

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Cyllid wedi'i dargeddu i wella canlyniadau addysgol | Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes

TF 15

Ymateb gan: NASUWT

Response from: NASUWT

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPEC) Inquiry into Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes (the Inquiry).
2. The NASUWT is the largest teachers' union in Wales representing teachers and school leaders.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. In noting the focus of the Inquiry, the NASUWT finds some difficulty responding to the specific areas raised by the CYPEC, as engagement with the education workforce unions over the introduction and application of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG), formerly referred to as the Pupil Deprivation Grant, the Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) initiative and the role of the regional consortia on the use of the PDG on looked after and adopted children (LAAC) has been negligible.
4. Indeed, the Union has been left to pick up the pieces of teacher morale and confidence being decimated in at least one of the so-called 'Pathways to Success' schools, where 'gaming' and 'data manipulation' appeared to be supported by SCC, while in another school, the headteacher was eventually removed from post, following complaints made by the NASUWT. Regrettably, the Governing Body in the latter case was supported by SCC in its attempts to protect the headteacher. In both cases, industrial action ensued.

5. The NASUWT, therefore, welcomed the decision to abandon the SCC initiative as it appeared to be an ill-conceived, quick-fix, data-driven exercise, with the attitude of 'do what it takes to improve outcomes', and where command and control management, rather than collegiality and co-operation, held sway.
6. The NASUWT maintains that there are some fundamental principles against which the grants referred to as being within the focus of the Inquiry, and the distribution of the same, need to be measured and evaluated by the CYPEC. The Union asserts that the grant funding and its distribution must:
 - (i) provide equality of opportunity and equitable access for all learners, including through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, and contribute to raising educational standards for all pupils and narrow the achievement gap;
 - (ii) ensure that all schools are funded on the same basis, irrespective of their legal or governance status, which should not result in anomalies between schools where their needs and circumstances and the expectations upon them are the same;
 - (iii) reflect the additional costs related to pupil deprivation, socio-economic circumstances, school location and setting;
 - (iv) ensure the provision of, and access to, high-quality education and related support services for children and young people, and particularly vulnerable children, including those currently provided by local authorities;
 - (v) provide equality of entitlement for all learners to be taught by qualified teachers and for the recruitment, retention and development of a world-class workforce in every school or setting as critical components in delivering better outcomes for all

children, and that these entitlements must not be based on parents' ability to pay;

- (vi) be clear and transparent so that school budgets are based upon clearly identified and agreed sets of expectations about what work schools should do and the performance expectations that will apply to them;
- (vii) enable fair, open and easy comparisons to be made with regard to the income and expenditure of different institutions;
- (viii) be fit for purpose, taking account of local circumstances and needs and the expectations on schools and local authorities, while promoting public and professional confidence in the system;
- (ix) be sufficient in ensuring that the global amount available for the funding of schools takes full account of education priorities and needs and promotes fairness, equity, inclusion and social cohesion;
- (x) ensure that any changes to the funding for schools do not result in detriment to colleges or early years provisions, which are also essential in providing education for school-aged pupils;
- (xi) be responsive to changing needs and circumstances;
- (xii) be predicated on consultation and democratic involvement at national, local and institutional levels, including full recognition of school workforce trade unions;
- (xiii) promote stability for schools and enable schools to plan and organise their priorities in the longer term, and help to minimise turbulence;
- (xiv) support the best use of resources, through arrangements for strategic planning of local provision, institutional collaboration, economies of scale and the pooling of resources to meet locally identified educational needs; and

- (xv) ensure that schools in receipt of state funding should not be able to 'hoard resources' and that they demonstrate the provision of good value for money.
7. By its very nature, the SCC initiative, which resulted in additional funding going to a relatively small number of schools identified as 'facing the greatest challenge', would not have met several of these principles.
 8. In contrast, the PDG sought to target funding across schools according to need, based primarily on an index of deprivation, within the school funding formula and, as such, this approach would meet several of the principles. However, the CYPEC may wish to reflect on the NASUWT's long-standing concerns about the use of indices of deprivation as indicators of socio-economic need, and on the potential implications of the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) which could result in children losing their eligibility for free school meals (eFSM).
 9. Further, in raising this contrast, the NASUWT is not providing an indication of support for the current methodology of funding schools in Wales to the CYPEC. Indeed, the Union maintains that the current system, which is based primarily on pupil numbers rather than the needs of the curriculum and the designated needs of specific groups of pupils, does not enable either schools or local authorities to retain staffing complements to ensure that these needs are catered for effectively.
 10. The NASUWT believes that the CYPEC should question seriously the decision to move away from the hypothecation of the grants in the focus of the Inquiry and to allow a regional consortium to allocate the funding, presumably, as it sees fit. The Union raised concerns about the decision to amalgamate this grant funding into the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) in its evidence to the inquiry into the EIG.

