

**Education and Lifelong Learning Committee**

**ASSEMBLY MINISTER'S REPORT TO THE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE ON 17 JANUARY 2001**

This report updates the Committee on the specific issues upon which it wished to be kept informed since my previous report of 13 December.

**Annex B** sets out my major engagements since the last report.

**1. NATIONAL LANGUAGES STRATEGY**

The First Minister launched the National Assembly's draft 'National Languages Strategy' consultation paper at the 'European Year of Languages' conference in Cardiff on 13 December.

The consultation paper describes the essential features of the Assembly's proposed strategy for achieving these aims. The Assembly is fully committed to raising the profile and standards of foreign languages in schools whilst maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum. This document puts forward recommendations for LEAs and sets out the policy direction that the National Assembly proposes to take in Wales.

**2. PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTION PLAN**

Commencement Orders for the bringing into effect of various provisions of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 relating to the establishment of the National Council for Education and Training for Wales have been made or are currently under consideration by the Assembly; and a scheme for transferring property, rights and liabilities to the new Council under section 93 of the Act is in preparation.

The Chairman and Chief Executive of the new Council have been appointed. Interviews for other members of the Council have taken place in North Wales. Others are being held in South Wales.

The new Council's senior management team was announced by the Council on 11 January. Details are on the ETAP pages of the Assembly website. The next stage is for

the Council to appoint its third tier of management - including the heads of regional offices. Work on this is already underway.

Agreement has been reached on the transfer of £4.721 million from the local authorities to the new Council in respect of adult and continuing education with effect from 1 April 2001. A project has also been set in train to identify the sum to be transferred in respect of sixth form funding with effect from 1 April 2002.

### **3. GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR WALES**

The General Teaching Council for Wales, which was established on 1 September 2000, met formally for the first time on 4 October 2000. Since then the Council has established four subject committees (Executive, Audit, Policy and Membership, Registration & Discipline Committees), each of which has also met.

The next meeting of the full Council will take place on 29 January 2001, and be held in Wrexham. The meeting, which will be open to the public, will be followed that night by an open forum giving the teaching profession in North Wales the opportunity to put questions and concerns to Council members.

One of the Council's first tasks has been to establish the register of teachers

in Wales. This exercise has gone very well, and in the short time since the establishment of the Council, some 34,000 teachers have either been automatically registered, or have asked to be registered. In the next week or so the Council will be writing to individual teachers letting them know the details of their registration.

The Council will also, in the short term, be concentrating on developing a Code of Practice for the teaching profession and teachers will be asked, individually, to make an input to the development of this code. The Council will also be looking into the issue of Continuing Professional Development in the teaching profession.

### **4. teachers' pay: threshold applications**

Following consultation on the School Teachers' Review Body's report, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment has made an Order bringing the pay threshold

system into effect.

Some welcome improvements have been introduced:

- all teachers will have their assessed application forms returned to them and will be given feedback from their head on the outcome of their application and on aspects of performance that would benefit from further development. This will enable the teacher and his/her manager to identify clear priorities for future professional development
- teachers who believe that they have been wrongly assessed as not yet meeting the threshold standards will be given the right to have that decision reviewed.

The position in Wales is this:

- Threshold applications are to be made by teachers in Wales for the new date of 16 March 2001, unless their personal circumstances make it difficult for them to apply by that date in which case the deadline will be 23 March 2001.
- Heads will then make their assessments of threshold candidates. Heads should complete their assessments of threshold candidates and send them to the external assessors by 18 May 2001. They can request an extension to 25 May in cases where they have 40 or more threshold applicants or a new head teacher has moved to the school during Easter 2001. Heads of small schools are encouraged to complete their assessments by 30 April 2001.
- External assessors managed by the consortia of Welsh LEAs will visit schools to validate the assessment process. Visits in Wales will take place in the summer term 2001

The pay threshold assessment against national standards of effective teaching offers the potential for good teachers to gain a £2,000 increase in their annual salaries, which will be backdated to 1 September 2000.

