN transformation process. The information shared by ALNCo's may offer other professionals and policy makers an insight into ALNCo's perceptions of ALN transformation in Wales.

#### **2. Why have I been invited to take part in the research?**

The reason you have been invited to participate is because you are an ALNCo practising in Wales. As a key stakeholder in ALN transformation, your narrative of the process could offer a unique perspective of how the ALN transformation has been experienced by ALNCo's. Currently, there is limited research exploring ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation in Wales.

#### **3. How will I know if I am eligible to participate in the research?**

You will be eligible to participate in the research if you have begun your ALNCo role on or before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. Capturing the narratives of ALNCo's who have been in post on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 will ensure that those who participate in the research have experienced the transformation since the statutory role of the ALNCo officially commenced. ALNCo's who are in post full time or part time are eligible to take part in the research.

#### **4. Do I have to take part in the research?**

You are under no obligation to take part if you do not wish to do so. Taking part in the research is a voluntary process. If you have any questions about taking part in the research, please feel free to direct them to the contact details at the end of this information sheet. If you do choose to take part

in the research, but later change your mind, the researcher can withdraw and erase any data you have shared up until the point of your data being anonymised, two weeks after analysis. It is important to note that Cardiff University does not offer financial incentives for participation in this research.

## **5. What is expected of me in the research?**

If you consent to participating in this research, the researcher will contact you to organise an online interview to explore your experience of ALN transformation. If you have any questions you wish to ask, please feel free to do so at any point during the research process. In the online interview, you will have space and time to discuss your own experience of ALN transformation. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour and will be guided by the experiences that you choose to discuss. After the interview has ended, you will be offered an opportunity to check in with the researcher and see how the information you have shared has been analysed. This check in is optional and entirely at your own discretion.

If you are interested in participating in the research, please follow the link to the online consent form found at the bottom of this information sheet.

## **6. What will happen to my personal data?**

Your personal data will be held confidentially on the Cardiff University secure password protected network. Any personal identification data (such as a computer IP address) will not be collected from your online consent form as all personal identification measures will be disabled. Your data will be safe behind two layers of password protection and will be stored in line with the Cardiff University data protection policy and Cardiff University Research Records Retention Schedule. Your personal data will only be accessible to the researcher and will not be shared with anyone else unless you disclose that you are at risk of harm. If you disclose that you are at risk of harm, your data will be shared in line with safeguarding protocols.

## **7. What will happen to the information I share?**

Once the interview has concluded, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym that will be used after data analysis has taken place to protect your data. The interview will be video recorded and transcribed for research purposes, after which the recording will be deleted. Two weeks after the optional check in, once data analysis has been completed, your data will be anonymised. This means the pseudonym will then be used instead of your real name to keep your identity safe. After your responses have been anonymised, the researcher will no longer be able to withdraw your data as it will not be identifiable. All transcriptions will be stored securely, password protected and only accessible by the researcher involved with this project in line with the Cardiff University data protection policy and Cardiff University Research Records Retention Schedule. If you would like to access the video recording before it has been deleted, or the transcription of your responses before they are anonymised, you may request this from the researcher.

## 8. What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

The data collected will inform the results of this research project which are shared in a report and may be published. Your anonymised data will be retained for a minimum of five years after the end of the research project or after publication of any findings based upon the data (whichever is later), as set out in Section 2.9 ('Research Project Conduct') of the University's Research Records Retention Schedule.

Your data will be stored on a secure password protected Cardiff University network. Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. The University has a Data Protection Officer who can be contacted at [inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). Further information about Data Protection, including your rights and details about how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/supporting-your-work/manage-use-andprotect-data/data-protection>

## 9. What will happen after I have taken part in the research?

After you have taken part in the research, the results will be written and shared with Trainee Educational Psychologists and Educational Psychologists as part of the researcher's doctoral thesis. The research may also be shared online or printed in academic magazines and journals.

