

Date: 10 December 2003

Title : Minister's Report

- 1. 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.**

2. Joint Ministerial meeting with WDA/ELWa/HEFCW and HEFCW's third mission

With the Minister for Economic Development and Transport, I chaired a meeting with ELWa, HEFCW and the WDA on 25 November. This was the third in a series of such meetings to ensure that our largest-spending ASPBs give sufficient priority to the delivery of services to business and that they are working to a fully integrated agenda.

Amongst the issues we discussed were sharpening the team Wales approach to skills development linked to better labour market intelligence; using the review of services to build more flexible models of delivery geared to the needs of business; extending the use of enabling frameworks such as company learning accounts; boosting the contribution of higher education to the growth of entrepreneurship through the 'third mission' agenda; and development of sectoral and segmentation analysis as a tool to target public sector investment more effectively.

Higher Education has a vital role in securing a successful and sustainable Welsh economy. Recognising this, HEFCW has established a Third Mission Committee whose first task will be to transform the Council's Higher Education Economic Development (HEED) Fund (worth some £3.1 million in 2003/04) into a mechanism that rewards not only HE's contribution to economic development, but to the social and cultural development of Wales as well. The National Council-ELWa and the WDA are represented on this group, alongside representatives from business and academia.

HEFCW is already ahead of the rest of the UK in requiring HE institutions to submit an institutional economic development strategy, implementation of which is currently funded via both the Council's HEED Fund and KEF. The sector in Wales also performs well in comparison with other parts of the UK. For example, the 2002 UK survey of HE-Business Interactions shows over the academic years 1999/2000 and 2000/01:-

- An increase in business spin-outs from 5 to 17 from Welsh HEIs - a 240% increase compared

with a UK average increase of 18%. The Welsh total for 2000-01 represents 7.8% of the total spin-outs from UK HEIs.

- An increase in graduate business start-ups from 15 to 56, accounting for 23.5% of UK graduate start-ups in 2000-01.
- Welsh HEIs' income from Research Councils involving business co-funding or formal collaboration more than doubled, and Wales's HEIs' share of DTI/OST funding also increased by 88% to put Wales's 2000-01 share (£5,586,942) ahead of Scotland's (£3,832,296).
- Welsh HEIs signed 412 contracts with business during 2000-01 valued at over £13m; over 50% of these contracts were with SMEs.
- A 7.75% share of UK Teaching Company Scheme programmes in 2000-01 and 8.9% of UK Teaching Company Scheme associates.
- An increase in revenues from intellectual property of over 250%.

In terms of promoting the employability of graduates

- HEFCW has won UK recognition for its strategic approach to the graduate employability agenda, and on 13 November launched a major new initiative in this area, Graduate Opportunities Wales (GO Wales). Universities UK advised the other HE sectors in the UK being to consider and follow Welsh practice.
- Over two years GO Wales aims to achieve: 1850 work placements; 800 work tasters; 700 opportunities for CPD; improved provision and development of services to enable graduates to get jobs in Wales, supporting 8122 students and graduates and 3360 companies in Wales.
- GO Wales also contributes to HEFCW's delivery in other key policy areas: third mission, including business links; widening access/increasing participation; disabilities; race equality; alumni; collaboration; and general student support arrangements.
- HEFCW has won European Social Funds (approx. £3.5m between 2000 and 2002) to enable enhanced delivery of two particular projects – Business and Management Skills, and High Level Skills – focused on the HE sector and delivering over 700 beneficiaries at Masters level (NVQ L5).
- Welsh Graduates accounted for more than 23% of UK graduate business start-ups in 2000-01.

It is essential that Wales builds on these successes and makes maximum use of the knowledge base provided by our HE institutions. The Economic Development Minister and I have therefore

commissioned a task and finish group to explore ways of ensuring that HE in Wales is more involved with economic development, especially in respect of the third mission activities of our institutions.

3. Funding of FE colleges

Dr John Graystone, Chief Executive of Fforwm, wrote to the Committee Chairman recently about a number of issues in connection with the funding of FE colleges. I have noted the points he has made and expect to discuss the issues with Fforwm at the next of my regular meetings with them. ELWa is mindful of the arguments advanced by Fforwm and will consider the needs of colleges alongside other providers when it produces its Operational Plan for 2004-05. The draft forward agenda for this committee will include the opportunity to consider progress on that Operational Plan. FE colleges are key players in post-16 learning and it is vital that they, and other providers, continue to deliver excellent results for Wales. ELWa will begin the transition to fairer funding arrangements for all providers with the introduction of dual running for the academic year 2004-05.

