

Research Briefing:

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Rhagfyr 2016

Petitions Committee | 13 December 2016

Petition number: P-05-727

Petition title: Funding for the Education Workforce Council Registration (EWC) Fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools

Since April 2016, Learning Support Workers in schools and colleges in Wales have been required to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) - the same body that regulates Teachers and Further Education Lecturers.

This year the actual fee for Learning Support Workers to register was £15. It was £45 for teaching and lecturing staff. The fee from April 2017 is not yet clear. UNISON lobbying secured an agreement from 12 Local Authorities to pay, in whole or in part, the 2016 fee on behalf of Learning Support Workers in Schools – therefore recognising that these workers are amongst the lowest paid in the public sector, largely due to their term time worker status. The remit of the EWC has so far been concerned with Teachers and Lecturers who are on significantly better wages than Learning Support Workers.

Learning Support Workers are predominantly women, the vast majority are paid term time only, unlike teachers and lecturers; their contracts are more likely to be fixed term and at the mercy of school budget cuts. Many work more than one job already.

Those Local Authorities who committed to pay the fee last year should be acknowledged. But, at a time of ever squeezed budgets, there are no guarantees for April 2017. Additional money must be ring fenced in the Local Government settlement to ensure that Learning Support Workers are not expected to bear the burden of the cost of registration next April.

For these reasons we the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ring fence monies in the Local Government settlement to fund the EWC fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools in April 2017.

Background

The *Education (Wales) Act 2014*, provided for the establishment of the Education Workforce Council (EWC) as a successor to the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW). Previously, only teachers in maintained schools were registered with the GTCW. The EWC came into existence on 1 April 2015. The Act set out two principal aims for the EWC:

- To contribute to improving the standards of teaching and the quality of learning in Wales; and
- To maintain and improve standards of professional conduct amongst teachers and persons who support teaching and learning in Wales.

The Act extended the obligation for additional groups of staff to register with the new body - school learning support workers, further education teachers and learning support workers.

The Welsh Government's rationale for establishing the EWC and extending the groups requirement to register was the need for a body with a broader remit that better reflected the close working between different sectors of workers within education. Examples provided of this close working included the greater use of school support staff (teaching assistants) and collaboration at post-16 between schools and colleges.

The requirement for Further Education teachers to register came into effect on 1 April 2015. The requirement on learning support workers in both maintained schools and in further education to register came into effect on **1 April 2016**.



The *Education Workforce Council (Registration of Youth Workers, Youth Support Workers and Work Based Learning Practitioner) Order 2016*, considered in Plenary on 6 December 2016, extended the requirement to register to these youth workers and work based learning practitioners.

Registration fees

The *Education (Wales) Act 2014* gives Welsh Ministers the power to make regulations in relation to fees payable for registration with the Council. Under the former GTCW, the annual registration fee was £45, of which £33 was subsidised by the Welsh Government.

In the first year the EWC was in existence (2015-16), the fee arrangements remained the same for teachers and the Welsh Government subsidised the fees of FE teachers who paid £18 of the £45 fee.

The current regulations, the *Education Workforce Council (Registration Fees) (Wales) Regulations 2016* increased the annual fee paid by teachers from £45 to £78.

Table 1: Current registration fees: 2016–17

Category	Registration fee (£)	Subsidy (£)	Contribution (£)
School teacher	78	33	45
FE teacher	49	4	45
School learning support worker	49	34	15
FE learning support worker	49	34	15

Source: Welsh Government, *Registration fees for the education workforce in Wales (2017)*, June 2016

Teachers have long received a subsidy towards their registration fees which is reimbursed to them from local authorities through their pay. This is provided for by the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) which is issued by the UK Government as teachers pay and conditions are a non-devolved function.

Instead of directing the funding for the subsidy to local authorities to pass on to teachers, the Welsh Government has committed in plans to give that money to the EWC to enable the fees of **all** registrants to be reduced, rather than just providing a subsidy for teachers. This requires the UK Government making the amendment to the STPCD.

The Welsh Government consulted (until 30 September 2016) on the arrangements for making this change. The net effect for those currently registering would be no different.

Welsh Government Action

The *Cabinet Secretary for Education's evidence* to the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 10 November 2016 said:

“The revised baseline figure for 2017-18 includes the transfer of £1m from the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in respect of the subsidy for teacher registration fees. In 2015, the General Teaching Council for Wales was reconfigured to create the Education Workforce Council (EWC). This saw professional registration extended to include Further Education (FE) teachers working in FE Institutions in Wales. Professional registration has since been extended further to include all school and FE based Learning Support Workers in Wales. The transfer will enable the sharing of the subsidy towards the EWC teacher registration fee between all teaching practitioners.”



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