## 10. What if I have any questions?

If you have any questions relating to the research, please contact the researcher or the research supervisor via the email addresses provided below. If you have any complaints about the research, please contact the secretary of the Ethics Committee through the details provided below.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, please click the following link and enter the password: ALNET2018

[https://cardiffunipsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_b79DI2iFsjKK7iK](https://cardiffunipsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b79DI2iFsjKK7iK)

### **Contact Details:**

- Hannah McCarthy - Researcher & Trainee Educational Psychologist: [mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk)
- Dr Emma Birch - Research Supervisor & Doctorate of Educational Psychology Course Director: [birche3@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:birche3@cardiff.ac.uk)
- Secretary of the Ethics Committee: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

Any complaints may be made to:



Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT, Tel: 02920 870707, Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk).

*Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. The University has a Data Protection Officer who can be contacted at [inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). Further information about Data Protection, including your rights and details about how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/supporting-your-work/manage-use-andprotect-data/data-protection>*

## Appendix E – Gatekeeper letter to Principal Educational Psychologists in Wales



### Gatekeeper Letter

[Name of Principal Educational Psychologist/ Welsh Government Representative]

[Address of Local Authority]

Dear [X],

As part of a doctoral thesis, research exploring Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos) narratives of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation in Wales will be carried out between 2023 and 2024. The purpose of this letter is to enquire whether you would be willing to share research information with ALNCos in your local authority.

The lived experience of ALN transformation in Wales for ALNCos has yet to be represented in academic literature. This research aims to capture a phenomenological narrative of ALN transformation while the legislative changes described in the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (2021) are in motion. The exploration of ALNCo narratives on ALN transformation will take place during individual interviews. The interviews will be approximately one hour long and will be held online. The findings from this research may provide reflective material to consider the impact of legislative change on ALNCos. This information may be useful for Educational Psychologists and policy makers as it could inform the support offered to ALNCos during times of transformation.

In order to recruit participants, I am asking [Principal Educational Psychologists in Wales/ Welsh Government representatives] if they would send an email including the information sheet to the ALNCos [in their local authority/ in Wales]. If you agree to share this information, I will send the relevant documents attached to a separate email.

Thank you for taking the time to read about this research project. If you have any questions or would like to request further information, please feel free to contact me on the details provided below.

Yours sincerely,  
Hannah McCarthy.

Trainee Educational Psychologist.

### Contact Details:

- Hannah McCarthy - Researcher & Trainee Educational Psychologist: [mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk)

- Dr Emma Birch - Research Supervisor & Doctorate of Educational Psychology Course Tutor:

[birche3@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:birche3@cardiff.ac.uk)

- Secretary of the Ethics Committee:

[psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

Any complaints may be made to:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT, Tel: 02920 870707, Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk).

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## Appendix F – Email from supervisor supporting participatory approach

Hello all,

I know this is quite late on in the day, but wondering if I could ask a favour for our trainee Hannah McCarthy, I believe some of you know. She is gathering some data for her thesis and would ideally love to speak to ALNCoS before end of term. This is her asking me below.

Would you mind asking if any of the ALNCoS you work with would be willing to have a brief discussion with me about my thesis topic, titled "ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation in Wales"?

I would only need about half an hour of their time, and I am interested in their opinion of what type of question I would need to ask them so they felt able to share their experience of ALN transformation.

Hannah's email is : [mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk)

Many thanks

## Appendix G – Recruitment email to ALNCoS

How are you? I am looking forward to working with you next term.

I am in the process of completing my thesis on ALNCo narratives of ALN transformation in Wales. I was wondering if you would be interested in taking part in the research?

I am recruiting ALNCoS across Wales who have been in role since January 2018, and I am inviting them to share their personal experience of ALN transformation in a one-hour online interview. I have attached the full information sheet to this email.

If you are interested in sharing your experience, I will be holding the interviews next week. Would you like to take part? There is no pressure or expectation to take part if you do not wish to do so, I just thought I would offer the invite in case you would be interested.

Best wishes,  
Hannah.

