

**Review of the  
School Workload Advisory Panel**

**Final Report**

for

**Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills**

**Welsh Assembly Government**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



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## **Introduction**

1. The School Workload Advisory Panel (SWAP) was established by the Welsh Assembly Government as an independent body in the autumn of 2004 with a remit that was aimed at reducing bureaucratic burdens on schools. It followed work previously carried out by the Welsh Assembly Government to reduce bureaucratic burdens and built on the commitment in *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: a National Agreement* (2003) for “a concerted attack on unnecessary paperwork and bureaucratic processes for teachers and head teachers”. The Implementation Review Unit (IRU) was established as a parallel body in England.
2. The panel, initially comprising 6 members representing support staff, teachers and head teachers, meets on a regular basis and, since the panel’s inception, have engaged with a range of stakeholders on a wide variety of issues that impact on the work of schools.
3. The panel was initially established for a period of up to three years with a commitment to review its work towards the end of its second year to inform the planning of any future provision. An interim review was carried out in 2006 following which the life of the Panel was extended for a further two years pending a further review of its operation and impact. The Panel was also increased to 8 members with additional representation by classroom teachers and support staff and a rolling programme of recruitment introduced to periodically refresh the panel membership.
4. The current panel of 8 comprises 4 primary school head teachers, 2 class teachers (one secondary and one primary), 1 Higher Level Teaching Assistant and is chaired by a Special School head teacher.
5. The panel is supported in its work by the School Workload Advisory Unit (SWAU) which mainly comprises a full time Business Manager who co-ordinates the work of the panel and acts in the role of secretariat.
6. The current lifespan of the panel is due to expire in September 2009 and this review has been commissioned to assist in determining the nature of any future role and activity of the panel.
7. To inform the findings of this review, submissions were invited from panel members, Welsh Assembly Government officials and stakeholder groups including local authorities, workforce unions and members of the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG).

## **Review Findings and Recommendations**

8. An executive summary of the review’s main recommendations is provided below. A more detailed account then follows of the review findings and recommendations which are grouped by section under the following headings:-
  1. Panel membership.
  2. The panel’s work.

3. Engagement with the Welsh Assembly Government.
4. Engagement with other organisations.
5. Engagement with stakeholders.
6. Impact on bureaucratic burdens.
7. Future lifespan and remit.

## **Main recommendations**

### **Extending the lifespan of the School Workload Advisory Panel:**

**R1** There remains further scope for reducing bureaucratic burdens on schools and addressing workload issues. It is therefore recommended that the lifespan of SWAP should be extended beyond September 2009 for a fixed term of sufficient length to allow current work to develop and achieve sustained impact. There should be provision for regular monitoring and periodic review to inform future decisions concerning lifespan and remit.

**R2** It remains important, both for effective operation and credibility with stakeholders, that the panel retains its independence and powers of scrutiny. The current powers should be considered sufficient but with the proviso that they are deployed so as to achieve greatest impact on reducing bureaucratic burdens.

**R3** An extension of the panel's lifespan should be used as an opportunity to clarify and re-state the panel's remit. This should involve all partners and stakeholders to secure a shared understanding of the panel's work and could effectively form part of a re-launch of the panel set against the wider context of other provisions contained in the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload.

### **Recruitment and retention:**

**R4** In view of the recently appointed status of most of the panel members and of the effective nature of the panel's current performance it is recommended that existing members be invited to express their interest in continuing to serve on the panel. This would then serve as a basis for determining any further recruitment arrangements including staggered appointments. For the purposes of maintaining business continuity it is also recommended that consideration should be given to inviting the current Chair to continue in post for an agreed period to at least cover transitional arrangements as the panel's lifespan is extended.

**R5** The role of full time Business Manager should be retained and developed to provide essential support and facilitation for the work of the panel and to have particular responsibility for maintaining business continuity given the part time nature of panel membership.

**R6** The current panel size should be retained with any additional required capacity and/or expertise provided through co-option arrangements.

