

## Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Gorffennaf 2017

Petitions Committee | 3 July 2018

### Research Briefing: Reintroduce educational support funding for MEAS and the TES to local authorities

Petition number: [P5-05-821](#)

Petition title: **Reintroduce educational support funding for MEAS and the TES to local authorities**

#### Text of petition:

Neath Port Talbot UNISON branch call on Welsh Government to reverse the decision to cut educational support funding to Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) and the Traveller Education Service (TES).

The Cabinet Secretary for Education has essentially withdrawn funding for these groups under the education improvement grant (EIG). Research shows that Roma and Traveller children have the lowest attainment rates of any ethnic group in Wales and the EIG is designed to support their learning and raise attainment.

In NPT we have a percentage of travellers and minority ethnic groups in our schools examples of which are Margam and Briton Ferry who rely on this funding. The council has evidence to show support workers provide a fantastic service engaging with these 'hard to reach' learners. We want all young people to be able to reach their potential and support workers are able to champion the needs of all learners, particularly the vulnerable or disadvantaged. They build strong relationships with families, schools and the communities they serve. This reduction in funding will be devastating and job cuts are already being discussed with the trades unions. Any redundancy costs will need to be funded from an already stretched budget provision.

We urge Welsh Government to consult with UNISON and local authorities. Welsh Government must complete an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure monies are allocated to those in need.

It is clear that the funding published in the provisional settlement to support these vulnerable learners, makes it abundantly clear that there are zero transfers in the 2018/19 in respect of education. The assertion that it was cut from the Education Improvement Grant and contributed to the additional £170m which went into the settlement for the education and social care is academic. This simply had the effect of reducing the overall cut to local authority funding.

Welsh Government has seen Revenue Support Grant cut but claimed these two cuts make an increase in funding. They have unequivocally removed the grant with no recompense within the RSG. Although £5M has been made available for Cardiff, Swansea and Newport for 2018/19 it provides no continuity for those councils beyond those financial year. The cut to this funding and the lack of information about future provision has placed directors of education in an invidious position. Equality of opportunity for these pupils cannot be achieved without targeted support previously funded from the EIG. It is clear that Welsh Government wishes to allocate funding directly to schools to assist with their overhaul funding pressures, however, some of this funding could have been allocated to local authorities to maintain specialist support over the coming year. Failure for Welsh Government to address specific grant funding will lead to an equality impact disproportionately affecting gypsy traveller and minority ethnic groups.

## 1. Summary of this briefing

- The Welsh Government has historically provided local authorities with hypothecated grants to support learners from Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. This has been in recognition that these groups of learners are at risk of underachievement compared to other pupils. (See section 2 of this briefing)
- For 2015–16 onwards, the Welsh Government amalgamated two previously ring-fenced grants, the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Education Grant, along with nine other grants into a single Education Improvement Grant (EIG). (Section 3.1)
- In the 2018–19 budget, the Welsh Government removed the funding for these groups of learners from the EIG to finance the protection of schools' core budgets in the Local Government Settlement. (Section 3.2)
- The Welsh Government subsequently decided to provide £8.7 million transitional funding to local authorities: £5 million to Cardiff, Swansea and Newport which it estimates have the greatest concentrations of these groups of learners; £2.5 million to these three as well as Wrexham to lead the transition to a regional approach to supporting these groups of learners; and (most recently announced) £1.2 million to the remaining 18 authorities. The transitional funding was initially announced as a one-off for 2018–19 although the Cabinet Secretary for Education now says she intends to repeat this in 2019–20. The indication is that from 2020–21, provision will be expected to be sufficiently mainstreamed and local authorities expected to support Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners from their own budgets. (Section 3.3)
- The National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee has been critical of the Welsh Government's decision to de-hypothecate the funding, particularly as it follows a policy inquiry the Committee conducted in late 2016 / early 2017 in which it recommended that funding and support for these groups of learners should be better targeted and evaluated. (Section 4)

## 2. Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners' attainment

The Welsh Government publishes statistics each January, *Academic achievement by pupil characteristics*, which show the attainment rates of the Level 2 threshold (5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*–C or the vocational equivalent) and the Level 2 threshold inclusive of English/Welsh and Mathematics, broken down by ethnic background. The data is aggregated over three years so that the number of pupils in each ethnic background group is larger, and to enable more robust conclusions to be drawn about the attainment of pupils in each group.

