

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

ST 17

Inquiry into Supply Teaching

Evidence from : The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW)

Consultation questions

Question 1 – What are your views on whether there is a prevalence in the use of supply teachers on a planned and unplanned basis?

The Council has significant evidence to confirm that supply teachers are used heavily in Wales, both on a planned and unplanned basis.

This evidence includes:

1. The Register of Qualified Teachers in Wales, maintained by the GTCW confirms that there are nearly 5000 supply teachers in Wales, the vast majority of whom are active. An analysis of these persons is attached for information or is available at <http://bit.ly/1kbAt00>. The data includes details such as the gender, age, ethnicity, Welsh language ability, phase and subjects taught.
2. In complying with its statutory responsibility to maintain a Register of Qualified Teachers in Wales, the Council works closely with local authorities, private supply agencies and schools. The Council can confirm that there are currently 40 private supply agencies operating in Wales (a small number of which hold Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) accreditation) as well as a diminishing number of local authorities that operate supply teacher “pools”.

There is a statutory requirement on agencies in Wales to only employ supply teachers who are GTCW registered. The Council provides an online facility for agencies (as well as local authorities and schools) to check the Register. On average, agencies in Wales make over 1000 registration checks per month.

3. A survey undertaken by the Council on behalf of the Welsh Government between March and May 2014 confirmed a number of facts about supply teachers, namely that:

- Supply teachers in Wales were predominantly either (a) in the early part of their career and undertook supply work largely due to a lack of permanent or temporary long term contracts. This is also confirmed by the data from the Register of Qualified Teachers (b) towards the end of their teaching career or retired from a substantive teaching post
- The average number of days worked by a supply teacher was 2.7 per week, however it was evident that those in the early part of their teaching career sought to work for as many days as possible (average 3.5 days per week)
- More supply teachers worked in the primary phase (nearly 60%)
- The most common reasons for schools to require supply teachers was to cover for sickness absence (41%) or for permanent teachers to undertake professional development (32.9%)

A copy of the survey report is attached and makes interesting reading, including qualitative comments from respondents about their personal circumstances and reasons for undertaking supply work. A copy of the Executive Summary is also available at <http://bit.ly/1kbAt00>.

4. The Council provides a facility, on behalf of the Welsh Government for supply teachers to record the sessions they complete towards the Practising Teacher Standards in Wales. This data shows that (a) around 80,000 sessions are logged by supply teachers in Wales towards the Standards each year (b) Very few supply teachers have met the Practising Teacher Standards in Wales to date (under 50) since supply teachers were able to work towards the Standards (September 2012).

The Council would also like to highlight that each of the other General Teaching Councils in the UK and Ireland has worked closely

with their respective governments in relation to teacher supply. Indeed, the Teaching Council for Ireland is currently developing formal advice to the Irish government on this matter. GTCW works closely with its fellow GTCs and is able to offer UK and Ireland perspectives to the Committee on this matter.

If you believe that this results in problems (for example, for schools, pupils or teachers), how do you think they could be resolved?

The Council is aware that the Welsh Government commissioned a study by Estyn and the Wales Audit Office in 2013, which examined the “impact on learner progress of schools’ strategies to cover the absence of teachers and the effective and efficient employment, training and deployment of supply teachers”. Following this report, the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee made a number of recommendations in May 2014.

While the Council does not wish to repeat the findings and recommendations from this work here, it does wish to highlight the following key points:

- It is essential that schools are able to make use of well qualified and effective supply teachers to cover for both planned and unplanned absences when they need to.
- It is important that pupils receive continuity and therefore the use of supply teachers needs careful management so as to ensure that pupil progress is not affected
- It can be difficult for schools to recruit both permanent teachers and supply teachers to certain secondary subjects or for subjects taught through the medium of Welsh.
- In considering supply teacher issues, it is important to avoid “treating the symptoms rather than the cause”. The most common reasons for the use of supply teachers are sickness absence and to cover for teachers undertaking CPD, therefore these are clearly areas that require further attention.

Many schools and headteachers are well aware of these challenges

and have strong arrangements in place to cover teacher absence. However, as the Estyn and Wales Audit Office report showed, such good practice is not consistent across Wales.