4. 14 – 19 Learning Pathways

The Welsh Assembly Government set out its intentions for education in Wales in ‘The Learning Country’ in September 2001. The consultation document ‘Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14-19’ in November 2002 took forward these ideas in an exercise of real partnership between all those engaged in providing for young people in the age group, together with young people themselves.

The ‘Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14-19’ Action Plan was completed in Spring 2003. This Action Plan gives details of specific action that is to be taken by the Welsh Assembly Government with its partners to enhance and extend the learning experiences of all young people to raise expectations and to work towards the aspirational target of ‘95 per cent of young people to be ready for high skilled employment or higher education by 2015’.

Over the summer months preliminary work was undertaken by the Youth Policy Team in preparing for the next stage of development. A Project Leader was appointed from September 1. Nominations to the Learning Pathways group and the six (Task and Finish) sub groups were sought. Representatives from across Wales from education and training and employers are involved. Young People’s Advisory Groups will be established in the New Year and representative young people will be members of the Overarching Group which oversees delivery of the Action Plan.

A ‘Setting the Scene’ conference was held on 5 September 2003 in Llandrindod Wells and, subsequently, the sub groups and Learning Pathways group have each held the first of three meetings to consider the issues identified in the appropriate section of the Action Plan. This series of meetings will be completed by Easter 2004. The Youth Policy Team will also be co-ordinating in December a meeting of 14-19 Network representatives from across Wales. Examples of good practice initiatives are being sought to provide opportunities for dissemination across Wales.

Key elements for transforming 14-19 education in Wales include tailored learning pathways with routes to a range of qualifications; work focused experience; community and voluntary experience; a wide choice of courses and experiences not necessarily all in the same setting; learning coach support to provide advice and support on learning provision and progress and the availability of personal support to meet need when required to help remove barriers to learning.

The involvement of over 100 representatives from all sectors in the task and finish groups, and the contributions of a wide range of learning providers and learners to the development of the proposals means that already significant changes are being planned to take forward some of the elements of transformation set out above.

Following the completion of the work of the sub groups and the Learning Pathways group a further report will be prepared after Easter 2004 with guidance prepared over the summer on how the various elements of provision will be delivered. The schedule envisages a progressive roll out of the programme with pilot work from September 2004.

5. Teachers' workload agreement

An important part of the workload agreement requires schools to change the way that they are organised so teachers are able to focus their professional skills on teaching. This will involve the recognition of a growing need for team working in schools, with support staff taking on new roles.

On 26 November I launched a consultation on draft regulations and guidance on teachers' qualifications and work. For the first time, they define what 'teaching work' is and provide that this can only be done by qualified teachers or 'other' teachers - such as overseas-qualified teachers or instructors. The draft regulations also provide that people, who are not qualified teachers, may undertake classroom work. This may only be done in support of a teacher, and under their supervision and direction, and, if the headteacher is satisfied that they are able to do so. This consultation is due to end on 6 February 2004.

I am also consulting on standards for higher level teaching assistants. There will be no requirement on schools to employ higher level teaching assistants. However, for the first time, this sets standards for the school workforce which will provide an assurance to parents, governors and to headteachers that the people working and doing this work are suitable.

6. Better Schools Fund 2004-05 (formerly the GEST programme)

At the end of November, I authorised the publication of the draft Circular for the Better Schools Fund for consultation with LEAs and others later this month.

The Grants for Education Support and Training programme has been subject to a detailed Assembly review over the past year and a number of essential changes have been identified, both in the activities

for which grant can be used, and in the management of the programme. These changes will be introduced in 2004-05. In order to reinforce the significance of these changes, the GEST programme will be re-branded and re-launched for 2004-05 as the Better Schools Fund. Whilst the Better Schools Fund will continue to support many of the activity areas previously funded under GEST, it has been designed to focus funding more explicitly at Assembly strategic priorities for Education. The Better Schools Fund will allow local authorities much of the same flexibilities which they enjoyed under GEST, enabling them to take account of local needs and circumstances by moving resources between activity and priority areas. The Fund is intended to direct resources towards innovation and embedding new initiatives, rather than providing continuing revenue funding for ongoing mainstream activities. The future development of the Fund will be strongly based in evidence and evaluation.