### 2.1 Minority ethnic pupils

Attainment rates vary considerably across different ethnic groups. Compared to the all pupil Level 2 threshold achievement rate of 80.4% in 2015–17, White non-British (73.9%), Mixed ethnicity White and Black Caribbean (74.6%), Black Caribbean (data withheld as would be disclosive), and Black non-African or non-Caribbean (75.0%) pupils, on average have lower attainment.

However, other minority ethnic groups, particularly Mixed ethnicity White and Asian (87.3%) and Asian or Asian British (86.5%) have higher attainment on average than all pupils.

### 2.2 Gypsy/Gypsy Roma pupils

The Welsh Government statistics use the category 'Gypsy/Gypsy Roma'. Data for Traveller learners is not disclosed due to insufficient numbers of learners and data protection. Gypsy/Gypsy Roma learners have the lowest attainment of any ethnic group in Wales.

- 49.4% of Gypsy/Gypsy Roma learners achieved the Level 2 threshold, compared to 80.4% of all pupils, during the period 2015–17.
- 21.5% of Gypsy/Gypsy Roma learners achieved the Level 2 threshold inclusive, compared to 59.0% of all pupils, during the period 2015–17.

## 3. Welsh Government policy

### 3.1 The amalgamation of previously ring-fenced grants into the EIG

Upon the amalgamation of 11 former ring-fenced grants<sup>1</sup> and its formation in 2015–16, the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) was worth £141 million, which was £11.6 million less than the sum of its individual parts in 2014–15. This included £8 million transferred into the EIG for the Minority Ethnic Achievement and Gypsy Traveller grants, which itself was £1.6 million less than the £9.6 million in the last year in which they were ring-fenced.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Education Grant, the other grants amalgamated were the Foundation Phase Revenue Grant; School Effectiveness Grant; 14-19 Learning Pathways; Welsh in Education Grant; Lead and Emerging Practitioner Grant; Reading and Numeracy Test Support Grant; Additional funding for Band 4 and 5 schools; Teacher Induction; and the Higher Level Teaching Assistant Grant

The Welsh Government allocates the EIG to the four regional consortia who are then expected to distribute their allocations within their region to support all of the former ring-fenced purposes of the EIG. The Welsh Government does not monitor how much of the EIG is spent on any of its individual purposes, as it said fewer administrative burdens would be one of the main benefits in amalgamating the grants:

The new arrangements were intended to simplify systems, reduce bureaucracy and enable a greater focus on achieving outcomes for learners with less resource spent on administering and managing the grants and less focus on recording the inputs and outputs at a national level.<sup>2</sup>

### **3.2 Removal of funding from the EIG and expectation that support be mainstreamed and met from existing resources**

During the [2018–19 budget setting round in autumn 2017](#) (PDF 1MB), the Welsh Government announced that £13.1 million was being ‘removed’ from the EIG as part of a re-prioritisation of local government funding away from specific hypothecated grants to finance the protection of frontline school budgets in the Local Government Settlement. The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams AM, has since confirmed that this £13.1 million included the element of the EIG which was to support Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.<sup>3</sup>

In doing so, the Welsh Government has ended the partially hypothecated funding in the EIG for supporting these groups of pupils in order to maintain funding within the 2018–19 Local Government Settlement (specifically the Aggregate External Finance (AEF)) for schools’ core budgets at 2017–18 levels.<sup>4</sup> The Cabinet Secretary for Education expects support for Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners to be mainstreamed and provided from local authority budgets. However, she has made transitional funding available (see section 3.3).