*Seicolegydd Addysg Dan Hyfforddiant* | Trainee Educational Psychologist

**Appendix H – Blank Life History Grid informed by Walsh (2017).**

1	2	3
4	5	6

**Appendix I – ALNCo 1 Life History Grid**

1	2	3
<p>Support prior to ratification of Act (the lead up to royal assent) 3 year prep process</p>	<p>Expectations on ALNCoS. They are written into the law and how this affects you as an individual</p>	<p>Workload and how the role has changed</p>
4	5	6
<p>SLT understanding or willingness to understand the changes in workloads and levels of responsibility for ALNCoS</p>	<p>New ESTYN report and the ministers take on the way that the new processes are evolving and what they see as future changes</p>	

**Appendix J – ALNCo 2 Life History Grid**

1	2	3
Timings	Understanding process	Fundamentals
4	5	6
External agencies		



## Appendix K – Interview script

Hello [ALNCo] thank you for sharing your time with me today. Do you have any questions about the research that you would like to ask?

[Answer any questions]

I am interested in your experience of ALN transformation. What I mean by your experience is your personal experience of transformation, and the thoughts, feelings, or emotions you have been holding during the ALN transformation process and all that it entails.

[offer further co-construction if needed]

I realise that the transformation process has been ongoing for a couple of years. I spoke with another ALNCo when this research was being designed and they suggested planning out what would be useful to talk about in this time that we have together. With that in mind, I have a grid here.

[Show life history grid]

There are six spaces on this grid for what you would like to share, though you can share more or less than 6. Would you like to add anything in these boxes?

[ALNCo to lead on what is added in the boxes]

Now we have the grid, we can refer to it if needed. Are there any other questions before we begin the interview?

[Answer any other questions]

We will begin the interview with a question and see where that leads us. Before we begin, I'd just like to check that you are happy for this interview to be recorded and that you understand that your participation will be kept confidential, with your data anonymised.

[Check consent] [Check recording] [Check transcription]

Please could you share with me, your own personal experience of ALN transformation in Wales?

## Appendix L – Example of coding – ALNCo 1

2 Um and at that point  
 3 We knew that there was going, that were going to be changes. /  
 4 We knew that that was process was already happening. /  
 5 Um and I was involved, as a result of taking over at that point, I was involved in all of the um  
 6 preparation and support that was made available um within South East Wales /  
 7 so there was a consortium called the Southeast Wales Cluster.  
 8 um And that consortium was brought together in order to (pause) make opportunities available for  
 9 ALNCoS to attend meetings.  
 10 um Together./  
 11 Um to, you know, could be given information about what the expectation was and what the changes  
 12 were going to mean and what the changes were going to be./  
 13 um And we attended a number of um Meetings in person and pre COVID with a whole of the  
 14 Southeast Wales cluster was brought together./  
 15 um It's a very large meetings./  
 16 And we were told we were given information regarding, you know what, what the transformation  
 17 was possibly going to look like./  
 18 I think unfortunately at that point that but everybody involved um in delivering that information,  
 19 they were, they was a lot of ambiguity around, you know, the code the code is in its draft form at the  
 20 time. /  
 21 So there was a lot of ambiguity around what that was going to look like./  
 22 And what it would, what it actually specifically meant?/  
 23 um and not just myself.  
 24 You know, I went with other colleagues, other ALNCoS, and it was, you know, most well. Everyone I  
 25 spoke to, everyone that, that, I came into contact with felt that it was too ambiguous, that they  
 26 didn't, wouldn't actually be pinned down./  
 27 You know, when you think about, it's now become an act and it's.  
 28 You know, it's very specific./  
 29 It wouldn't be, they actually wouldn't actually be pinned down to what something would specifically  
 30 look like./  
 31 So for example, when they were talking about and, this is still an ongoing debate which children  
 32 would need IDPs.  
 33 There was a lot of ambiguity around that./  
 34 Um and.  
 35 Every meeting we went to, I think that was one of the main concerns for people, you know, which  
 36 children are we talking about?/  
 37 Um every meeting that we went to, we could not pin that down as much as we tried and asked lots  
 38 and lots of questions around that./  
 39 Um paperwork relating to rolling these processes out also came very, very last minute. The the  
 40 paperwork was talked about for a long time, oh it might look like this. It might think it's like this and  
 41 we were given some kind of templates for the final solution that we ended up with was very  
 42 different to anything that we'd seen, much more specific, much more detailed./  
 43 Um but it came very, very late and and you know, I'm not really blaming anybody in that process

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 1 - Recognition of role and transformation

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Strophe 1 - Role of ALNCo in change process

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Part 1 - Experience of transformation process

