



Children and Young People Committee

CYP(4)-12-11 Paper 1

Inquiry into the Implementation of the Learning & Skills (Wales) Measure 2009

Evidence from Governors Wales

- 1.1 Governors Wales promotes the effective governance of schools in Wales and provides support to individual governors, local governors associations, fora and other groupings. Governors Wales is committed to the promotion and effective management of quality provision in schools in Wales.
- 1.2 There are approximately 23,000 school governors in Wales. They give their time, skills and expertise in a voluntary capacity, to help their schools provide children with the best possible education.
- 1.3 Governors Wales recognises that governing bodies are accountable for the strategic direction of their school and for the quality of education provided.
- 1.4 Governors Wales' role, therefore is to support governors by:
 - Encouraging effective and efficient governance of schools;
 - Providing advice and guidance to governors and governing bodies;
 - Identifying their training needs;
 - Promoting their entitlement to training;
 - Identifying and disseminating best practice;
 - Raising the profile and status;
 - Helping governors to focus on the consequences of their work for children;
 - Representing the views, concerns and aspirations of governors and governing bodies to policy makers.
- 1.6 Governors Wales welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Learning and Skills Measure 2009 and offers the following comments:

1. What effect has the implementation of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* had to date on young people aged 14-19 years? Do young people have a wider choice of academic and vocational courses as a result of the Measure?

Governors Wales feels that the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 appears to have made an important contribution and positive impact in widening choice and opportunity for learners aged 14-19. Although it must be stressed that it is still early days to assess its overall impact. The legal framework however, promotes consistency and the entitlement for all learners throughout Wales to follow their chosen course of study wherever this is feasible. Collaborative working between schools and between FE colleges and schools has also increased. This should lead to improved pupil retention and outcomes as a result. Our evidence indicates that there seems to be compliance with the Measure across most of Wales, but at different levels.

2. Do Welsh language pupils get the same depth and range of choice?

Some of the issues are potentially greater and provide challenge to the intent of the Measure. It is imperative that access to and the availability of Welsh medium courses is an integral part of planning of local curricula. We are mindful of a number of issues identified when the proposed Learning and Skills Measure was being discussed, i.e. a lack of suitably qualified teachers and FE lecturers who were able to deliver Welsh-medium courses; the need to travel longer distances for Welsh medium courses and potentially a restricted number of course choices.¹ Anecdotal evidence appears to indicate that this is still applicable in some instances.

We would agree with the findings of the Evaluation of the Learning and Skills Measure which indicates that Welsh Medium schools are 'making more use of peripatetic teachers; cross border collaboration and of ICT facilities, such as video-conferencing.'²

The proposed requirement in the Education (Wales) Bill 2012 for LAs to prepare and submit Welsh in Education Strategic Plans will hopefully be of further assistance.

3. If the Measure has resulted in a wider choice of academic and vocational courses, has this had any unintended consequences for other subjects, for example modern languages?

We are not aware of any negative impact as such. We recognise from anecdotal evidence the positive impact of the Measure on improved attendance and behaviour. All Learning Pathways – vocational and academic are equally valued. Local curriculum planners need to take account of the needs of all learners as far as reasonably practicable to ensure that learners follow their chosen pathway.

The wide choice of subjects (a minimum of 30) now offered for the same number of students could lead however, to a lower uptake in some subject areas. This will need to be monitored.

4. Has the implementation of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* had any effect on the numbers of young people choosing to stay on in education or training after the end of compulsory education at age 16?

There is anecdotal evidence (NE Wales) that learners who would have disengaged from education at some time before 16 have found a vocational learning pathway that has encouraged them to continue in education or has enabled them to find employment.

At the end of 2010, 11% of 16-18 year olds were NEET, which is lower than 2009 (12.2%). Data has also shown that the proportion of young people who are NEET has ranged between 10-12 per cent over the last 15 years, accounting for around 12,000-15,000 young people³.

The developing difficulties in both student and family finances may become an important factor in stay-on rates.

¹ Proposed Learning and Skills Measure Committee: Stage 1 report on the proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008. National Assembly for Wales.