The total value of the Better Schools Fund in 2004-5 will be £39.6 million, based on the GEST grant provision included in the Assembly's provisional budget which was published on 14th October 2003.

Eight activity areas will be supported under the Better Schools Fund in 2004-05, as opposed to ten under the GEST programme in 2003-04. The eight activity areas will be:

- School Curriculum;
- Governor Training;
- Pupil Support;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Iaith Pawb mewn Ysgolion;
- Music Development Fund;
- ICT in Schools; and
- Professional Development

Eligible activities under the GEST programme have changed year on year in the past; the inclusion of new priority areas and removal of existing ones continues to be a feature of the operation of this stream of funding through its new profile.

As I indicated in the paper on the budget tabled at our meeting on 22 October, overall the GEST programme will be more closely focused on pump priming development, where alternative sources of funding are not available. To make the Better Schools Fund most effective and responsive to changes in Educational needs and priorities, activities that will be eligible for inclusion in the Better Schools Fund in future will:

- not represent support for long term recurrent activities;
- not duplicate other grant streams;
- not be admitted for more than three years, with a clear exit strategy for funding beyond that point;
- not represent continued funding for any activities beyond three years unless clearly underpinned by formal evaluation; and
- not provide funding for statutory responsibilities.

7. Special Education

(i) Service Delivery in Wales

This document, shortly to be issued, will give an overview of professional development in SEN in Wales based on the evidence. It includes details of professional development at a number of levels e.g. Initial Teacher Education, Early Professional Development, SENCO training, Senior Management, School Governors, specialist teachers and Learning Support Assistants. It makes recommendations for future best practice and presents three options for service delivery. The document will be issued as a consultation document in the New Year and is based on a range of evidence, including questionnaires to LEAs, and discussions with Higher Education Institutions and other stake holders.

(ii) Addressing the Needs of Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Wales

The work of the education task and finish group is contributing to the Welsh Assembly Government external working group. It is developing a pioneering all Wales strategy for ASD. The education group have conducted a survey of LEA services for pupils with ASD. A consultation document will be published in the New Year which, will give an overview of the current situation and offer recommendations for future best practice. The document will also contain standards of excellence in service provision and offer options for service delivery.

(iii) Educational Services for Children and Young People with Hearing Impairment

A guidance document is currently out for consultation until the end of January 2004. This document reports on the findings from an audit of services and gives recommendations based upon the audit findings and also includes standards of excellence for service delivery. There are proposals in the document for future delivery of services for HI across Wales through regional collaboration.

Key issues outlined in the consultation document are:

- Although all LEAs offer an educational support service for hearing impaired pupils, there is disparity across Wales in that each LEA determines its own policy for intervention and level of support. Methods of referral also differ considerably, even across neighbouring authorities, thus resulting in difficulties and confusion for families of hearing impaired children who move across borders.
- Current staffing levels in Wales are below nationally recommended levels (BATOD).
- There are current difficulties in staffing structures in terms of the age range of teachers of the deaf, the lack of mandatory qualification, supply cover, training of teachers and support assistants, salaries and job descriptions.
- There is also a lack of suitably trained personnel such as teachers of the deaf, Support Assistants and Educational Psychologists who can provide support hearing impaired learners through the medium of Welsh.
- There is a need for uniform standards of excellence to ensure equal entitlement to high quality provision for all hearing impaired children and young people across Wales.

A national conference for Hearing Impairment will take place on December 4th in Mold. I will be attending the conference as keynote speaker. There are three guest speakers attending, all of them experienced specialists in the field of hearing impairment - an associate director of Newborn Hearing Screening Wales, a head of a service for a sensory inclusion across all ages and a senior lecturer in the training of teachers of the deaf and audiologists.

Since September I have met with officials from RNID and BATOD, and have spoken at the FEAPTA conference in October and the NDCS conference in November.

8. Class Sizes

A statutory class size limit of 30 pupils has applied to all infant classes in Wales since September 2001. Initially specific grant was paid for individual schools with classes of over 30 pupils, but the funding was transferred into the local government revenue settlement progressively in 2001/02 and 2002/03.

