

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

FEI 01

Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill

Evidence from : NUT Cymru

About NUT Cymru:

NUT Cymru represents primary and secondary school members and is the largest teaching union in Wales. We welcome the opportunity to contribute evidence to the Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill.

1. The principle of teaching financial awareness and responsibility to young pupils is one NUT Cymru supports. The rise in individuals who are reliant on pay day lender loans is testament enough to the need to provide improved financial education. In that regards we do welcome the principle need behind the Bill.

There is also recognition that how financial literacy is taught across Wales at present varies from school to school and from local authority to local authority. Having a Bill of this nature, putting requirements on both local authorities and the Welsh Government, may establish a more consistent picture.

2. On the whole yes. Of course how it is interpreted at a local level by local authorities will largely determine how effective it is in achieving its aims.

3.

4. In one sense it may support schools in bringing together a more coherent picture of how financial literacy should be delivered. The pockets of good work that are ongoing across Wales can be filtered to all schools to allow greater consistency. The emphasis on expertise is also a strong positive.

Of course there is equally a danger that the Bill in practice could be misconstrued by local authorities and schools in the implementation phase leading to higher workloads for teachers and a greater squeeze on the curriculum.

Perhaps the big question is where in the curriculum this will sit. It may be anticipated that financial education could simply be placed under the personal and social education (PSE) heading. However, this is increasingly becoming the dumping ground of all 'non-essential' priorities, which means it is both an over prescribed area and one that is not given the right level of focus.

If the view is that financial education is to be fitted into another area of the curriculum, again this will need to be viewed against the existing, and often competing, priorities in other subjects.

Aside from the obvious and real concerns about the time capacity available in the school day to implement a new topic of this substance, there are questions about the skills capacity. Teachers are easily capable of relaying information but to ensure that the subject is properly embedded in the curriculum, and taught well, practitioners will need to have the relevant expertise. Therefore, in order to ensure this policy is correctly delivered assurances do need to be given as to the continued professional development (CPD) commitment that would be provided in line with any new expectation on teachers. Schools and local authorities therefore will have to reassess their current skill structure and CPD arrangements.

Failure to identify the necessary CPD will inevitably result in a new topic in schools that for all its laudable ambitions will not have the impact it should or could have. Too often new initiatives have fallen by the wayside as a result of a lack of consideration given to the need to offer appropriate, high quality training to practitioners.

5. As stated in response to question 4 the key barriers will be in regards to the potential increase in teacher's workloads; where in the curriculum this will sit and the capabilities and knowledge of teachers to deliver it in conjunction with existing pressures on CPD arrangements.

In line with these issues is a resource consideration. School finances are already stretched to breaking point and we are acutely aware that at the time of responding to this consultation there is a view that the Welsh Government intend to claw back up to £5m from existing budgets. There is, therefore, a concern that the budgets for CPD provisions and new materials will not be available to be able to fully meet the expectations of teaching financial literacy in the way the Bill may envisage.

6. We do not have the legal expertise to make any judgements but given education policies are devolved we would believe this does come under the remit of the Welsh Government.

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8. It appears that the preferred option is the best in terms of achieving what is required by the Bill. It is worth noting that there are no clear costings at present. The Explanatory Memorandum does state that it is hopeful clearer costs can be established through the curriculum review that is currently taking place in Wales. These will need to be tightly defined before any final decision is taken on the Bill. Finances are extremely tight in Wales. While there is a clear case for the development of greater guidance and even a legislative approach to financial literacy we do need to know for certain how much of a potential strain that will have on the education budget and what could be achieved without legislation at a cheaper cost.

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