

# ELL(2) 03-06(p1)

## EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 8 February 2006
<b>Time:</b>	9.00am
<b>Venue:</b>	
<b>Title :</b>	Minister's Report

**This report updates the Committee on specific issues raised by members and on issues of current interest. Annex A sets out major engagements since the last report**

### **1. Clywch Implementation**

During my recent plenary statement about vetting and barring arrangements I indicated that I would provide a progress report to the Committee outlining our actions on implementing the Assembly Government's response to the Children's Commissioner's recommendations arising from his Clywch inquiry.

A copy of the update is at Annex B and sets out where the current position with regards to the implementation for the 16 recommendations specifically directed to the Assembly Government.

As before, the paper also provides an indication of progress on 6 other recommendations that, whilst directed at others, recognise that we have substantial involvement either in providing relevant guidance or in a sponsorship role.

We are also taking forward action which, whilst not part of Clywch, contributes to our wider commitment to safeguard children in Wales. We re-issued guidance in December on "Reporting Cases of Misconduct or Professional Incompetence in the Education Service".

That guidance outlines the statutory requirement for employers to make a report to the Assembly where they cease to use a person's services on grounds of unsuitability to work with children, misconduct or health where that concerns the safety and welfare of children. A report is also required where the employer might have ceased to use the person's services on one of those grounds had he or she not already ceased to provide the services.

We continue to be vigilant in taking forward implementation taking full account of the relevant consultative and legislative processes. We are on track to deliver on implementation on most of the recommendations within the coming months.

I would once again like to take the opportunity of thanking the Children's Commissioner and his officers for the role that they have continued to play as part of the development of and consultation on our responses to the recommendations.

## **2. Safeguarding Children in Schools**

As I said in my statement to Assembly Members on 17 January (<http://assembly/rop/ROP/Plenary%20Session/2006/January/rop060117qv7.pdf> )

the Assembly Government remains totally committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Wales. Recent developments have however raised concerns about the need to strengthen the arrangements for safeguarding children in our schools.

On 24 January, in the light of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills statement to Parliament on 19 January, I wrote to all schools, LEAs, employers and others in the education sector about the need to exercise robust pre-appointment procedures to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. Copies of my letter together with Ruth Kelly's statement and review have been circulated to all Assembly Members.

As I set out in my letter, I plan to introduce legislation to make Criminal Records Checks compulsory across the school workforce in Wales; I have asked Estyn to undertake a survey of the vetting practices within a sample of Welsh schools; and, as an extra safeguard in Wales, I intend to introduce new legislation to enable the General Teaching Council for Wales to undertake suitability checks on teachers.

On 31 January we commenced section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which will introduce a statutory duty on local education authorities, governing bodies and further education institutions to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare. The commencement of section 175 fulfils the commitment that I gave to Members on 23 November 2005, as part of Gwenda Thomas AM's debate under Standing Order No. 31.

Guidance to support LEAs and governing bodies meet their duties under section 175 will be the subject of consultation in the coming months and issue before this duty comes into force on 1 September.

I am confident that these measures together with those that we are taking forward as a result of Clwyd recommendations and the specific measures announced by Ruth Kelly, for example the introduction of a new vetting and barring scheme and the creation of a new panel of independent experts to make the final decision on who should be barred, will strengthen existing procedures and ensure that our arrangements are suitably robust and put child protection first.

As I mentioned in my Plenary statement, there are no teachers registered with the General Teaching Council for Wales who are subject to List 99 bars or restrictions. In addition, I have now received assurances from those undertaking the List 99 review that, of the cases highlighted by Ruth Kelly in her statement, none of the individuals is working in Wales in a school or in a capacity that brings them into contact with children.

I can assure the Committee that I am taking all possible steps to continue to safeguard children in our schools and we will continue to work with Whitehall departments to ensure that measures taken to strengthen procedures equally apply in Wales.

### **3. HE Reconfiguration and Collaboration**

I have approved 2 significant proposals for support under the funding provided for reconfiguration and collaboration following the publication of the Assembly Government's strategy for HE - "Reaching Higher" . The Reaching Higher budget is intended to strengthen the sector through development of collaborations and structures in the HE sector which build capacity and enable Wales to compete effectively. Proposals are therefore supported only if they are: significant, sustainable once the pump priming resources from the Reaching Higher Fund have ceased; managed under a unified management structure; and have the capacity to deliver greater benefit than institutions acting alone.

These two proposals now approved are for the establishment of :

a Research and Enterprise Partnership between the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and the University of Wales, Bangor and

a Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. The Institute is being created by drawing together and building on existing excellence at University of Wales Bangor, Cardiff University and University of Wales Swansea.