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 2 - ALNCoS coming together

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 3 - Info about change

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Strophe 2 - Group (local) change process

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 4 - Change in local context

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

## Appendix M – Example of coding ALNCo 2

50 I think because, (sigh) this sounds really cocky, I don't mean it that way./  
51 But I think because (pause) I can look myself in the mirror and say right the decision that we're  
52 making is either right for staff or right for children or right for the families./  
53 It's not illegal./ |  
54 D'ya know, we're not doing something that we - that you have to do statutory wise  
55 fundamentally it's still means that our staff, our children are going to have quality targets because  
56 because because, I suppose what I would argue um and I still see it now, which takes me onto the bit,  
57 the other one of the other headings that I put down, um - it doesn't really matter what bit of paper  
58 it is that you're writing it on./  
59 If you've got a rubbish target, you've got a rubbish target./  
60 If your provisions not good, your provision's not good./  
61 It doesn't matter what - what Act your under um and its part of so part of the SEWC thing people  
62 were saying./ |  
63 Oh, not everybody, does, write IDPs, not everybody shares those with parents./  
64 That's just bad practice, and again, it doesn't matter whether it's the old act or the new act it - so  
65 people should be doing things right./ |  
66 And I think that was what was, - so for me, as long as it was having a positive influence and it had the  
67 right impact on staff and parents and children and all, then that's what - that was what the deciding  
68 factor was./ |  
69 Yeah and certainly things like you know that paperwork back then, it would not have been  
70 sustainable because we were, you know, if you're having one target, you know, what really, what if  
71 you need a target, you're probably gonna have more than one unless it's a medical or something like  
72 that./ |  
73 Um - and you could have seven or eight children in a class, 8 so that's 24 bits of paper if nothing else,  
74 you. Yeah. So yeah it's it's just in terms of organization./ |  
75 However, what was important that those targets would be smart, and when you review them, you  
76 review them properly./ |  
77 But that's still the ethos in the school now./  
78 So even with the one page profiles, we give staff a model and a template, we all use the same base  
79 language and we all review and all one page profile and targets come into either me or (colleague 1)  
80 and we check them before they go back out to parents./ |  
81 That's our school practice - and we write on them, we scroll them and we - don't mean mark them,  
82 but we - actually, "no that doesn't make sense./"  
83 "How can the child be on this?" Could be a typo, but I don't want to be in a meeting with that./ |  
84 We go, we go, go to all one page profile and target reviews as an ALNCo./  
85 Um because it's important, I feel it's important, so that's the time we invest./  
86 That's the time, (colleague 1), now has the the the luxury to invest, because that's how as an ALNCo,  
87 you get to know the children and you get to know the, build relationships./ |  
88 So initially and I think this was a naivety, IEP's to IDP's, we can call them IDP's, that's fine.  
89 So we did call him an IDP./  
90 We just didn't take on board their format because it wasn't working for us um./

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 16 - Quality practice important

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 17 - Quality determined by practice

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Strophe 9 - Quality practice undetermined by legality

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 18 - Good practice should occur regardless of legality

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 19 - Positive influence informs decisions

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Strophe 10 - split stanza 19 and stanza 22 - Positive influence guides practice

Reply

Han McCarthy ...

Stanza 20 - Initially unsustainable paperwork

Reply

## Appendix N – Debrief form

## **Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos) Debrief Form**

*ALNCo narratives of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation in Wales*

Thank you for taking part in the research. Your contribution to this research is valued.

### **What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of the research is to explore ALNCos narratives of ALN transformation in Wales. This research has invited ALNCos to share their experiences of the ALN transformation process. The information shared by ALNCos may offer other professionals and policy makers an insight into ALNCos perceptions of ALN transformation in Wales.

### **What will happen to my information?**

Your personal information will be kept confidential. Your personal information will be stored on a secure network with password protection to keep your information safe. These details will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher, unless you have disclosed that you are at risk of harm.

Your interview was recorded and will now be transcribed for research purposes, after which the recording will be deleted. The information you have shared will be stored securely behind two layers of password protection and analysed. Once the analysis has taken place, you will be offered an optional check in to discuss the findings ahead of your data being included in the results and discussion section of the research. The date for your optional check in will be emailed to you.

