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# BWLETIN POLISI CYTÛN

## CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

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## REVIEW INTO THE QUALIFICATIONS MARKET IN WALES

Following reports regarding examination seminars held by examination boards, Welsh Education Minister Leighton Andrews has announced a Review into the structure of the general qualifications market in Wales.

The Review will look at the impact of the market structure on standards in GCSEs and A Levels and will also assess the effectiveness of the structure – identifying options for change and recommendations. The Review will report back on its recommendations after three months.

The Minister has written to the Secretary of State for Education in England, The Rt. Hon Michael Gove, and Glenys Stacey, Chief Executive of Ofqual, notifying them of the Review and has asked to be kept informed of developments on allegations against awarding organisations, including the WJEC, who award GCSEs and A levels to candidates in Wales.

The Review's terms of reference are as follows:

- an assessment of the impact of the current market structure of awarding organisations on standards in GCSEs and A levels;
- an assessment of the efficacy of the current market structure;
- the identification of options for change and recommendations.

#### **Key tasks**

- Gather and review information about the current system of awarding organisation operation in Wales for GCSEs and A levels.
- Consult with relevant stakeholders.
- Analyse whether, and to what extent, competition for market share has had a negative impact on standards.
- Review the advantages and disadvantages of the current model of multiple awarding organisations offering the same qualification.
- Consider the debate that is currently focused on this issue in England, explore the model in operation in Scotland and consider international comparisons.
- Explore possible alternative models for the way forward, offering a critique of their efficacy.
- Explore the legal implications of potential change.
- Within three months of commencement of the Review, provide an Option Appraisal report to the Minister, identifying recommendations for ministerial consideration.

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL BANDING INFORMATION PUBLISHED**

**Banding information for all secondary schools in Wales has been published by the Welsh Government.**

Banding uses the performance of schools to group them into one of five bands – from Band 1, schools which are performing well, to Band 5 schools which need to improve.

Information about how well 15-16-year-olds have performed in examinations, and information about their level of attendance is used to band schools. The Welsh Government also takes account of the level of poverty of pupils in the school as this can have an impact on what the school can achieve.

Welsh Education Minister, Leighton Andrews, has said that “banding is not about labelling, naming or shaming, or creating a crude league table. It is about putting schools into groups to identify which need our support and which we can learn from. will now be exploring how we can best support those schools in the lower bands so they can begin their improvement journey.”

Four groups of data are used to calculate the relative performance of schools:

- The number of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs or the equivalent at grade C or above.
- The average points per 15 year old pupil for the top eight GCSEs or equivalent results. The top eight scores are used to encourage schools to concentrate on achieving higher grades rather than more GCSEs at lower grades.
- Performance in English, Welsh and mathematics.
- Attendance.

Across the groups, relative performance is measured according to actual performance, progress over time and performance relative to the proportion of pupils at the school from a relatively deprived background, based on their entitlement to free school meals. These measurements reflect the Welsh Government’s priorities for improving literacy, numeracy, attendance and reducing the impact of deprivation.

The process is designed to help local authorities support their schools more effectively, raising standards and performance in Wales. High-performing schools will be expected to share their good practice widely in order to help low-performing schools.

## **PROTECTING CHILDREN IN WALES: MULTI-AGENCY CHILD PRACTICE**

**The Welsh Government is seeking views on proposed new arrangements for Child Practice Reviews (CPR).**

The purpose of the new framework is to replace the present Serious Case Review system. As part of the new CPR framework, different types of reviews will be undertaken depending on the nature of the incident and the circumstances of the child involved.

Two practitioner workshops have been organised to provide further details. The first is in Swansea on 20 January 2012 and the second in Conwy on 14 March 2012.

**End of consultation:** 02/04/2012

## **PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION OF THE EDUCATION WORKFORCE IN WALES**

This consultation document outlines proposals for the future of registration of the education workforce in Wales.

In February 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills set out his agenda to raise standards of education in Wales.

To deliver this agenda the Minister wants to ensure that the education workforce works together as a single group of professionals to improve educational standards for the people of Wales.

There are considerable differences between the requirements for professional standards, qualifications, initial training, performance management and continuing professional development across the different sectors of the education workforce. While some of these differences are entirely appropriate, reflecting real differences in sector requirements, others are more artificial, creating barriers to cooperation and mobility among the workforce. It also does not assure the public that all education professionals exhibit similar high standards of professional conduct and competence and so can undermine parity of esteem.

A body registering the education workforce has potential to be a key partner in delivering better coherence. It could support the improvement agenda and could monitor and potentially help to drive up standards, maintaining and enhancing public confidence in the profession. The scope and functions of the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) as they are currently constituted are too narrowly focused however to fully achieve this.

### **Changes Proposed**

The intention is to reconstitute the GTCW or establish a new education registration body for Wales. As a minimum, this body will register school teachers to ensure that only those who are qualified and fit to practice can teach in Wales. Views are sought on the wider scope and functions of the registration body and it is proposed that:

- the work of the body should be overseen by the profession. This could be achieved through a professional council consisting of persons with expertise in the sectors and

functions covered by the body, or a series of sector councils each considering a particular area of the workforce

- the scope of the body should be extended beyond teachers to include the wider education workforce. This would include, as a minimum, school learning support staff, further education lecturers and the work-based learning workforce, and the Government are considering and seeking views through this consultation whether additional categories of staff should be included. A phased approach to registering the additional categories of the education workforce is proposed so that, over time, a complete picture of the whole workforce can be built up
- the potential functions of the body should be broadened to enable it to play a key role in establishing and monitoring standards within the education workforce. These new functions would be phased in over time as and when the Minister considers that the body is ready to take them on. These functions could include approval of initial teacher training courses, requirements for continuing professional development and setting professional standards
- those registered with the body should be required to pay a registration fee. It is proposed to avoid a complex fee structure that would be costly to administer but would consider a limited range of differential fee rates where these could be properly justified
- alongside these changes we should also consider the differences in requirements for qualifications, professional standards, performance management and professional development and consider whether greater coherence across these issue could support our drive to improve standards
- broad powers are sought in the proposed Education Bill to enable these changes to take effect.