The Department for Education and Employment will commission a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the threshold standards and procedures which will be available for consideration during the review for the report which the School Teachers' Review Body expects to produce at the beginning of 2002.

## **5. NATIONAL HEADSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

This programme provides training for aspiring headteachers; supports newly appointed headteachers; and further develops experienced headteachers.

## Aspiring Headteachers

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has become recognised as a key component in preparation for headship. There are currently 400 candidates following the qualification in Wales and the total number of teachers who have already been successful in gaining the NPQH is 120. I am currently considering proposals to improve the delivery of the NPQH to ensure that it meets the needs of candidates in Wales.

## Newly Appointed Headteachers

The Assembly has developed a Professional Headship Induction Programme (PHIP). This is a 'Made in Wales' product. PHIP has recently undergone trials in Wales and will be introduced from April 2001 for headteachers taking up their first appointment in September.

The four components of PHIP are:

- a headship profile which helps new heads to identify tasks, strengths and areas for development
- mentoring support from experienced heads
- peer networking
- a national training directory

These combine to provide support for the first two years of headship.

## Experienced Heads

The Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) builds on heads' existing knowledge and expertise to further develop and enhance effective leadership and management skills. The first nine programmes in Wales are fully subscribed catering for 126 headteachers and commence this month. LPSH was developed by DfEE, but has been translated and put into a Welsh context.

### The wider Leadership Group

In addition to the headship programmes, I have recently approved the development of School Leadership Modules (SLM) to support continuing professional development for the leadership group that was introduced to schools in Wales in September 2000. These will provide a distinctive programme created specifically in Wales which will be developed and delivered in partnership with LEA's and teachers.

## **6. ASSEMBLY'S INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION GROUP INTO STUDENT HARDSHIP AND FUNDING**

The Group is progressing the investigation. It has met twice since I announced the terms of reference and the Group Members to the Assembly on 5 December 2000, with its 3rd meeting to be held on 17th Jan. The Group will shortly be formulating a timetable for evidence taking meetings to be held at several venues across Wales which will take place in the forthcoming weeks.

## **7. SPECIAL GRANT REPORT – LEADERSHIP PAY COSTS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS MEASURES**

The Special Grant Report proposing an additional £7.9m for schools to cover the costs of the leadership pay costs and for school improvement measures was approved by the Assembly on 19 December. The funds were allocated to local authorities' accounts on 4th January. The terms of the Report require authorities to pass on the whole amount to schools and to do so within 10 working days of receipt of the money. Schools should, therefore, have received notification of increases in their delegated budgets as planned. I also wrote to Chairs of Governing Bodies and to Headteachers of all schools in Wales on 20 December to inform them of the additional funding being made available and to clarify more generally funding issues affecting schools.

## **8. SEN AND DISABILITY BILL**

In the Assembly Plenary debate on the Queen's Speech on 19 December, reference

was made to the SEN and Disability Bill, amongst others, being remitted to the relevant Subject Committee for consideration of the powers given to the Assembly and how these powers might be used. Subject Committees have until 13 February to report back in Plenary. I understand that Committee Clerk is making further enquiries of the Office of the Presiding Officer before circulating a suggested response to members for consideration.

I thought it would be helpful to refresh the memories of Members of the predecessor Committee and to brief new Members of this Committee about this Bill as part of my report today. A fuller explanation of the Bill, the powers given to the Assembly together with a brief explanation of how these powers might be used, is provided in the attached Annex to this Report. Copies of the Bill, complete with detailed Explanatory Notes, are available in the Assembly Library. Alternatively it can be accessed on the House of Commons web site.

## **9. BUDGETARY TRANSFER**

Last month, the Minister for Finance, the Minister for Culture and I jointly approved the transfer of £95,000 for dance and drama and £39,992 for the Welsh Books Council to their correct positions. The details of these transfers are shown below:

a transfer of £95,000 from the Arts Council for Wales Support for the Arts Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) to the Student Access BEL;

a transfer of £39,992 from ACCAC's Programme BEL to the Welsh Books Council BEL.

