

Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Additional information following 21 February 2024 evidence session on covering teachers' absence

1. In relation to the Framework Review, which will now take place every quarter, how frequently was it done previously (paras 97-98)?

A full review of the framework specification and Terms & Conditions is undertaken, alongside colleagues in Education, prior to the re-procurement exercise every four years.

Agency performance is reviewed via framework management and supplier submitted reporting data every quarter. This review has been undertaken quarterly since the commencement of the 2019 framework agreement.

2. On agency fees, you agreed to provide additional figures on the Welsh Government's expenditure through the agency framework (paras 100-101).

To clarify, expenditure through the agency framework is Local Authority expenditure rather than direct Welsh Government expenditure.

The total spend figure of £101m does not solely constitute profit for private sector agencies. The majority of this figure will be pay passed onto supply workers, along with legislative costs of employment (pension, National Insurance, etc.). Whilst it is difficult to be exact given the number of agencies on the framework (and their different agency fees), the agency fee element is approximately 16% of the total charge when engaging a supply teacher. Applying this to the £101m figure would equate to approximately £16m retained by private sector agencies for this period across the 24 agencies on the framework during that reporting period (the current framework is now 39 agencies).

It should also be remembered that with this spend, agencies must also cover the provision of additional services and costs (not just provision and pay of the worker). These costs include back-office support staff and account managers, payrolling services, DBS and safeguarding checks, annual accreditation and audits by an approved accreditation body, cyber essentials and carbon reduction policy compliance, along with providing training and development for their workers (over 2000 training courses provided by agencies in 2023).

3. The Committee's Chair asked for further information about whether the model suggested by Owain Lloyd (para 120) led to lower or higher costs overall than the agency model (para 121). Please can you provide this information?

As at 2022 data indicates the minimum cost of employing a supply teacher through a local authority or directly by a school on the minimum of the salary point (M2) is £198 per day. This includes the TPS at 23.68% and employer national insurance contributions. A school or local authority can opt to pay the supply teacher at a higher salary point on the main pay range or upper pay range (UPR), at an increased cost. These employment costs do not include any management time, administration, advertising or recruitment costs incurred by the school or local authority.

The cost of employing a supply teacher through an agency registered on the national framework in 2022 was between £188 and £218 depending on the agency fee; the average was £190 based on an average daily fee of £22. The agency daily rate includes the Nest workplace pension contribution (3.5%).

4. You agreed to provide updated figures for 2022-23 about the spend and number of cover days worked through the agency framework by job role.

Role usage is captured in days and has been monitored since 2019:

	(Sept 19 - March 20) only 8 months data				(Apr 23 - Dec 23) only 9 month data
	Days				
Role	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Supply Teacher	99,136	100,173	220,173	214,120	198,627
Teaching Assistant	150,542	155,230	257,703	376,757	391,261
Cover Supervisor	12,108	10,686	19,875	16,820	23,832
TOTAL	261,786	266,089	497,751	607,697	613,720
	%				
Role	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Supply Teacher	37.9	37.6	44.2	35.2	32.4
Teaching Assistant	57.5	58.3	51.8	62.0	63.8
Cover Supervisor	4.6	4.0	4.0	2.8	3.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

5. You also agreed to provide information about the average cost of agency fees per local authority and the extent to which they differ, based on location.

Average daily agency fees (all framework agencies) are summarised below:

All Wales Average for all framework agencies:	£41.13
North Wales Average for all framework agencies:	£42.71
South-East Wales Average for all framework agencies:	£40.46
South-West & Mid Wales Average for all framework agencies:	£40.85

The above compares fees for all framework agencies and does not account for those agencies that are used most often. As such, the following analysis has also been provided.

Average daily agency fees (top 5 spend agencies) are summarised below:

All Wales Average for Top 5 (spend) framework agencies:	£36.91
North Wales Average for Top 5 (spend) framework agencies:	£40.00
South-East Wales Average for Top 5 (spend) framework agencies:	£35.20
South-West & Mid Wales Average for Top 5 framework agencies:	£36.98

These agencies account for approximately 75% of total framework spend. This shows a lower average agency fee across all areas of Wales, but a bigger difference in average agency fee between South and North Wales. This can likely be explained by only 2 of the top 5 agencies operating across North Wales. There are far more agencies operating across South Wales (approximately 30) versus North Wales (approximately 15), thus greater choice and competition.

A further point, the agency with the highest spend / usage has the same agency fee for all 22 local authority areas in Wales, so no geographical difference.

As stated above, this approximately £40 agency fee per day represents only 16% of the total daily charge for a supply teacher.

6. The Chair asked about the booking platform’s ability to facilitate individuals switching from an agency model to a directly employed model (para 172). Please can you provide information on this, as agreed?

The detail of the exact employment model for the platform is still being considered as we explore how key functions can work at a national level. However we would envisage that as is the case now those employed via an agency would be able to easily switch to a different employment model (e.g direct employment), if they wished to work via the platform.

7. You agreed to provide further information on the following, specifically in the context of NASUWT’S survey of supply teachers from 2021-22, which found that 31% of supply teachers “had not been given access to continuing professional development opportunities in the last 12 months” (paras 202-205):

The National Professional Learning Entitlement, the Schools as Learning Organisations model, and professional standards help schools and settings nurture a culture of professional learning and enquiry for all, including supply teachers.

Since the NASUWT survey the Hwb website has been further developed, including changes a new professional learning area. This supply section outlines the various routes open to supply teachers to access professional learning including linking to the EWC Professional Learning Passport for professional learning as well as summarising other options including access to Welsh language and induction processes. More information is available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-learning/supply-teachers/>.

The new [professional learning area](#) aims to provide a single point of access to high quality, easily navigable professional learning provision, to meet the needs of all education professionals.

We are continuing to develop the new area. This includes working with a wide range of internal policy areas as well as external stakeholders to continue to identify appropriate, relevant, high quality professional learning provision to include in the professional learning offer to support all practitioners in their continued development.

8. What steps the Welsh Government has taken, or intends to take, under the new agency framework to collect data on the uptake and impact of professional learning provided by agencies?

Welsh Government collects data on the number and name of the training courses provided by framework agencies during each quarter, and the number of workers that have attended training during this period.

9. What action the Welsh Government is taking to collect data on the uptake and impact of professional learning for supply teachers accessed through the Education Workforce Council's provision?

Any professional learning the Education Workforce Council provides is specific to its statutory responsibilities, in particular the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice. This professional learning is open to all registrants including supply teachers and supply school learning support workers and as such EWC do not break down their attendance figures.

10. Please can you provide the Committee with a copy of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body of supply teachers' pay and conditions, when it is published?

This has not yet been published but we will share as soon as it is available.

11. We note that the pilot in Ynys Môn remains ongoing. Once this pilot has concluded the Committee would be interested to hear from you with your evaluation of the pilot.

The initial rollout within Ynys Môn is an ongoing process with the local authority working closely with schools and teacher booker. At the outset schools were initially able to use both the booking platform as well as contacting the local authority directly to secure supply staff. However, we understand Ynys Môn is now intending for all schools to transition to booking entirely via the new platform in the coming weeks. We are happy to liaise with Ynys Môn colleagues to provide their initial assessment of the platform and experiences of the rollout following this transition.