



Pembroke House, 20 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ

01332 372337 07972 482931

ufelda@community-tu.org

Mrs Sharron Lusher

Chair

Independent Welsh Pay Review Body

C/o:

Secretariat

Independent Welsh Pay Review Body

Secretariat@iwprb.wales

15/03/2022

Dear Chair,

I hope to detail below issues which impact on our ability to ensure a secure and safe learning environment for both students and teachers – and reasons arising from the current crises which make it imperative to protect working conditions for teachers to provide a continued secure and safe learning environment for our learners.

As a nation we are not yet recovered from the impact of COVID 19, an impact which has had a disproportionate hit on disadvantaged children. In Wales 29% of children live in relative income poverty, 18% are entitled to Free School Meals. There is a 16% educational attainment gap for children at age 11 in poorer compared to more well-off backgrounds (Education Response to C19 – Implications for Schools 2021). Our current situation as indicated by the Educational Endowment Fund estimates that the gap due to school closures will have widened by between 11% and 75% for children in England which is likely to be the same in Wales.

The crises have led to lasting trauma for many pupils, with a 25% rise in referrals for Mental Health Support (The Guardian Feb 2022). We are aware of the extra support needs which exist now in helping students and pupils to recover, a heavy responsibility which sits with schools and staff in the teaching environment.

Our teachers are one of our most precious commodities, holding a teaching, learning, and safeguarding role for the nation's children and young people, providing a safe learning environment and being the eyes and ears on the wellbeing of these children and young people. The financial pressures on government are huge, and this may raise threats to spending on education in this coming year. But OECD 2020 state that there is compelling

evidence that the calibre of teachers is the most significant determinant of student achievement. Teachers also carry a responsibility in safeguarding children. The ONS November 2021 reported that child safeguarding referrals fell by almost a third during the pandemic. Vulnerable children who would usually be recognised at school have been slipping through the net. The face-to-face contact is the first line of defence in identifying children in need.

There is an imperative to recruit and retain top talent to education on many levels.

Under the current world crises, it is more important than ever to recognise that it vital for the future of our school children and the nation that the pivotal role of education in economic recovery is kept as a priority. Ignoring this would endanger the prosperity of future generations with widespread repercussions for poverty, social exclusion, and sustainability of social security systems (Woessman 2015).

A report in The Guardian 8th March 2022, from the Resolution Foundation predict that inflation will rise above 8% by the spring 2022. This is expected to drive more children into poverty. Save the Children UK Impact Manager Dan Paskins states that the UK has ' 2.2 million households with children in poverty. This impact is described as leaving even more children in cold and damp homes, going to be hungry, and missing out on the opportunity they need to live and thrive. (Daily Express Mar 13th, 2022). The food writer Jack Monroe whilst giving evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee stated ' in my experience of 10 years at the coal face of poverty work I can tell you that people are just eating less or skipping meals, or having less nutritious food...' (Sky News March 9th, 2022). The Independent reports from the New Economic Foundation has estimated that 23.4 million people will be short of funds to meet the acceptable standard of living by April 2022, by £8600 per year. This means nearly half (48%) of children will be part of households unable to provide them with a decent standard of living. The Resolution Foundation research suggests that inflation could spike again in September at 10%.

These statistics paint a very bleak future for the poorest in our communities, and their children's education will be affected by these standard of living pressures, an increasing number of children will be at risk and in need. Teachers are the daily contact whose responsibility is to safeguard the education and the wellbeing of these vulnerable children.

In this time of added pressures, it is more important than ever to ensure that all recruitment and retention tools are utilised to protect and maintain a highly skilled education staff.

Voice Community believes that the resilience of teachers to remain in the profession is on a knife edge. Voice Community and other Unions have described in their initial submissions the stresses arising from the real term reduction in pay over decades and in comparison with other professions, the OECD 2021 statistics state that UK teachers work more hours than comparable teachers in OECD nations, that workload is the most quoted reason for leaving the profession, we know that there is year on year reduction in recruitment, and there is an increase in teachers teaching in a subject they are not qualified in (an indicator of quality of teaching).

The Education Support Survey on wellbeing which is conducted annually report a Teacher Wellbeing Index score of 43.9% which is down from last year and below the general population of 49.4%. other response show:

- 72% of teachers described themselves as stressed – up 10% from previous years.
- 46% always go to work even when feeling unwell.
- 54% had considered leaving the profession due to mental health pressure.
- 72% of staff were stressed.
- 35% worked 51 hours a week or more.
- 66% of senior leaders worked 51+ hours per week.

As a result of these findings the ESP concludes that retention and stress appear to be closely linked, and that workload remains the most important work-related factor determining wellbeing.

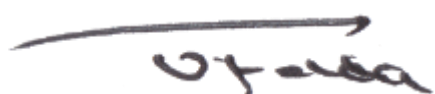
The World Health Organisation 2021 stated that long working hours led to 745,000 from stroke and ischemic diseases in 2016, a 29% increase since 2000. These diseases result for working hours of more than 55 per week. In the WEC 2021 National Education Workforce Survey teachers report that they work more than 56 hours per week.

The Welsh Government have to move quickly to ensure that sufficient teachers are retained in the profession. Working conditions have a stronger influence on retention, and moderate pay rises do not impact retention.

A multi-year award of 4% and 2% or 4% is not sufficient to address retention issues, nor to mend the real term drop due to the many years of nil or low awards, particularly now being faced by inflation of 8% in April 2022, and 10% in September m2022.

The Welsh Government also needs to be mindful of the increased pressure due to the incalculable impact of below standard living conditions for 48% of children in the UK, on an already traumatised child population in the UK. Teachers in the education setting bear responsibility for learning and safeguarding as they are often the first point of contact for vulnerable children. Now more than ever before the Welsh Government needs to respond with a pay and conditions offer which respects the contribution of this highly skilled profession, and addresses the workload so consistently raised. Voice Community in the initial submission of evidence commented on specific matters but would here again emphasise the need for a 10% pay award, as well an increase in PPA to 20%. This is done with the hope that the Welsh Government will hear.

With regards,



Senior Professional Officer, Voice Community.