**R7** Future recruitment should seek wide representation across the panel in terms of role, region, phase, setting and language. The panel as a whole should have balanced representation from all sectors of the school workforce.

**R8** Future recruitment cycles should allow for panel membership to be periodically refreshed but should also ensure new appointments are staggered so that no more than 25-40% of the panel membership changes at any one time.

**R9** The current time commitment required of panel members should remain unchanged but with consideration given to providing additional time for the Chair to discharge the particular duties associated with the role. Given the limited time available for the panel's work it is recommended that the bi-annual meetings with the Minister are considered as additional working days in addition to the maximum of 24 days already allocated.

#### **Future work priorities:**

**R10** The panel should continue to build on the effective ways of working it has recently developed. This should be regularly referenced against its Strategic Work Programme to ensure that the skills and experience of panel members are effectively deployed.

**R11** The panel should periodically review its Strategic Work Programme to ensure it continues to address issues that impact most on bureaucratic burdens and that intended outcomes are clearly stated. This should include consultation with stakeholder groups to ensure the panel's priorities reflect those issues of greatest concern to stakeholders. It should also include means by which the panel can evaluate the extent to which it achieves intended outcomes and demonstrate its impact on tackling bureaucracy.

**R12** The panel should also underpin the priorities identified in its Strategic Work Programme with a broader assessment of the nature of bureaucratic burdens on schools. This would enable the panel to more accurately identify the extent to which workload issues are externally imposed or internally generated and adapt its focus and activities accordingly and provide further scope to link its work with other provisions of the National Agreement.

**R13** The Welsh Assembly Government should consider how the panel's work and its other strategies designed to support implementation of the National Agreement can be effectively aligned to achieve greater overall impact.

#### **Engagement with partners and stakeholders:**

**R14** The Welsh Assembly Government should review the means by which it engages with SWAP so that engagement routinely occurs at a sufficiently early stage to facilitate effective and constructive dialogue. This should be considered in relation to policy development processes and to the systems DCELLS employs for gatekeeping and impact assessment and seen as contributing to securing joined up policy delivery. It will be necessary to support this with high level endorsement and monitoring from senior managers to ensure that impact assessment processes

become more embedded in ways of working. Whilst this will have greatest implications for DCELLS it should also take in other departments whose work impacts on schools.

**R15** To support the previous recommendation the Welsh Assembly Government should also review the organisational positioning of the School Workload Advisory Unit in the DCELLS structure so that it can be more centrally placed to facilitate better strategic cross-cutting operation within DCELLS and across other government departments.

**R16** The panel should complete its review of engagement with key partners and stakeholders and use the results to put in place arrangements that secure more effective and consistent means of engagement so that SWAP's work is better understood and informed. In this and other aspects of its work the panel, with the support of the Business Manager, will need to ensure it continues to make best use of available resources.

**R17** The panel should also review its communications strategy, building on recent successes and addressing areas where communication has been less effective. This should include regular and routine communication with stakeholder groups and other partners, including WAMG. Updating the SWAP website should be considered as a priority. The communications strategy should also include provision for more effectively communicating the panel's achievements in reducing bureaucratic burdens and support its continued approach to sharing good practice so that it targets the areas that have greatest impact on schools.