The Council is also aware that many supply teachers find it difficult to access continuing professional development or are actually prevented from accessing certain programmes such as the Masters in Educational Practice. Specific work needs to be undertaken to ensure that supply teachers are able to undertake valuable CPD, however, in doing so it is essential that the profile of supply teachers is clearly understood, namely that the majority are either newly qualified and are seeking permanent posts or are at the tail end of their careers

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

X

Question 2 – What are your views on the circumstances in which supply teachers are used for example, the types of classes they cover; the types of learning activities which take place under the supervision of supply teachers; whether they are qualified to teach relevant subjects?

As explained in its response to question 1, the survey undertaken by GTCW in 2014 confirms certain points regarding supply teachers in Wales, namely:

- Supply teachers are more prevalent in the primary phase
- The most common reasons for schools to require supply teachers is to cover for sickness absence or for permanent teachers to undertake professional development

Furthermore, the Council's work in maintaining a Register of Qualified Teachers in Wales and in administering arrangements for Induction, EPD and the Masters in Educational Practice in Wales has indicated

that:

- There are many occasions where a supply teacher is used for activities that are of a “cover supervisory” nature and that could be adequately covered by a substantive member of school support staff
- There are occasions when a non–subject specialist is used to cover a particular subject, although most schools try to avoid such a situation

The Council would be pleased to investigate the matters referred to in this question through a further survey if the Welsh Government considers it helpful to gain hard quantitative evidence in this regard.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

Please refer to question 1.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	X
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

Question 3 – What are your views on the impact of the use of supply teachers on the outcomes for pupils (including any impact on pupil behaviour)?

Please refer to question 1.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 4 – What are your views on the Continuous Professional Development of supply teachers and the potential impact of the National Professional Learning Model?	
<p>It is clear that many supply teachers do not receive the same professional development opportunities as teachers with substantive, including in-service training and access to the Masters in Educational Practice.</p> <p>However, it would be incorrect to assert that there are no such opportunities for supply teachers. For example supply teachers working towards the Practising Teacher Standards are provided with an external mentor to support them (after 50 sessions) and all supply teachers are able to access services such as Hwb and Learning Wales. In addition, some supply teachers are able to attend school based training if they are at a school for an extended period and at least one prominent private supply agency in Wales does provide a full of CPD support to its workers.</p>	
If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?	
<p>The Council notes that the Public Accounts Committee made 2 specific recommendations on CPD in its May 2014 report on teacher absence regarding CPD.</p> <p>The Council concurs that this is an area that requires particular attention by the Welsh Government. As the professional body for teachers, the Council would be pleased to assist the Welsh Government in such work.</p>	

In developing CPD for supply teachers, the Council re-emphasises the point it has raised above that it is important that the profile of supply teachers is clearly understood, namely that the majority are either newly qualified and are seeking permanent posts or are at the tail end of their careers. It is likely that each group will have differing needs.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

X

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

Question 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?

The Council has a statutory duty to uphold standards in Wales by:

- Maintaining a Register of Qualified Teachers
- Developing and maintaining a Code of professional Conduct and Practice
- Investigating and hearing allegations regarding unacceptable professional conduct, serious professional incompetence or where a teacher has committed a criminal offence

Through this work, the Council is aware that there is variability in practice amongst private supply agencies and local authorities in terms of performance management arrangements. The Council is aware of some agencies and authorities that have well developed arrangements in this regard and in contrast others with little in place. Indeed, it is all too easy for an agency or authority to no longer give work to an under-performing supply teacher rather than actually confront and deal with performance issues.

If you think there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

The Council has referred to the England based REC accreditation scheme for private supply agencies. This accreditation is not compulsory in Wales and only a small number of agencies hold it. One option might be for such a scheme to be compulsory for agencies operating in Wales and overseen by the newly established Education Workforce Council in Wales. This would enable Wales to establish its own criteria in order for any agency to hold such accreditation.

It is common in other professions for a registered professional to meet certain minimum annual CPD requirements in order to retain registration with their professional body. Indeed this is an arrangement that has been piloted by the General Teaching Council for Scotland and is about to be formally introduced. One advantage of such a scheme is that it requires “occasional” workers such as supply teachers to undertake ongoing CPD. While the Council is not specifically advocating such a system in Wales, it would be pleased to provide further information to the Children, Young People and Education Committee on this matter if required.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	X
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?

