

# Education and Lifelong Learning Committee ELL (2) 03-04(min)

## Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday 25 February 2004

**Time:** 9.15am - 12.30pm

**Venue:** Committee Rooms 3 & 4, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

<b>Office</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
ELL Chair	Peter Black	South Wales West
ELL Minister	Jane Davidson	Pontypridd
	Leighton Andrews	Rhondda
	Jeff Cuthbert	Caerphilly
	David Davies	Monmouth
	Mark Isherwood	North Wales
	Denise Idris Jones	Conwy
HSS Chair	David Melding	South West Central (Present for Item Three)
	Janet Ryder	North Wales
	Owen John Thomas	South West Central
	<b>Officials</b>	Office
	Richard Davies	Director, Department for Training and Education
	Elizabeth Williams	Head, Youth and Pupil Participation Division
	Alan Lansdown	Head, Pupil Support Division
	Mair Watkins	Pupil Support Division
	Judith Nedin	Central Support Unit
	<b>In Attendance:</b>	
	Claire Moyle	Director, Afasic
	Joyce Chatterton	Director, RNIB Cymru
	Ceri Jackson	Policy and Communication Manager, RNIB Cymru

Jim Edwards	Director, RNID Cymru
Maggie Denholm	Education Research Associate, RNID Cymru
Nichola Jones	Welsh Association of Teachers and Assistants for Pupils with a Physical Impairment

Peter Clarke	Children's Commissioner for Wales
Sara Reid	Assistant Commissioner - Communications

### **Committee Secretariat**

Christopher Reading	Committee Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Committee Clerk
Ruth Hatton	Committee Support Officer

## **Item One: Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and members of the public.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest (but see paragraph 3.1).

## **Item Two: Minister's Report**

### **Paper: ELL(2) 09-03(p.1) and Annexes**

2.1 The Minister introduced her report and made the following points:

- The Education Act 2002 (Commencement No.4 and Transitional Provisions) (Wales) Order 2004 had been added to the schedule of secondary legislation at Annex B;
- Richard Davies, Director of the Assembly's Department for Training and Education, chaired a liaison group with the research community. An opportunity had arisen to extend the reach of the existing Teaching and Learning Research Programme for Wales. This would involve funding amounting to £0.5m in total. The deadline for bidding would close on 29 April 2004; and
- The recent inquiry into the teaching of mathematics in schools had culminated in a report, 'Making Mathematics Count'. The Minister said that the report had implications for Wales: Wales had to address the shortage of mathematics teachers and that it was important that this subject was taught effectively in Wales. Professor Teresa Rees would consider the contribution of mathematics to higher education in her remit.

2.2 In response to questions from Members, the Minister made the following points:

### **2.3 Teachers' Pay**

- The Minister had submitted evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) and had fully

addressed the issue of different salaries for teachers teaching shortage subjects.

## **2.4 Physical Education and School Sport**

- The Development Centres would be wide ranging in application;
- A number of health and fitness activities had been attracting young people, such as gymnastics and dance;
- Wales had more teachers with specific sports expertise in primary schools than elsewhere in the UK;
- NOF funding was awarded to schools to enhance facilities for use during the school day and after school hours;
- The 'Healthy Schools Initiative' was a strategy to improve food and fitness as part of the Assembly Government's 'Healthy Challenge Wales' agenda;
- Local government had to produce asset management plans by April 2004 which included developing appropriate plans to improve local building stock;
- The Minister invited Members to write to her if they had particular concerns about certain sites; and
- The Minister undertook to report to Committee after the Easter recess on further developments.

## **2.5 ACCAC**

- Commissioning Welsh writing through the medium of English was not included in ACCAC's remit but the Culture Committee was currently carrying out a policy review of this subject.