## Review of the School Workload Advisory Panel – March 2009

## Detailed Findings and Recommendations

| Review focus  | Findings   | Recommendations  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>1. Panel membership</b></p> <p>Size</p> <p>Representation</p> <p>Recruitment and retention</p> <p>Time commitment</p> | <p><b>1a</b> The two additional panel members, appointed following the 2006 review, have increased the panel's capacity to conduct its business more effectively. The current panel size (8 members) is considered large enough to enable wide representation without being so large that it reduces efficiency.</p> <p><b>1b</b> Six of the existing eight panel members have been appointed since January 2008 and all six within a 10 month period. Whilst this has refreshed the panel and supported a fresh impetus such a high turnover within a relatively short period of time has made it challenging to maintain business continuity – a concern expressed by one of the workforce unions. The work of the full time Business Manager has been of particular importance in these circumstances - this is referred to in more detail in following sections.</p> <p><b>1c</b> The current term of office for all panel members is due to end in September 2009 to coincide with the expiration of original five year lifespan of the panel.</p> <p><b>1d</b> The current profile of the SWAP panel (4 primary head teachers, 1 special school head teacher, 1 primary teacher, 1 secondary teacher and</p> | <p><b>1.1</b> The current panel size should be retained subject to considerations referred to in recommendations 1.6 and 1.7.</p> <p><b>1.2</b> Periodic refreshing of the panel should be seen as a positive feature but future recruitment processes should be planned so as to ensure new appointments are staggered so that no more than 25-40% of the panel membership changes at any one time.</p> <p><b>1.3</b> The role of full time Business Manager should be retained with particular responsibility for maintaining business continuity and to mitigate against disruption to panel business caused by recruitment processes. The role and organisational positioning of the Business Manager is further considered in the following sections.</p> <p><b>1.4</b> In view of the newly appointed status of most of the panel members, and of the positive features of its current operation (see section 2) it is recommended that, should the panel continue in its present form, existing members be asked to express their interest in continuing to serve as panel members. Expressions of interest could also include preferences for length of office up to a</p> |

| Review focus | Findings  | Recommendations  |
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|              | <p>1 HLTA) raises differing issues around representation. There is now a better regional representation and Welsh medium settings are also now better represented. However, the current make-up is heavily skewed to the primary sector and, in particular, primary leadership.</p> <p><b>1e</b> Under-representation of phase, setting or workforce sector naturally has implications for the range of collective knowledge and experience panel members can bring to the panel's work. However, there is an expectation that, as part of their role, panel members will work in areas outside of their normal setting and, whilst this has not been cited by panel members as being a major obstacle to progress, some issues have been more challenging than others. Engagement with 16-19 provision was offered as an example of one such area.</p> <p><b>1f</b> The 2006 Review of SWAP proposed that co-option may be a means of addressing any such gaps in the panel's expertise. This option has so far not been adopted.</p> <p><b>1g</b> Evidence gathered from panel members, workforce unions and local authorities generated a number of proposals on panel composition. There were strong cases made for increased</p> | <p>pre-determined maximum relative to whatever period of time the panel's lifespan is extended for. This may, in itself, generate sufficient scope to stagger future recruitment of new members to address issues of representation referred to in 1.5.</p> <p><b>1.5</b> Future recruitment processes should seek wide representation across the panel in terms of role, region, phase, setting and language. The panel as a whole should be representative of the whole school workforce. However, recruitment is subject to applications received and it is likely to be impossible to always achieve the desired blend. Of equal importance is the need to assemble a panel that combines experience and a willingness and ability to work together effectively to address stakeholder concerns and this may necessitate some compromise in regard to representation. Particular thought needs to be given to how applications can be encouraged from those sections of the workforce who may not normally be alert to these opportunities. Workforce unions have a role to play here in encouraging their members to express interest in SWAP membership.</p> <p><b>1.6</b> The question of Local Authority representation should receive further consideration. There is no doubt that processes which place bureaucratic burdens on schools often</p> |

