

# Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

ELL2-03-05(p.1)

<b>Date:</b>	<b>9 March 2005</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>9.00am</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>Minister's Report</b>

This report updates the Committee on specific issues raised by members and on issues of current interest. **Annex A** sets out major engagements since the last report

## 1. Educational provision for profoundly deaf children

- In November 2003, I issued a consultation document on educational services for children and young people with hearing impairment. It reported that there is disparity across Wales in that each LEA determines its own policy for intervention and level of support. Methods of referral also differ considerably, even across neighbouring authorities.
- I have also issued consultation documents on educational provision for children and young people with visual impairment and for those with multi-sensory impairment. As there are parallel issues within the three areas, the intention is to issue guidance for sensory impairment, including standards of excellence, later this year. All of these documents give proposals for future delivery of services for HI, VI and MSI across Wales through regional collaboration. WAG officials are currently in discussions with LEAs on this matter. There is already an example of regional collaboration of educational services for HI in south east Wales.

### **Qualified Teachers of the Deaf**

- There is currently a shortage of teachers of the deaf, particularly in the light of newborn hearing screening. There is a need to recruit more teachers into this specialist area of work and to raise awareness of the potential difficulties as the majority of the existing workforce approach retirement age. I am currently looking at funding mechanisms to enable more teachers to access the mandatory qualification and also means of raising awareness of teachers to this career direction.

## Training

- UCW Newport has delivered a training course since 1993 but there was no take-up for places in September 2004. WAG officials are currently looking at alternative training routes and considering other models for the future.

## Educating deaf children through the medium of sign language

- The 2003 audit indicates that all educational services for HI offer support in sign language. Many schools across Wales have special resourced units for HI where pupils access the curriculum through alternative communication methods. Recent data collated by the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) show that over 80% of hearing impaired children in the UK follow an oral route, with the remaining children using symbols or sign/bilingual systems.

## 2. Action taken by the Minister to assist 3 year olds and 17 and 18 year old pupils who do not live within safe walking distance of school according to the measure used by LEAs in organising free transport to school

Section 509 (1) of the Education Act 1996 places a statutory obligation on LEAs to provide free transport if they consider it necessary to facilitate a pupil's attendance at school. The duty applies to all children of compulsory school age. Free transport must be provided if the pupil lives beyond walking distance from school and there is no suitable school nearer to home which they could attend. Walking distance is defined as 2 miles for pupils under 8 years of age and 3 miles for older pupils, in each case measured by the nearest available route.

There is no legal obligation on LEAs to provide free transport to school to children or young people who are not of compulsory school age. The Assembly Government has no powers to change the law in that respect, nor otherwise to compel LEAs to make such arrangements. However LEAs do have discretion to make provision beyond the statutory minimum, which many do.

Sixth form pupils are included in the 16-19 learner group for whom LEAs are statutorily required to produce transport policy statements about the provision of transport, or support for transport, from home or place of employment to place of education or training. The Assembly issues guidance to LEAs on producing transport policy statements, which must include details of criteria for eligibility for free transport, any other financial support available (including details of concessionary fares, discounts or subsidies) and how and when to apply for assistance with transport.

The majority of LEAs do currently provide transport assistance for post-16 students. However, it is much less common for transport to be provided for 3 year olds whose parents take up a nursery place for their child. There are particular child safety and welfare issues associated with transporting 3 year olds, which, together with the varied nature and take-up of nursery provision (eg different settings/locations/

hours of attendance) make it a much more challenging proposition for LEAs. We plan to invite LEAs who apply to become pilot areas operating innovative school travel schemes under the School Transport Bill to consider whether there might be scope under their scheme for offering transport to under 5s.

### **3. Revised guidance to local Authorities on School Organisation Plans**

Local authorities are statutorily required, through their School Organisation Plans, to keep their supply of school places under review and to make five year forward plans to ensure provision matches local need. Where there is projected parental demand for more Welsh medium education, LEAs should bring forward proposals to enlarge existing Welsh medium schools or establish new ones. LEAs are obliged to consult the Welsh Assembly Government on the content of their plans and to prepare them in the light of guidance issued centrally, therefore there is a national framework within which provision is planned. The Welsh Language Board is a statutory consultee on School Organisation Plans, and the Board copies its responses to Schools Management Division, thus alerting us to areas of concern to the Board.

