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## **Finance Committee**

### **Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2018-19**

#### **About the National Education Union Cymru:**

- The National Education Union Cymru stands up for the future of education. It brings together the voices of teachers, lecturers, support staff and leaders working in maintained and independent schools and colleges to form the largest education union in Wales.
- The National Education Union is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). It is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.
- Together, we'll shape the future of education.

#### **What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2017-18 budget?**

#### **What expectations do you have of the 2018-19 draft budget proposals?**

The education sector in general is increasingly expected to undertake more activities with less money. The Welsh Government's 'Transformation Agenda' will see greater expectations of the whole education sector, with no, or little, more resources. Reforms include:

- A new Curriculum for Wales
- Additional Learning Needs Reform

- Welsh language targets
- Changes to tests and Qualifications
- New Estyn regime
- Digital competency framework
- Changes to categorisation
- New professional standards
- The Tertiary Education Commission for Wales

These, along with other changes, will all have cost implications for the whole sector, and yet are not being met by adequate resources.

All education budgets have been stretched to breaking point. This is not merely a reflection the 2017-18 budget but a recognition that education has been underfunded for a significant number of years. This has led to school having to utilise reserve budgets, make staffing cuts in the interests of finance rather than educational outcomes and reduce the levels of resources they are able to offer pupils. The budget for 2017-18 again failed to ensure schools and the wider education sector is adequately funded and there are particularly harsh challenges for those in the FE sector.

We do not expect the 2018-19 draft budget proposals to do anything to mitigate the historic chronic underfunding within the sector. We would also anticipate that any benefits of possible increases in delegated school budgets, for example, to be undermined by the requirement to fund increased responsibilities.

**How financially prepared is your organisation for the 2017- 18 financial year, and how robust is your ability to plan for future years?**

Schools in general have mapped out their funding plans for the coming year, and indeed for future years, however they have increasingly found the goalposts have been moved in terms of the grants and initiatives they are provided with, as well as with increasing expectations placed on them without warning. This has often led to financial upheavals that cannot be accounted for in advance which have significant impacts on their abilities to ensure financial security.

The number of school teachers registered with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) has dropped by 769 this year<sup>1</sup>.

Naturally this, and other financial decisions, has led to poorer education provisions being offered to children and young people as resources, education professionals and streams of work have had to be amended in an ad-hoc fashion to reflect this lack of budget flexibility due to operating on budgets already at breaking point.

The number of FE lecturers registered with the EWC also fell this year, by 626<sup>2</sup>. Changes to the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector will have a significant impact on an already squeezed sector.

Whilst some of the changes proposed under the Tertiary Education Commission for Wales (TERCW) may be welcome, the change will inevitably have an impact on the sector's ability to undertake long term planning, and could have implications for learners and education professionals as they are introduced.

### **Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal (Wales) Bill**

The ALNET Bill is yet to proceed to the Stage Two Committee Stage because the Financial resolution is being redrafted. This is welcome. However, it is difficult to comment on the financial implications of the Bill without this document.

Never-the-less, the ALNET Bill, along with the other reforms listed above, will have implications for the whole workforce. Without sufficient funding and training ahead of the Bill's implementation, the aims of the Bill will not be realised.

### **The Well-Being of the Future Generation Act**

There are some specific targets under the WFG Act which relate to education and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Whilst we recognise that the WFG Act is new, it is difficult to see how the Welsh Government is implementing the Act, for example, in the manner in which it is planning, writing and implementing legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Statistics Digest 2017 <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/research-statistics/education-workforce-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Annual Statistics Digest 2017 <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/research-statistics/education-workforce-statistics>

For example, it is our view that the ALNET Bill needs clear collaborative working, underpinned by duties, which relate not only to schools, FEIs and local authorities, but also the health sector too.

At this very top level, if duties are not imposed equally, across several sectors, then the work on the ground will become more difficult. We have real concerns that the current challenges in ALN provision – around funding, for example – could be replicated if the Welsh Government fails to implement its own plans for collaborative working, outlined in the WFG Act.

## **Conclusions**

Education professionals want only the best for children and young people in Wales. We believe that much work needs to be done to ensure that education provision is properly funded, to ensure that future generations of Wales are ready for the challenges they will face.

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