| Review focus | Findings  | Recommendations   |
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|              | <p>representation from the secondary phase (including secondary leadership) and also for additional classroom-based teachers and support staff.</p> <p><b>1h</b> A further case was made for including local authority representation on the panel on the basis that local authorities were heavily involved with schools, national government and other agencies. As such, they were well placed to make a valuable contribution to the panel's work.</p> <p><b>1i</b> Panel members are expected to spend 12-24 days per year on panel activities. In evidence gathered from panel members there were no strong views expressed as to whether this was too much or too little. By networking through membership of various other groups it was felt that, in reality, intelligence gathering went beyond the allocated time for panel business.</p> <p><b>1j</b> Discharging the full commitment of 24 days equates to approximately 12% of term-time working and, therefore, it should be noted that this represents a relatively small proportion of panel members' substantive roles. This can make it difficult to maintain continuity and momentum. The panel is now supported by a full time Business Manager whose communication with the Chair and other members is a significant factor in securing business continuity.</p> | <p>involve local authorities, directly or indirectly. As such, the insight of local authority representation on the panel may add value to the panel's work. However, SWAP has historically been based on a panel composed of school practitioners and it is likely that reducing the number of practitioners to create one or more places for local authorities would not be welcomed by school-based stakeholders. Should this receive further consideration it is recommended that local authority representation is considered as additionality, either through co-option, as described below, or through permanent membership – all other panel members should have substantive school-based roles. A possible way forward may be to consider whether Consortia Cymru could provide the appropriate representation given their close working links with practitioners and local authority officers.</p> <p><b>1.7</b> Where there are gaps in the panel's expertise that negatively impacts on its ability to efficiently carry out its business consideration should be given to co-opting additional membership. This should be time-limited and focus on specific work strands and arrangements should be subject to agreement between the Chair and the Business Manager and any additional funding approved by officials.</p> |

| Review focus   | Findings  | Recommendations  |
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|  | <p><b>1k</b> The panel has bi-annual meetings with the Minister and these are valuable opportunities to provide an update on activities and engage the Minister in discussion on key issues. The two days allocated for these meetings account for nearly 10% of the panel's annual expected time commitment.</p> <p><b>1l</b> The role of Chair is naturally more demanding, not only in terms of processing communications, but also in providing leadership and direction for the panel.</p> | <p><b>1.8</b> The current time commitment required of panel members should be retained but with consideration given to whether additional time should be allowed for the Chair to discharge the particular duties associated with the role, over and above those expected of other panel members. Further consideration should also be given to whether additional discretionary time for panel members should be allowed when there are particular, unforeseen demands on the work of the panel.</p> <p><b>1.9</b> Given the limited time available for panel work it is recommended that the bi-annual meetings with the Minister are considered as additional working days in addition to the maximum of 24 days already allocated. This would free up further time for the panel to focus on field work and other core activities.</p> |
| <p><b>2. The panel's work</b></p> <p>Ways of working<br/>Work plans and priorities<br/>Secretariat support</p> | <p><b>2a</b> The panel's preferred ways of working has been adapted to achieve more efficient use of panel members' time. The panel had recognised that previous activities, whilst having broad coverage, did not always achieve sufficient depth and satisfactory resolution.</p> <p><b>2b</b> The panel now meets bi-monthly with the majority of its work being carried out as field work with panel members being assigned specific</p>  | <p><b>2.1</b> The panel has successfully developed more effective ways of working and it should continue to explore how these can be further improved to maximise the panel's available resources.</p> <p><b>2.2</b> The panel should periodically review its Strategic Work Programme to ensure it continues to address issues of greatest influence on bureaucratic burdens and that they are employing</p>  |

| Review focus | Findings  | Recommendations   |
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|              | <p>responsibilities individually or in small groups. Part of the bi-monthly meeting is used as a plenary session for reporting back on progress whilst the remainder is allocated to pre-arranged meetings with WAG officials. The work is led and managed by the Chair and Business Manager respectively.</p> <p><b>2c</b> Panel members feel this way of working has been successful in making more effective use of their time, both in field work and in plenary, and has also provided them with greater flexibility to combine panel duties with their substantive roles. They further feel that this approach has greater potential for positively impacting on reducing bureaucratic burdens.</p> <p><b>2d</b> The panel carried out a review of its priorities in October 2008 and, as a result, produced a Strategic Work Programme which identified the need to focus on a number of key DCELLS policy areas. These were assigned to panel members who have been tasked to gather evidence of bureaucratic burdens in these areas and engage with DCELLS officials to follow up specific concerns.</p> <p><b>2e</b> The process for identifying work priorities is mainly based on the experience of individual panel members who become aware of issues either through their own experience or through concerns</p> | <p>the most appropriate means of identifying work priorities.</p> <p><b>2.3</b> The panel should also periodically test priorities with stakeholder groups to ensure they continue to reflect those issues of greatest concern to stakeholders. Engagement with stakeholders is further addressed in section 5.</p> <p><b>2.4</b> There would also be value in establishing a more objective and broader picture of the nature of bureaucratic burdens on schools to inform the work of the panel and to set its Strategic Work Programme in a wider context. This would also enable the panel to more accurately identify the extent to which workload issues are externally imposed or internally generated and adapt its focus and activities accordingly.</p> <p><b>2.5</b> The panel should consider nominating a Vice-Chair to assist in maintaining business continuity should the Chair be unavailable.</p> <p><b>2.6</b> Recommendation 1.3 referred to retention of the Business Manager role. The strategic elements of this role should be further developed to promote effective panel working and to assist in securing value for money from the panel's work. This is further addressed in the recommendations in Section 3.</p> |

