

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
ST 30
Inquiry into Supply Teaching
Evidence from : Supply Teacher

Email 1

I am pleased to offer my submission regarding Supply Teachers. I trust that you seek to have well qualified, professional and dedicated Supply Teachers within Welsh schools?

If you want good quality supply teachers then I put forward that supply teachers are treated abysmally and need to be treated much better than they are at present. More and more Supply Teachers are the modern day equivalent of Medieval Surfs – all the responsibilities of the classroom and no rights whatsoever.

Supply teachers, more and more have no choice but to work for private supply agencies. These private supply teachers undercut LEA supply teaching rates and other agencies, driving down pay and conditions. Being undercut many LEA's have either abandoned or are planning to abandon their supply lists. (Flintshire seems to be the latest.) Cash strapped schools are only too willing to employ these undercut teachers from agencies – whilst hypocritically demanding as high a standard of professionalism, expertise and service as from their much better remunerated teachers.

Undercutting

Agency X pays a Teacher Y £100 – 100per day (full day including all the expected professional duties, marking etc) If the teacher works every day on supply that is 195 school days X £100 X = £19, 500 maximum per annum. This is much less than the salary of a Newly Qualified Teacher in the first year of Teaching. Indeed, as an experienced teacher I have on a long term supply teaching position. Teaching Mathematics for less remuneration than a Newly qualified teacher in the same department in the same school.

You might think that the benefit of outsourcing to private employment agencies is that by reducing pay and conditions of supply teachers that costs to schools and ultimately to the taxpayer is likewise reduced. Not a bit of it! By many accounts the cost of supply teachers to schools has substantially increased since the opening up of the market by privatizing supply teacher supply. This is due to the cost that the privatized supply agencies charge schools for supply teachers.

With supply teachers now costing more than ever, schools seek further ways to reduce their costs for absent Teachers. Since the allowing of unqualified teachers to teach school often opting for much cheaper but not qualified Teaching Assistants and Cover Supervisors. Consequently, there is much less employment for Supply Teachers – who after all are qualified Teachers. Many supply teachers find themselves having to work as supply Teaching or Cover Assistants or they simply do not get any work. Indeed, I personally have had to work as a supply cover supervisor being in charge of classes (you certainly are!) for half the pay of a supply teacher.

You may say, "Yes but cover assistants don't teach but just hand out the set work, collect it in and generally keep an eye on the class?." This is the theory. The reality is that as Cover Supervisor I have many responsibilities including managing the class, setting and maintaining the rules, ethos, order and discipline, manage others such as learning support staff and managing the students. When I had have worked as Cover Assistant (or no work at all) then in reality, whether I like it or not, have had to be a Supply Teacher teacher for half the pay.

Supply Teaching Agencies.

Anyone can set up a private supply teaching. No qualifications or expertise in teaching and education required. No fit person test required.

A typical scenario A teacher applies to a private supply agency. Interviewed by a someone, (often a young person, not too long out of school), who is not qualified as a teacher and knows absolutely nothing of the demands teaching.

Undercutting LEA's and other teaching agencies is the name of the game. The poorer cheaper agencies undercut those agencies that at least try and maintain

some standards by providing some teacher professional development or supply teacher welfare. Profit, is the name of the game.

Conditions of Service.

Teachers employed by in school are able to accrue "Benefits of Service". e.g. pay increments for experience gained and are eligibility for the a pension based on length of service through the Teachers' Superannuation Pension Scheme. Prior to privatization of supply teaching, Supply Teachers were also able to benefit from "Benefits of Service including pay increments and membership of the Teachers' Superannuation Pension Scheme.

No longer do most Supply Teachers, forced to work through private supply agencies, have any Benefit of Service whatsoever. No pay increment for experience or access to the Teachers Superannuation Pension Scheme.

Don't stop working as a Supply Teacher! – you will never work teaching again, not even as a Supply Teacher!

Here is the scenario.

You are an experienced Supply Teacher. For whatever reason you take a short break. Maybe, you take a short break maybe to bring up a family or become full time carer. Later, with changes circumstances and return to teaching. You simply won't be able to return – not even as Supply Teacher!

You apply to an Lea or a private agency. They really like you, your Curriculum Vitae and your wealth of experience. Furthermore for safeguarding you have a fully clear up to date (and subscribed to the DBS update service) enhanced DBS criminal record check. Everything is fine and you pass every recruitment requirement. until they seek *employment* references covering the last two years until you come to the final hurdle – references. Lea's and private agencies insist on references completely covering the last two years employment as a teacher and only acceptable from your last full time headteacher. But the supply teacher may say "But I have taken a couple of years to bring up my children or I have been a full time Carer for my child. Moreover, prior to my teaching break I was a day to day supply teacher. How can I provide such extensive references". To no avail. The supply teaching applicant will be rejected.

