

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee ELL (2) 07-04(min)

Minutes

Date: Thursday 13 May 2004

Time: 14.00pm - 16.00pm

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

Members

Constituency

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Peter Black (Chair) | South Wales West |
| Leighton Andrews | Rhondda |
| Jeff Cuthbert | Caerphilly |
| David Davies | Monmouth |
| Mark Isherwood | North Wales |
| Irene James | Islwyn |
| Lorraine Barrett | Cardiff South and Penarth |
| Janet Ryder | North Wales |
| Owen John Thomas | South West Central |

Officials

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Alan Lansdown | Department for Training and Education (DfTE) |
| Mair Watkins | Department for Training and Education (DfTE) |
| Deryck Jones | Department for Training and Education (DfTE) |

Presenters

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| Stuart Evans | Chair of ADEW Finance sub group/ Assistant Director of Education, Neath-Port Talbot LEA |
| Sue Cromack | NHS Workforce Management Branch, Welsh Assembly Government |

Committee Service

| | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Chris Reading | Committee Clerk |
| Olga Lewis | Deputy Committee Clerk |

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

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and members of the public to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed David Melding, Chair of Health and Social Services Committee.
- 1.3 Apologies were received from Jane Davidson and Denise Idris-Jones.
- 1.4 The Chair informed the members that Lorraine Barrett would substitute for Denise Idris-Jones.
- 1.5 The Chair informed the members that they had an open invitation to attend the launch by Newport Transport of a new purpose built school coach next Tuesday afternoon, near Tredegar House. He said that the Clerk would attend the launch and was arranging a more convenient opportunity for Members to inspect the coach.
- 1.6 Mr David Melding AM declared a special interest as the Member and Chair of the Governing Body of the Meadowbanks Special School. There were no other declarations of interest made in accordance with standing order 4.5.

Item Two: Policy Review: Special Educational Needs

Paper: ELL(2) 07-04(p.1)

Item Three: Policy Review: Special Educational Needs

Papers: ELL(2) 07-04(p.2)

- 2.1 The Chair suggested taking Item Two and Item Three together.
- 2.2 The Chair invited Stuart Evans, Assistant Director of Education, Neath Port-Talbot Borough Council/ Chair of the ADEW Finance Group to introduce his report. Mr Evans raised the following points:
 - By way of introduction, Mr Evans pointed out that he was not an expert in SEN per se, but he knew enough to talk about funding. He was representing ADEW and his comments were to be in general;
 - Mr Evans pointed out that Unitary Authorities' Annual budget allocation came from the Assembly Government and was augmented by grants which were time strapped; each Unitary Authority determined the provision of resources to the Education Authority; the Education

Authority determined the level of funding the LEA retained and the level of funding for schools. The Education Committee decided own priorities, including SEN;

- LEA money was divided into two parts (according to the regulations, funding for SEN was contained in both):
 - money for itself to exercise its functions
 - money for school budgets
- One of the LEA functions was to make SEN effective. That could be done by quickly identifying the needs of children and finding the best possible support;
- Rather than a special category of pupils, pupils with SEN were regarded as ordinary pupils who have a particular need at a particular time;
- Additional money was available from Authority to address particular needs of pupils;
- Obligation to meet the needs of young people did not lie just with the LEA - it was a shared responsibility with the governing body;
- Among the duties of the governing body was the identification of needs and provision for these needs;
- Governing bodies dealt with the actual funding delegated to schools;
- Actual funding included a specific sum of money for all youngsters, called Average Weighted Pupil Unit;
- Generally, all authorities provided additional sums of money for pupils with SEN;
- Every base budget allocated 5% for SEN augmented by additional sums from authorities for SEN pupils;
- Money at school level was used for different purposes, most important being the training of support staff working with SEN;
- Schools were obliged to report to parents how funding was used by them;
- Early identification and intervention did not necessarily mean identification/intervention in early years - not necessarily in the 0-3 age range;
- Special needs developed at different times (it could be any age within the school life);
- Within the 0-2 age group special needs were generally supported by multi-agency funding rather than by LEAs;
- Within the 2-3 age group statutory assessment by LEA was generally required;
- Within the 3-16 age group Average Weighted Pupil Unit funding was available to every school per child combined with other funding for children with special needs. Other budgets also contributed at that stage and helped to identify and meet the needs at that stage after the assessment process;
- As part of the total process, there were provisions for:
 - funding to special needs units;
 - funding to schools for very severe cases;

- funding for out-of-county placements;

- in some cases, there was a joint provision of funding by LEAs and social services for out-of-county placements.

- LEAs were obliged and expected to deal with unusual or unexpected SEN cases.

2.3 The Chair invited Sue Cromack, NHS Workforce Management Branch, Welsh Assembly Government to introduce her report. Ms Cromack raised the following points:

2.4 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Training for language therapists took four years; were fast track training opportunities considered? In response it was pointed out that now there was a two-year Post Graduate Qualification course available and the students had bursaries.
- In respect of the speech therapists' training it was pointed out that there were many teachers, nurses and other personnel, who would be willing and prepared to train as speech therapists. However, most of them had mid-life commitments and could not attend college full-time - could relevant training be provided close by or by distance learning? In response, it was said that there was indeed a national shortage of speech and language therapists and when the work on Post Graduate Qualification was complete, maybe it would be possible to do it by distance learning. However, it was difficult to provide training both for PGQ and full-time students at the same time quickly as such specialists required clinical placements and the number of such placements was limited. Another thing to bear in mind was that the SEN youngsters were supported not just by speech therapists, but by joint use of various specialists and in 2004-05 the SEN training element in school budget was increased.
- In response to the notion that speech and language therapists should be consultants and specialists, it was asked whether there was any planning for specialists such as care assistants or teachers to be trained for SEN as well as for their general professions? What methodology existed? If a trained teacher wanted to gain further qualification as a speech therapist, would this be possible? If the Open University delivered the relevant courses (high level NVQs, professional awards etc) - would professional teachers be able to undertake such training? The response was that a current work load agreement for teachers had one fundamental provision stating that trained teachers should use their expertise in the most appropriate manner. Other staff should apply their expertise in areas they were best trained. However, speech and language therapists' policy already existed and certain specially trained staff performed such duties, provided that they were properly trained. It was also mentioned that the Assembly was working with the University of Wales colleges to provide a relevant training module for teachers with a view for them to ultimately build up a portfolio of experience.
- Was there a problem with replacement of retiring special needs teachers? Was it worth considering giving somebody a special responsibility - for example, maybe the solution was to create a separate position of the Minister for SEN? In response, it was mentioned that generally,

there should be no problem as the teachers were required to inform their employers about their forthcoming retirement one year in advance and that was sufficient for the school governing body to find a suitable replacement.

- Was there any experience of provision of career information earlier on, for example, in schools? At the moment 40% of school leavers went to higher education, whereas there was no requirement for so many specialists with degree level education. Shouldn't education be tailored to the needs of the market? In response it was pointed out that a lot of work was done in that area, including open weeks, trips to schools to give a flavour of what NHS was about, opened career lines, careers literature, video etc. The Assembly was proactive in this respect and the success of its work was monitored by the figures showing the retention of specialists/ students.
- Funding delegated to schools was established in accordance with the formula. However, with SEN there were areas where the needs were greater than in others - did the formula always work? In response, it was mentioned that at the moment the formula calculation was an accepted system in accordance with the requirements of the regulation.
- It was mentioned that some of the LEAs were small, - for example, Bridgend, - would such LEAs find it difficult to find/fund special needs provisions? In response, it was said that indeed, the smaller the authority, the more difficult it would be to find the accommodation of special needs; even the relatively large LEAs required six figure sums. It was suggested that a central pot might be the answer as it would still be the aggregation of the twenty two LEAs' funding and thus still the same amount of money.
- It was pointed out the inquiry into regional funding deserved endorsement as one part of the country ended up better than the other - should the needs be identified irrespective of geography? The response was that the regional provision was suitable for extreme cases, but for the mainstream it was a step too far. However, different counties could be combined together for different needs, meaning different geographical shapes.
- Was the regional approach the most convenient? Did the authorities acknowledge that children were sent across the border, meaning that they were torn away from their communities, meaning difficulties to parents, carers, friends etc? The response was that authorities already acknowledged that and that the task was to identify reasonable regional provisions. For low incidence cases the whole of Wales could be regarded as a region, whereas for some rarer cases "regional" would mean a much smaller area. When this was identified, it would be possible to decide where the provision itself would be located.
- It was pointed out that the funding, calculated in accordance with the formula, did not cover the cases where a LEA had children with exceptionally severe needs. The response was that the question translated into two parts:
 - when youngsters went to LEA special needs schools, the authorities funded schools on the basis of the places across Wales;
 - In case of out-of-county provisions, the authorities had to find provisions elsewhere and paid the going rate - whether the facilities were LEA or private.
- It was stated that in severe cases the LEAs would inevitably be forced to seek help elsewhere at market prices. Usually, the more severe disability, the farther away from home the youngster

would end up. Across Wales might be a certain number of severe cases - should anticipation be locked into the system, in terms of intelligence about availability of provisions as close as possible? In response, it was said that actual identification of a region from the point of view of a particular need differed from another particular need. When LEA considered where to find a provision, it would take into account such factors as expense and adequacy of provision of locums (not across the border). Generally, in respect of regional planning it was stated that later this year the regulations would be issued that would give more power to ELWA. Thus, the Assembly would take more 'hands on' approach regionally.

- Should LEAs be much better at planning ahead with earlier intervention and identification? In response, it was pointed out that forward planning greatly improved recently and was quite good at the moment. Due to the introduction of early years assessment as statutory obligation youngsters were identified quickly, with more and more children identified within the 0-2 age group. The number of toddlers whose SEN were unidentified decreased already and continued to decrease.

2.5 The Chair thanked the presenters for their helpful contribution to the policy review, stating that the evidence gathering for the policy review was now concluded and that the Clerk would prepare a paper setting out the key themes and propose some conclusions and recommendations, for consideration by the Committee in June. The paper would be circulated at least two weeks in advance. Action: Clerk

Item Four: Draft Annual Report 2003-04

Paper: ELL(2) 07-04(p.3)

4.1 The Chair invited the Members to ratify its annual report for 2003-04, pointing out that Standing Order 9.9 required subject committees to report to the Assembly on their progress in fulfilling their forward work programme and that the report covered the period from the Committee's first meeting in June 2003 to the end of March 2004.

4.2 The Committee agreed to ratify the Committee's annual report for 2003-04. The Clerk was required to arrange for the report to be laid before the Assembly. Action: Clerk

Action Points

- To arrange for the ratified Annual report to be laid before the Assembly.
- To prepare a paper on the policy review with recommendations to be discussed at the next meeting in June; paper to be circulated at least two weeks in advance.