In addition the Minister for Finance and I jointly agreed the following transfers:

a transfer of £226,000 from ACCAC's Programme BEL to its Running Costs BEL to reflect the figures agreed by the First Secretary and Finance Secretary in December last year;

a transfer of £72,000 from ACCAC's Programme BEL to its Running Costs BEL to meet the additional requirements set out below:

- increased rental costs of the Authority's offices;
- the purchase of essential new IT equipment; and
- the Authority's negotiating remit

a virement of £23,000 from underspend identified on Performance Management for

Teachers BEL into the Authority's Running Costs budget to cover costs associated with publishing National Curriculum materials in Wales.

## 10. Queen's Golden Jubilee Poetry Competition

On 23 November, the First Minister announced that an additional Bank Holiday has been created to celebrate the Queens Golden Jubilee on 3 June 2002.

This will provide a unique opportunity to recognise Wales and Welsh culture within the UK and the Commonwealth, and Welsh schools will be encouraged to submit entries in both Welsh and English. A steering group has been established to co-ordinate a range of events which will celebrate the Monarch's role as Head of the Commonwealth and look to the future. I am making representations about a Welsh representative on the group.

## ELL 01-01(p.1)Annex A

10. Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Bill 2000 – Memorandum of Information for Education and Lifelong Learning Committee Members

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11. **Introduction**

12. This memorandum of information is intended to brief members of the National Assembly's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on the introduction by the Government of the SEN and Disability Bill on 7 December 2000. The Bill received its second reading in the House of Lords on 19 December 2000 where there was cross party support for the broad aims of the Bill. Lord's Committee Stage commences on 22 January 2001. The Government is hopeful that the Bill will receive Royal Assent by end of March 2001.
13. Assembly Plenary Debate on Queen's Speech
14. Assembly Plenary debate on the Queen's Speech on 19 December 2000, referred to this Bill, along with others to be introduced during the current Parliamentary Session, as being remitted to Assembly Subject Committees for the purpose of reporting back to Plenary on the powers to be given to the National Assembly and how these might be used. Deadline for the Report is 13 February 2001. Committee Clerk is in the process of making further enquiries as to what is required before circulating a suggested Report to Members for consideration ahead of the 13 February deadline.
15. **Background**
16. The statutory framework governing SEN provision, primarily under Part IV of the Education Act 1996, is common to England and Wales. The Code of Practice on the

Identification and Assessment of SEN prepared under the 1996 Act is currently a single England and Wales document. The majority of the Secretary of State's functions in relation to SEN under the Act were devolved to the National Assembly for Wales by virtue of the National Assembly for Wales Transfer of Functions Order 1999. However, the Secretary of State's regulatory functions in relation to the jurisdiction of the SEN Tribunal, and to determine the terms and conditions, fees and other remuneration for the President and Members of the Tribunal were retained by the Secretary of State. There is a duty, however, under the Transfer of Functions Order 1999, for the Secretary of State to seek the agreement of the National Assembly in exercising functions in respect of Wales in relation to the SEN Tribunal.