No.

As stated above, as part of its statutory duty to maintain a Register of Qualified Teachers in Wales, the Council currently liaises with 40 private supply agencies in Wales, a number that has risen threefold since the Council’s establishment in September 2000. In contrast, in

2000 supply “pools” administered by local authorities were commonplace, however these have now been discarded by most authorities and even where they do still exist, there is no obligation for a school to use supply teachers from the pool.

While most local authorities have preferred supplier contracts in place with private supply agencies, their oversight of the use of supply teachers is very limited.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

The Council considers that a number of organisations can play a part in providing an effective oversight about the use of supply teachers in Wales, including the Welsh Government, Estyn and Local education authorities (and consortia) and the soon to be established Education Workforce Council (following the reconfiguration of GTCW).

In discharging its statutory duties, the Council works closely with local authority Human Resources teams and private supply agencies. Using data from the Register of Qualified Teachers, by undertaking regular surveys of supply teachers (on behalf of the Welsh Government) and through maintaining a Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered teachers, the Council considers that it can make a helpful contribution in this area.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

X

Question 7 – Are you aware of any local and regional variation in the use of supply teachers and if so, are there any reasons for this?

Yes, greater use in South Wales.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

The survey undertaken by the Council has indicated that the most common reasons for the use of supply teachers are sickness absence and absence to participate in continuing professional development.

The Council considers that it would be valuable for the Welsh Government to collect data at a local and regional level on these two areas in order to identify whether or not there are geographic differences. We note that one of the Public Accounts Committee recommendations in May 2014 was for the Welsh Government to collect data on teacher absence.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

X

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

Question 8 – Do you have any views on supply agencies and their quality assurance arrangements?

As stated above, the Council is aware of some agencies with very robust quality assurance arrangements and others with little in place.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

The Council reiterates its comments in response to question 5 that

while a small number of agencies in Wales hold REC accreditation, most do not. Furthermore, this scheme is “England based” and therefore lacks the scope to incorporate any specific needs and priorities for Wales. As suggested, one alternative would be to develop an accreditation programme in Wales, overseen by the new Education Workforce Council.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

X

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

Question 9 – Are you aware of any specific issues relating to Welsh medium education? If so, what are they?

The Council is aware anecdotally from schools and private supply agencies that it can sometimes be more difficult to secure supply teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh. This is particularly difficult in certain secondary subjects in geographical areas like South Wales.

Data from the Register of Qualified Teachers also indicates that the number of supply teachers who speak Welsh or can teach through the medium of Welsh is slightly below the figures for all registered teachers. Please refer to the analysis mentioned under question 1.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

This matter would need an innovative solution. For example the appointment of “permanent” supply teachers at a local authority or consortia level who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh, especially if subject specialists are also required.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	X
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 10 – If you had to make one recommendation to the Welsh Government from all the points you have made, what would that recommendation be?	
<p>The Council would propose a Task and Finish Group of relevant stakeholders to develop and action recommendations in relation to supply teachers. The stakeholders might include representatives from the Welsh Government, the Education Workforce Council (which will be formed following the reconfiguration of GTCW on 1st April 2015), Estyn, local authorities / consortia and private supply agencies.</p> <p>The Group should be required to present its recommendations and its progress in delivering them to the Committee.</p>	
Question 11 – Do you have any other comments or issues you wish to raise that have not been covered by the specific questions?	
<p>The Council wishes to highlight that under <i>the Education (Wales) Act 2014</i>, the GTCW will be reconfigured on 1st April 2015 to become the Education Workforce Council (EWC) and registration will be extended to further education lecturers and school and further education learning staff workers. This will extend the number of registered persons in the education workforce to around 70,000 by April 2016.</p> <p>The Council understands that supply staff are also heavily used in across these groups, in particular school support staff via agencies. The Council is already working with employers and agencies to ensure such persons are registered in line with Welsh Government phasing requirements.</p>	

The Council proposes that the Committee might extend its consideration of this matter to include the wider education workforce in due course once the EWC has collected the necessary registration data.