### **3.3 Transitional funding until provision is fully mainstreamed**

The Cabinet Secretary for Education has allocated £8.7 million of transitional funding in 2018–19 and said that intends to do the same in 2019–20. This funding has been announced since the setting of the 2018–19 budget and follows representations from local authorities and scrutiny in the Assembly of the decision (see section 4.2). Kirsty Williams AM says it is ‘in recognition that transitioning the service to one which is core provision and sustainable for the long term takes time’.

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<sup>2</sup> [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education to the CYPE Committee](#) (PDF 749KB), 11 November 2016

<sup>3</sup> Letters from the Cabinet Secretary for Education to the CYPE Committee: [28 February 2018](#) (PDF 135KB) and [17 April 2018](#) (PDF 354KB)

<sup>4</sup> This resulted in a £1.5 million rise in the schools service block within the AEF from £1.554 billion in 2017-18 to £1.556 billion (rounded figures) in 2018-19. See the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies AM’s letter. [Letter from Alun Davies AM, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, to the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee](#), 13 November 2017

The £8.7 million funding for 2018–19 is broken down as follows:

- £5 million to Cardiff, Swansea and Newport local authorities which the Welsh Government estimated has the greatest concentrations of Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners;
- £2.5 million in 2018–19 to these three authorities as well as Wrexham to lead the transition to a regional approach to supporting these groups of learners;
- £1.2 million to the remaining 18 local authorities.

## 4. National Assembly scrutiny

### 4.1 CYPE Committee inquiry: 2016–2017

In a [policy inquiry in late 2016/early 2017](#), the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee inquiry criticised the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the use and impact of the EIG, specifically with regard to Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. In her [response to the CYPE Committee’s report](#) (PDF 402KB), the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams AM, said that the Welsh Government would put in place a ‘strengthened outcomes framework’ to address this, adding in [Plenary on 3 May 2017](#):

One of the recommendations I am particularly very strongly in agreement with, and that is that the current education performance framework is not sufficiently robust. It simply is not, and there was no hiding from that during the committee sessions. (...)

It [the Committee’s ‘valuable report’] has strengthened my arm in being able to galvanise action within the department, especially with regard to monitoring.

In terms of the funding model for supporting Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners, the CYPE Committee did not hear definitive evidence that the amalgamation of the grants into the EIG had had a detrimental impact on the priority given to this area or on educational outcomes but concluded that this could not be known either way. This is because of the lack of monitoring and evaluation undertaken.

The CYPE Committee therefore concluded the Welsh Government should strengthen its focus, and target funding specifically, on the educational outcomes of these groups of learners. The Committee recommended that the Welsh Government improve the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the EIG and keep the funding model under review. The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation but has since further de-hypothecated funding for Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners by removing it from the EIG (see section 3.1). The CYPE Committee has expressed its disappointment at this decision (see section 4.2).

The petition calls for an Equality Impact Assessment of the removal of the funding to be carried out. In its [inquiry report](#) (PDF 739KB) in February 2017, the CYPE Committee recommended that the Welsh Government undertake a ‘thorough updated impact assessment’ of the decision to amalgamate the grants in 2015–16. However, this was

rejected by the Welsh Government as it '[did] not believe there were deficiencies in undertaking the equality impact assessments which led to significant impact on services and which justifiably call for officials to revisit the original assessments'.

## 4.2 CYPE Committee follow-up

In its report on the [Welsh Government's 2018-19 draft budget](#) (PDF 1.0MB), the CYPE Committee expressed its disappointment at the decision to further de-hypothecate funding for Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners:

We would be disappointed if the Welsh Government decided to further de-hypothecate funding to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic learners when our policy inquiry earlier this year showed a need for far greater monitoring and evaluation of how the funding in the EIG was affecting these groups of learners. (...)

On the basis of the evidence provided in our Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic Children Report (February 2017) we urge the Cabinet Secretary to retain funding to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic learners as part of the Education Improvement Grant.

