

Rob Williams, Director
NAHT Cymru
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21st June 2019

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders AM,

NAHT welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Petitions Committee.

NAHT represents more than 29,000 school leaders in early years, primary, secondary and special schools, making us the largest association for school leaders in the UK.

We represent, advise and train school leaders in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. We use our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere. Our new section, NAHT Edge, supports, develops and represents middle leaders in schools.

Petition text

We, the undersigned, request that all supply teachers be paid fairly and have full access to training opportunities and other terms and conditions. There should be a qualified teacher in every classroom and taxpayers' money should be going directly into education and not into the pockets of private agencies.

Supply teachers are being exploited and teachers are leaving the profession as they cannot afford to be supply teachers. Agencies reduce teachers' pay by forty to sixty percent and teachers lose their pensions, this is public money going into the private sector for profit. Lessons are being covered by unqualified staff.

We understand that the petition has been under consideration by the Petitions Committee since May 2018 and, most recently, the Committee held an evidence session with the Minister for Education on 2 April 2019.

Following the session, the Committee sought our views on the general content of the petition and the following specific issues:

- the viability of a public sector solution for employing supply teachers in Wales, for example in a similar vein to the system which operates in

Northern Ireland, or the recent pilot project based on cluster arrangements;

- the improvements which could potentially arise out of new framework contract arrangements developed by the National Procurement Service
- (including letting the contract on the basis of individual local authority 'lots', a minimum daily pay rate and greater transparency over agency fees);
- any potential opportunities or risks for supply teaching arising from the devolution of pay and conditions for teachers; and
- arrangements for professional learning for supply teachers, particularly in light of current education reforms.

NAHT Cymru response:

1. NAHT Cymru believes, wherever possible, there should be a qualified teacher in every classroom in Wales, this is essential if we expect to maintain high standards of teaching and learning;
2. NAHT Cymru believes that all teachers should have access to the Teachers' Pensions Scheme, irrespective of their place of employment within the Welsh Education system;
3. NAHT Cymru believes that a national education service, that employs teachers trained to national standards, that is implementing a national curriculum, that is nationally inspected, upholds national standards with national accountabilities and outcomes should have a national pay and conditions service framework;
4. A range of factors, including ever growing cost pressures, has led to an increasing role for supply agencies for permanent and temporary recruitment, leading to additional financial pressures on schools who are already struggling. NAHT Cymru believes government should regulate payments to supply agencies to secure best value for public funds and that there needs to be greater transparency in terms of a minimum daily pay rate and greater transparency over agency fees;
5. The practical implications of employing supply staff within schools plays out in a variety of ways, particularly in relation to the reasons why a school requires supply cover, in the first instance. For example, there is a distinct difference between the circumstances under which a school might source longer-term, anticipated medical absence cover to that of supply staff required under urgent unplanned sickness absence;
6. Schools require the ability to source high quality supply staff, often at very short notice, and many schools see value in being able to access

familiar staff who they know and who themselves understand the ethos and day-to-day workings of the school;

7. NAHT Cymru understand that Local Authority 'supply pools' or 'supply lists' were the relative norm some years ago, but, often as a result of Local Authority funding pressures, they are not necessarily viable in many parts of Wales;
8. NAHT Cymru understands that private companies, who are able to offer supply staff insurance cover for schools have approached Local Authorities within Wales offering to 'manage' their 'supply staff pools'. However, it is unclear as to the contractual or commercial arrangements undertaken nor whether this offer has been taken up by any Local Authority;
9. The potential for shared services between Local Authorities has appeared to be growing, particularly since the establishment of Regional Consortia – for example, shared HR services and school improvement. However, there is no uniformity of approach between regions and there remains a risk of duplication where some Local Authorities maintain a level of a certain type of service within a Regional Consortia that also provides an element of the same service;
10. Given the financial pressures facing Local Authorities and, by default, schools and other settings in the public sector, NAHT Cymru would be surprised if there was the capacity or level of expertise remaining within Local Authorities to reintroduce a public sector solution for employing supply teachers at that level.
Regional Consortia also do not have the statutory responsibilities for education delivery (including employer duties) that are retained by Local Authorities and they are set up under very differing governance structures which, again, we believe would not be appropriate for managing a public sector solution for employing supply teachers;
11. Whether there would be the possibility of a fully functioning national public sector solution for employing supply teachers, is a matter for Welsh Government;
12. Within our submission to the Supply Model Taskforce in 2016, NAHT Cymru suggested looking at a model currently used by the Plymouth Association of Primary (school) Heads a Co-operative, Community Interest Company (CIC). One of the challenges we found in looking at this model, however, was obtaining key data, including staff pay levels – the model talks about 'excellent working pay and conditions' and the testimonials from supply staff are positive but may not provide the full picture. One of the other challenges was the degree of 'buy-in' to meet the economies of scale required for its success and the employment

