

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-805
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/07643/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

09 December 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 2 December, in relation to P-05-085 Fair Deal for Supply Teachers, and your consideration of the petition regarding supply teaching in Wales - the National Procurement Service's (NPS) Framework and the school-based supply cluster pilot.

The new NPS framework went live in September 2019 and the NPS have been actively promoting it to local authorities through their procurement networks. The NPS have held two meetings with the local authorities since the framework was awarded to provide clarity and communications on the changes made to the agreement and how they can implement it with schools. Welsh Government have also been actively promoting the use of the framework to schools through Dysg, Hwb and via social media routes.

Spend through the new agreement has increased significantly in comparison to the previous framework with New Directions from approximately £1.75m to £4.5m (comparing the comparative spend for September 2018 against spend for September 2019). The NPS will be able to conduct an on/off framework spend comparison when the data is available early in the New Year but initial figures show the majority of agency spend in Wales is now going through the framework, thus allowing the NPS to have more visibility and control over the market.

Initial figures also show that over 300 workers have received training through framework agencies. In addition, 24 out of the 27 appointed agencies have signed up to the Welsh Government's code of practice for ethical employment in supply chains and 27 jobs have been created in Wales to support the delivery of the framework.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The NPS have been carrying out monitoring of pay rates, which has included acting on feedback from supply teachers, reviewing job adverts/websites and subsequently following up with agencies to address any issues of non-compliance. In instances where there has been an issue with an agency, it has been rectified immediately.

The NPS have recently met with New Directions, the largest agency on the framework, as part of their contract management work and they have reported that approximately 88% of their bookings for supply teachers in September have been at the minimum pay rate. The remaining 12% of bookings were not paid at the minimum level at the request of the school.

The trend of the correspondence now being received by the NPS is that where the minimum pay rate is not being met, it is the schools that are making this decision. Where the NPS are made aware of this either through an agency or supply teacher, it has been reported back to individual local authorities to address with the school in question.

As the NPS Framework has only been operational since September, there are no immediate plans to introduce statutory changes. It is important that we allow some time for the arrangements to bed in, to rectify the issues, and to monitor improvements. The NPS will provide an update to me early in the New Year, once the first full term has finished. However, its initial findings have been positive, with reported improvements in agency compliance and spend through the agreement having increased significantly.

Arad research published its initial report on the School-based supply cluster project on 12 November. The research highlights a range of benefits for the schools that took part in the pilot ranging from clear positive outcomes across teaching and learning, pupil behaviour, professional development, wider school improvement, support for supply teachers and consistency of teaching and learning. The final report from Arad research will follow in August 2020, which will take into account the sustainability of the project following the third and final year. Consideration will now be given to the feasibility of supporting a second phase of the project and I will provide an update on this in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

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