

**EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE****ASSEMBLY MINISTER'S REPORT TO THE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE ON 23 JANUARY 2003.**

Amongst other things, this report updates the Committee on the specific issues upon which it wished to be kept informed since my previous report of 19 December 2002. **Annex A** sets out my major engagements since the last report.

**1. PE AND SCHOOL SPORT.**

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving health and fitness levels in Wales and to giving sport a renewed emphasis in schools and local communities. In particular, it is recognised that PE and school sport make a vital contribution to the health, physical fitness and general development of young people.

I was therefore pleased to announce before Christmas (5 November) an extra £5million to support the implementation, over the next three years, of the key recommendations in the PE and School Sport Action Plan for Wales. This builds upon the £500,000 made available to the Sports Council for Wales this year for PE and School Sport.

The Sports Council for Wales continues to take the lead on action to address the central recommendations in the Action Plan. In 2002-03, work is focused on the establishment of pilot Development Centres (DCs) for PE and School Sport - together with initial development work on specialist projects, planned for the next three years, in the areas of Initial Teacher Education and Training, Continued Professional Development for Teachers, Health and fitness, and ICT links to PE.

Eleven Development Centres have been established to date, with a target of 18 by April 2003. Development Centres are in place in Caerphilly, Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Monmouth, Newport, Bridgend, Gwynedd, Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire and Conwy. Further centres will be established by March 2003 in Anglesey, Cardiff, Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The Development Centres provide an excellent example of partnership at its best – working together, pooling resources and sharing best practice to improve standards in physical education and sport for all young people.

A recent paper provided for the Culture Committee to inform the Committee's current review of sport is attached at **Annex B**.

## 2. GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR WALES RECRUITMENT SURVEY

1. In 2001-02 the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) carried out a survey of teacher recruitment in the secondary school sector in a limited number of subject areas where there was anecdotal evidence of difficulties in recruitment (mathematics, chemistry, physics, modern foreign languages, English, religious education and Welsh).
  2. Following that initial work, the GTCW carried out a similar but wider survey in 2002-03, covering both primary and secondary schools. Questionnaires covered applications for advertised vacancies and appointments made; and teachers leaving schools for employment outside education or for early retirement. The secondary sector questionnaire also covered teachers' qualifications.
  3. Some of the main findings are listed at **annex C**. A copy of the draft survey is at **annex D** (the full survey results were available, in draft form, at the GTCW's conference on teacher recruitment and retention on 9 December in Cardiff. As at 9 January 2003 the final version survey had not yet been published by the GTCW).
  4. The GTCW also commissioned a desk based research study of existing secondary data sources by Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, aimed at achieving the following objectives:
    - the identification of existing data sources on recruitment, supply and retention in Wales;
    - a consideration of the quality and value of existing qualitative and quantitative information sources;
    - a detailed analysis and interpretation of the existing secondary information sources found.
- A three page high level summary report was available, in draft form, at the GTCW's conference on teacher recruitment and retention on 9 December in Cardiff – copy at **annex E**. As at 9 January 2003 the final version and the full report had not yet been published by the GTCW.
5. I very much welcome the GTCW's survey which has produced a more in depth analysis of the sector in Wales. But with any survey it is only current at the time it was conducted and the position can change. It is the pattern of change which also needs to be monitored.
  6. The publication of the survey was accompanied by much negative and alarmist media comment, but there is no evidence of a crisis in teacher recruitment. There are no recruitment problems in the primary sector, where there is a healthy demand for all classroom vacancies. The survey suggests that secondary schools are finding recruitment more difficult than in previous years in certain subject areas and that they have to work harder to fill posts.
  7. On the other hand, schools are managing to fill posts. There is not a widespread shortage of teachers in the classroom.

8. An average of 6.4 candidates per post (secondary recruitment) would not be regarded as low in many sectors. Clearly it is not sensible to use public resources to train many more teachers than needed. On the other hand, we recognise the need to attract more teachers in certain subjects and are offering considerable incentives as part of our efforts to make these posts more attractive.

9. The position on Welsh medium recruitment is not as strong. As the report acknowledges, there is a smaller pool of teachers who are Welsh speakers and who are able to apply for such posts. But action is being taken. Our Action Plan for the Welsh Language includes an additional £9.5 million to support the crucial role of education and training – in particular an extra £1 million in 2005-06 to fund language learning sabbaticals for teachers at all stages of education, and increased funds for to the Welsh Medium Incentive Supplement scheme to encourage trainee teachers to improve their competence so that they are able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

10. Qualifying postgraduate students training in Welsh as a second language are already eligible for a £6,000 training grant and a £4,000 teaching grant. They will now be able to have their student loans repaid, which will act as an additional incentive.

11. On qualifications, the survey shows that 92% of teachers are teaching with a degree in a subject or a closely related subject, which dispels the claim sometimes made that “many” teachers are not qualified to teach their subject.