status and requirements placed upon the headteachers who were involved in the running of the model, in terms of workload;

13. The scale of the school funding crisis in Wales, outlined within our evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee school funding inquiry, calls into question the current ability of schools to meet the growing costs of supply cover.
14. School leaders clearly wish to see supply teachers paid fairly, but the current reality is that school budgets are inadequate – for example, schools look at saving money on what can be costly supply cover insurance and instead often use alternative solutions to cover absent colleagues, including not employing external supply staff but instead using themselves and other leadership colleagues (including ALNCoS) which pulls them away from their substantive roles. This is a risky, unsustainable and not-to-be-recommended approach, but the scale of cuts have forced this upon many settings;
15. In the current financial climate, if schools were to strictly adhere to employing supply staff and ensuring they are paid fairly at all times, the knock-on effect could well be catastrophic, placing the school in a position whereby the only solution to making up an end-of-year budget deficit would be to go through an enforced redundancy process and lose permanent staff;
16. It is difficult to project the potential improvements which could arise out of new framework contract arrangement developed by the National Procurement Service without seeing the detail of any approach and the practical implications for schools and school leadership. However, the principle behind a national model, which could potentially better manage the consistency, quality and a more common approach across the whole of Wales, would be of interest to school leaders. How this could be managed in order to benefit from schools that know their supply staff and supply staff who know their schools would be of great benefit. However, there would also need to be a comprehensive financial impact assessment to establish if schools would be able to fully utilise the benefits of such a system, or would they simply not be able to afford to do so even if they were, in principle, in favour of it?
17. In accepting that devolution of teachers' pay and conditions to Wales has now taken place, despite our original reservations, NAHT Cymru do believe that there might be opportunities to create improved conditions of service within Wales. Our reservations, however, still remain, as they are based principally upon the limiting nature of the overall quantum of funding at the disposal of Welsh Government and the risk of not at least ensuring parity with England which could result in a loss of talent out of Wales;

18. NAHT Cymru were mindful that, given the extraordinarily limited timescale available for the new Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) within this first-year remit, focusing solely upon pay matters was essential in order to reach a decision in time for any pay award. However, within the Pay Partnership Forum (including the workforce unions, employers and Welsh Government) future remit areas are already being discussed;
19. In future remits, the issue of supply teacher pay, professional learning and conditions of service will be essential in order to bring consistency, transparency and fairness to the whole workforce. The risks that exist will be mainly as a result of the capacity, within finances, time and within the wider system, to meet the deserved needs of supply staff. Warm words alone will not make it happen. It is worth noting, for example, that Welsh Government recognised the pressures upon schools in delivering the professional learning required for the new curriculum by announcing additional National Approach for Professional Learning (NAPL) funding – the same needs to be explored specifically for supply staff;
20. It would be NAHT Cymru's view that ensuring access to quality professional learning, across all the essential education policy areas within current reform, for example, the new curriculum and ALNET (Wales) Bill, needs to be planned on a national basis and delivered via committed additional resource;
21. The risk of encouraging a local, low level approach to such professional learning for supply staff, is one of inconsistency, varying quality and hit-and-miss accessibility, highly dependent upon the individual's employment circumstances;
22. NAHT Cymru believe that in order to fully address the issues outlined within the petition text, a full and comprehensive review of all the relevant factors is required. Principally, identifying all the relevant factors that have driven the system to the circumstances under which we now find ourselves within Wales. The school workforce's commitment to do the best for our children and young people, despite an increasingly challenging financial picture, has resulted in support staff, teachers and school leaders often operating in ways that appear admirable but ultimately create risk and are unsustainable in terms of mental health, wellbeing and ongoing high performance.

Rob Williams
NAHT Cymru - Director