The [Cabinet Secretary rejected](#) (PDF 1MB) this recommendation but said she would write to the Committee again to provide further information on arrangements for 2018-19. In this letter, issued on [28 February 2018](#) (PDF 135KB), Kirsty Williams AM said:

For more than a decade the Welsh Government has provided targeted additional grant funding to Local Government to support our minority ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. Over that time Local Authorities have tried and tested arrangements and I fully recognise the expertise and experience in our schools and in those Local Authority services.

Secondly, what is clear to me is that this kind of support should not be allowed to be seen as additional. That is not sustainable in the long term and our expectations should be greater. (...)

Local Government has long called for de-hypothecation of grant funding, simplified arrangements, greater flexibility to deliver services and manage the pressures they have. These are Local Authority services and the Local Government Settlement remains the most sustainable way to fund core delivery.

And lastly, in prioritising funding to Local Government for schools, all Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers have had to make difficult decisions and consider a range of services and the ways they are funded.

The Cabinet Secretary's letter also gave details of the transitional funding in 2018-19 to ease pressures in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport and embed the mainstreaming of support for Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners on a regional basis.

The CYPE Committee subsequently wrote to the Cabinet Secretary on [14 March 2018](#) (PDF 187KB). This letter highlighted the Committee's concerns that the more robust outcomes framework the Welsh Government put in place for the EIG would have no benefits on Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners given they have been taken out of the scope

and remit of the EIG. The Committee also reiterated its disappointment with the decision to remove the funding from the EIG and its belief that ‘it goes against the direction of travel set out in your response to our inquiry’:

When the Committee recommended you consider whether the introduction of the Education Improvement Grant has improved outcomes for these groups of learners and keep the funding model under review during this Assembly, we did not envisage that one year later this funding would be de-hypothecated further and local authorities expected to find it from the Revenue Support Grant (RSG).

The CYPE Committee also sought clarification about what was happening to the £13.1 million removed from the EIG and the mechanism for its movement into the RSG as it was not formally transferred as part of the Local Government Settlement. This referred to the concerns of local government regarding the expectation that it continue providing Minority Ethnic Achievement and Gypsy/Traveller education services without any commensurate transfer into the RSG.<sup>5</sup> The [Leader of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council wrote](#) (PDF 400KB) to support the position adopted by the CYPE Committee.

The Cabinet Secretary responded to the CYPE Committee on [17 April 2018](#) (PDF 354KB). Kirsty Williams reiterated:

Local Authorities are responsible for schools funding as is set out in law and they must ensure appropriate education provision is available for all learners. That is why after 10 years of additional grant funding to try and to test systems and approaches, minority ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learner support is now a core provision.

The Cabinet Secretary also said that the transitional £7.5 million<sup>6</sup> was ‘additional’ to the £13.1 million which has been removed from the EIG and made available to local authorities through the RSG. The CYPE Committee sought further clarification in a [letter dated 14 May 2018](#) (PDF 467KB) asking how it can be additional when the £13.1 million for Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller no longer exists. It is possible that the Cabinet Secretary meant that the £7.5 million is separate to the £13.1 million which was removed from the EIG and contributed to the money the Welsh Government has used to offset an otherwise reduction to the funding in the Local Government Settlement for schools.

However, the £61.8 million the Welsh Government has taken from budgets such as the Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller element of the EIG has only maintained the schools service block of the settlement at existing levels (a £1.5 million increase to a £1.5 billion total).<sup>7</sup> This is why the petitioners suggest that the use of the funding for schools’ core budgets is academic as the overall effect has been a cut to local government funding.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example BBC Wales, [‘Education cuts impossible to defend, says council leader’](#), 22 January 2018

<sup>6</sup> Note this is now £8.7 million following the announcement of £1.2 million for the remaining eighteen authorities, as documented in the Cabinet Secretary’s [letter to CYPE Committee of 25 May 2018](#) and letter to this Committee of 12 June 2018.

<sup>7</sup> [Letter from Alun Davies AM, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, to the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee](#), 13 November 2017

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.