17. In October 1997, the then Welsh Office published the Government's SEN Green Paper in Wales 'The BEST for Special Education'. While the Green Paper in Wales mirrored to a large extent the policy messages outlined in the Green Paper in England, it reflected issues discreet to Wales and the separate statutory bodies in Wales, including not least; the Welsh language dimension; differences in the National Curriculum Literacy, Numeracy and Early Years frameworks in Wales; and proposals to establish a separate Welsh Advisory Group on SEN to complement the earlier establishment in England of the National Advisory Group on SEN. The Welsh Advisory Group on SEN was established in July 1998 to advise on the preparation of the Welsh Office's response to the Green Paper consultation.
18. In January 1999, the then Welsh Office published its response to the Green Paper in Wales 'Shaping the Future for Special Education – An Action Programme for Wales' which again shared many of the policy objectives set out in the SEN Action Programme published by the DfEE in England in November 1998, including the commitment to introduce new and revised SEN legislation to underpin many of the policy objectives outlined in both SEN Action Programmes.
19. On assuming the devolved functions of the Secretary of State on 1 July 1999, the National Assembly for Wales Cabinet endorsed the SEN Action Programme in Wales. Since then, National Assembly officials have been closely involved with the Wales Office and with DfEE officials and lawyers in the preparation of the draft SEN and Disability Bill and supports fully the measures outlined in the Bill including the disability aspects of the Bill that are not devolved to the National Assembly.
20. Consultation
21. The Government undertook wide public consultation across the UK on the proposed Bill during March and April 2000. A presentation on the Bill's proposed provisions was given to the then Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee on 12 April 2000. Copies of the Government's detailed consultation papers on the Bill were also made available to members of the Assembly's Health and Social Services Committee and members of both committees were invited to submit any comments on the proposed Bill to Assembly officials. In the event, no comments were received from Assembly Members in relation to the proposed Bill.
22. SEN and Disability Bill – Main Provisions
23. The Bill seeks to improve the standard of provision for all children with special



educational needs (SEN) and to introduce new rights for disabled people in education. The Bill is in three parts: Part I will take forward the Government's legislative proposals referred to in the Assembly's Action Programme for Wales "*Shaping the Future for Special Education*" first published in January 1999) and make changes to the existing SEN framework in Part IV of the Education Act 1996; Part II of the Bill will address the education recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force (DRTF) as set out in its report "*From Exclusion to Inclusion*" published by the Government in December 1999 and will amend the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 (DRCA); and Part III will provide for supplementary matters such as commencement orders and expenditure of money.

24. In summary, **Part I** will:

25. strengthen the right of children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools where this is what parents want and the interests of other children with whom they would be educated can be protected;
26. require local education authorities (LEAs) to make arrangements for services to provide parents of children with SEN with advice and information, and a means of resolving disputes locally with schools and LEAs;
27. require LEAs to comply, within prescribed periods, with orders of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal (SENT) and make other technical changes in support of the SENT appeals process; and
28. require schools to inform parents where they are making special educational provision for their child and allow schools to request a statutory assessment of a pupil's SEN.

29. Part II will

30. place new disability access duties on LEAs and schools (including independent schools and non-maintained special schools) in England and Wales:
31. not to treat disabled pupils less favourably, without justification, than pupils who are not disabled;
32. to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to pupils who are not disabled in their access to education. Schools will not be required to make physical alterations to premises or to provide auxiliary aids;
33. to plan strategically and make progress in increasing physical accessibility to schools' premises and to the curriculum;
34. place new duties on further education institutions, higher education institutions, adult education and youth services provision secured by LEAs not to treat disabled students less favourably, without justification, than students who are not disabled; and
35. to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to students who are not disabled in their access to education.
36. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) will have functions in respect of the new legislation akin to those conferred upon it, by virtue of the DRCA, in respect of Parts II and III of the DDA. The DRC will prepare Codes of Practice to explain and illustrate the legislation to providers, disabled people and others.

37. **Territorial Coverage and Delegated Powers to National Assembly for Wales**

38. The provisions in the Bill relating to SEN will apply to England and Wales only. The disability provisions will apply to England, Wales and Scotland since equal opportunities issues are matters reserved to the UK Parliament under the Scottish and Welsh settlements. The exception is the duty to plan for accessibility, which, although intended to help disabled pupils, primarily relates to the organisation and administration of schools and hence is a devolved matter.
39. Several of the SEN clauses (Clause 8, and paragraphs 6 to 12 and 16 of Schedule 7) and the disability planning clause (clause 13 ) give the Secretary of State power to make regulations in relation to England. The National Assembly for Wales is given the power to make equivalent regulations in relation to Wales. This underpins the devolution settlement by enabling decisions to be taken by the National Assembly. However, the position is different in relation to the regulation making powers given to the Secretary of State by Clauses 5 and 18 and paragraph 15(3) and (5) of Schedule 7. Clause 5 makes provision in respect of certain appeals to the SENT which are conceded by an LEA. The SENT is reconstituted as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) by Clause 16. Clause 18 and paragraphs 15(3) and (5) provide for regulations to be made about SENDIST proceedings. Under the NAW (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999 (S.I.1999/672) the power to make regulations about SENT remains with the Secretary of State, to be exercised in relation to Wales with the agreement of the NAW. Clauses 5 and 18, and the provision made for paragraphs 15(3) and (5) in clause 41 reflect that aspect of the devolution settlement.

