

## Written Response by the Welsh Government to the Petitions Committee report in relation to Petition P-05-805: Fair Deal for Supply Teachers

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Supply teachers play an important role in providing education to learners across Wales and the Welsh Government is committed to improving pay and conditions for those teachers working in temporary roles.

Following the Supply Model Taskforce report in 2017 and the submission of Petition P-05-805: Fair Deal for Supply Teachers, significant improvements have been made by the Welsh Government to address the concerns and Taskforce recommendations relating to pay and conditions for supply teachers.

The revised National Procurement Service's (NPS) Supply Agency Framework was introduced in September 2019 and includes minimum criteria that framework agencies must meet to ensure fair pay and conditions for agency supply teachers, including a minimum pay rate and the offer of relevant professional learning. Concerns previously raised over inflated agency fees have also been addressed by including a requirement on agencies to provide fixed and transparent pricing schedules to schools, to help them manage their delegated staffing budgets and make an informed decision over agency use.

To trial an alternative method to schools of recruiting supply cover, the Welsh Government established the Supply Cluster Model pilot project in October 2017. The project was well received by the schools that took part and we continue to promote this model to both schools and local authorities, and the benefits of using supply cover via a cluster arrangement.

One of the more complex aspects of this area has been to try to improve circumstances for those working in the supply sector whilst recognising that in Wales there is no one existing model that will suit everyone. This was a point that was acknowledged by the Supply Model Taskforce when it reviewed supply teaching arrangements in 2017<sup>1</sup>. In addition, schools are responsible for ensuring there is an appropriate and effective workforce in place, including cover arrangements. Supply teachers can be employed directly or through agencies and, under local management of schools arrangements, schools are best placed to determine what works for them.

I would like to thank the members of the Petitions Committee for their report on the Fair Deal for Supply petition, and for its consideration of the recent and ongoing work undertaken by the Welsh Government in this area.

I have set out my response to the Report's individual recommendations below.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gov.wales/supply-model-taskforce-report>

## **Recommendation 1**

The Committee recommends:

That the next Welsh Government should keep the impact that the National Procurement Service's Framework Agreement for the provision of temporary workers and supply teachers, awarded in September 2019, under close review in order to fully understand its impact on the pay and conditions of the supply teaching workforce.

### **Response: Accept**

The NPS monitors agency compliance and collates data against the Framework on a quarterly basis. Agencies are asked to record information against the numbers of bookings, roles recruited to and whether roles for qualified teachers are paid at the minimum of the teachers' main pay scale. Information is also collected against the training requirements, and records how many agency staff have taken up training offers. Since the Framework was established in September 2019, agency compliance has improved significantly, and any instances of agency non-compliance that are reported to the NPS are investigated and addressed with the agency in question.

The Welsh Government will continue to monitor the Framework and implement changes, as required.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommends that:

As recommended by Audit Wales, the Welsh Government should monitor the rate of take-up of the Framework Agreement to understand whether schools are using agencies outside of that contract, and in what numbers.

### **Response: Accept**

Data collated by the NPS in late 2020 indicated that whilst agencies are now adhering to the terms of the Framework, some schools and local authorities were either choosing to use non-Framework agencies to pay a lower rate, or refusing to pay the Framework rate. Following discussions through the Schools Social Partnership Forum, local authorities have committed to supporting the Framework and schools have been asked to include the requirement to adhere to Framework terms in their individual school pay policies. The Welsh Government will continue to engage with local authorities, and promote use of the Framework.

I understand that the NPS reviews the local authority supplier spend information that is submitted to assess how local authorities are procuring services. Whilst this is not

a statutory collection, it enables the NPS to assess where local authorities are procuring services from. Currently these services have been paused due to Covid-19 pressures, and the data available has also been impacted due to the pandemic. Officials will assess how these services can be resumed in the next academic year, and, using data that is provided, will continue to monitor uptake against the Framework.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

### **Recommendation 3. The Committee recommends that**

The next Welsh Government should give further consideration to alternative arrangements for supporting schools to find and employ supply teachers, including direct employment and the introduction of centralised or regional supply arrangements. We consider that a public sector solution would have significant advantages over the current model.

#### **Response: Accept in principle**

Alternative supply models were explored through the work taken forward by the Supply Model Taskforce in 2017. The Taskforce subsequently reported that it could not recommend a single model of delivery that would be appropriate for Wales, although it recommended that alternative options be explored, including a collaborative model. Such a model was trialled from 2017 – 2020, with a range of benefits reported by both the participating schools and supply teachers.

The Welsh Government will give consideration to a further independent review into the employment of supply teachers, which will inform any proposals for alternative supply models which could be established. Any changes to the current mixed model would need to consider the impact on the current supply market, which is well established in Wales. Currently, local authorities and schools are responsible for staffing decisions, including supply cover.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

### **Recommendation 4.**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should remit the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body to consider the pay and conditions of supply and temporary teachers as part as part of its responsibilities.

#### **Response: Accept**

The 2021 remit letter to the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) includes a direction for the IWPRB to give consideration to potential longer term issues that could be addressed through multi-year remits and/or additional stand-alone remits addressing specific matters in relation to terms and conditions; to include;

- Whether the existing structure for teachers' pay, terms and conditions is fair and appropriate for all school leaders and teachers in Wales, including supply teachers within scope of the STPCD.

The IWPRB is currently considering advice from stakeholders and is due to report with its recommendations by 14 May.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.