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Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee
Cyllid wedi'i dargedu i wella canlyniadau addysgol | Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes
TF 02
Ymateb gan: National Education Union Cymru
Response from: National Education Union Cymru

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.

Our response
We welcome the opportunity to contribute evidence to the Children and Young People's Committee's consultation on Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes. There is a clear need for a wide ranging debate on education funding in Wales, in particular in light of increasing evidence that teachers and parents are having to personally fund the resources required in classrooms. This is not acceptable.

We are aware that this consultation is confined to set questions and areas of interest in recognition of the need to reduce the scope of the inquiry. We will address the individual issues in our response.

However, we would very much encourage the committee to revisit education funding as a topic and look at the whole issue in context. While this would prove a time consuming and large topic of discussion it is very difficult to look at specific funding streams in isolation and without a true reflection of the extremely challenging financial climates schools are currently operating within. We strongly believe the committee will benefit greatly from further exploration of education funding as an inquiry topic and that it would lead to a very worthwhile evidence and research base for the National Assembly to debate in future.

eFSM – what does this really mean?

Whilst many believed that those eligible for free school meals (eFSM) included all of those children and young people whose parents could apply for FSM this is not the case. In reality eFSM is all those who had applied for FSM. Therefore FSM and eFSM are virtually the same.

We are therefore concerned that the allocation of the PDG is not based on those children who are eligible through their circumstances, but eligible through the schools ability to obtain consent for the child to have free school meals.

We believe there should be consistency in how local authorities assess access to FSM – which should use the Ever 6 model, which has been used in England. This allows for parents to apply for FSM once, which is then counted for 6 years – and allows schools to plan their interventions appropriately.

The situation in England
We understand that the Pupil Premium in England has suffered from changing criteria every year. With the introduction of free school meals to all infant children the incentive to fill out a form to gain PP is harder to gain traction.

As we understand it, because the number of children receiving free school meals in England is now difficult to measure (because all infants receive FSM) they are moving to a system which assigns money based on "low attainment".

Who is eligible in Wales?
Schools or consortia receive extra money for pupils under certain conditions. They are:

- Who are eligible for FSM (eFSM) (schools)
- Who are looked after by a local authority (LAC) (consortia)

Rates of the PDG/ PP in England and Wales 2015/16

Country	Eligible group	Amount
Wales	Age 5-15 eFSM	£1,050
	LAC	£1,050
	Foundation Phase 3-4 yrs	£300
England	Primary school aged children (reception to yr 6)	£1,320
	Secondary aged pupils (years 7-11)	£985
	LAC	£1,900
	Children who have ceased to be looked	£1,900

	after by a local authority	
	Children whose parents are in the services	£300

Full details of the rates of PDG can be found on the WG website[1].

WISERD evaluation
Whilst the PDG has received relatively positive evaluation from Wiserd[2], news reports suggest some "leaked documents" suggest that PDG is being used to fulfil 1% above block-grant manifesto commitment made by WG – it is not extra money.[3]

However, we are concerned there are discrepancies in terms of how much money is given to children and young people in Wales and England, as well as who is eligible for the PDG. We believe the 'Ever 6' method should be used in Wales to reflect the true number of children eligible for FSM.

Schools' use of the PDG and the extent to which this benefits the pupils it is designed to be targeted at;

A number of National Education Union Cymru school leaders have been very positive about the impact the Pupil Development Grant has had on their Free School Meals (FSM) pupils. As a targeted grant it has made a significant difference to that specific set of learners very often helping to establish noticeable increases in attainment levels, pupil progress and development.

Our members believe that much more needs to be done as part of community engagement, but the PDG is a useful way to help redress the imbalance. Many members believe that funding as a whole is critical to the ability of schools to support all pupils, but in particular those on FSM. However, it does not compensate for educational engagement outside school hours. If a child or young person value education as a way out of poverty, then education is something they are more likely to engage with. If parents or guardians have specific challenges in this regards, either through their own experiences of education or as a result of financial hardship, then they are likely to have needs that require additional support, both financial and otherwise. Not sure exactly in what regard you mean?

In schools, PDG money tends to be focussed upon the weaknesses in data in each individual school and is delivered in ways designed by that school. It is fair to say that this individual approach allows schools to use the funding for their own specific needs and challenges. That is very useful and is a practice that should be encouraged. However, as a result it's not possible to simply summarise the impact upon the targeted pupils unless every school's individual plans are collated and evaluated as a whole.

[1] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150323-pdg-essential-guidance-en.pdf
[2] http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/research/education/current-projects/evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant/
[3] **http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/huw-lewis-urged-come-clean-7035358**

In addition to the above we do believe there needs to be a stronger focus on pupils who are living in families experiencing in-work poverty. For example, in some areas the difference between family the income of those on FSM and others is substantial. In other areas there may be very little difference between the income of those on benefits and those struggling to hold down multiple minimum wage jobs. Morally, there is an argument to state that the PDG should be used for strategies which benefit all learners who are experiencing disadvantage.

<u>The relationship between PDG-funded support for pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and expenditure on activities designed to improve attainment of all pupils;</u>

When responding to this question it is important to recognise that some areas of work undertaken by schools are hard to disentangle from all pupils – for example, one National Education union member reports to us that they have established a 'vulnerable pupil panel' and a 'vulnerable' pupil lead teaching assistant – the majority of pupils are FSM, but not exclusively so. This therefore certainly supports pupils eligible for free school meals but the decision to take this approach also benefits a wider section of the school cohort. There will also be examples of teachers who may have their salary, or part of their salary, funded through PDG budgets. They may have a specific focus in their work on promoting attainment for eFSM pupils but that does not mean that they do not also contribute more widely to the success of other pupils within a school. We believe this is in line with the expectations of the PDG and can be checked using the PDG flow chart[4].

