

## fforwm EVIDENCE TO THE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

### FE Sector: Staff Recruitment & Retention

#### 1 Introduction

1 fforwm is the national organisation representing all 24 further education (FE) colleges in Wales. It is an educational charity and a company limited by guarantee. Its mission is to *'raise the profile of colleges amongst key decision-makers and support them in the continuous pursuit of high quality education and training aimed at stimulating the economic development, social well-being and cultural life in Wales'*.

2 fforwm's Board comprises college principals and chairs of corporations, appointed by member colleges. fforwm provides a range of services to its members including networks, conferences, research, consultancy and the sharing of good practice. It also works closely with a wide range of partners in post-16 education and training. Through fforwm, colleges are represented on various committees, working parties and other groups influencing and shaping policy in post-16 education and life-long learning.

3 fforwm welcomes the opportunity to present evidence to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee of the National Assembly for Wales on a subject of growing concern to the further education (FE) sector - the recruitment and retention of FE college staff.

4 Clearly the welcome decision by the Welsh Assembly Government to increase the levels of pay of FE staff over the next three years will have a long term impact on the recruitment and retention of staff. This paper deals with the current position.

5 In the main, this paper will focus on three inter-related themes: overall staff turnover, shortage subjects and staff retention.

6 Evidence contained in the paper derives from three main sources: a fforwm survey of teacher vacancies, the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) Skills Foresight Survey of FE Colleges in Wales 2002 and the Association of Colleges' (AoC) UK-wide survey of staff recruitment and retention (Appendix A).

#### 7 Teaching Vacancies

8 Based on fforwm's research (July 2002), the analysis of staff turnover shows that the number of teaching staff vacancies per college varies between 0 – 26, or an average of 6.6 vacancies per college. The equivalent figures for teaching support staff were an average of 5.8 vacancies, ranging from 0 - 15.

9 If these figures were extrapolated to cover all 24 colleges in Wales there would be 158 teaching and 139 support staff vacancies.

10 In general, however, teaching staff turnover was not seen to be a major problem for colleges at present. Staff in their late forties and fifties were

unlikely to move into other jobs or make the career step of moving into better paid positions in schools. Also many lecturers enjoyed the FE ethos and the opportunity to work with a wide range of learners. However there is concern over the replacement of these experienced staff as they move into retirement. This point is developed below.

- 11 Some colleges do report a drift into schools. One college, for example, has reported the loss of two key staff moving into schools from its star performing areas - music and performing arts and indeed have written to the Minister expressing their concern. In the latter case, the lecturer moved to a similar post in a school with salary uplift from £25,000 to £32,000 and more favourable conditions of service.
- 12 A fforwm survey of 2,411 full time lecturers carried out in February 2002 showed that 44 per cent were aged 50 or over. These staff will be retiring over the next few years. At least two colleges reported that around 40 per cent of their lecturing staff would be reaching retirement age in the next four years. Only 2.6 per cent of lecturers were aged below 30 with 18.8 per cent aged 30-39, 35.5 per cent aged 40-49, 39.0 per cent aged 50-59 and 5 per cent aged 60 plus.
- 13 With an increasingly ageing work force, all colleges responding expressed concerns over the difficulty in recruiting new staff. Typically the number of applicants for posts has fallen. In one case, for example, applicants for posts have halved over the last three years. Some reported that they had to interview every applicant but frequently only had one or two candidates who matched the person specification. Another reported that the amount of applications is often low and the standard of application is 'below what would be expected.' Re-advertising for posts is becoming increasingly common.
- 14 One college stated that since September 2001, 23 jobs had been advertised with an average three applications per post. Another college reported that they had lost seven teachers to higher education over the past year and one reported that in the last few weeks two of their staff had been appointed to teaching jobs in schools.
- 15 Colleges have traditionally attracted lecturers in their 30s and sometimes 40s who have experience of the world of work. This vocational expertise has ensured that colleges keep up to date with latest developments. Thus it is unusual to find teachers of job-related courses in construction, plumbing and catering, for example, who have not had direct experience in these industries. In addition, colleges rely on a pool of part-time staff who currently work or have recent experience in the professions such as accountancy and the law. There is some evidence that the falling behind of salaries in FE is making it more difficult to recruit full-time staff from industry although the recruitment of part-time staff at present is less affected - this latter point is developed below

## 16 Shortage Subjects

17 A number of subject areas where teacher shortages were particularly acute were identified by fforwm's research. The most common areas in which these shortages occurred were as follows:

- a. ILT/IT/ICT
- b. Computing
- c. Health and Social Care
- d. Accountancy
- e. Aeronautical Engineering
- f. Business Administration
- g. Construction
- h. Plumbing

18 Other shortage areas mentioned by colleges included animal care, beauty therapy, engineering, English, geography, key skills, maths, modern languages, music, travel and tourism and Welsh. FENTO'S Skills Foresight Survey also cites applied science as a subject experiencing staff shortages.

19 In respect of support staff, particular areas of shortage were

- a. I.LT/IT Technicians
- b. advice and guidance staff,
- c. caretakers
- d. cleaners
- e. all computer related work
- f.. engineering staff
- g. NVQ Assessors.