| Review focus | Findings   | Recommendations |
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|              | <p>picked up through networking activities. These are then set against current, key policy areas and further insight is provided by the Business Manager through 'horizon-scanning' of emerging policy initiatives.</p> <p><b>2f</b> Whilst the personal experience and network contacts are a valuable resource to support prioritising of work it can be limited by the nature and range of representation on the panel.</p> <p><b>2g</b> Referrals by stakeholders, individual or group, are less frequently used as a means of identifying priorities. This may be a reflection of the extent to which stakeholders are aware of SWAP and/or the means by which contact is made with the panel. (Stakeholder engagement is covered more fully in Section 5.)</p> <p><b>2h</b> Whilst the panel is active in focussing on individual policy areas there does not appear to be systems in place for identifying broader causal effects of bureaucratic burdens that examine, for example, policy development processes in WAG or at the capacity of schools to manage change. In forming an overview of bureaucratic burdens it can therefore be difficult for the panel to distinguish between externally imposed burdens on schools and internally generated bureaucracy as constituent elements of overall workload concerns.</p> |                 |

| Review focus   | Findings  | Recommendations  |
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|  | <p><b>2i</b> The current Chair provides enthusiastic and purposeful leadership and has promoted ways of working that has led to the panel working more cohesively and effectively. There is currently no provision for a Vice-Chair to act in the absence of the Chair.</p> <p><b>2j</b> The strategic direction of the panel owes much to the work of the Business Manager whose full time role facilitates the effective working of the panel, particularly given the part-time nature of panel members' involvement. In addition to facilitating meetings and maintaining internal and external communications with the panel this role also involves engaging with WAG officials and other agencies on behalf of the panel.</p> <p><b>2k</b> The work of the panel benefits from an effective working relationship between Chair and Business Manager. Given the part time nature of panel member roles it is difficult to see how the panel could function effectively without the services of a Business Manager.</p> |  |
| <p><b>3. Engagement with WAG</b></p> <p>DCELLS and other WAG departments</p> | <p><b>3a</b> The panel currently works on a remit that centres on monitoring and, where possible, reducing the bureaucratic burdens on schools arising from government policies and initiatives.</p>  | <p><b>3.1</b> Systems should be put in place so that engagement with SWAP is not reliant on the initiative of individual officials or SWAP members but embedded in DCELLS systems and ways of working.</p> |