If you decide that you no longer want your interview to be part of the research, please contact the researcher through the details shared below. You will not have to give any reason for wanting to withdraw your data. Two weeks after the date of your optional check in, your data will be anonymised. Once your data has been anonymised, your responses will no longer be able to be withdrawn as they are no longer able to be identified or linked to you.

This research will be formally reported and shared with Trainee Educational Psychologists and Educational Psychologists as part of a doctoral thesis. The research may also be shared online or printed in academic magazines and journals. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the researcher.

Thank you again for your time.

### **Contact Details:**

- Hannah McCarthy - Researcher & Trainee Educational Psychologist: [mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:mccarthyh1@cardiff.ac.uk)
- Dr Emma Birch - Research Supervisor & Doctorate of Educational Psychology Course Tutor: [birche3@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:birche3@cardiff.ac.uk)
- Secretary of the Ethics Committee:

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Any complaints may be made to:

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## Appendix O –ALNCo 1 analysis

Stanza	Label	Strophe	Label	Parts	Label
Stanza 1	Recognition of role and transformation	Strophe 1	Role of ALNCo in change process	Part 1	ALNCo experience of transformation process
Stanza 2	ALNCo's coming together				
Stanza 3	Information about	Strophe 2	Local change process		
Stanza 4	Change in local context				
Stanza 5	Ambiguous change process	Strophe 3	Conflicting processes		
Stanza 6	Specific framework				
Stanza 7	Debate over process	Strophe 4	Uncertainty of process		
Stanza 8	Uncertainty over process				
Stanza 9	Disappointing support process	Strophe 5	Personal disappointment in systems		
Stanza 10	Personal experience of ALN				
Stanza 11	ALNCo isolated	Strophe 6	High accountability		
Stanza 12	Legal stress				
Stanza 13	Meaning of transformation	Strophe 7	Transformation is hard		
Stanza 14	Transformation as extreme				
Stanza 15	Legal role	Strophe 8 (split 15&17)	Unrealistic legal obligation	Part 2	Legal interpretation impacts transformation.
Stanza 16	Regression to previous system				
Stanza 17	Ministers expectations are unrealistic	Strophe 9 (split 16&18)	Legacy of previous system		
Stanza 18	Questioning what is right/wrong				
Stanza 19	Inconsistent practice	Strophe 10	Different interpretations impact practice		
Stanza 20	Different interpretations of implementation				
Stanza 21	Lack of empathy for ALNCo's	Strophe 11	ALNCo on their own		
Stanza 22	Direct accountability of ALNCo				
Stanza 23	Senior leaders not providing adequate support	Strophe 12	Senior leaders not providing adequate support		

Stanza 24	Context of role not considered						
Stanza 25	ALNCo is conscientious	Strophe 13	ALNCo work ethic				
Stanza 26	ALNCo feels pressure						
Stanza 27	Working with external agencies is hard	Strophe 14	Tensions with external agencies				
Stanza 28	Relationships mediate external agency involvement						
Stanza 29	ALNCo is powerless	Strophe 15	Lack of power in ALNCo role				
Stanza 30	ALNCo as coordinator						
Stanza 31	Support for ALNCo is ambiguous	Strophe 16	Meaningless support for ALNCo	Part 3	Support offered to ALNCo during transformation.		
Stanza 32	Support for ALNCo is box ticking						
Stanza 33	Support for ALNCo is aimed at primary schools	Strophe 17	Support for ALNCo is not context specific				
Stanza 34	Secondary schools are different						
Stanza 35	Support for ALNCo a waste of time and money	Strophe 18	Support for ALNCo not fit for purpose				
Stanza 36	Support for ALNCo stopped during COVID						
Stanza 37	Additionality of ALN	Strophe 19	Importance of support for children and ALNCo				
Stanza 38	Lack of clarity						
Stanza 39	Misinformation shared to masses	Strophe 20	WG has hidden agenda				
Stanza 40	Additionality of ALNCo role hidden						
Stanza 41	The need for the ALNCo role to be reviewed	Strophe 21	Review of ALNCo role is bias				
Stanza 42	Review economic bias						
Stanza 43	Unhopeful of pay and review report	Strophe 22	Financially biased system				
Stanza 44	Interpretation of review will be financially bias						
Stanza 45	Legal duty of ALNCo	Strophe 23	Relationships led to successful implementation			Part 4	Personal impact of ALNCo role
Stanza 46	Importance of relationships in school						
Stanza 47	Personal success in implementing policy	Strophe 24	Success at emotional cost to ALNCo				