40. **Description of Delegated Powers**

41. The Bill as introduced on 7 December provides for the following powers to be delegated to the National Assembly for Wales:

42. **SEN - Regulations**

43. **Power to prescribe in Regulations, information to be provided by LEAs to parents when serving notices declining a request for a statutory assessment of SEN or declining to make a Statement of SEN. (Clause 8 – new Section 329A (9) (b) of Education Act 1996; and Schedule 7, paragraph 6 – amending section 325 of the 1996 Act).** The purpose of these provisions (in line with the provisions of sections 329A (8) and (9) of the Education Act 1996 - inserted by clause 8 of the Bill) is to give the the National Assembly for Wales, power to make sure, if considered necessary in the future, that LEA serve notices promptly, and that notices contain helpful information, such as the LEA's view on the extent of the child's needs, the timetable for appealing to the SENT and an explanation of the conciliation arrangements available locally to the parent. At present most LEAs do serve notices promptly and provide parents with helpful information. There is some evidence however that this does not happen in all cases and the regulation making powers are required to ensure that the good practice of most LEAs becomes the norm. These are operational matters which may need to be considered in the light of the operation of the provisions. Schedule 26 to the Education Act 1996 already provides for prescribed information to be provided when a notice is served under section 323 of the 1996 Act (advising the parent of a determination not to

amend a statement). Regulation making powers under that Schedule are already devolved to the Assembly.

44. **SEN - Guidance**

45. **Statutory Guidance on Inclusion. Clause 1 amends the**

46. **EA 1996 by inserting new sections 316 and 316A. Section 316A(8)**

provides for the authorities of maintained schools and maintained

47. nursery schools to have regard to guidance on the new sections issued

by the Secretary of State in England, and the National Assembly for

Wales in Wales. It is envisaged that the guidance will explain the

reasonable steps LEAs and schools should take to prevent the

inclusion of children, with special educational needs, being

48. incompatible with the efficient education of other children and what

49. incompatibility might mean. The guidance will be published under

section 571 of the 1996 Act. In time this guidance will probably

become part of the SEN Code of Practice. Section 313 of the EA

requires the Secretary of State for England, and the National Assembly for Wales in

Wales, to issue a Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of pupils with

special educational needs.

50. **Statutory Guidance on Parent Partnership Services. Clause 2**

**amends the EA 1996 by inserting a new Section 332A. Section 332A(2)** provides for

LEAs and schools to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, in

England, and the National Assembly for Wales in Wales, on the arrangements of parent

partnership services for the purpose of providing information to the parents of children

with SEN. The guidance could be published under section 571 EA 1996, but it is

envisaged that it will probably form part of a revised Code of Practice to be issued in

Wales under sections 313 and 314 of the EA 1996 later in 2001.

51. **Statutory Guidance on Dispute Resolution Services. Clause 3 amends the EA**

**1996 by inserting a new section 332B. Section 332B (4)** provides for LEAs and

schools to have regard to guidance published by the Secretary of State, in England, and

the National Assembly for Wales in Wales, on the arrangements for preventing and

resolving disputes between parents and schools and parents and LEAs about the

provision for children with special educational needs. The guidance could be published

separately under Section 571 of the EA 1996, but it is envisaged that it will probably

form part of a revised Code of Practice to be issued by the Assembly under sections 313

and 314 of the EA 1996, later in 2001.