#### **Research and Enterprise Partnership**

The Research and Enterprise Partnership will ensure that international quality multidisciplinary research is strengthened in the two institutions, securing a long term research base in mid and north Wales.

Central to the development of the Partnership will be the establishment of a Joint Research Management Board and the appointment of a Director to oversee the collaboration and research strategy development. The Partnership will initially develop four joint research centres. These are the Centre for Catchment to Coast Research, Centre for Integrated Rural Environment Research, Centre for Advanced Functional Materials and Devices Research and the Institute for Mediaeval and Early Modern Studies. The Joint Research Management Board will also identify further subject areas for a second phase of research collaboration and integration between the two institutions.

## **Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience**

The development of the Centre will bring together the existing 5\* rated psychology departments at U W Bangor and Cardiff U with the 4 rated Department at U W Swansea. By integrating existing groups at the partner institutions, the Institute will draw together a current total of 246 academic/ research staff and PhD students with significant grant capture. Cognitive neuroscience has emerged over the past decade as one of the most significant areas of contemporary science. The partner Institutions have strengths in these fields already and the new Institute will create a multi-centre, multi-disciplinary research institute which will be sustainable for the future and change the shape of the academic discipline of psychology in universities in Wales. There will be 3 core areas of activity:

Reconfiguration of the Research Groups to develop sustainable research collaboration;

Establishment of a graduate school;

Development of partnerships with industry and healthcare through the work of the new Third mission and dissemination taskforce

Taken together these two proposals represent funding of over £16m over 5 years and a significant contribution to strengthening research capacity in fields which are important to our institutions and to Wales.

## **4. Childcare Initiatives**

The Childcare Bill received its Third Reading in the House of Commons on 25<sup>th</sup> January.

The Bill places statutory duties on local authorities in Wales to secure sufficient childcare within their areas, and also to ensure that parents have access to adequate information on childcare and other children's services. The Bill provides flexibility for the Assembly Government, where appropriate, through regulation and guidance making powers. The timing of the duties and supporting guidance will be in the control of the Assembly Government. It is envisaged that the new duties will come into force in April 2008, at the same time as in England.

Links to both the Bill and explanatory notes are below

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/107/06107.i-v.html>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/083/2006083.htm>

## **Cymorth**

The new duties will be supported by the Cymorth grant scheme, which includes support for childcare. We have recently issued instructions and guidance to local partnerships requiring a level of Cymorth investment of at least 8.5% to fund childcare projects, including children's information services. In 2006-07, there is growth of £12 million in the "Cymorth including childcare" budget, including centrally distributed funds, and in 2007-08 Cymorth funding is budgeted to increase further to £59 million.

## **Flying Start**

Furthermore, the Flying Start initiative aims to provide part time free childcare in its target areas; £46 million is available over the two years to March 2008.

## **Foundation Phase**

As a part of the Learning Country agenda, the Welsh Assembly Government is piloting a new Foundation Phase for children from 3 to 7 years of age. The new phase will replace what is currently known as the Early Years and Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. The new curriculum is developed under seven Areas of Learning rather than subjects. Children will access the new Foundation Phase curriculum through play and active involvement and there is focus on developing children's Personal and Social Development and Wellbeing.

There are 41 schools and non-maintained settings involved in the pilot which began in September 2004 for the 3 to 5 year olds. In September 2005 the Year 1 children and some Year 2 children entered the pilot and the remaining Year 2 children will join in September 2006. The pilot will continue until September 2008 when the national rollout will begin.

## **Children and Families Organisation Grant (CFOG)**

Through the Children and Families Organisation Grant (CFOG), the Assembly provides core funding to voluntary organisations in Wales involved in delivering the Childcare Strategy. This includes Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs (CPCKC), Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM), Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association (WPPA), Play Wales, the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA). Collectively they receive funding of £1.85 million in 2005-06.

## **Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks Reimbursement for childcare workers in the Welsh Voluntary Sector**

The Assembly is providing funding of £214,000 in 2005-06 to provide free Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for childcare workers in the Welsh voluntary sector.

## **Torfaen Community Focused Schools Childcare Pilot**

In addition, the innovative pilot in Torfaen focusing on childcare in schools and funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (£529,000 over 18 months to March 2006) is contributing to the increase of quality childcare places.