The only acceptable references that LEA's and private agencies are employment references from a *headteacher*. How do the unemployed, full time parents or carers return to teaching, not even supply teaching?

When questioned LEA's and private agencies state that the reference criteria is a Safeguarding issue. Whilst Safeguarding is of course paramount, it should not be such a barrier as to keep thousands of bona fide safe would be returning teachers from supply teaching employment. Indeed, why is it a Safeguarding matter? Surely, the DBS and the Update Service are the rigorous parts of the mandatory the enhanced criminal record and safeguarding check.

Many would be returning supply teachers, many with a wealth of experience, simply find that the demand from LEA's and private agencies for references covering the last two years teaching and from your last full time headteacher, impossible barriers to surmount. Many remain unemployed claiming benefits. What a waste of taxpayers money and a waste of talent.

I am an experienced supply and temporary Teacher. With my wife securing a full time position as a teacher I became a supply teacher whilst also a part time carer for my disabled daughter. A couple of years ago I became a full time carer for my disabled daughter, for just over two years. With my disabled daughter much more independence I sought to return to supply and temporary teaching. Despite being an experienced supply teacher of both the primary and secondary age ranges, a teacher of a shortage subject Mathematics and over 20 years experiences Supply teacher (and part time carer) to my dismay I found it was almost impossible to return to Supply teaching (or indeed any sort of teaching)

Like many other would be returning Supply Teachers I remained on benefits for far too long.

I must be one of the relative few to return to supply teaching after taking a break (to be a Carer) How did I eventually return to some Supply Teaching?

I was fortunate that my subject is Mathematics. With Mathematics and Numeracy being a priority among the adult population I was accepted by a further education agency for there temporary teacher and lecture supply register. As for references this college teaching agency accepted my voluntary teaching for a community project as my main reference. Subsequently, I secured a six month temporary

contract teaching Functional silks and GCSE Mathematics and was able to return to temporary teaching employment after being unemployed and unemployable rejected at the above described insurmountable reference barriers.

I was then able to be granted a couple of reference that were acceptable to school teaching agencies. What an obtuse route back into school supply teaching! Most would just give up. Reiterating, what a waste of taxpayers money. What a waste of talent.

Existing Supply Teachers Find Insurmountable Barriers gaining further Work Opportunities

Here is the Scenario.

A supply teacher seeks further opportunities or supply teaching employment. He or she applies to be recruited to LEA or privatised agencies supply registers.

By the nature of supply teaching he or she has mainly been working "a day or so here and a day or so there". The reference criteria is as described above – references completely covering the last two years from your last full time headteacher. As describe above for most day to day supply teachers the reference criteria are an insurmountable barrier. As above applications for further supply teaching opportunities will be rejected.

No doubt many of these daily supply teachers have to claim top up benefits. What a waste of taxpayers money. What a waste of talent.

*You can't become a supply teacher if you are a day to day supply teacher!
Madness!*

So who is mainly recruited by LEA and privatized supply teaching supply registers?

As described above, not too many would be returners after a teaching break or day to day supply teachers.

It will be the likes of newly qualified teachers have the required references from college and teaching placements or recently retired *full time teachers*.

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Madness!*

GCTW

Supply teachers earn less per day than regular colleagues. Most supply teachers are day to day supply teachers, have no guaranteed work, don't work regularly and are for the most part over a year not in regular employment are low paid workers.

The GCTW annual fee may not be too much for a full time teacher or a headteacher, but it is a substantial sum for most supply teachers. Why should supply teachers have to pay the same GCTW fees as full time teachers or indeed a headteacher?

Conclusion.

- Don't lose the skills and expertise to the dole queue of experienced supply teachers – remove the well meaning but insurmountable reference recruitment barrier for day to day teachers
- Don't lose the skills and expertise to the dole queue of experienced supply teachers – remove the well meaning but insurmountable reference recruitment barrier for would be returning supply teacher after a relatively short carer break.
- You can't become a supply teacher if you are a day to day supply teacher!
Madness!
- Get the best of Supply Teachers – treat them as professionals with fair pay and conditions. Not as "medieval surfs with all responsibilities of the classroom and no rights whatsoever. (e.g. No Teachers' Superannuation pension)
- Qualified Teachers, for every classroom
- Ban free market teaching agencies
- Supply teacher recruitment by qualified personnel

- Save the money so it can be better spent in schools – private supply agencies actually cost the taxpayer more.
- GCTW – Why should supply teachers have to pay the same GCTW fees as full time teachers or indeed a headteacher? Well why?

I would welcome the opportunity to be interviewed by Welsh Assembly members regarding my experiences as a supply teacher, my time unable to return to supply teaching and the how to return to a quality professional supply teaching force.