11. The NASUWT is concerned that the un-hypothecation of these grants could lead to funding being allocated on the basis of grace, favour and patronage, rather than being targeted to areas of need through the provision of either dedicated funding to schools or the retention of central local authority services where specialist staff can be deployed to areas of need.
12. The NASUWT has previously raised concerns over the funding for meeting learners' Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in written and oral evidence presented to the CYPEC's inquiry into ALN, and in the Union's response to the consultation to the ALN Bill which was annexed to the written evidence. However, it may be of interest to the CYPEC to be aware that NASUWT members charged with the responsibility for catering for the needs of these learners often complain that the funding they should be able to access is not ring-fenced to the learners and is often vired to other budget headings.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

13. The NASUWT offers the comments and observations which follow on the issues under scrutiny by the CYPEC:

Schools' use of the PDG and the extent to which this benefits the pupils it is designed to be targeted at.

14. The NASUWT is aware that many schools have been placed in the position of having to use the PDG funding to retain staffing levels on a general basis because of the school funding methodology and/or the disparities in school funding levels between local authorities across Wales. In addition, the situation is exacerbated by the general underinvestment in education by successive Welsh Governments which, as estimated by the NASUWT, has led to an on-average per-pupil funding gap between maintained schools in Wales when compared to maintained schools in England increasing from £31 in 2000-01 to £678 in 2015/16.

This is equivalent to an additional £306 million which should be going into school budgets in Wales and which could result in the employment of around 7,500 additional teachers, or a combination of additional teachers and learning support staff. Instead, as the CYPEC will be aware, schools have been blighted by year-on-year redundancies.

The relationship between PDG-funded support for pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and expenditure on activities designed to improve attainment of all pupils.

15. As stated previously in this evidence, the NASUWT recognises that using the deprivation index of eFSM provides a reasonably effective means of ensuring that the PDG can be targeted to areas of need on a relatively equitable basis across Wales. However, this view is tempered by the Union's long-standing concerns about the use of indices of deprivation as indicators of socio-economic need, and by the potential implications of the introduction of UC, which could result in children losing their eFSM.
16. The NASUWT suggest that the CYPEC should ask the Welsh Government to consider seriously the turbulence which may ensue around the introduction of UC and what measures are needed to ensure that no school loses out simply as a result of changes to the eligibility criteria for FSM. The Union maintains that the Welsh Government needs to recognise and address the fact the levels of deprivation will not have changed, just the way in which they are defined for the purpose of school funding and, in particular, access to the PDG.

Regional consortia's use of the PDG on looked after and adopted children, and the impact this is having.

17. Other than the general concerns expressed elsewhere in this response over the use of the regional consortia structure to distribute the PDG, the NASUWT is not able to comment further on this issue.

Progress since the previous Children, Young People and Education Committee 2014 inquiry; [Educational outcomes for children from low income households](#).

18. In noting that the 2014 Inquiry covered, amongst other things, the Pupil Development Grant, known at the time as the Pupil Deprivation Grant, the SCC initiative, and the role of regional consortia, the NASUWT suggests that the CYPEC should reflect on the failure and subsequent abandonment of the SCC, the decision to rename the PDG, and low esteem in which the regional consortia are held, when considering what progress has been made since the 2014 Inquiry.

The impact of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme and the consequences of its closure on the participating 'Pathways to Success' schools.

19. The NASUWT is unsure about the impact the closure of the SCC programme had on the participating schools as there was very little transparency about the degree to which the schools benefited directly from the additional funding and how much was used by SCC to administer the programme.
20. In any event, as stated elsewhere in this evidence, the Union's limited experience of the programme was entirely negative.

How the lessons and legacy of Schools Challenge Cymru can be used to complement subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes.

21. The NASUWT maintains that the decision to abandon the SCC programme speaks for itself in terms of lessons learnt and legacy and does not believe that the approach has anything to offer in terms of

complementing subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at effectively improving educational outcomes for pupils, as the programme was data driven and lacked integrity.

Evaluation of attainment data in light of the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes.

22. For reasons expressed elsewhere in the response, the NASUWT questions the reliability of the data relating to the SCC programme and to a lesser extent the data relating to the PDG, although the Union is aware of the PDG being used to facilitate the removal of pupils from non-core subjects in order to concentrate on literacy and numeracy outcomes and to ‘cram’ pupils in terms of the achievement of level 2-equivalent GCSE C grade qualifications.

Targeted funding/support for more able and talented pupils.

23. The NASUWT is aware of schools ‘ticking the box’ in establishing a post-holder with a teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) for more able and talented (MAT) pupils, but is not confident in commenting further about the support that is offered to MAT pupils.

The value for money of both the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes.

24. The NASUWT maintains that the SCC programme provided very little, if any, value for money for the reasons expressed elsewhere in this evidence, but would not view the PDG in the same light. However, the Union has serious concerns over the implication of the name change and the reliance on the regional consortia to ensure that the funding is distributed in accordance with the principles referred to in paragraph 6 of this evidence.