Other ways of funding childcare outside the Assembly Government budget include:

## **Genesis Wales**

The Genesis Wales project, for a combined total of approximately £12.5 m over 3 years under Objectives 1 and 3, for the purpose of increasing the contribution of European Structural Funds to childcare provision across Wales. The Genesis Wales project will run until 2008, and will offer assistance to parents to enable them to take up work and training opportunities. It will provide additional affordable and accessible childcare, freeing parents to enter training and employment. The Objective 1 bid is made under the measure to "improve the participation of women in the labour market", and has approval for approximately £10.1 million of ESF over three years. The Objective 3 bid is made under the policy "Promoting gender equality within the labour market" and measure "Pathways to participation" and has approval for approximately £2.5 million, again over three years.

## **CWLWM**

The Assembly Government has also taken over leadership of the CWLWM (Childcare Wales Learning and Working Mutually) Equal Project, which brings together a number of childcare development interests together to tackle childcare challenges in partnership, with an additional £1.2 million of EU funding over three years to June 2007.

## **Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs (CPCKC) "Kids' Clubs" Project**

The Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs ESF project provides £3.7 million to August 2007 to increase affordable, quality childcare provision, complementing the Genesis Wales project.

## **5 ELWa/ACCAC Merger Update**

The central Change Programme Team are currently putting in place arrangements for the 'Week One' project to ensure a smooth transition for all the merging organisations, including ELWa and

ACCAC. This work includes a concentration on ensuring all essentials are in place and providing practical support for staff who are new to the Assembly. The DELLIP team continues to work closely with the Change Programme Team to effect as smooth a transition as possible for ELWa and ACCAC into the new Department.

The Wales Youth Agency merged with the Assembly Government on 1 January. The majority of staff have joined the new Youth and Pupil Participation Division, splitting into two teams - Youth Work Policy and Youth Work Delivery. This new Division will give the Assembly Government enhanced capacity to support the implementation of Extending Entitlement for 11-25 year olds, and to supporting the quality and development of youth work.

Steve Marshall took up post as Head of Department designate on 16 January and has begun the process of bringing the new Department together with a series of meetings with staff and Ministers. He, together with the three Group Directors designate currently in place, will also begin to operate as a shadow management team for DELLS, known as the Corporate Executive Team. Formal take-up of appointment for the senior management team will be on 1 April.

The third report to the Felt Fair Committee on the deployment of staff was considered on 6 February. Next steps will be to place staff currently in the redeployment pool and, following the decision that Dysg would also merge with the Assembly on 1 April, to put forward Dysg staff for deployment into their new roles.

## **6. Advance notification of statistical release of Reserves held by schools in Wales at 31 March 2005**

### **School Reserves in Wales**

The Assembly's Statistical Directorate has issued a statistical brief on school reserves held at 31 March 2005. The reported figures are a 'snapshot' of the situation at the end of the financial year. The paper (Statistical Release 12/2006) was published on 26 January 2005 and is available at

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwalesheadline/content/local-gov/2006/headline-local-gov.htm>.

The key points of the paper are:

The overall level of reserves within Welsh schools was £78 million at the end of March 2005, the equivalent of £164 per pupil. This is an increase of 14 per cent over the previous year. Reserves in primary schools accounted for £47.3 million or 60 per cent of the total;

Conwy, at 8.2 per cent, had the highest level of reserves as a percentage of delegated schools expenditure. Monmouthshire recorded the lowest percentage with 2.1 per cent;

1,704 schools had positive reserves at the end of March 2005 totalling £82.5 million; 441 of which had reserves in excess of 10 per cent of their total delegated expenditure.

133 primary schools, 27 secondary schools and 3 special schools in Wales had negative reserves (i.e. deficits) totalling £4.1 million at the end of March 2005;

Schools are responsible for managing their own finances. The level of reserves held by an individual school at any time will depend on a number of factors such as the timing of payments and receipt of income, the view of the governing body as to the need for contingency provision or whether the school is 'saving' to fund a particular project or activity.

LEAs are responsible for the financial monitoring of their schools. The ELL Minister has no powers to determine budgets for individual schools or to intervene when schools hold significant reserves.

The Education (LEA Financial Schemes) (Wales) Regulations 2004 make it a requirement that when dealing with the carry forward of funds from one year to another authorities must have a monitoring regime in place for balances which amount to 5% or more of the individual delegated budget for the school.

We expect LEAs to monitor and talk to schools with significant reserves to determine how they have arisen and the purpose to which they will be put. LEAs should ensure that any school that has a surplus balance is retaining that balance for a specific purpose. By the same token LEAs should ensure that schools with negative balances are brought back to positive balances as soon as possible.

## **7. Funding for Transition and the Better Schools Fund**

At the Committee meeting on 11 January I was asked to provide details of the funding arrangements for our transition from primary school to secondary school agenda within and outside the Better Schools Fund. I was also asked to provide a full breakdown of the Better Schools Fund section of the budget.