| Review focus   | Findings   | Recommendations  |
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| <p>Engagement protocols<br/>Impact assessment<br/>Gatekeeping<br/>Organisational positioning</p> | <p><b>3b</b> Current engagement with WAG is in the form of periodic meetings with DCELLS officials who have responsibility for specific policies. Feedback from officials report that, whilst engagement with SWAP is positive and constructive there has so far been little impact on the nature and delivery of individual policies, particularly where engagement has occurred some way into the process of policy design and delivery.</p> <p><b>3c</b> Panel members also contend that engagement would be more effective if it were to occur at a much earlier stage in the policy development process. This has been a consistent message from SWAP since its inception.</p> <p><b>3d</b> However, where engagement has occurred at a sufficiently early point in policy development there is evidence that this has positively influenced policy development and delivery. Both panel members and officials have commented favourably on their engagement in relation to the Statutory Reform Agenda for Children and Young People with Additional Learning Needs. Engagement has been more collaborative and constructive than previously reported and officials have noted a significant change in the panel's approach during the past 18 months.</p> | <p><b>3.2</b> These systems should make provision for engagement with SWAP in the early stages of policy development and consideration should be given to how this aligns with engagement with other stakeholders through working groups and/or focus groups. Engagement with SWAP should be viewed as positively contributing to effective policy development and to securing intended policy outcomes. This is more likely to be achieved if engagement occurs at an early point in policy development and as part of a wider process of impact assessment.</p> <p><b>3.3</b> Whilst the SWAP remit currently focuses on the bureaucratic impact of policies on schools this cannot, and should not, be considered in isolation from the wider process of impact assessment as an integral part of policy development. Consideration should therefore be given to how workload impact assessment could be aligned with the processes set out in the Policy Gateway. This would support greater awareness of the impact of policies on bureaucratic burdens beyond DCELLS.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> The functions of the SWAU, including those of the Business Manager, could more effectively be centrally positioned in the organisation by operating as part of strategic policy management and gatekeeping across DCELLS rather than be placed within a policy group as it is now.</p> |

| Review focus | Findings  | Recommendations   |
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|              | <p><b>3e</b> Engagement with officials and policy development is generally instigated by SWAP and brokered by the Business Manager. DCELLS officials report that the facilitation provided by the Business Manager works well and does much to add value to the nature of their working relationship with panel members.</p> <p><b>3f</b> However, the practice of engagement being instigated by the panel does expose the absence of a systemic means of involving SWAP at a sufficiently early stage to allow panel members and officials to collaborate in ways that can have real impact and benefit for intended policy outcomes. The nature of engagement also reflects the varying level of awareness among officials of SWAP and its remit. Whilst contact between panel members and officials is positive and constructive there is often a degree of uncertainty with some officials as to the exact purpose of such meetings.</p> <p><b>3g</b> Earlier work by the panel and the SWAU focussed on promoting more effective and consistent approaches to impact assessment of policies and gatekeeping arrangements that could positively impact on reducing bureaucratic burdens. This was reinforced in the SWAP publication <i>'Working with Schools'</i> (2006) which was co-signed by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and</p> | <p><b>3.5</b> Implementation of the above recommendations needs to be underpinned by strong, top-down endorsement by senior managers supported by ongoing monitoring to ensure consistent compliance.</p> <p><b>3.6</b> The panel should consider how officials can be better informed of SWAP's role and how engagement can be best managed. DCELLS electronic bulletins may be a place to start but face-to-face awareness raising sessions may also support an improved level of dialogue. Further consideration will need to be given to how this should or could be extended to other WAG departments.</p> <p><b>3.7</b> In making contact with officials and, in particular, when arranging meetings it is essential that the panel sets out clearly the nature of their interest and the purpose of the contact. As well as providing officials with an opportunity to fully prepare for meetings this would assist in making best use of time and in securing desired outcomes.</p> <p><b>3.8</b> The panel should review the guidance provided to officials in the SWAP document <i>'Working With Schools'</i> (2006) and update as necessary. The review should actively involve partners and stakeholders to ensure it remains fit</p> |

