

## Supply teaching

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Petitions Committee | 1 May 2018

### Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-805

Petition title: Fair Deal for Supply Teachers

Text of petition: 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.

#### 1. National Assembly business

The **Public Accounts Committee** in the Fourth Assembly undertook a short inquiry on 'Covering teacher absence' and published its [report](#) in May 2014, making 14 recommendations. The [Welsh Government responded](#) in June 2014.

The **Children, Young People and Education (CYPE)** Committee of the Fourth Assembly undertook an inquiry into supply teaching in 2015. The [Final Report](#) was published in December 2015. Huw Lewis, the [Minster for Education responded](#) in December 2015.

Among the issues identified in evidence to the CYPE Committee were difficulties in accessing professional learning for supply teachers and the use of supply agencies. Much of the evidence suggested that many of the issues identified could be ameliorated if there were closer arrangements between the employers of supply teachers and those with responsibility for providing school education, for example **cluster arrangements** operated by local authorities or a **national body**. The Committee made an overarching recommendation that the Welsh Government should start work to design a new model for the employment of supply teachers.

## 2. Welsh Government action

### Supply Model Taskforce

The Welsh Government established the **Ministerial Supply Model Taskforce** in June 2016 to consider issues around supply teachers. Their [report was published](#) on 2 February 2017. The Cabinet Secretary for Education [accepted most of the recommendations](#). The report considered various models for supply teaching provision, such as those currently operating in Northern Ireland (see below), but found ‘no one size fits all’ solution that could be implemented across Wales with immediate effect.

### Pay and Conditions of teachers

For teachers employed by a local authority or local authority maintained schools in Wales and England, the [School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document](#) sets out statutory rules about supply teachers’ pay. However, supply teachers employed through employment agencies are not in the employment of the local authority or the school and are therefore not covered by the pay and conditions document. In general, agency supply teachers are employed by the agency and are therefore subject to pay and conditions determined by the individual agency. Teachers who are employed through a supply agency do not have access to the Teacher Pension Scheme.

The report of the Ministerial Taskforce noted

Currently, school teachers’ pay and conditions of service are not devolved to Wales. If in the future they were to be devolved there would be scope for the Welsh Government to take a more pro-active approach to the setting of pay and conditions for supply teachers.

Responsibility for setting teachers’ pay and conditions has now been devolved. The Welsh Government are [currently consulting](#) (until 4 May 2018) on the proposed model for determining teachers’ pay and conditions of service in Wales. September 2019 is the earliest date that a new pay system would come into force in Wales. The [Wales Act 2017](#) reserves teachers’ pensions as a non-devolved function.

The Ministerial Taskforce report included [data collected by the Education Workforce Council](#) that showed that, at July 2016, 46.7 per cent (1,987) of supply teachers identified the local authority as their employer compared to 50.4 per cent (2,143) who identified their employer as a supply agency.

### Cluster arrangements

On 24 October 2017, [the Cabinet Secretary for Education announced](#) a £2.7 million project to will support 15 local authorities to create new supply teacher arrangements across 86 schools. The project will support the appointment of around 50 recently qualified teachers who will work across groups of schools, covering teacher absence and supporting wider

school improvements and learner outcomes. The pilot project will run during 2017–18 and 2018–19 financial years.

### Supply teacher contract

The National Procurement Service has put in place a three-year contract for supply staff with New Directions, as the ‘preferred provider’. The contract came into effect on 1 August 2015, and runs for three years (with an option to extend for a further twelve months). All 22 Local Authorities have signed up to use the Framework Agreements. Local Authorities expect schools within their areas to use the framework to meet their supply teacher requirement. However, schools are not bound by the framework and are free to use any method of supply to cover their lessons.

## 3. Northern Ireland

In her response to the Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Education states that the Petitioner ‘promotes’ the model for supply teaching used in Northern Ireland.

In March 2004, the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers’ Register (NISTR) was established by the Department of Education Northern Ireland, in partnership with employing authorities, support associations and the teacher unions. NISTR is a regional centralised database for all substitute (supply) teachers in Northern Ireland. It allows local schools to access the database at short notice in order to book substitute teaching cover for teacher absences. Payment for all approved periods of substitute teaching is then made on a monthly basis by the Department for Education’s Teachers’ Pay Team. Since September 2006, only teachers who are on NISTR can be employed to work in maintained schools. From 1 August 2008 substitute teachers employed by schools must be booked on-line via the NISTR.

Substitute teachers are employed in accordance with Northern Ireland terms and conditions of service. They are also members of the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Pension Scheme (NITPS).

In relation to the model in Northern Ireland, the Supply Model Ministerial Taskforce report said:

The clear advantages of this type of model are that all substitute temporary teachers registered with the NISTR are able to benefit from statutory set national pay and conditions of service and the associated benefits. As pay and conditions are not yet devolved, coupled with variations in the way supply teachers are recruited and the significant use of commercial supply agencies to meet school needs it is difficult to see how, within the current context a similar centralised model could operate within the existing legislative framework in Wales.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