Authorities are required to prepare School Organisation Plans every 3 years and the next ones are due in 2007. Revised guidance was being prepared which would, amongst other things, have strengthened the guidance on the assessment of demand for Welsh medium education and provided for questionnaires to parents of pre-school children to establish language preferences. However this is likely to be overtaken by rationalisation of planning requirements on local authorities from 2006. I envisage that authorities will still have to provide information on school organisation issues but it may no longer be required in the form of a separate School Organisation Plan. Consultation on guidance for successor plan requirements will take place during the summer. I envisage that will still include a recommendation that authorities should survey parents of pre school children to establish what their language medium preferences will be when they come to chose schools. This should help LEAs plan effectively to meet needs in their areas. Prior to that I intend to write to local authorities to stress the importance of having proper tools in place to plan for Welsh medium provision and alerting them to the intention to recommend a survey of parents.

The details of the suggested survey would need to be covered in the wider consultation exercise.

Some local authorities have already undertaken such surveys.

The Welsh Language Board has recently finalised its revised guidance to Local Education Authorities on the preparation of Welsh Education Schemes. One of the purposes of these schemes is to map, identify and analyse demand for Welsh medium and bilingual education. The guidelines indicate that schemes must be cross-referenced with School Organisation Plans. A survey of parents of pre school children would also inform Welsh Education Schemes.

### **4. ELWa's Welsh Language Policy**

Under the terms of the Welsh Language Act 1993 ELWa is obliged to have a Welsh Language scheme,

approved by the Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of that Act.

ELWa has developed its scheme in conjunction with the Welsh Language Board. The Scheme sets out how ELWa intends to promote Bilingualism throughout its activities and comprises three parts. The first part relates to ELWa's internal workings and its communications with the public, the second to ELWa's discharge of its functions with regard to post-16 education and training, and the third deals with arrangements for managing and implementing the scheme.

Public consultation on the draft scheme closed on 14 January 2005, the results of which prompted some minor textual amendments that were considered and approved by the National Council on 24 February. The scheme will be submitted to the Welsh Language Board for final approval by 4 March.

## **5. Progress made by HEFCW in Promoting Additional Provision for Welsh-Medium Higher Education**

- In 2003/04, HEFCW funded two Welsh-medium teaching fellowships for nine months – in Psychology at UW Bangor and French at UW Swansea. The Teaching Fellows undertook a minimum of 5 hours undergraduate teaching in Welsh in a week and developed at least the equivalent of a 20-credit module within their subject area through the medium of Welsh.
- HEFCW announced funding for a further five Teaching Fellowships for 2004-05 in September 2004. There will be two Fellows at University of Wales, Bangor in Divinity/Religious Studies and Music, one Fellow at Cardiff University in History and Welsh History and two Fellows at University of Wales, Aberystwyth – one in Human Geography and one in Mathematical Sciences and Physics.
- HEFCW established a National Steering Group, which has developed a national strategy for the development of Welsh medium provision in higher education, including identifying priority areas for development. The Steering Group is chaired by Andrew Green, the Librarian, at the National Library. The strategy was submitted to me in November 2004.
- I announced on 2 November, £2.9 million funding for expanding teaching capacity within the higher education sector in Wales. This will be made available from *Reaching Higher* resources. I gave approval to HEFCW to utilise Reaching Higher Funding to support an innovative and collaborative scheme to extend Welsh medium provision in the higher education sector in Wales. The scheme is designed to increase teaching capacity in the short to medium term and forms an integral part of the strategy chaired by Andrew Green.
- The bid essentially consists of two components – a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship scheme and a Postgraduate Research Scholarship scheme. The Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship element of the bid builds on the existing successful programme and will provide for up to six Fellows per year to 2007/08 at an estimated cost of almost £250,000. The Research Scholarship scheme

proposes to fund up to 10 scholarships per year for an initial three-year period and will be tenable for a maximum period of five years, depending on the duration of the research degree being undertaken. The scheme will extend over seven years, commencing in 2005-06 at an estimated cost of over £2.6 million. Funding has been approved to 2007-08. The bid has been approved in advance of the strategy so that structures can be put in place to allow the schemes to start in 2005/06.