Stanza 48	ALNCo victim of own success				
Stanza 49	Long processes prevent ALNCo meeting own needs	Strophe 25	Unpredictable workload impacts ALNCo role		
Stanza 50	Impossible to predict growing workload				
Stanza 51	Retirement as a way out	Strophe 26	Leaving the ALNCo role		
Stanza 52	Personal cost of leaving role				
Stanza 53	Uncertainty of process is hard	Strophe 27	ALNCo does their best to support children		
Stanza 54	ALNCo is a supportive role				
Stanza 55	Pressure on alternative provisions	Strophe 28	ALNCo support inclusion		
Stanza 56	ALNCo driven by need				
Stanza 57	ALNCo in middle of process	Strophe 29	ALNCo role expanding		
Stanza 58	Other services reducing their responsibilities				
Stanza 59	ALNCo as gatekeeper	Strophe 30	ALNCo as organiser		
Stanza 60	ALNCo as information sharer				
Stanza 61	ALNCo holds process	Strophe 31	Process outside of ALNCo control		
Stanza 62	Process outside of ALNCo reach				
Stanza 63	ALNCo role massively different to SENCo role	Strophe 32	ALNCo paperwork includes medical needs		
Stanza 64	ALNCo responsibility around medical needs				
Stanza 65	ALNCo not medically knowledgeable	Strophe 33	ALNCo meeting medical needs		
Stanza 66	ALNCo researching medical conditions				
Stanza 67	Necessity of meeting need	Strophe 34	Every part of the role is a priority		
Stanza 68	Competing priorities				
Stanza 69	Lottery of SLT support	Strophe 35	Lottery of ALNCo support available in schools	Part 5	Change in school comes from crisis
Stanza 70	Different schools offer different ALNCo support				
Stanza 71	ALNCo demonstrates dissatisfaction to SLT	Strophe 36	ALNCo does not feel valued		



Stanza 72	ALT value ALNCo in theory				
Stanza 73	Problems in practice needed for SLT to engage	Strophe 37	Change is a consequence of problems in practice		
Stanza 74	Good practice does not support change				
Stanza 75	ALNCo does not like to ask for help	Strophe 38	Crisis needed for change in role		
Stanza 76	Change occurs from crisis				
Stanza 77	ALNCo avoids crisis for children	Strophe 39	Crisis avoidance impacts workload		
Stanza 78	Avoiding crisis means postponing tasks				
Stanza 79	Lack of specific templates available	Strophe 40	Worry for future practice		
Stanza 80	Worry over future changes				
Stanza 81	ALNCo defending decisions	Strophe 41	ALNCo defending practice		
Stanza 82	Change not in line with Welsh Government expectations				
Stanza 83	Person Centred Practice is biggest change	Strophe 42	Person Centred Practice widely used	Part 6	ALNCo position in education system
Stanza 84	Person Centred Practice is used across other services				
Stanza 85	Welsh Government lack of trust in education staff	Strophe 43	Education not trusted to change		
Stanza 86	Legislation is forcing change				
Stanza 87	Education staff are flexible	Strophe 44	Different expectations across services		
Stanza 88	Service ability to meet legal demand				
Stanza 89	Mindset change takes time	Strophe 45	Law not needed for mindset change		
Stanza 90	Law not needed				
Stanza 91	ALNCo knows more than other professionals	Strophe 46	ALNCo guides systems		
Stanza 92	ALNCo guides conversations				