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-business-documents/bus-business-documents-doc-laid.htm?act=dis&id=107894&ds=1/2009>

² Evaluation of the Learning and Skills Measure. York Consulting. April 2010. (Page 45)

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/researchandevaluation/evaluation/evaluationmeasure/?lang=en>

³ Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Year to 31 March 2011).

Welsh Government Statistical bulletin SB 94/2011, 12 October 2011

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16education2011/111012/?lang=en>

The current funding model for post 16 students means that schools are struggling to provide for more students and an increasing range of options, on funding which is linked to a cash total from previous years.

Governors Wales is also aware of the work that is being carried out in South Wales (the pre-VENT 14-19 scheme) to tackle underlying reasons why youngsters find it difficult to learn and are at risk of leaving school without the necessary qualifications or skills.⁴

5. What practical problems are being addressed in order to implement the Measure? Are there implementation problems for example:

- **in rural areas;**
The main issue still focuses on travel and transport although this is not just in rural areas. In some cases, loss of teaching time due to transport issues can also be a problem.
- **the provision by local authorities of a minimum of thirty learning programmes, including five vocational options;**
Only the largest of schools can do this by themselves and still maintain 'value for money' class sizes, others must work in collaboration. This to a certain extent is workable in urban areas but can be problematic in rural areas.

There are examples of good practice that highlight the effective partnership and collaborative working that exists between schools and colleges to deliver the 14-19 curriculum. For example, Coleg Menai where they have had a full time headteacher seconded to them and funded by them to promote FE-School Collaboration.

- **delivering local area curricula;**
School consortia have worked together to address time-table issues and make the best use of teaching staff.
- **delivery of learning (including the use of IT and remote learning);**
Examples include those already highlighted in section 2. Although remote learning has benefits, face-to-face is also essential to ensure effective learning.
- **transport and travel issues;**
There has been and continues to be transport issues between schools and between schools and colleges. Loss of learning and teaching time and additional transport costs as a result of travelling between sites are a concern. This is a significant issue in the more rural areas. We are aware of examples where schools are using and arranging their own transport/minibuses etc. to keep costs down.

Additionally, with the 14-16 group, staff will often need to supervise learners on journeys etc.

- **schools and FE college;**
Re-alignment of time-tables to enable collaborative working.
- **any others?**
Strengthening of collaborative arrangements and consortia producing shared time-tables to accommodate movement of learners between schools and colleges.

⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2001/110620prevent/?lang=en>

6. Is the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* being implemented consistently across all local authorities?

We are unable to comment specifically. Whilst LAs are supportive of the Measure, consistency is hard to determine. A variety in high quality provision would be valuable in developing best practice.

We note however, the Welsh Government's intention to fund 14-19 Learning Pathways via regional consortia for 2012 and stress the need to provide sufficient funding to allow for effective implementation and delivery.

7. Are vulnerable learners, particularly those with additional learning needs, able to benefit from the provisions in the Measure?

All learners have access to a wide range of courses, notably vocational courses, where this has led to successful achievement of qualifications. Deeside College, for example, has examples of students with ALN who have gone on to or are going on to study at a higher level. This would not have happened in a purely academic learning environment. We note submissions from some of the teacher unions who make reference to concerns regarding the central funding which may result in courses being withdrawn at level 1.⁵

8. Is learning support being delivered effectively?

It is crucial that learner support is learner centred to enable learners to participate effectively in education and training. Consistency of approach is essential via learning coaches and team awareness of individual learner's requirement, as well as independent and impartial advice.

9. What effect is the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* having on further education colleges?

The numbers of students at 14-16 using the facilities offered by FE colleges have increased. This is an area of growth for FE Colleges and presents a number of different challenges, not least coping with younger people in what is predominantly an adult environment. Colleges are having to work more closely with schools to ensure learner needs (vocation, academic and in a pastoral sense) are met. Policies and strategies are being re-examined and curriculum provision amended to ensure they cover all learner needs. The Transformation Agenda in FE is being delivered at pace.

10. Other comments:

In addition to transport issues already highlighted, there may be concerns for some learners moving to other schools that offer certain courses, but do not necessarily wish to be taught at another school/college i.e. preferring to stay in their own learning establishment.

⁵ Inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure 2009. Evidence from NASUWT and UCAC. 17th November 2011. <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MID=488>