- HEFCW is in the process of an options appraisal on other elements of the strategy and I expect to be able to make further announcements with regard to the broader strategy for strengthening Welsh medium provision over coming months.

## **6. ACCAC and ELWa Merger: Progress report**

The Implementation Project team (DELLIP), to prepare for and manage the process of merging ACCAC and ELWa with DfTE to form the new Department for Education and Lifelong Learning (DELL) is now fully effective. It has an agreed workplan and has held the first of a series of planned regular meetings with the Joint Senior Teams of the three organisations. The project team has agreed the development of an Extranet facility for the staffs of the three organisations, which will be launched in early May 2005. This will carry updates and information on the project for staff. It is hoped that it will assist in building common understanding leading to development of shared good practice and a common culture.

Task and finish design groups have been established to take forward work on integrated delivery structures, comprising staff from identified functional areas in each of the three organisations. Closer links have been established with the wider Welsh Assembly Government Change Programme and the Economic Development and Transport Department project.

Consultation events with the staffs of the three organisations are currently being organised by the Change Programme team. The closing date for public consultation on the merger process is 15 April and I very much hope that all interested parties will respond with constructive suggestions. We are contacting our partner education organisations to highlight the fact that ACCAC is now included in the merger planned for April 2006 and with a general invitation to let us have any comments they may have on the merger process more generally.

## **7. Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction Survey 2002-03**

January saw the publication of the latest Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction Survey, relating to academic year 2002-03. Higher education institutions in Wales have once again built on their performance of previous years and continue to outperform other areas of the United Kingdom.

The Survey is an annual exercise and is a key vehicle for assessing the development of knowledge exchange activity between the HE sector and businesses and the wider community. Ensuring that we maximise the benefits of knowledge created in higher education institutions is integral to *Reaching*

*Higher* and is a theme that has been further developed in the *Nexus Report*.

Between 2001/02 and 2002/03, HEIs in Wales:

- Achieved a 28% increase in income from collaborative research involving both public and business funding and in 2002/03 outperformed Scotland, Northern Ireland and five of the nine English RDA regions;
- Achieved a 30.5% increase in consultancy contracts and an associated increase in income of 60% and in 2002/03 accounted for almost 12% of UK wide income from HE consultancy services (approximately £20 million);
- More than trebled income levels from the hire of facilities and equipment related services and in 2002/03 accounted for over 8% of all UK activity in this field;
- Established 14 new spinout companies and 2 new staff start-ups to account for almost 6% of total UK spinout and staff start up activity. Across the UK, Wales also accounts for 5% of all such companies that remain active after three or more years, with 7% of UK turnover.
- Achieved a 19% increase in graduate business start-ups and in 2002-03 accounted for over 15% of all UK graduate business start-ups.

Clearly these achievements are to be welcomed and I congratulate institutions on their performance here. However, this survey is an annual exercise and we need to maintain the impetus to sustain and build on these levels of activity. We also need to look to those areas where HEIs in Wales have scope for improvement – especially rates of commercialisation of intellectual property. These development needs will be taken forward in the context of the implementation of the *Nexus Report*.

Copies of the report can be downloaded at [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05\\_07](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_07)

## **8. DfES White Paper on 14 –19 Education and Skills**

The DfES published its White Paper on 14-19 Education and Skills on 23 February. The White Paper was the DfES' detailed response to the final report of the Mike Tomlinson's Working Group on 14-19 Reform in England, which was published on 18 October 2004.

Although the White Paper is for England only it is clear that work stemming from it will have significant implications here in Wales. I was therefore very pleased to see that it very much reflects what we are already doing in Wales.

I was pleased, also, that DfES Ministers acknowledged the importance of Mike Tomlinson's report and

of the White Paper for Wales and other parts of the UK. I particularly welcomed the clear commitment in the White Paper to "work closely with colleagues in those countries. In particular, when we are asking QCA to undertake work, we shall ask them to do so in co-operation with their fellow regulatory authorities to ensure that developments take account of the needs and circumstances in other parts of the UK and are compatible with structures there." I am sure there will be a lot we can learn from future development in England - and I am equally sure England will be able to learn from what we have already done.