**End of consultation:** 30/03/2012

## **FULL REVIEW OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PROFILES**

**Leighton Andrews, Welsh Minister for Education and Skills has announced a full review of assessment arrangements for children when they first enter the Foundation Phase - the first stage of learning in Wales for children aged 3-7.**

An independent expert will undertake the review and is expected to be appointed in March. A revised Profile will be introduced from the start of the 2013/14 school year. For the remainder of this year, schools can continue to use the CDAP as they did during the autumn term, ensuring consistency of application. However, because there has been a measure of inconsistency across Wales, local authorities will not be required to submit the results to the Welsh Government at the end of the year.

## **REPLACEMENT OF SOCIAL FUND COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS AND CRISIS LOANS FOR LIVING EXPENSES**

**This consultation document seeks views on replacing the Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses once the funding is devolved to the Welsh Government in April 2013.**

The Welfare Reform Bill that is currently before Parliament abolishes the discretionary Social Fund and paves the way for delivery of new local services to replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses.

From April 2013 the Social Fund is being devolved to local authorities in England, the Scottish Government and to the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government will receive funding equivalent to that which was spent on the Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans in Wales at the point at which responsibility is transferred.

**End of consultation: 30/03/2012**

## **FLYING START EVALUATION REPORT PUBLISHED**

**Deputy Minister for Children, Gwenda Thomas has responded to the publication of the first survey report into the Flying Start programme saying that the report will provide useful evidence as the programme expands and develops.**

The report provides an insight into the nature of Flying Start Families and the challenges they face. It provides a wealth of information about the take-up and experience of Flying Start from the perspective of families.

Gwenda Thomas said: "What comes over to me from this report is that parents in areas where the programme is running are very positive about the impact that Flying Start is having. This chimes with what I have heard myself from parents and from front-line staff involved in the delivery of the programme, as well as the wider evidence base for the programme."

"We must remember that the areas in which Flying Start runs are among the most disadvantaged areas in Wales and families within them some of the hardest to reach. This report must be viewed against that background. We should also remember that we are still in the early stages of the programme and I expect that, over the longer term, we will see further improvements. It is important that we continue to evaluate the impact of the programme and this report will provide evidence that we can use for its development and expansion."

The Minister will be making a statement to the National Assembly about the report early in 2012.

## **ORGAN DONATION ISSUES:**

### **FIRST MINISTER ENCOURAGES EVERYONE TO GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE**

**Just before Christmas, the Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones visited the Kidney Wales Children's Renal Centre at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff to encourage everyone to give the gift of life this Christmas by signing up to the organ donation register.**

He met the staff and children at the centre awaiting kidney transplants. The Kidney Wales Children's Renal Centre offers specialist inpatient care to children with kidney disease and renal failure.

The Welsh Government is currently seeking views on the detail of how a soft opt-out system for deceased organ and tissue donation in Wales would work.

The Welsh Government has been holding consultation events throughout Wales in recent months, and is continuing to do so. One such event, just before Christmas was held specifically for faith groups.

Welsh Churches are continuing to campaign against the proposals, insisting that the proposals will not deliver the benefits the Government wishes, and that instead more energy needs to be given to registering more Welsh donors. The leaders of the main Christian communities in Wales have all spoken against the proposals, including Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales; the Archbishop of Wrexham, Edwin Reagan, and the President of the Free Church Council, Gareth Morgan Jones.

Meanwhile, Virgin founder Sir Richard Branson has congratulated Welsh Health Minister Lesley Griffiths for Welsh Government plans to introduce a soft opt-out system of organ donation.

## **MINISTER REITERATES WELSH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO REDUCING DRUG RELATED DEATHS**

**The Local Government and Communities Minister, Carl Sargeant has said that the Welsh Government is committed to reducing the number of drug related deaths across Wales.**

Marking Wales Overdose Awareness Day, the Minister said that substance misuse continues to have a devastating impact on individuals and their families and friends. During 2010 there were 152 drug related deaths in Wales. To try and bring down this number an initiative aimed at preventing overdoses has now been rolled out across Wales.

The Take Home Naloxone Rescue Scheme offers free Naloxone kits to all drug users at risk of overdose. The decision to roll out the scheme Wales-wide was made by the Minister in May following a successful evaluation of the pilots carried out over the last two years in a

number of areas in Wales. To date over 1,000 Naloxone kits have been issued across Wales with over 100 being used to reverse the effects of overdose.

## **RURAL ISSUES : CAP REFORM**

**Welsh Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes, Alun Davies has called on the Welsh public to have their say about Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reform and published a discussion paper to stimulate the debate.**

“CAP Reform; Conversation on the way forward for Wales” follows the publication of the European Commission’s draft Regulations for further reform of the CAP, that when agreed, will be implemented on 1 January 2014.

The CAP supports farmers in Wales with direct payments and other support under the Wales Rural Development Plan. It also plays a key role in maintaining the viability of Welsh farming and the economic, environmental and cultural cohesion of rural Wales.

Responses to the document can be submitted from 19 December 2011 until 31 March 2012. The document can be found [here](#) (link at bottom of page).

**GERAINT HOPKINS,**

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**CYTŪN – CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WALES**