### **Transition (outside the Better Schools Fund)**

My report to Committee on 11 January gave a broad indication of the key development areas which we would expect to see in transition plans. A total of £5 million over the next 3 financial years (£1m/£2m/£2m) will be made available in the form of a grant to all local authorities to work with schools in developing a range of exemplar projects on specific aspects of transition. Authorities have been notified of plans in this area we will shortly be consulting with authorities on the detail. This will include consultation on the detailed formula for allocating the funding across authorities.

### **Transition (within the Better Schools Fund)**



Within the broad Activity Area of "Curriculum Development" of the Better Schools Fund £9.5 million gross funding (i.e. including the matched funding of 40% from the LEAs) has been made available for Effective Transition in the Better Schools Fund in 2006-07. Indicative allocation for individual authorities are determined by the funding formula agreed with local authorities for Activity Area 1. Given the requirement that transition plans be put in place during the 2006-07 school year it has been agreed that this money will be ringfenced for this year. The money can be drawn down by local authorities working with schools to provide staff time and meet staff development costs.

Eligible expenditure, as set out in National Assembly for Wales Circular No. 18/2005 includes activities to develop a transition plan to meet the requirements set out in Regulations and guidance to be published by the Assembly Government / ACCAC in spring 2006. Funding can also include specific activities to improve transition such as:

Joint curriculum planning. For example, general arrangements for secondary teachers and primary subject co-ordinators to develop shared schemes of work in specific subject areas and in the promotion of cross-curricula themes including literacy and numeracy. This might, where appropriate, be supported by use of bridging units or specific arrangements for ensuring continuity of the learning experience and progression in a particular subject e. g. Welsh.

Achieving continuity in teaching and learning methods. For example, arrangements for observation of classroom practice so that subjects are taught in ways that provide for continuity and build on primary schools methods.

Achieving consistency in assessment and monitoring and tracking pupils' progress against prior attainment. For example, improving opportunities for teachers to work together to assess the work of pupils as they move from Year 6 to year 7, including moderation of Teacher Assessment.

Evaluating the impact of the policy and improvement initiatives on standards. For example, monitoring and review of transition arrangements and looking at ways to evaluate the impact of improved practice on learning and standards.

Pastoral links to meet pupils' personal and social needs. For example, sharing of information about pupils, visits to schools and support provided for pupils in managing the transition from Year 6 to Year 7.

Communicating the learning needs of individual pupils. For example, information on those with additional learning needs, those for whom English / Welsh is an additional language, more able and talented pupils, pupils who are looked after by a local authority and any other pupils who may be at risk of underachieving for a variety of reasons.

## Better Schools Fund

The Better Schools Fund provides pump priming support to help schools and authorities implement new initiatives and develop innovative approaches to raising standards of attainment in schools. In line with the Assembly Grant Protocol with WLGA, funding is generally limited to three years, subject to formal evaluation. It is the intention that successful programmes will be embedded into mainstream teaching and learning.

Grants from the Better Schools Fund (£36.94m gross budget for 2006-07) are paid to LEAs under powers in section 14 of the Education Act 2002. Payments are made at a grant rate of 60% with authorities required to contribute 40% from their own resources. Provision is made through the Local Government Revenue Settlement to enable authorities to meet the match funding requirement, although this element of funding is not hypothecated.

The Better Schools Fund circular for 2006-7 was published in September following consultation with LEAs and others. The revised programme aims to strengthen the focus on developing and sharing good practice, promoting innovation, encouraging whole-school approaches, encouraging non-curricular interventions and demonstrating the impact of measures supported by grant on teaching and learning.

### The Activity Areas to be supported under the programme for 2006-7 are:

<b>ACTIVITY AREA</b>	<b>Amount to be allocated</b>
1. Curriculum Development	£16,100,000
2. Governor Training	£600,000
3. Pupil Support	£4,956,000
4. Additional Learning Needs	£3,900,000
5. Iaith Pawb mewn Ysgolion	£3,700,000
6. ICT in Schools	£7,600,000

### Activity 1 - Curriculum Development

This Activity Area aims to raise standards and achievement through:

the development and implementation of arrangements to support continuity and progression in learning for pupils moving into key stage 1 and between key stages;

improvements in basic skills with a special focus on reducing the number of pupils

leaving school without good literacy and numeracy skills;

the promotion of thinking skills on the basis that problem solving skills and creative skills are key features in developing pupils' cognitive abilities;

innovative schemes for small or rural schools to work together; and

support for initiatives aimed at developing a broad and balanced curriculum.