I am committed to developing education and training in Wales to reflect the needs of Wales. But it is clearly very important that developments in England and Wales are consistent. I am confident, for instance, that the qualifications developments emerging from this White Paper can be accommodated in our Welsh Baccalaureate. The Welsh Bac model is flexible. GCSEs and A levels – well known, respected and valued qualifications – will remain as free-standing qualifications and I am happy that the regulatory authorities will work together to build on the strengths and reputations of these qualifications. I will also look to ACCAC, working with its regulatory partners, to ensure that vocational qualification developments meet our needs and fit with the Welsh Baccalaureate model.

Annex B sets out a comparison between the key features of the White Paper and our own 14-19 Learning Pathways and Welsh Baccalaureate developments. There are a number of striking similarities. For example, our 14-19 Learning Pathways developments set out to widen choice and flexibility, involving partnerships of learning providers to provide wide-ranging option menus. Option menus will include general and vocational options, with Sector Skills Councils involved in developing vocational options. The Welsh Baccalaureate requires both breadth and depth of achievement and will be available at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the National Qualifications Framework as well as in vocational and academic routes. Our 14-19 provision will include a Learning Core which aims to achieve a continuum from 14-19 and the National Curriculum review will ensure an early focus on skills development. We also place great store on providing appropriate support for young people through Learning Coach, personal support and specialist careers advice.

The broad aims of the 14-19 developments in Wales and England are similar. Arrangements are in place to ensure that the detailed developments are consistent with the needs and circumstances of each country. I am sure that we can take this exciting agenda forward, working in co-operation.

## 9.

### **Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship grant scheme**

On 28 February I invited organisations to bid for a Welsh Assembly Government grant to support projects that will boost the development of the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) agenda in Wales. I have asked public bodies, non-governmental bodies, higher education institutions and voluntary organisations to bid for a grant from the £150,000 fund available in

2005-06.

The grant, which was first awarded four years ago, provides a further opportunity for organisations to add to the successes of previous year's approved projects which have already shown their considerable potential and are influencing the ESDGC scene in Wales. I am looking forward to applicants coming forward with further new, innovative and creative approaches to embedding the Assembly's sustainable development and global citizenship approaches in the wider education field.

## **10. Teachers' Pay And Conditions**

- The 14<sup>th</sup> Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) was published by the Department for Education and Skills on 22 February.
- Teachers' pay and conditions of service is not a devolved area. The Department for Education and Skills is responsible for teachers' pay and conditions of service in both Wales and England.
- There are no recommendations on headline pay increases for teachers. The current multi-year pay deal lasts until September 2006.
- The STRB's recommendations arise from the matters set out in the Secretary of State's remit letter of 22 July 2004 and cover:
  - a new framework for allowances to cover responsibilities for teaching and learning (to replace the current management allowances system)
  - principles for safeguarding within the pay system (in part to cover the introduction of the new arrangements above)
  - pay arrangements for secondary mathematics and science Advanced Skills Teachers
  - an Excellent Teachers Scheme
  - issues covered in previous STRB reports on which work is ongoing, including local approaches to pay, pay document simplification and unattached teachers.
- The Secretary of State for Education and Skills is seeking consultation comments on the report and her response by 18 March 2005. A copy of the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Statement, which contains details of the STRB's recommendations, is attached at annex C.
- In the section on the proposed Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments, the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Statement accepts the STRB's recommendation that schools be required to review their staffing structure in consultation with staff and their representatives, and to publish their revised structure by 31 December 2005. The STRB has proposed this so that schools can consider the implications of the most effective way of replacing the current management allowances system with TLRs.
- The Secretary of State's Parliamentary Statement makes it clear that the introduction of the requirement for schools to review their staffing structures is, for Wales, a matter for the Assembly (because the legal basis for introducing such a requirement is different from pay matters and is a devolved power). At the moment I am inclined to propose that this should be a requirement in Wales alongside DfES's proposals in England, as it would mean that schools



would consider this matter on a common basis, provides the possibility of a requirement to consult staff and unions and would enable schools to deal efficiently with the new pay requirements. However, we will be considering this issue and will announce any proposals in due course.

- Copies of the full STRB report will be distributed to members as soon as possible; in the meantime the report can be accessed on DfES's Teachernet website at:- [http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/8201/20052202%20STRB%2014%20report.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/8201/20052202%20STRB%2014%20report.pdf)