## **2.6 Iaith Pawb**

- Gwnaeth Owen John Thomas gais i'r Gweinidog adrodd yn ôl yn amlach ar Iaith Pawb, fel y gwnaeth gyda menter Llwybrau Dysgu 14-19. Ychwanegodd fod pawb yn ymwybodol bod y Gweinidog Addysg wedi cymryd rheolaeth dros Iaith Pawb. Nododd Owen John Thomas y byddai'n disgwyl i adroddiad blynyddol gael ei gyhoeddi ar Iaith Pawb yn fuan gan fod blwyddyn wedi mynd heibio ers lansio'r strategaeth (h.y. gwanwyn 2004). Mewn ymateb, nododd y Gweinidog ei bod wedi cyflwyno adroddiad ar Iaith Pawb yn ystod y cyfarfod blaenorol. Nododd y Gweinidog fod Iaith Pawb, gan fwyaf, yn rhan o bortffolio'r Gweinidog Diwylliant ond cydnabu ei chyfrifoldeb dros yr agweddau sy'n ymwneud ag addysg a hyfforddiant a chytunodd y byddai'n rhoi gwybod i'r Pwyllgor am yr hyn sy'n mynd ymlaen. Cadarnhaodd y Gweinidog y byddai adroddiad llawn ar gynnydd strategaeth Iaith Pawb yn cael ei gyhoeddi yn ystod yr haf.

## **2.7 Post-16 Teaching and Learning**

- Schools would be able to set their budgets more quickly next year, as the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data would be even more readily available;

- It was important that LEAs provided ELWa with accurate data. Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) County Council had underestimated pupil numbers and subsequently, its budget had been reduced. The Minister was pleased to note that discussions were currently ongoing between RCT County Council and ELWa;
- ELWa had sent a letter to headteachers with school sixth-forms to provide advice on funding arrangements; and
- The Minister had visited many effective post-16 partnership arrangements in Wales.

## **2.8 ICT Task Force**

- The ICT Advisory Group would make its recommendations to the Minister in April 2004; and
- The ICT Task Force (WS Atkins) had completed an audit of ICT provision in schools, carried out research on a wide range of issues and had provided advice for the ICT Advisory Group. They had been paid £688,481.

## **2.9 Secondary Legislation**

- The Minister referred to paper ELL(2) 03-04(p.2) and explained that the secondary legislation items ELL 13-04, 15-04 and 16-04 were technical ‘tidying up’ regulations. The Minister suggested that the Committee should concentrate on the policy implications of ELL 14-04;
- The Committee adopted the recommendations outlined in paragraph five of paper ELL(2) 03-04 (p.2).

## **Item Three: Policy Review Special Educational Needs - Sensory Impairment Papers: ELL(2) 03-04(p.3), (p.4), (p.5) and (p.6)**

3.1 The Chair welcomed David Melding AM, Chair of Health and Social Services Committee. David Melding declared that he was Chair of Governors at Meadowbank Special School. The Chair also welcomed the presenters and invited them to make their presentations. The Chair then invited Members to question presenters and the following issues were raised in discussion:

### **Speech and Language Therapists acting as consultants**

3.2 Claire Moyle said that this depended on the individual needs of the child but intervention of this type was most effective in the classroom setting. Nichola Jones said that this was occurring in Wales and that there was good practice, which should be disseminated.

### **Assessment**

3.3 Claire Moyle said that Afasic received many telephone calls from parents, who were frustrated that there were insufficient professionals in clinics or schools to carry out assessments. Currently, children with speech and language difficulties were waiting too long for assessments and this was affecting

numeracy and literacy in later years.

3.4 Joyce Chatterton stated that in a previous post she worked alongside health professionals with knowledge and expertise. Their experience with low-incidence need was paramount to delivering an effective service.

3.5 Jim Edwards said that early identification was successful with the newborn hearing screening service. A comprehensive package of information from health, education and social services and voluntary organisations was given to parents of a child shortly after birth.

3.6 Nichola Jones proposed that education and health professionals should collaborate to produce a basic checklist for teachers. Adults sometimes underestimated children's ability, for they often responded well when they were encouraged to participate. Behavioural problems were sometimes secondary problems derived from frustration: it was vital to empower children.

### **Post-16/Work Placements**

3.7 Claire Moyle said that young people contacted Afasic because they had been encouraged by Careers Wales to pursue work experience placements but had not found them to be helpful, because employers were often unable up to accommodate young people with SEN.

3.8 Joyce Chatterton agreed with Claire Moyle and added that mobility officers could be very useful, as part of a re-habilitation service – particularly for children who lived in remote rural areas.

### **Regional Provision**

3.9 Claire Moyle said that regional provision for low-incidence need had been discussed by the Welsh Advisory Group for SEN (WAGSEN). The newborn hearing screening had taken an all-Wales approach. Low-incidence SEN provision on a regional basis would have to be well managed and sufficiently resourced.

3.10 Jim Edwards stated that there had been some successful work with deaf children on a regional basis, which could be extended on an all-Wales basis.