In 2000 the Welsh Assembly Government set a target of virtually eliminating junior classes containing more than 30 pupils by September 2003.

Additional revenue funding has been paid in 2003/04, for the 3rd year in succession, for reducing the size of junior classes, supporting improvements in attainment for 11-14 year olds and supporting low performing schools. £20m was provided in 2001-02, £25m in 2002-03 and £32m in 2003/04. The proportion of grant spent on reducing junior class sizes has increased year on year - £9m in 2001-02, £13m in 2002-03 and £17m in 2003-04.

To monitor compliance with the infant class size limit and progress in reducing junior class sizes, a primary Class Size Count is undertaken by the Assembly Government Statistics Directorate every September.

The results of the count taken in September 2003 were published on 25 November [SDR 71/2003] and revealed that :

- 75 infant classes in Wales had more than 30 pupils, but 56 of these were permissible exceptions
- 2.3% of pupils were in infant classes of over 30 but this reduces to 0.6% if permissible exceptions are excluded (these relate to pupils admitted on appeal and where a mistake has been made in applying admissions criteria , to pupils admitted outside the normal admission round, and to Welsh medium schools when there is no other school within reasonable proximity)
- 19 schools had an infant class in breach of the legislation but 12 of these have been resolved and the remaining 7 are expected to be resolved by the beginning of next term.
- continued progress in reducing large junior classes as the number containing more than 30 pupils fell from 769 at September 2002 to 576 and the percentage of pupils in such classes fell from 17.4% to 13.3%.
- a large disparity in the performance of LEAs, with some having significantly reduced the number of junior classes of over 30, while others still have more than 20% of children in larger classes.

The nine worst performing LEAs have been asked to explain their poor performance and their responses will inform consideration of the conditions to be attached to grant provided for reduction of junior class sizes in 2004-05.

A table setting out the information on junior class sizes by local authority is at Annex C.

9. Race Relations Amendment Act

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 amended the Race Relations Act 1976 and placed a general duty on all public authorities to have due regard to the need -

- a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and
- b) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

The DfTE has produced a Race Equality Action Plan that forms part of the overall Assembly Race Equality Scheme. This was brought to your attention in MB/JD5444/03 dated 3 October 2003.

The scheme details how the Assembly will meet its obligations under the RR (A) A 2000, in terms of the General and Specific Duties. It does this by setting out the action that is proposed to meet these duties, and the priorities for reviewing current programmes, policies and ways of working in response to the Act.

The requirements of the Act impact on the Assembly both in its role as the Democratic Body created by the Government of Wales Act, and as an employer.

The work of Assembly members in the exercise of their public functions are also covered by the Scheme.

The scheme sets performance target for all directorates on the delivery of the RR(A)A that will be monitored via a reporting framework that is under development. Regular reports and information bulletins will be published using data derived from this monitoring and there will be an open and transparent analysis of this information that will be fed back to the BME communities in Wales. This monitoring information will also be used in informing policy review and development.

The statutory consultation period for the Assembly Race Equality Scheme started in October. There are two planned community consultations, in Cardiff on Saturday 25 October, and in Swansea on Saturday 6 December.

10. Anti-bullying guidance for schools

The first all-Wales anti-bullying guidance, Respecting Others, was sent to all Welsh schools in September 2003.

The document can be found on the National Assembly for Wales website at:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/circulars/c2303-respecting-others-e.pdf>

The guidance aims to provide information on tackling bullying in schools. It offers direct practical solutions to both prevention and dealing with incidents of bullying and gives the legal background and an explanation of the roles of all involved in preventing and dealing with bullying. The main areas covered are:

- The need for school-based policies and the methods for developing these.
- The legal responsibilities of schools.
- Types of bullying, why it happens, the risks to pupils and pupils attitudes.
- Gathering and using information on the incidence of bullying.
- Strategies for combating bullying, which can include use of the curriculum, the development of specific strategies, working with victims and deciding when it is appropriate to take tougher measures.
- Ways of working with parents to gain their support to a whole-school approach and to deal

appropriately with cases of bullying whether they be parents of the bully or the victim.