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52. **DISABILITY - Regulations**

53. **Power to prescribe in Regulations the time period which LEA strategies and school plans for increasing accessibility for disabled pupils should cover and the times at which further LEA strategies must be prepared. Clause 13(1) amends the DDA by inserting a new section 28D. Section 28D(1) makes provision for the**

Secretary of State, and in Wales the NAW, to make regulations to specify the period of time to be covered by LEAs' strategies for increasing accessibility for disabled pupils to schools in their areas and how often new strategies should be produced. **Section 28D (5)** makes provision for regulations to be made to specify the period of time to be covered by schools' accessibility plans. We intend to consult with representative organisations as to what constitutes realistic and workable periods but we envisage that the intervals at which new strategies must be produced will directly correspond with the period to be covered by the strategy. The flexibility afforded by Regulations is required to enable timescales to be altered where necessary to respond to any changes we might bring about in future to related administrative procedures and to allow dovetailing of the strategy with other LEA development plans. Section 6(1) and 6(4)(a) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 provides a precedent in relation to Education Strategic Plans prepared by LEAs in Wales.

54. **DISABILITY - Guidance**

55. **Statutory Guidance on Content and Form of LEA Accessibility Strategy. Clause 14 inserts a new section 28E(1)(b) in the DDA 1995**, which places a duty on LEAs to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, or for Wales the NAW, as to the content of an accessibility strategy; the form in which it is to be produced, and the persons whom the LEA should consult with when preparing the strategy. The guidance will essentially cover the administrative details and practicalities of what LEAs need to do in preparing their strategy.

56. The guidance will also set out how often the LEA should review its existing strategy to see whether it requires revision (**new section 28E(2)**). For example, the guidance may set out that it would be appropriate for an LEA to review its existing strategy after a large reorganisation of the school provision in the area, or once some major capital work has been completed. It may also suggest minimum time intervals at which LEAs should review their existing plans.

57. Guidance will allow the flexibility to update as necessary and to respond quickly to feedback from LEAs about where further or more detailed guidance is needed. The level of detail proposed is also much more suitable for guidance rather than on the face of the Bill.

58. **Additional Assembly Provisions to be pursued through Government Amendments to Bill**

59. In addition to the Assembly provisions described above, we are liaising with DfEE lawyers and officials with a view to **securing a further power for the Assembly to prescribe in Regulations, the circumstances in which a child without a Statement of SEN can remain at a special school**. Clause 1 of the Bill was amended by DfEE immediately prior to introduction on 7 December. **Clause 1 amends the EA 1996 by inserting two new sections: 316 and 316A**. Section 316 provides that a child with SEN, but without a statement of SEN, must be educated in a mainstream school.

Section 316A(2) allows a child without a statement to attend a special school in various circumstances, including (section 316A(2)(a)) where he is being assessed under section 323 of the EA 1996, and various specified individuals and bodies agree. **Section 316A (2)(b)** provides that once the assessment process is complete, Regulations will prescribe the circumstances in which the child can remain at the special school. The Bill introduced on 7 December makes provision for the Secretary of State to make regulations in respect of England but does not currently provide for Regulations to be made by the NAW in Wales. DfEE will ensure that this is rectified by way of a Government Amendment.