Email 2

I wish to make a further submission to your enquiry into Supply Teachers and Supply Teaching.

More and more supply teachers are forced to become casualised labour of privatized agencies. As submitted in my initial response this casualised labour is treated as medieval serfs with all the responsibilities of the teaching profession in the classroom and absolutely no employment rights whatsoever. No employment conditions of service and no employment rights including no right to opt in to the Teachers' Superannuation Pension.

One area that I did not raise in my initial submission was the use of umbrella companies in these privatised agencies. Umbrella companies are used by privatised agencies to process supply teachers pay and tax.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of umbrella companies, they no doubt make good sense for the likes of tradesmen and contractors. For example a plumber or an electrician might do say 5 jobs for 5 different customers in a week. Rather than having to spend hours sorting out 5 different lots of pay invoices, 5 different lots of tax, it is far easier to utilise the services of one umbrella company to sort them pay, tax and expenses as a combined total each week. One company, however many different jobs and with different clients the contractor deals with – hence the term "Umbrella company! The contractor can shop round, choose an umbrella company and change his or her one umbrella companies at will. Not so Supply Teacher.

Privatised agencies use umbrella companies for their own convenience, but certainly for the convenience of supply teacher. Far from it!

As explained above the principle is of one company an umbrella company to sort out a contractors pay, tax and expenses from all assignments irrespective of how many clients in say a weekly remuneration period.clients. All the pay, expenses and tax during a week. However, supply teacher are told by privatized supply agencies which umbrella company will process their pay. Different privatized supply teaching agencies use different umbrella companies to process their payroll. Far from one umbrella company the supply teacher ends up having to deal with several umbrella companies – which rather defeats the object an Umbrella company for the Supply Teacher. Moreover the supply teacher, as I have experienced, has to spend far too much time completing numerous time and expense sheets to submit online to these umbrella companies.

I have spent some time in order to understand the workings of umbrella companies including the charges for the services rendered, tax and expenses process and the remuneration. Never-the-less, even I do not fully understand the complexities of umbrella companies. From talking to other supply teachers, I believe that most supply teachers have little understanding of the remuneration process through umbrella companies.

For most supply teachers there will be no advantage from being paid through an umbrella company. Indeed, most supply teachers will be disadvantaged.

(The only Supply teachers who will be better off from being paid through an umbrella company are those relatively few teachers on long term regular contracts in one school of at least two days a week.

The Mathematics:

- The amount most workers can earn before paying tax is £10 000. Most supply teacher, except perhaps for a few long term supply teachers, won't earn £10 000 per annum.
- A supply teacher has to work 100 days a year at say £100 per day to be earn £10 000 ($£100 \times 100 \text{ days} = £10\,000$ per annum) (100 days out of the maximum of 195 school days per year)
- A supply teacher has to earn an average at least £192 – 31 per week over a year – for it to be beneficial to the supply teacher. e.g. $\text{tax code} / 52 \text{ weeks} = £10000 / 52 = £192 - 31$

Most supply teachers cannot offset expenses occurred against tax through umbrella companies because they do not earn more than the tax code threshold of £10 000. Hence, there is no advantage to being paid through an umbrella company whatsoever. **Indeed, supply teacher are disadvantage in several ways:**

- 1) **having to spend endless time for now gain completing hours and expenses forms for no gain whatsoever – no doubt saving the privatised teachable supply agency much time, effort and cost in the process.**
- 2) **Supply teachers have to pay charges to these umbrella companies to process their pay. As most supply teachers earn less than**
- **£10 000 per annum they are indeed worse off than being paid and taxed directly through PAYE directly through the privatized supply teaching agency.**

Just another way that supply teachers are treated appallingly.

I would welcome the opportunity to be interviewed by Welsh Assembly members regarding my experiences as a supply teacher and the how to treat, maintain and return to a quality professional supply teaching force.

Email 3

I am pleased to make this further submission to your enquiry regarding supply teachers.

Often schools will use much cheaper unqualified Cover Assistants instead of qualified Teachers. Consequently, there has been a substantial reduction in work opportunities for qualified supply teachers. With reduced employment opportunities qualified Supply teachers find that they have no choice than to accept Cover Assistant work at half the pay of an agency teacher or not work at all. . (please see in a previous submission my comments regarding the cover assistants employment)

The system is open to abuse from a less reputable agencies. It would be all to easy for disreputable agency to supply a cover assistant to a school and charge for supplying a teacher. I am certainly not suggesting that this has happened because I have no proof. but the checks and balances seem to be "a bit lose." Indeed, I have had to work as Cover Assistant and not being sure what has requested, I have felt the need to ask the school as to what they have hired – a

Cover Supervisor or as Teacher. One particular agency comes to mind, as perhaps not dishonesty but not transparent with its supply teachers – which raises some doubt