

Kirsty Williams AC/AM Ysgrifennydd
y Cabinet dros Addysg Cabinet
Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/KW0848/18

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair CYPE Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

9 March 2018

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your letter of 13 February about the exchange of correspondence with Richard Knights, campaign leader for the Fair Deal for Supply Teachers group dated 30 January.

You will recall that the Supply Model Taskforce was unable to recommend a central supply pay model at that time of reporting in February 2017. However, the report made a number of practical recommendations for supporting and developing supply teachers. The Welsh Government has continued to investigate alternative new models for supply teaching. The model operating in Northern Ireland promoted by the Fair Deal for Supply group is inextricably linked to the setting of teachers' pay and conditions (including supply teachers). The power to set teachers' pay and conditions will be formally transferred to Welsh Ministers. We anticipate that this will occur in September 2018 with September 2019 being the earliest date by which a teachers' pay system would come into force in Wales. We are currently engaging with the sector on how these powers can provide opportunities to set teachers' pay to underpin our aspirations for the wider education system, to raise standards and support and develop the teaching profession including those who undertake temporary supply work.

It is important to reiterate that the Welsh Government does not directly employ teachers - that is a role undertaken by school governing bodies and local authorities.

When I met, at my request, the Fair Deal for Supply Teachers group last October I assured them that the delivery of high quality teaching and learning is at the heart of our national mission for improving education in Wales and I remain committed to that vision.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

There is more work to be done in working with the sector, including employing authorities and schools, to develop new ways to support the delivery of temporary cover arrangements, but this will take time. Therefore, it is important that in the meantime we look at all alternative systems alongside trialling new and innovative ways of providing supply teacher provision such as the £2.7m school-based supply cluster pilot I announced on 24 October 2017. The pilot is currently being rolled-out across fifteen local authority areas with the aim of trialling a more sustainable, collaborative model of working which supports the professional learning of our newly qualified teachers whilst benefitting schools and our learners.

The aim of the pilot is to recruit some fifty recently qualified teachers to work across clusters comprising over a hundred schools in Wales. It is early days; however the pilot evidences our commitment to ensuring that our recently qualified teachers, who might otherwise find themselves in supply roles, are supported fully at the beginning of their career. The Welsh Government will monitor the pilot closely to see if this approach offers a viable alternative model that could be rolled out by employers more widely.

We continue to support the professional development of supply teachers. To date over two hundred teachers are signed up and registered for personal access to Hwb. The Hwb networking pages are also now live. Further work is also underway to establish how regional consortia core training programmes might better support and benefit supply teachers working on a short term basis.

In December 2017 streamlined guidance issued on the '*Effective Management of School Workforce Attendance*' to share the good practice that schools and local authorities have adopted in managing absence - both planned and unplanned. This was published alongside with an easy reference guide to support schools and local authorities in meeting their cover needs whilst ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of all involved in commissioning temporary cover is clear.

We are also developing better data capture arrangements for the supply workforce as part of the planned workforce census data collection arrangements. The data collection will gather information on the numbers of supply teachers and the duration of cover provided helping inform more accurate data held on the workforce including those working flexibly in this way.

Officials continue to issue regular communications directly to commercial supply agencies operating in Wales, Local Authorities and schools to remind them of their statutory obligations in respect of their responsibility for safeguarding, including the need to undertake identity, DBS and qualification checks.

The Supply Working Group, which includes representatives of the wider education sector, continues to meet every 2 to 3 months. The group includes education workforce representatives and employers to support the implementation of the Taskforce recommendations and to discuss, consider and support workable solutions to address related issues as they arise.

Many of the concerns raised by the lobby group involve the use of commercial supply agencies to meet the demand for teachers to cover staff absence and the use of the private supply agency, New Directions, the current Welsh local authorities' managed service framework provider. Officials from my department, Value Wales and the National Procurement Service (NPS) are due to meet shortly to discuss the terms of the NPS' Framework contract which will expire in August 2018. I understand that NPS, on behalf of

local authorities, has initiated a one-year extension period while the re-tendering arrangements are considered.

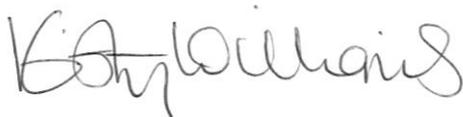
However, the fact that New Directions is the current framework provider doesn't preclude schools from entering into alternative cover arrangements or engaging directly with individual supply teachers. We have been clear that any future contract specification should be fit for purpose. The Fair Deal for Supply group has also been invited to a meeting with NPS to engage with the re-tendering process.

We are keeping a watching brief on changes proposed and currently being consulted on by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in Westminster. The amendments proposed to the Agency Worker Regulations 2010 will help address concerns raised about the terms of the Swedish Derogation provision, the use of umbrella companies and improved inspection arrangements for recruitment and employment agencies. The consultation has been published in response to the Taylor Review into Modern Working Practices published last summer. If regulatory changes are subsequently made many of the barriers that supply teachers employed by commercial agencies claim they face will be addressed.

It might be helpful for you to know that since I met with representatives of the Fair Deal for Supply Teachers group last October we have continued to correspond directly with them. Members of the group met with my officials and representatives of the Supply Working Group on 21 and 22 February respectively to discuss their on-going concerns in detail. Mr Knights was also invited to meet with officials but was unable to attend.

I would like to assure the Committee that the Welsh Government continues to explore all options available to us to support supply teachers in Wales. I want to see successful models for deploying temporary supply cover in our schools and we are working toward a system where high quality teaching staff are available, providing a positive impact on educational outcomes, and where temporary staff are developed appropriately.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education