## **Activity 2 Governor Training**

This Activity Area includes training to raise Governor awareness of the new statutory requirement to safeguard children and of changes arising from the recommendations in the Clywch report; and to enable them to undertake their responsibilities in respect of discipline and dismissal. Governors will be encouraged to undertake training alongside school staff.

## **Activity 3 Pupil Support**

This Activity Area has increased the emphasis on earlier intervention on behaviour and attendance, improvements in the sharing and use of information and enhancement of schools' policies on tackling these aspects, including anti-bullying procedures. Support for training for designated teachers and other staff maintained in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's Response to the Clywch Inquiry Report.

## **Activity 4 Additional Learning Needs**

This Activity Area aims to develop staff expertise and provision for pupils with additional learning needs in line with the Inclusion and Pupil Support Policy Framework and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales, and as part of LEA and school strategies for developing inclusive educational practices and removing barriers for learning.

## **Activity 5 Iaith Pawb Mewn Ysgolion**

This Activity Area sees continued support for: measures to improve teachers' Welsh language skills; to raise standards of teaching and learning in Welsh First and Second Language; and to extend opportunities for pupils to practice and experience Welsh in non-curricular settings.

## **Activity 6 ICT in Schools**

The aim of this Activity Area is to develop the effective use of ICT in order to enhance teaching and learning and encourage learning behaviour across the curriculum, whilst allowing LEAs flexibility to

direct resources towards schools with poorer levels of ICT provision (i.e. pupil:computer ratios less than 8:1 primary and 5:1 secondary and/or have yet to be connected to the Lifelong Learning Network).

## **8. Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. External Evaluation – Interim Report.**

The Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning (CDELL) based at the University of Nottingham was appointed as the Assembly's External Evaluators after a tendering competition in September 2005. The Interim Report contains information on the scope of the external evaluation, the research model used and the key research questions, the different phases of the evaluation, activities undertaken to date and the timetable for further work.

In line with agreement at the meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on 13 October, I am arranging for copies of the Interim Report to be made available to committee members.

In accordance with the Assembly's contract, a Final Report is to be produced by 31 May 2006 and this will be made available for discussion at a subsequent ELL committee meeting.

## **9. Update on the payment of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

At our meeting on 11 January I said I would provide you with an update on EMA payments.

The EMA Wales scheme for 2005/06 has been extended to cover both 16 and 17 year olds. On 31 January the Statistical Directorate published a Provisional Statistical First Release on EMA awarded in Wales as at 31 December 2005. This release (SDR 8/2006) is attached at Annex C. This provisional data revealed that 23,080 young people had had their 2005/06 applications approved and of these 18,890 (82%) had received an EMA payment.

Whilst the statistical data does provide information on the overall numbers and levels of award it does not cover expenditure on allowances paid. Some £6.5m has been paid to eligible young people during the September 2005 – December 2005 period.

## **10. Basic Skills**

I launched the "Numbers Count" campaign at a Press Conference on Monday 16 January 2006. The Numeracy Campaign forms part of the 'Words Talk, Numbers Count' Basic Skills Strategy, being taken forward by the Basic Skills Agency on behalf of the Assembly. The concept was introduced at the Basic Skills Conference in October 2005.

It comprises a series of TV advertisements in English and Welsh, one generic and one specific, targeted at Adult Learners and parents of young children. Coverage will be across Wales via HTV West, HTV Wales, S4C and radio. There will also be billboard advertising and posters issued.

The advertisements have been produced by JM Creative of Cardiff who were also responsible for the 'If you help me read' campaign which is considered to have made a memorable impact on the public. The TV adverts feature Cerys Matthews, singing the lyrics to a 1960s hit by Len Barry called "1,2,3." with Jonathan Davies providing dialogue.

The first screening was on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2006 as the last advertisement in the break in "Coronation St". Details of the remainder of the scheduling are currently being finalised but the advertisements will run for four weeks.

Individuals ringing the telephone number given in the advert (also featuring the numbers 1,2,3) will be sent one of two branded information packs.

The total cost of the campaign, including packs, is £1,120,000.00. The cost of the TV advertisements is £490,557.70.

The campaign is aimed at improving the numeracy skills of adults and children in Wales. Overall 990,000 adults do not have Level 1 numeracy skills and they need to be encouraged to have better numeracy skills in order for them to progress in the workplace. They also need to have better numeracy skills for everyday tasks such as working out APR and interest rates on loans, being able to manage their finances and counting back change. The campaign is also aimed at children and parents as children need to be encouraged to practise counting and improve their numeracy skills in order to improve their chances at school. If parents practise counting with children and help them with their homework, their numeracy skills will improve.