**Appendix P – ALNCo 1 raw data [REDACTED from publication]**

1  
2

**Appendix Q - ALNCo 2 analysis**

Stanza	Label	Strophe	Label	Parts	Label
Stanza 1	Consortia initiates transformation process	Strophe 1	Information about transformation shared	Part 1	Responding to ALN transformation
Stanza 2	Lots of information shared				
Stanza 3	Misinformation shared	Strophe 2	Information around transformation practice changeable		
Stanza 4	Non concrete information shared				
Stanza 5	Experience important when understanding transformation	Strophe 3	Experience guided change process		
Stanza 6	Position of readiness led change				
Stanza 7	Systems overlap	Strophe 4	Systems overlap led to uncertainty		
Stanza 8	Noone knew what they were doing				
Stanza 9	Confidence to justify response	Strophe 5	Confidence to make own decisions		
Stanza 10	Confidence in practice comes from experience				
Stanza 11	Leadership ethos important	Strophe 6 (split 11 & 14)	School culture informs practice		
Stanza 12	Chaos of changing terminology				
Stanza 13	Changing connotations	Strophe 7 (split 12 & 13)	Chaos of changing connotations		
Stanza 14	School led by sustainable practice				
Stanza 15	Ethics leads practice	Strophe 8	Ethical practice important		
Stanza 16	Quality practice important				
Stanza 17	Quality determined by practice	Strophe 9	Quality practice undetermined by legality		
Stanza 18	Good practice should occur regardless of legality				
Stanza 19	Positive influence informs decisions	Strophe 10 (split 19 & 22)	Positive influence guides practice		
Stanza 20	Initially unsustainable paperwork				
Stanza 21	Organisation needs to be manageable	Strophe 11	Practice initially unmanageable		

Stanza 22	School ethos focused on quality practice				
Stanza 23	Shared language consistent in school	Strophe 12	Shared understanding underpins quality expectation	Part 2	Communication of process
Stanza 24	Quality assured practice				
Stanza 25	Building relationships is an investment	Strophe 13	Invest in appropriate practice		
Stanza 26	School adapts practice				
Stanza 27	Adapt practice for school context	Strophe 14	Schools knows what will work		
Stanza 28	Unbelievable story				
Stanza 29	Following process	Strophe 15	Mixed messages when communicating process		
Stanza 30	Mixed messages				
Stanza 31	Parental understanding	Strophe 16	Parents understand need not systems		
Stanza 32	Parents focus on need				
Stanza 33	Confusion for parents in different ALN systems	Strophe 17	Letters caused parental confusion		
Stanza 34	Letters not functional				
Stanza 35	Relationships mediate confusion	Strophe 18	Conversations offered meaning		
Stanza 36	Letters are unnecessary				
Stanza 37	Letters tick a legal box	Strophe 19	Letters are legal box ticking		
Stanza 38	Letters are not meaningful				
Stanza 39	Conversations explain change	Strophe 20	Relationships supported change process		
Stanza 40	Relationships offer clarity				
Stanza 41	Letters do not add context	Strophe 21	Letters are not helpful		
Stanza 42	Letters are not clear				
Stanza 43	Letters were not legal	Strophe 22	Letters were inappropriate		
Stanza 44	Letters were unacceptably wrong				
Stanza 45	Systems not synchronised	Strophe 23	Disbelief in local authority system	Part 3	Vulnerability of schools
Stanza 46	Disbelief in system				

Stanza 47	Resistance to system				
Stanza 48	System penalises others	Strophe 24	Resistance to injustice		
Stanza 49	Inefficient local authority systems	Strophe 25	Local authority systems not effective		
Stanza 50	Slow local authority systems				
Stanza 51	Relationships prevent conflict	Strophe 26	Relationships protect system		
Stanza 52	Local authority system takes too long				
Stanza 53	School systems manage time pressure	Strophe 27	Disbelief in system time constraints		
Stanza 54	Disbelief the work is not complete				
Stanza 55	All systems under strain	Strophe 28	System pressure outside of ALNCo control		
Stanza 56	System outside of ALNCo control				
Stanza 57	Working relationships hold system	Strophe 29	Relationships protect system		
Stanza 58	Recognition that individuals try hard				
Stanza 59	Something goes wrong in process	Strophe 30	Processes not functional		
Stanza 60	pointless processes				
Stanza 61	Lack of meaningful planning	Strophe 31	ALNCo role needs protecting		
Stanza 62	Confidence to know own role				
Stanza 63	Setting boundaries with the local authority	Strophe 32	ALNCo boundaries form protection from system		
Stanza 64	System will breakdown				
Stanza 65	Responsibilities outside of competency	Strophe 33	Vulnerability in practice		
Stanza 66	Schools are vulnerable				
Stanza 67	Different expectations on schools	Strophe 34	High expectation of schools		
Stanza 68	Services request a lot from schools				
Stanza 69	Tasks outside of ALNCo role	Strophe 35	ALNCo role has limits		
Stanza 70	Schools can not do it all				
Stanza 71	School goes above and beyond	Strophe 36		Part 4	