60. It is envisaged that the Regulations will set out what happens; in the period between the completion of the assessment and the decision whether to make a statement; in the period during which any statement is being made; if the LEA decides not to make a statement; if there is an appeal to the SEN Tribunal in connection with an assessment; and if the statement names the school the child is attending during the assessment or another school. These are very much detailed practical operational matters and therefore more suitable for Regulations than on the face of the Bill.
61. Commencement Powers
62. The Bill as drafted does not currently provide the National Assembly with any commencement powers. There are several clauses of the Bill, primarily those relating to SEN provisions, which relate to devolved matters upon which the Assembly should have the power to determine commencement in Wales. This has been taken up with DfEE lawyers who will table the necessary amendments in relation to Commencement powers, along with any other Government amendments at Committee Stage of the Bill in the House of Lords scheduled for late January 2001.
63. **Implementation Timetable**
64. SEN Provisions
65. Subject to the Assembly approving necessary amendments to SEN Regulations flowing from the Bill, and the proposed revised SEN Code of Practice for Wales, it is envisaged that all the SEN provisions in the Bill will come into operation in England and Wales from **September 2001**.
66. Disability Provisions
67. The DfEE envisage that the **Disability provisions** for schools and LEAs will come into force **by 2003**.
68. DfEE intend to implement the new disability duties on the **post-16 sector** by **September 2003** (duties not to discriminate and to make reasonable adjustments to non-physical arrangements such as policies, practices and procedures) and **by 2005** (to adjust physical features and provide auxiliary aids and services).
69. Assembly Resources to Support Key Bill Provisions
70. In England, the DfEE is supporting key SEN aspects of the Bill through its Standards Fund. In Wales, the equivalent funding mechanism to the 'Standards Fund' operated by the DfEE in England is the National Assembly's Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) Programme. Grant support to LEAs for key policy objectives stemming from the published SEN Action Programme in Wales is available under the GEST

Programme. Since publication of the SEN Action Programme in January 1999, resources allocated under the GEST programme in support of SEN policy initiatives has increased from £1.3million to £2.8million currently. This will increase to some £3.5million for 2001/02 – an overall increase of almost 270 per cent since 1999.

71. The SEN priority areas for funding under the Assembly's GEST Programme cover: teacher and specialist SEN training plans, including training through the medium of Welsh; the introduction of Independent Parental Supporters (IPs) to replace the current 'Named Persons' requirement; the introduction of local independent conciliation arrangements for resolving SEN disputes between LEAs and parents; measures and initiatives to promote stronger co-operation and closer working practices between mainstream and special schools; initiatives aimed at identifying and disseminating Welsh language teaching and assessment materials; and a separate allocation to support regional SEN planning pilot projects in Wales.
72. Overall resources for education spending in Wales have also increased significantly over the same period. The Assembly is aware that measures outlined in its SEN Action Programme and the SEN and Disability rights in Education Bill 2000, will have resource implications for LEAs and of course schools. In each year since 1997 the settlements for local education services have increased substantially; £50million in 98/99, £70million in 99/2000 and £91million this year (2000/01). The increases run ahead of increases in pay and prices. On top of this, the Assembly has been able to allocate an additional £20million to schools this year in additional revenue spending. The Assembly is also making available an additional £27million this year to local authorities to accelerate progress on much needed capital work on school buildings.
73. Unlike in England where DfEE proposed to support additional costs from the Disability measures in the Bill from their Schools Access Initiative, in Wales LEAs will be able to draw from the significant additional resources that are to be made available under the Assembly's New Deal monies, Additional Capital Funding for Schools Programme, and from an additional £85 million allocated for the 3 year period from 2001-02 to 2003-04 for school building. Taken together with existing provision this will provide nearly £300 million for school buildings in Wales over the forthcoming 3 year period.
74. In determining the resources available for increased education spending in Wales the Assembly has taken account of the additional expenditure implications for local authorities and schools of certain measures outlined in the SEN Action Programme where these were judged to have additional expenditure implications. The Assembly takes the view that many aspects of its SEN Action Programme require a change in the way that the already significant resources for SEN are managed by local authorities and schools rather than requiring wholly new investment. There is also a need to ensure that more of the money delegated to schools, which is intended to reflect the needs of children with SEN, is actually used for this purpose.

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**National Assembly for Wales**

**ELL 01- 01(p.1) ANNEX B**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
13 December	Address – Children in Wales Annual Conference
	Speech – Opening Association of Teachers & Lecturers new offices
15 December	Meeting – Voluntary Sector Partnership
19 December	Meeting – Secretary of State for Education and Employment and Secretary of State for Wales
10 January	Speech – Ysgol Plasmawr (25 years of Equal Opportunities Legislation)
	Speech – Millennium Stadium - Teacher Placement Scheme (celebrate 25,000 teacher placements)
11 January	Launch – NIACE Dysgu Cymru
12 January	Visit – Llangewydd Junior School (announcing funding for ICT)