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Welsh Local Government Association**

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Dyddiad / Date: 06 January 2023

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WLGA / ADEW Response to Jane Bryant MS

Thank you for your letter, Minister Jane Bryant,

the scale and nature of violence, abuse, sexual harassment or sexual abuse towards school staff across maintained settings in Wales, whether by colleagues, managers, parents or pupils

Schools record reported incidents and local authorities monitor these, and LAs are therefore able to identify patterns / clusters / links between cases which can highlight concerns around culture or volume of cases which could lead to interventions and training / re-training prioritisation.

Local authorities have generally seen a rise in exclusions and permanent exclusions over the last academic year. A large proportion of these have been related to incidents of verbal and physical aggression to staff from pupils.

In addition, anecdotal feedback from schools highlights that tensions from parents towards schools in relation to their children's education appear more prominent in comparison to pre-pandemic issues.

Local authorities do not publish data relating to incidents due to the sensitivity of the content, but to assist with this query and to provide a sense of scale, a number of local authorities have agreed for the purposes of this communication to provide information and examples of practice under agreement of anonymity:

Example 1:

Since January 2020 (to November 2022) there have been 196 recorded incidents in maintained settings. These are mostly incidents of violence by pupils against staff. There are number of recurring types of incidents, and these tend to be in the main in areas of higher deprivation. Incidents involving physical violence by parents and

other staff is rare with less than 5 incidents reported since January 2020.

This example shows the level of data available, and the role local authorities take in monitoring and intervention.

Example 2:

Scale and Nature of violence (both physical and non-physical, e.g., verbal abuse across maintained settings in Wales is recorded via the use of accident report forms and Violence at Work Report forms.

Violence at Work Statistics for the period July to September 2022:

In total there were 62 Violence at Work reports in the Directorate between July to September 2022. In 61 of the incidents, the assailant was a pupil of which 55 were primary schools, 1 was a secondary school and 5 were special schools.

Violent Incident Category	July to Sept 2022	July to Sept 2021	July to Sept 2020
Anti-Social Behaviour	0	0	1
Damage to Property	2	0	0
Physical Assault No Injury	37	20	11
Physical Assault with Injury	21	9	6
Threat of Physical Assault	0	5	1
Verbal Abuse	2	0	1
Total	62	34	20

To note: Scale and nature of sexual harassment or sexual abuse towards staff may not be captured using this form – unless the member of staff made a comment on the form to notify the Local Authority that the incident was in relation to sexual harassment or abuse. In this instance the member of staff's line manager would record this (i.e., Head teacher) and act through the schools Conduct and Behaviour Policy - Behaviour Corrective Actions with the pupil (via parent/carer).

what steps schools should take to prevent violence, abuse and harassment (e.g., policies, guidance, training, risk assessments, etc.) and how effectively schools across Wales are taking those steps

All schools should have well defined policies in place and governing bodies / leadership teams would be supported by local authorities to ensure full understanding and application of policy. Local authority support includes provision of effective policy support, support for risk assessments and guidance on managing the risk. Schools in general work well with local authorities on this but there is a concern that there remains underreporting in schools. Training can also be offered via online training systems but there is an acknowledgment that there is further work to do in ensuring all staff are well trained.

Schools should take a proactive approach and use the guidance and frameworks provided. LAs have policies in place (e.g., Schools Keeping School Staff Safe Guidance) and there are various Violence at Work / Security risk assessments and Lock Down procedures to be followed and practiced as well as training via Head teacher induction and specific training provisions.

Additional LA support / interventions include reviews of behaviour policies and a school graduated response to increases in behaviour incidents, introduction of additional behaviour support including wellbeing hubs and additional behaviour/wellbeing trained staff, and training for staff e.g. ELSA and Thrive.

Partnership working with Early Help, youth services, youth justice services, Police and Children's Social Care are all ways that schools can use to respond to some of these issues.

Head teacher induction is mandatory, and schools are supported to implement the guidance and protective measures. On occasions, the LA would support a school after an incident has occurred to either review their existing procedures or provide support to ensure measures are in place to protect staff.

Incident reporting is generally perceived to have increased and this is something that is encouraged very often to remove the stigma from reporting. However, more can be done by school management teams to ensure these messages are commonplace to improve reporting and ensure targeted support is offered, and local authorities encourage this.

what support schools should offer to staff who have suffered violence, abuse or harassment and how effectively schools across Wales are providing that support.

Staff who suffer any of the above would be offered occupational health support, wellbeing support or additionally can be referred to counselling services. However, take up of this offer is often reported as low.

Key indicators of a successful package of policy, practice and support include:

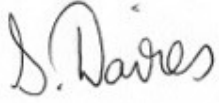
- Confidence in the reporting process by providing an open door, time to decompress and explain the incident without judgement.
- The offer of counselling and support
- Ensure the employee understands the incident can be reported to the police (where relevant)
- Risk assessment review to ensure safe systems of work, no lone working and signposting to further support
- Ensuring wider general awareness of, training in, and monitoring of delivery of VAWDASV mandatory training, and signposting to support routes.

Example 3:

Where there has been a need for additional therapeutic or counselling support, the local authority has worked with schools to provide that bespoke support.

The majority of schools have introduced wellbeing days and mentors to assist each other with the day-to-day pressures within the school environment. Schools have identified staff and pupil wellbeing as one of their strategic priorities to ensure this area is being addressed.

Yours sincerely,



Pennaeth Addysg
Head of Education

Croesawn ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb i ohebiaeth yn yr un iaith.
Ni fydd defnyddio'r naill iaith na'r llall yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English and will respond to correspondence in the
same language. Use of either language will not lead to a delay.

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