Equally, when appraising the way resources are utilised it again depends on the specific schools and also depends upon how much they receive. There will be examples of pupils who are eFSM who receive extra support through PDG funding initiatives even though they are on target to achieve positive outcomes. At the same time other children who aren't classed as eFSM may still receive the PDG funded intervention because they are behind their targets.

It is also important to recognise the wider funding pressures on schools. With budgets so tight in some schools unless the children, both eFSM and not, access the PDG activities there is no other monies available to support them apart from their normal class based support.

Finally it is worth noting that a lot of the support eFSM pupils receive come in the form of the time given by teachers and support staff. It is harder to quantify this in direct correlation to the use of any specific funding stream.

<u>Regional consortia's use of the PDG on looked after and adopted children, and the impact this is having;</u>

[4] http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/150408-pdg-essential-guidance-diagram-en.pdf

Feedback from members stated that this tends to be a very hit and miss approach. Often it is largely down to how proactive a school is in their applications to access the monies rather than any specific considerations on behalf of the regional consortia. Additionally, members have stated that they have been informed on occasion by regional consortia staff that there isn't enough money to share it out fairly for every Looked After Children (LAC) so the individual school bids will guide the decision process. Whilst individual schools may be able to evaluate the impact of their own LAC plans unless the whole package of LAC funding is collated and evaluated there is no way to realistically evaluate the impact the funding as a whole has.

Other school leaders within the union have stated that they simply do not know how regional consortia make use of the PDG, which in itself is a damning appraisal of the consortia's approach to both communication about and use of this funding.

Some members have raised specific concerns about how regional consortia have allocated the grant. In the Central South consortia region for example one school reported that they were sent information in October 2017, inviting them to apply for this year's grant within a 10 day timescale. Successful bids were notified by the end of November with impact reports required to be produced by mid-February and the money spent by the end of March. These rushed timescales will undoubtedly impact on the effectiveness of how the money can be strategically utilised by schools to achieve the desired outcomes. Not only is the money then allocated in a hastily arranged fashion the notion of spending money through December and January and reporting the impact by February is unreasonable. Members also report that the allocation and criteria for the grant appear to have changed on an annual basis since its introduction leaving schools unclear about what they can apply for and how it should be used.

Progress since the previous Children, Young People and Education Committee 2014 inquiry; Educational outcomes for children from low income households;

Wiserd have undertaken two interim reports on the PDG, which can be found here:
http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21168/1/141022-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-1-en.pdf

http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151203-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-2-en.pdf

The impact of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme and the consequences of its closure on the participating 'Pathways to Success' schools;

Anecdotal feedback received stated that one area where the SCC money had been successful was in enabling secondary schools to undertake much more intensive transition support work with primary school pupils. Since the removal of the money the capacity to undertake this work has gone which has had a negative impact on the transition process, particularly for the most vulnerable learners.

How the lessons and legacy of Schools Challenge Cymru can be used to complement subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes;

Grant funding is not an acceptable way for schools to be funded. Schools need the security of adequate funding in our base budgets so that they are able to undertake effective, long-term planning in order to deliver high quality teaching and support interventions.

Evaluation of attainment data in light of the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes;

With a study finding that 65% of all primary Pupil Deprivation Grant-funded interventions were delivered by teaching assistants[5], these key members of staff should be properly rewarded for their contribution as key members of the education workforce.

One of the big issues with evaluation of attainment is that it is far too crude a measure and takes no account of the progress the pupils have made. Therefore, unless the attainment data is monitored the PDG impact cannot be properly evaluated as it doesn't take into account the progress of pupils that don't reach the expected outcomes but have still made significant progress.

Targeted funding / support for more able and talented pupils;

Many members feedback suggested that it was unlikely that this cohort of pupils will be supported explicitly by the PDG. For many it was a case that there simply wasn't enough funding provided through the grant to target all individuals and the priorities often fell elsewhere. It is an unfortunate consequence of the limited supply of PDG money that more able and talent pupils have, by and large, not been specifically targeted through the funding.

Other member feedback suggested that with the emphasis placed so heavily on individual pupils reaching specific attainment targets and levels the funding was channelled towards those pupils at risk of not achieving the expected outcomes. As such these accountability measures drove schools to focus funding and resources at borderline pupils rather than those more able and talented. This is however a wider problem with the way the existing

[5] http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21168/1/141022-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-1-en.pdf

system is set up and the pressures it puts on schools, the curriculum, resources and priorities rather than an issue confined to PDG expenditure.

The value for money of both the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes.

There is a significant level of support for the PDG as a funding stream amongst the teaching profession. It has been a crucial element of additional financial resource which schools have effectively utilised in a variety of ways to support staff and pupils, particularly those from poorer and more challenging backgrounds. It is very much valued and retains a high level of support within the sector.

In terms of SCC, some schools have been able to show improvements due to the investment and support, others have been less able to state categorically that any change in their outcomes has been due specifically to the SCC initiative. However, what can be stated is that there was a lot of support for the SCC policy when it was announced. It was a programme similar to the London Challenge. That initiative ran for a number of years, whereas the SCC policy has come to an end prematurely, and is therefore difficult to compare it with other programmes and fully evaluate the initiative. Never-the-less, taking away much needed funding at this time, puts increasing pressure on schools where resources are much needed.

Contact us:
Owen Hathway: owen.hathway@neu.org.uk;
Mary van den Heuvel: mary.vandenheuvel@neu.org.uk