

Information Further to Ministerial Answers

Information further to OAQ36643, issued by Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister, on 9 August 2004

To Laura Anne Jones:

During Plenary on 6 July, I said that I would write to you about support available for deprived areas of Wales, other than those identified in the Communities First programme.

The Communities First programme covers the 100 most deprived communities in Wales as identified (at electoral division level) in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation, but it is not limited to areas of deprivation defined by electoral division. A further 32 smaller communities (pockets of deprivation at sub-electoral division level) are also included. In addition, we have identified 10 communities of interest or otherwise imaginative proposals that are eligible for support under the programme. Local authorities were given the opportunity to nominate the sub-electoral division areas and the communities of interest/imaginative proposals for inclusion in the programme. There is, for example, a sub-electoral division Communities First area in Monmouthshire: north Abergavenny, which is made up of the Lansdown, Central and Priory areas.

We recognise that there are a number of areas that are not eligible under Communities First but suffer from deprivation. The community facilities and activities programme is a Welsh Assembly Government grant scheme, which therefore provides funding on an all-Wales basis for the provision or improvement of community facilities as well as access to activities that contribute to the regeneration of deprived areas. The scheme offers grants of between £20,000 and £100,000 per annum for a maximum of three years.

In addition, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust is working in partnerships with the Welsh Assembly Government and other grant giving bodies in Wales to provide support and to help reinvigorate and regenerate the former and current coal mining communities across Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government has entered into a financial assistance agreement with the trust to ensure that the work of the trust continues to progress in Wales. Although the trust administers funds on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, it remains independent of the Assembly. The trust operates two grant programmes in Wales: the Coalfields Regeneration Trust main grant scheme and the bridging the gap small grant scheme.

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust welcomes applications from groups, organisations and agencies throughout Wales that are committed to the regeneration of coalfield areas and their communities. The maximum grant possible is £100,000 with the minimum grant possible being £10,000.

The bridging the gap programme in Wales offers grants from £500 to a maximum value of £10,000 to groups and organisations that operate in former coalfield communities. Organisations and groups can make only one bridging the gap application within any one 12-month period.

There are other grants available to community groups such as the community buildings grant scheme, and the Welsh Development Agency's community regeneration toolkit. The regeneration toolkit provides assistance and has included support for project officers, small grants eligible businesses and community groups and capital grants for projects within the rural business initiative award areas. These measures are intended to combat economic inactivity and social deprivation and to aid regeneration.

Information further to OAQ36621, issued by Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, on 9 August 2004

To Janet Davies

I am writing to respond to a question about initial teacher training and modern foreign languages which you raised at First Minister's questions on 6 July.

The Welsh Assembly Government is supporting foreign modern languages in initial teacher training at the moment—eligible students on secondary postgraduate courses receive £6,000 grants; if they teach in those subjects, they may receive an additional £4,000 teaching grant. For 2004-05, 125 postgraduate places in modern foreign languages have been made available, and a further 10 for undergraduate courses.

The number of teaching vacancies in secondary schools in modern foreign languages at January 2004 was very low (just one). The General Teaching Council for Wales's 2002 teacher recruitment survey showed that there were on average nearly 7 applications for every modern language teaching post advertised.

In the secondary sector, the council's survey also asked respondents about the number of teachers teaching subjects at key stage 4 who had degrees in the listed subjects or a closely related subject. Teachers without degrees in the relevant subjects but with possible significant teaching experience in the subjects will have therefore been excluded from this data. However, even with this restriction, the data showed that for modern foreign languages at key stage 4, nearly 97 per cent were teaching these subjects with a degree in the subject or a closely related subject.

At present there is no specific requirement for modern foreign languages on primary initial teacher training places in Wales. It is essential that we analyse results from the pilots promoting modern foreign languages we are currently running in primary schools to see what works well before making any final decisions. Any decisions about specific initial teacher training or in-service training developments needed will flow from that.