Stanza 72	School meets need regardless of Act		School good practice built without Act		
Stanza 73	Good practice leads school process	Strophe 37	Good practice does not need transformation		
Stanza 74	Frustration over lack of change				
Stanza 75	New systems do not change practice	Strophe 38	Ethos informs practice		
Stanza 76	Ethos informs outcomes				
Stanza 77	Difference in quality unacceptable	Strophe 39	ALNCo holds high expectations of practice		
Stanza 78	ALNCo interprets expectations for staff				
Stanza 79	ALNCo needs to be directive	Strophe 40	ALNCo is coordinator		
Stanza 80	ALNCo has multiple roles				
Stanza 81	ALNCo always works hard	Strophe 41	ALNCo meets demand		
Stanza 82	Different settings need different ALNCo skill sets				
Stanza 83	Forward planning needed for meaningful work	Strophe 42	No foresight in system		
Stanza 84	System does not support itself				
Stanza 85	Purposeful processes are worthwhile	Strophe 43	Transparent system important		
Stanza 86	ALNCo is honest				
Stanza 87	Good practice leads process	Strophe 44	Good practice is purposeful		
Stanza 88	Frustration over lack of recognition of good practice				
Stanza 89	Systems are not large enough to support need	Strophe 45	Other systems lack capacity to meet need		
Stanza 90	Lack of external agency support				
Stanza 91	Box ticking referral process	Strophe 46	Tick box processes		
Stanza 92	External services cannot meet need				
Stanza 93	Frustrating inequality of system	Strophe 47	Threat in system leads to inequality	Part 5	Inequitable systems

Good practice transcends transformation

Stanza 94	Process led by system threat		
Stanza 95	Frustrating inequity in system	Strophe 48	Inequitable process causes frustration
Stanza 96	Frustrating uncertainty around prioritising children		
Stanza 97	External services are great	Strophe 49	Guidance from external sources is needed
Stanza 98	Constantly changing practice is not manageable		
Stanza 99	Relationships support honesty	Strophe 50	Honesty supports effectiveness
Stanza 100	Effectiveness of support implemented		
Stanza 101	Fidelity of training important	Strophe 51	Resources impact practice
Stanza 102	Frustrating over stretched education system		
Stanza 103	Capacity is a luxury	Strophe 52	Barrier of budget is a luxury
Stanza 104	Budget is an acceptable barrier for others		
Stanza 105	Disbelief in limitation of other services	Strophe 53	Limitations of systems
Stanza 106	Frustration with systems process		
Stanza 107	System does not allow meaningful process	Strophe 54	System not ready for good practice
Stanza 108	Transformation commenced before systems were ready		
Stanza 109	Uncertainty in the transformation continues	Strophe 55	Act does not ensure good practice
Stanza 110	Good practice is good practice with or without transformation		
Stanza 111	Quality of practice not checked	Strophe 56	Practice not falsifiable
Stanza 112	Funding implications of need		
Stanza 113	Diversity of practice	Strophe 57	Quality assuring diverse practice
Stanza 114	Quality of practice is uncertain		

Stanza 115	Variation in comprehensive practice	Strophe 58	Good practice unsupported by local authority		
Stanza 116	Question of local authority practice				
Stanza 117	Consistency of quality not promoted	Strophe 59	Quality of practice inconsistent		
Stanza 118	System not equitable for children				

**Appendix R – ALNCo 2 raw data [REDACTED from publication]**

**Appendix S - Quotes from ALNCos regarding participation in the research.**

ALNCo	Quote
1	<p>“Oh great, I really enjoyed that.”</p> <p>“I’m glad to help be able to help you with your research. It’s really, I really feel like you’re the first person to ever listen to me.”</p>
2	<p>“So that’s like a big therapy session.”</p>