| Review focus | Findings  | Recommendations  |
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|              | <p>Skills and Chairs of SWAP and ADEW. It set out guidance for WAG, Local Authorities and other organisations on how bureaucratic burdens could be reduced through more effective gatekeeping and impact assessment systems.</p> <p><b>3h</b> The 2006 interim review of SWAP noted that despite the efforts of the panel and the SWAU these principles were not yet sufficiently embedded in the work of the department. This appears to remain the case and the absence of such processes therefore means engagement is still largely dependent on an element of chance through individual initiative and voluntary participation rather than systemic provision.</p> <p><b>3i</b> Related to this is the positioning of the SWAU in the DCELLS organisational structure. The School Workload Advisory Unit (SWAU) essentially comprises the full time SWAP Business Manager. This post is presently attached to the Workforce Remodelling Branch within the Qualifications, Curriculum and Learning Improvement Group. This organisational positioning owes more to the historic origins of SWAP as a product of the <i>National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload</i> than as a strategic positioning within the DCELLS structure.</p> | <p>for purpose. Re-publishing could then form part of a wider awareness-raising communications strategy and assist in promoting the desired working practices. Consideration should be given to whether joint endorsement by Minister, SWAP and ADEW could be further strengthened by the involvement of workforce unions with all signatories working to secure compliance with the guidance.</p> |

| Review focus | Findings  | Recommendations |
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|              | <p><b>3j</b> The current positioning of the SWAU in a policy area within the departmental structure works against facilitating SWAP engagement as a constituent element of achieving effective department-wide impact assessment and gatekeeping systems. Whilst assessing impact in terms of bureaucratic burdens is but one element of wider impact assessment there are clear implications for ensuring policy development is 'joined up'. This could be more effectively achieved at a strategic level across the department rather than attempting to 'champion' it from within one policy branch.</p> <p><b>3k</b> Evidence received from some stakeholders suggested that some bureaucratic burdens on schools were due to a lack of 'joined up' development of government policy and this would indicate that a more strategic and consistent approach to impact assessment would be welcomed.</p> <p><b>3l</b> Whilst the panel's focus has so far mainly been on DCELLS, reducing bureaucratic burdens on schools is also considered to be the responsibility of other WAG departments. Co-ordinated approaches across departments could more effectively be achieved through high-level strategic positioning of the SWAU in DCELLS.</p> |                 |

| Review focus   | Findings   | Recommendations  |
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| <p><b>4. Engagement with other organisations</b></p> <p>Local Authorities<br/>Other agencies and organisations</p> | <p><b>4a</b> In the years following its inception the panel's work included engagement with local authorities and other agencies including Estyn, the Lottery Fund and the HSE. This has since featured less prominently in the panel's work programme with a greater focus on engaging with WAG officials. More recently, the panel is refocusing its work to include engagement with organisations other than DCELLS.</p> <p><b>4b</b> This is an approach favoured by some workforce unions who express concern that local authority officers are not sufficiently aware of SWAP and of good practice in gatekeeping processes.</p> <p><b>4c</b> The same submission cites other bodies such as Estyn and WJEC as contributing to workload pressures and urges SWAP to widen the scope of their work to include these and other organisations.</p> <p><b>4d</b> Comments received from local authorities indicate that there has, in recent years, been relatively little contact from SWAP and there is scope for strengthening links.</p> <p><b>4e</b> SWAP has recently used examples of local authority policies to highlight good practice and publicised these widely to schools.</p> | <p><b>4.1</b> Through appropriate monitoring SWAP needs to be able to identify with confidence the main sources of bureaucratic burdens on schools and adjust their priorities accordingly within the constraints of time and resources available to them. Where this involves organisations outside of WAG departments suitable means of engagement need to be established.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Given the positioning of local authorities in relation to schools, WAG and other agencies it is important that SWAP maintain effective engagement with local authorities. This should build on work already initiated in this area. ADEW and Consortia Cymru provide forums with which SWAP may wish to consider developing stronger links. (Recommendation 1.6 addresses the possibility of local authority membership of SWAP and this may also provide an opportunity to strengthen the links described.)</p> <p><b>4.3</b> The panel should continue to use the work and policies of local authorities and other organisations to showcase good practice that assists in reducing bureaucracy burdens on schools.</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Effective links between the SWAP and the local authority Change Manager network should be</p> |