20 Other relevant quotations made by colleges included:

*"We are becoming dangerously reliant on too high a proportion of part-time staff"*

*"Bilingual requirements make our recruitment even more difficult"*

*"We do not appear to be attracting young/recent graduates. Our youngest member of staff is aged 34"*

*"A college is still addressing its over dependence on hourly paid staff to deliver key areas"*

*"We have recruitment problems in most subject areas"*

## Part-time Staff

21 There are benefits and problems relating to the increasingly heavy dependency of colleges to use part time teaching staff. FENTO research suggests that the decision to work part-time is a complex one. The four most often quoted reasons were *flexibility, family, lifestyle* and *other professional work*, suggesting that long-term commitment to FE is not guaranteed. Cross-tabulation of national responses indicated that preferences were likely to be age-related. The younger teacher is working part-time in the hope of obtaining full-time employment; the older teacher is working part-time more from choice or post-retirement.

22 However, those who are employed within business or other organisations (49 per cent of part-time college teaching staff, according to FENTO's survey) bring up-to-date transferable industrial experience and skills to their teaching.

**23 A Career in FE**

24 As part of FENTOs' recent research, FE college students (potential new entrants to the FE teaching profession) were invited to take part in a SWOT analysis from the perspective of the FE sector as a career option. The results were as follows:

<p><b>STRENGTHS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Have professional status</li> <li>-Are able to bring life and work - experience to the sector</li> <li>-Are trained to teach</li> <li>-Are flexible</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Casual status</li> <li>-Reduction in funding to FE</li> <li>-Low salaries</li> <li>-Unpaid preparation time</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To progress a career by access to Continuous Professional Development</li> <li>-Links with industry</li> <li>-Access to salaried employment and promotion</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Risk - Short-term contracts and casual status leads to financial insecurity</li> <li>-Change – qualifications, vocational subjects in schools, amalgamation of colleges, training provider consortia</li> <li>-The 'management'</li> <li>-Poor facilities</li> </ul>

**25 Staff retention**

26 The recent pay settlement by way of a £9m package for FE lecturers and support staff, announced on October 24 by the Minister for Education & Lifelong Learning, is firstly welcome news for colleges across Wales, and secondly a first step in bringing about parity between college lecturers and schoolteachers.

27 Developing plans to ensure the most appropriate and effective use of this funding for FE pay will involve crucial input by fforwm.

**28 Conclusions**

29 The challenges of recruitment and retention consist of a combination of factors and are often the consequences of the difficulties which colleges have in offering sufficiently attractive remuneration in competition with alternative employment opportunities.

30 The subject specialisms that are difficult to retain more often than not match those that are difficult to recruit. Possible ways forward might be the consideration of differentiated pay rates which favour shortage areas, secondments to and from industry, effective promotion to raise the image of FE colleges as employers and better terms and conditions of employment. In

addition, the extension of 'Golden Hallos' under which new recruits to FE teaching in England obtain an incentive lump sum payment of up to £4,000 to pay off student loans would be of benefit in Wales. As mentioned under point 5, the FE pay settlement will have a long-term impact on the recruitment and retention of staff. In the short-term, full discussions will need to take place between fforwm and Welsh Assembly Government officials to ensure the settlement is delivered appropriately and successfully for the benefit of FE staff, and ultimately, their learners.

**fforwm**  
**November 2002**

## **Appendix A**

### **The UK picture:**

- 1 Key figures from the AoC Survey of Staff Recruitment and Shortages 2002 showed a dramatic rise in the number of vacancies in FE colleges, with more than 3,000 teaching posts. This shows that the problems of recruitment and retention are widespread outside Wales.
  - 3,239 Further Education teaching staff vacancies in September compared to 2,600 in September 2001, representing a 25 per cent increase
  - The percent of vacancies in local colleges now stands at double that of schools, (2.4 per cent in colleges compared with 1.2 per cent in schools\*) \*Department for Education and Skills figure from National Statistics "Teachers in Service and Teacher Vacancies: January 2002 (Revised)" 05/08/2002
  - In local colleges the lecturer workforce (full and part-time) is 134,000\* – Learning and Skills Council - "SIR 2000-2001" (Staff Individualised Record)
  - 4,913 management and support staff vacancies in 2002 compared to 3,400 in 2001 representing a 44 per cent increase
  - 90 per cent of colleges have teaching staff vacancies in 2002
  - 61 per cent of colleges are experiencing difficulties in retaining teaching staff
  - The average college has 4 vacancies for full-time teaching staff and 7 vacancies for full-time support staff
  - On average each post needs to be advertised more than once
  - 83 per cent of colleges consider that the low salary in FE colleges compared to VI form colleges and schools has an impact on the retention of teaching staff

- 73 per cent of colleges consider the lower salary in FE colleges compared to the private sector has an impact on the retention of support staff
- 63 per cent of colleges have management vacancies in 2002 and 23 per cent are experiencing difficulties in retaining their management staff
- 48 per cent of colleges consider the retention of support staff is a problem
- In the average college support staff turnover is 14 per cent, teaching staff turnover is 11 per cent and management turnover is 7 per cent
- In the average college staff turnover as a whole is 10 per cent