3.11 The Minister suggested that presenters write to the Committee Chair with proposals for using the powers contained in the Education Act 2002 regarding provision of regional services.

### **Statementing Process**

3.12 Claire Moyle believed that if statements were removed, there would be no guarantee of support for children and young people with SEN.

3.13 Jim Edwards felt that statements had to be fit for purpose. Statements were useful when a diagnosis was made later or if needs changed. He believed that eventually statements would cease to exist - currently, they raised expectations; parents wanted resources and solutions.

3.14 Nichola Jones cited the former Secretary of State for Education, Estelle Morris and said that there was a need to gain the trust of parents and children and meet their needs before statements were abolished. Nichola Jones felt that the statementing process would eventually cease to exist.

## **Teacher Training**

3.15 Jim Edwards told the Committee that there would soon be a crisis due to the shortage of teachers of the deaf and that Wales had to take a positive lead.

3.16 The Chair thanked the presenters for their contribution to the meeting.

## **Item Four: Children's Commissioner for Wales - Annual Report 2002-2003**

4.1 The Chair welcomed Peter Clarke and Sara Reid to the meeting. The Chair invited them to introduce the report. The Chair then invited questions from Members and the following issues were raised:

- Child Poverty - the Assembly had responded positively to this;
- Respect - children and young people had felt that the adult community did not respect them; and
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy (CAMHS) - some aspects of this related to education: peer support in school and some schools had their own school counsellors.

4.2 The Children's Commissioner and Sara Reid then referred to the education elements of the report:

School buildings and school toilets - the disrepair of buildings and poor state of school toilets had worried many school pupils;

School Councils - the Commissioner's office supported the development of school councils;

Pressure of examinations - Professor Daugherty's review of assessment was welcomed;

Complaints - The Clywch Inquiry report would be published in May and would make recommendations about the complaints procedure for young people. The Commissioner's office wanted young people to access complaints procedures without being unduly anxious;

Special Educational Needs - issues surrounding SEN were being monitored;

School Transport - the Commissioner would respond to the recent coroner's report regarding the fatal

accident near Cowbridge. The Commissioner offered to assist the Committee with its review of school transport, due to start shortly;

Bullying - methods would be developed to tackle bullying;

Children and Young People's Participation - the office would help children and young people contribute to the work/policies of the Commissioner's Office;

Advisory groups - would be established to help young people become familiar with the work of the office;

Backchat/Atebnôl - the online service had proved to be a safe, effective means for young people to make their views heard;

Website - it was hoped that a forum would be established online; and

Policy reviews - the office tried to involve young people in policy reviews, often via workshops run by professional facilitators.

4.3 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions and the following issues were raised:

Unborn Children

4.4 In response to a question from David Davies, the Commissioner stated that he did not have a remit for the rights of unborn children.

Dysfunctional Families and Child Poverty

4.5 David Davies asked if dysfunctional families were a contributory factor in young people misbehaving and becoming involved in criminal activity. In response, the Children's Commissioner said that families did have an influence on all children's behaviour. There was a need to identify allies of the child (i.e. parents or carers). He felt that stereotyping families would only add to the burdens that some young people already faced.

4.6 Leighton Andrews raised a point of order under standing order 7.2, concerning the use of offensive language. He felt that David Davies had used offensive and discriminatory language when referring to dysfunctional families, with particular reference to step-parents. David Davies defended his use of language and stated that he had not intended to denigrate any particular type of family structure. David Davies stated that he agreed with the Children's Commissioner on the need to avoid stereotyping. After consulting the Committee Clerk, the Chair ruled that David Davies had not breached standing order 7.2.

## Behaviour on School Buses

4.7 It was very difficult to monitor behaviour of pupils on school buses. Young people themselves had supported the concept of monitoring behaviour, as this was often an environment where bullying occurred. School transportation was an adult controlled environment. The idea of escorts had been suggested, which seemed to be a sensible idea.

## Support for School Councils

4.8 The Children's Commissioner supported the development of school councils. Children and young people often brought up excellent ideas it was vital to identify the key features of a good council for wider dissemination. It would be some time before school councils were truly representative and the Commissioner might review school councils in due course.

## The Clwyd Report

4.9 The Commissioner said that he would be content to address the Committee on the topic of whistle blowing, complaints and advocacy after publication of the Clwyd Report. Systems for complaints should be clear a practical as possible for young people.