- Dealing with bullying and its prevention outside the classroom, which involves considering the supervision and environment of playgrounds and school grounds.
- Tackling the difficulties of the key transitions which children face: the move from home to compulsory schooling, the transition from primary to secondary school and the difficulties of changing schools mid-term.
- Case studies from 3 schools as examples where progress has been made in tackling difficult bullying problems.
- A list of potentially useful sources to help inform anti-bullying strategies.
- Advice for pupils parents and families on how to deal with bullying incidents and information and contact details.

11. Secondary legislation

The table of secondary legislation is provided at Annex B. Next term this will be expanded to include the anticipated procedure to be followed.

12. Consultation on the school organisation proposals by the National Council – ELWa

The Committee will wish to be aware of the consultation which commenced on 8 December 2003 on draft regulations with respect to the Learning and Skills Act (as amended by the Education Act 2002), to prescribe arrangements by which ELWa may in future propose the reorganisation of sixth form provision. Under the legislation, it will be able to do this in response to a report of an area inspection by Estyn or to achieve improvements in educational achievement, participation or the range of educational or training opportunities available for those aged 16-19. The powers available to ELWa will complement the existing powers of LEAs and school governing bodies. They will also complement ELWa's existing powers under the Learning and Skills Act to propose closure of sixth forms identified by inspection as inadequate. The regulations will be supplemented by guidance in the light of the outcome of the consultation.

Annex A

Minister's Engagements - 13th November to 3rd December

13th November

VISIT - Fairwater High School

VISIT - Army Preparation Course open building

SPCH - Launch the new GO Wales employability programme

VISIT - University Of Wales Aberystwyth

MTG - Richard Daugherty to discuss the review of KS 2 and 3 tests

14th November

SPCH - Torfaen CBC Sharing Best Practice Event

15th November

SPCH – Keynote Speech at the Governors Wales Conference

MTG - Welsh Youth Forum on Sustainable Development

17th November

VISIT - Allensbank Primary School

SPCH - UWIC 'Who Cares about Politics?' Autumn Lecture

SPCH - Early Years Foundation Responses Conference

MTG – Higher Education Wales (HEW) (Annual Meeting)

18th November

MTG - Annual Meeting with the Wall Wales Young People's Organisation (AWYPO)

SPCH - Launch Cymdeithas Tai Hafan's new learning package 'New Dawn'

Interview - Video for Presiding Office's Awayday

19th November

MTG - Mr Xavier Gisberta da Cruz, the Conserjero de Education of the Embassy of Spain UK

MTG - John Davies Business Partnership Advisor

SPCH - Community University of the Valleys Partnership Lecture

20th November

SPCH - NDCS Conference

MTG - Cardiff Chamber of Commerce

SPCH - Blackwood Comprehensive School Prize giving evening

21st November

PRESENT - Welsh Woman of the Year Awards

24th November

SPCH - Barnardo's Launch of the 'Offside' Video - video on teenage relationships and sex issues

MTG - Robin Moulson to discuss Review of Careers Wales

SPCH - European Youth Parliament - CEWCs International Youth Participation day

MTG - Bi-Lateral Meeting with Don Touhig MP

25th November

MTG - NATFHE Annual Meeting

MTG - ELWa re National Planning Funding System

MTG - RNIB Annual Meeting

SPCH - Launch of the Skills Active SSC in Wales

26th November

VISIT - University Of Wales College Of Medicine Visit

SPCH - Children in Wales AGM

MTG - Chairs and CEs of WDA/ELWA/HEFCW and Andrew Davies

ATTEND - Cabinet Open Mic Session

27th November

SPCH - Second ChildLine Bullying in School Conference

SPCH - The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres 2003 National Conference

MTG - Annual Meeting with the NUT

MTG - Bwrdd yr Iaith

SPCH - Present Award at Engineering Employers Federation Young Apprentice of the year Awards night

ATTEND - British Irish Council Dinner

28th November

MTG – British Irish Council Summit

30th November

SPCH - Wales TUC & Stonewall Cymru Event - Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

1st December

SPCH – Keynote Speech at National Education Business Partnership Network Annual Conference 2003

MTG - All Chairs of Higher Education Wales

SPCH - St Richard Gwyn School's Prize-Giving Evening

2nd December

MTG – ELAW

3rd December

SPCH – Launch of Broadband at Dylan Thomas Community School

VISIT - University Of Wales Swansea

VISIT - Swansea Institute Of Higher Education

MTG – National Association of Headteachers (NAHT)