

Annwyl Weinidog/Dear Minister,

We write to raise our deepest concerns regarding the school funding review, being conducted by Luke Sibieta. The Trade Unions welcomed the review when you made the announcement in October 2019 as we have lobbied for years for a whole-scale review of school funding.

The announcement followed the publication of the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPEC) report on school funding which made a series of recommendations to Welsh Government on what measures should be taken to work towards a fair funding system for schools. These included a recommendation that “Welsh Government commission an urgent review of how much funding is required to fund schools sufficiently” and that the review should “consider, as its basis, what the minimum cost is of running a school and educating a child in Wales”.

Since the announcement we have had some concerns regarding the remit of the review, but were reassured by the statements that you have made:

“Luke Sibieta will take forward an analysis of how total spending, and spending on different categories of inputs, varies across schools in specific circumstances in Wales.

"This will include, but not be limited to, how spending varies with levels of deprivation, rurality and growth in Welsh medium education. This empirical analysis would account for the differences in levels and methods of central spending across local authorities and will help provide for informed decision making on levels of funding for schools and pupils in different circumstances across the country.  
(6 December 2019)

"According to IFS analysis, spending per pupil in Wales is just below £6,000 on average. However, this varies considerably between local authorities, reflecting differences in deprivation and sparsity, as well as choices made by local authorities in line with their responsibility for setting school budgets.

"Although schools differ significantly in terms of the factors which influence their costs, making it difficult to identify a “minimum cost”, this work will provide an essential analysis for

government, local authorities, schools and all with an interest in securing the right investment in Welsh education."  
(24 October 2019).

Announcing the analysis, you added the review will "help provide for informed decision making on levels of funding for schools and pupils in different circumstances across the country."

On Tuesday (January 14, 2020) Luke Sibieta gave a presentation on his review at the Welsh Government Union Partnership Group. This was the first time that any of the Trade Unions had met with Mr. Sibieta.

In your statement outlining the scope of this important review you stated: "We will invite policymakers from within the Welsh Government and external stakeholders (local authorities and unions). The aim of this meeting will be to establish clear expectations of what will be covered in the work and adjust the scope of the work if this is likely to be useful/feasible."

This meeting took place in December without representation from any trade union. This in its own right is deeply disappointing. Had unions been given the opportunity to participate in the 'initial project meeting' we most likely would not be in a position to be querying the premise of the report.

Upon being questioned about the lack of consultation, we were further informed that we would be invited to give evidence to Mr. Sibieta before the end of January. With two weeks left in the month, and heavy diary commitments this seems unlikely.

However, that offer would not have even been made had Mr. Sibieta not have been questioned and he seemed caught completely unawares that he would need to meet with the unions again, as if his attendance and presentation at this meeting constituted some sort of consultation.

Such a report is in danger of simply telling us what we already know, that there is insufficient money in the system to meet need; the CYPEC report documents that very clearly. We had hoped that the remit of the review would at the very least draw upon an understanding of what it costs to educate a learner - and thereby move the debate on from the work already completed by CYPEC.

Instead, it would appear this review aims to just achieve little more than describe how schools use the meagre funding currently allocated to them. Schools are in a funding crisis: ascertaining how

schools spend what little they get, is less than useful. We had understood from the CYPEC report and your announcement, that the report would scope flow and sufficiency.

If our deductions following Mr Sibieta's presentation are correct, then the report is set to disappoint not just our members but the CYPEC whose recommendations are apparently being ignored. Mr. Sibieta, was repeatedly asked if he would be providing a base figure for educating a child: we received no satisfactory response to this.

We would ask that the stakeholder meeting setting out the expectations and scope of the report, be reinstated with trade union officials, before this review goes any further. Since this should have happened in December and our views taken into consideration, we do not anticipate that this should delay Mr. Sibieta's work on this vital matter. Indeed, it will render his report more "useful/feasible" as was your stated intention.

We are keen to support a review of school funding as we firmly believe that it is the only way to shine a light on the dire funding settlements in schools and begin to provide a strategic plan for reversing the funding crisis that we are in. However, we cannot support a report that will merely highlight the current situation and tell us what we already know. We urge you to act now to address our concerns.

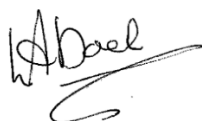
A copy of this letter will also go to Mr. Sibieta and the Chair of the CYPEC.

We look forward to your urgent response.

Yn gywir/Yours faithfully



Ruth Davies, President, **NAHT Cymru**



Laura Doel, Organiser, **NAHT Cymru**



Eithne Hughes, Director of **ASCL Cymru**

Deborah Lawson, General Secretary, **Voice**

Nicola Savage, Regional Organiser, **GMB**

Dilwyn Roberts-Young, Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol/General Secretary,  
**UCAC**

David Evans, Wales Secretary, **NEU Cymru**

David Gunter, Regional Officer, **Unite the Union**

Rosie Lewis, Regional Organiser, **UNISON Cymru**