12. On retention, we are introducing new arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers in their first years in teaching. This will ensure that the best practice in supporting and developing new teachers - that many schools currently follow - becomes common across Wales. I expect that this will have a significant impact on losses from the profession in the first five years. Our work on pupil disaffection and the changes to be made to reduce teachers' workload will also help to improve teacher retention.

The GTCW intends to make use of its survey, the results of its conference on 9 December and other work to put together an action plan with proposals for improving teacher recruitment and retention. It will be discussing this at meetings with partner bodies, including Welsh Assembly Government officials. We look forward to proposals which build on the measures already being undertaken and which offer a practical and effective addition to policies to maintain and improve teacher recruitment and retention.

### **3. GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR WALES (CONSTITUTION) REGULATIONS**

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Committee that we are taking forward regulations to be considered before Business Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> February, which will amend the General Teaching Council for Wales (Constitution) Regulations 1999. The proposed regulations are simply a technical measure to take account of the fact that certain bodies that were invited to nominate members to the General Teaching Council

for Wales are no longer in existence e.g. the TEC's and that new institutions have been established e.g. ELWa. .

In revising the list of those eligible to nominate members to the Council, all bodies currently listed within the regulations were consulted together with a wide range of other interested organisations.

Copies of the draft regulations may be obtained via <http://assembly/subord/> from 21<sup>st</sup> January and copies of the original regulations may be obtained at <http://www.legislation.hmsso.gov.uk/si/si1999/19991619.htm>

#### **4. TEACHERS' WORKLOAD**

A national agreement aimed at reducing teachers' workload was signed on 15 January a copy is at **Annex F** and a copy of the agreement at **Annex G**.

#### **5. HEFCW REACHING HIGHER**

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to two joint announcements made with HEFCW over the Christmas period. On 17 December the Council announced that it had allocated £5.3 million in support of our reconfiguration agenda, set out in *Reaching Higher*. The one hard collaborative proposal being supported is the merger between Cardiff University and UWCM. The remainder of the money will involve the other institutions in Wales and will be used in support of scoping projects across the full range of administrative and subject collaboration. I expect to see firm proposals coming from these projects in the next year.

On 7 January, HEFCW also announced that it had allocated the additional £2 million which I made available to support the objective of widening access to university. This has been distributed to four collaborative projects designed to raise performance and aspirations in our young people and to encourage them to take up higher education opportunities. Taken together these projects represent a good coverage of Wales and target a widespread of age groups – many with a longer term view than has been the case in the past. Both of these announcements show the sterling work that has been undertaken in the year since the publication of this Committee's review of HE. During my visits to all HEIs in the autumn, I detected a very real culture change, which bodes well for the future success of the sector.

#### **6. WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

##### **Background**

This is a joint campaign involving the Welsh Assembly Government, Department for Trade and Industry, the Scotland Office and representatives from the business community to promote a more effective balance between work and employees' lives outside work. The basic message is that there is

often a strong business case for having flexible employment practices that enable all employees to balance work and their lives outside.

### **Work-Life Balance Challenge Fund**

The Work-Life Balance Challenge Fund builds upon the WDA's successful SME equality project. For the past 2 years the Fund has been managed by the Welsh Development Agency in partnership with Chwarae Teg and Business Connect. £50k was made available in Wales in 2001/2002 for organisations employing fewer than 250 people to develop innovative, practical ways to implement working practices to achieve work-life balance and benefit both the business and its employees.

The WDA evaluated the way that the Challenge Fund has operated and a report was made available in May last year. In the light of this report it was agreed that further rounds of the Challenge fund should be made available to SME's in Wales.

A work life balance challenge fund was launched in November inviting bids by end of January 2003 for projects to start in April 2003 and finish in March 2004. It is envisaged that there will be a further round for 2004/05. Funding to support the challenge fund will total £300,000 over the next two years.

The Assembly Government has also approved plans to: -

- develop pilot projects in three local authorities (Bridgend CBC, Neath Port Talbot CBC and Wrexham CBC), two colleges / universities (Cardiff University and Trinity College Carmarthen), and two ASPBs (ELWa - National Council and Countryside Council for Wales) to develop work life balance schemes for employees in Wales and
- develop a work life balance web site as a resource for all employers and employees in Wales.

## **7. GWYNFRYN SITE**

Following the satisfactory resolution of Standing Order 19 procedures, I announced on 17 December that I was gifting the Gwynfryn site to the Brondyffryn Trust to enable them to provide the necessary ancillary facilities to support Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn as a regional centre of excellence for autism in North Wales. The announcement was warmly welcomed and we have been advised by the Chairman of the Brondyffryn Trust that they anticipate that the initial phase of development at Gwynfryn costing £1.2m and providing residential and respite care for pre-16 children suffering from autistic spectrum disorder will be available as from September 2003.