## Play and Leisure Time

4.10 The provision of shelters had proved popular with young people for congregating and meeting friends. This initiative had also been supported by South Wales Police. The Commissioner stated that young people often felt excluded from leisure centres or they could not afford the public transport fares to reach these facilities. The school campus was often a great community resource; a number of teachers had stated that they would welcome a youth worker in their schools.

## Quality of Food in Schools

4.11 Results from a survey on the quality of food in schools via the Backchat/Atebnôl facility were not yet available. Various initiatives for alternative healthy food had been identified by local education authorities. Pupils had provided some helpful suggestions.

## Walking to School

4.12 In response to a question Jeff Cuthbert concerning the Commissioner's role in advising local authorities to provide school transport for those children who walked to school on routes which might be unsafe, the Commissioner said that there was a need to take advice on the legal issues involved. The Commissioner's office did not have the powers to compel local authorities to provide school transport.

## Citizenship Agenda



4.13 The Commissioner was keen to promote the citizenship agenda and involving young people. The office would continue to promote school councils, youth forums and Funky Dragon. Young people should be enabled to participate fully in democracy and their views should be listened to and acknowledged.

#### Subsistence Misuse

4.14 Young people were concerned about the ready availability of drugs and peer pressure. The Commissioner said that he was unclear about the purpose of the recent announcement (by the UK Government) of proposals for drug testing in schools; there were implications for consent and civil rights.

#### Halal Meat

4.15 The Commissioner was asked by Owen John Thomas of his views on the case of Muslim children in Cardiff who were refused Halal meat. The Commissioner said he believed that schools should provide a diet sensitive to religious beliefs - this was an equal opportunities issue.

4.16 The Chair thanked Peter Clarke and Sara Reid for their interesting presentation and discussion.

### **Item Five: 14-19: Implementing the Action Plan - Progress Report Paper: ELL(2) 03-04(p.7)**

5.1 The Chair welcomed Liz Williams and invited her to introduce the progress report. The following points were raised:

- The 14-19 agenda was based on evidence and experience from Wales;
- It was expected that the 14-19 networks in each local authority area would be catalysts for implementing the agenda;
- Next year each network would receive £50,000;
- It was intended that guidance would be produced by the summer;
- Annex 2 described the support mechanisms required.

5.2 The Chair then invited Members to ask questions; however, due to time constraints Liz Williams was unable to provide answers at the meeting. The Chair suggested that the Minister deal with following issues in her next report to Committee:

- Would money allocated to each local authority area cover the development of local options, colleges and youth officers etc? Would there be different funding streams?

- How would the 14-19 agenda be developed alongside the Welsh Baccalaureate?
- How were young people, schools and colleges involved in the consultative process?
- Was the Welsh Assembly Government satisfied that Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs) were effective?
- Did Wales have staff trained to deliver vocational learning opportunities?
- How could meaningful work experience placements be provided?
- Would employers accept the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification?
- Had young people been asked if they believed that GCSE Welsh should be compulsory at key stage four (KS4)?
- Would reference to the needs of business be included in the document?

5.3 The Committee agreed to Jeff Cuthbert's suggestion that the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) be invited to hold a seminar for the Committee to explain the specification of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

### **Item Six: European Legislation**

**Paper: ELL(2) 03-04(p.8)**

6.1 The Chair invited Members to identify recent items of EU legislation relevant to education and training. Members did not identify any items but the Chair advised them to contact the Committee Clerk, if they required clarification.

### **Item Seven: Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Paper: ELL(2) 02-04(mins)**

7.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2004.

Any Other Business

8.1 The Committee agreed to hold an additional formal meeting on the afternoon of Thursday 1 April. The Clerk would seek approval from the Business Committee.

### **Action Points**

- The Minister would report to Committee after the Easter recess, when the 30 sports development centres were in place;
- The Committee adopted the recommendations outlined in paragraph five of paper ELL(2) 03-04 (p.2);
- The Minister invited the SEN presenters to write to the Committee Chair with proposals on how the powers in the Education Act 2002, regarding provision of regional services;

- The Commissioner said that he would be pleased to address the Committee on the Clwyd Report;
- The Chair suggested that the Minister should respond to Members' questions from Item Five in the next ministerial report;
- The Committee agreed to Jeff Cuthbert's suggestion that the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) be invited to hold a seminar for the Committee to explain the specification of the Welsh Baccalaureate;
- The Clerk would seek approval from the Business Committee for an additional meeting on the afternoon of Thursday 1 April.