| Review focus   | Findings  | Recommendations   |
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|  | <p><b>4f</b> As part of its recent strategic review the panel has also committed to re-engage with other key partners including local authorities, Estyn and GTCW. The panel has also recognised the importance of maintaining effective contact with local authorities and has assigned responsibilities to each panel member to liaise with specific local authorities.</p> <p><b>4g</b> The panel regularly attends national meetings of local authority Change Managers to keep in touch with their activities and to provide reports on SWAP activity and priority. Given the origins of both groups in the National Agreement this is an important linking arrangement.</p> | <p>further developed to recognise the complementary nature of the work of both groups in tackling workload. Through co-ordination of the Change Manager network and oversight of the SWAP Business Manager role, DCELLS officials are best placed to facilitate this.</p>   |
| <p><b>5. Engagement with stakeholders</b></p> <p>Communication and contact with stakeholder groups</p> | <p><b>5a</b> Panel members make extensive use of their individual networks to engage with stakeholders and they report this as being a valuable means of gathering intelligence to support an evidence-based approach to their work and of testing SWAP's strategic work programme.</p> <p><b>5b</b> The panel has also recently reviewed its engagement with stakeholder groups and has since put in place arrangements to engage more frequently with workforce unions. This is likely to be welcomed by unions who have expressed concern at the previous level of engagement.</p>   | <p><b>5.1</b> The panel should complete its review of its engagement with stakeholders and use this to inform the priorities in their Strategic Work Programme.</p> <p><b>5.2</b> The review should include consideration of a communications strategy to maximise engagement with stakeholders and build on the recent successful newsletters.</p> <p><b>5.3</b> The panel should satisfy itself that it is using all reasonable and practicable means of ensuring its communications reach target stakeholder</p> |

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|              | <p><b>5c</b> The panel has also engaged with head teacher forums in some local authorities as a means of improving their understanding of local issues of concern.</p> <p><b>5d</b> Workforce unions report that there is a generally low awareness of SWAP and its activities amongst their members but also concede that this may be due, in part, to the ‘unseen’ nature of some of SWAP’s activity.</p> <p><b>5e</b> There is support from stakeholder groups for a better means of SWAP communicating to stakeholders its presence, purpose activities and achievements.</p> <p><b>5f</b> Several respondents commented adversely on the SWAP website, commenting on it not having been updated for some time. Latest materials and news are dated 2007 and this gives a misleading and false impression of current inactivity.</p> <p><b>5g</b> In 2006 SWAP published two guidance documents. The first, <i>Working with Schools</i>, was aimed at those organisations working with schools and has been referred to previously. The second, entitled <i>Reducing bureaucracy in schools: Principles for Schools</i>, provided guidance for head teachers and governors on measures they could take on</p> | <p>groups including all sectors of the school workforce.</p> <p><b>5.4</b> Consideration should be given to further means of encouraging stakeholders and their representative groups to contact SWAP – either with concerns or with good practice that can be shared more widely. Workforce unions, in particular, need to recognise that engagement with SWAP is a two-way process and they are able to contact SWAP at any time with concerns they may have regarding bureaucratic burdens.</p> <p><b>5.5</b> Recommendation 2.3 referred to periodically testing panel priorities with stakeholders and this would provide opportunities for face-to-face engagement through conference-style events with representative groups, including workforce unions.</p> <p><b>5.6</b> The panel should consider the value of updating their guidance to head teachers and governors, previously published in 2006, and consider whether this should be supplemented by guidance to other sectors of the school workforce. The current newsletters may be a suitable vehicle for this and would provide an opportunity to draw attention to internally generated bureaucracy as a component of overall workload.</p> |

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|              | <p>reducing internally generated bureaucracy. At the time these were widely publicised and well received.</p> <p><b>5h</b> SWAP also publishes an Annual Report which summarises the areas the panel has focussed on and indicates future priorities. Whilst this is helpful in highlighting specific policy areas it does not give stakeholders an overview of the underlying causes of bureaucratic burdens on schools and how they influence SWAP's priorities for action.</p> <p><b>5i</b> During the past 12 months the panel has started publishing a newsletter which is periodically sent to all schools. The newsletters draw attention to SWAP's recent activity, highlight current issues relating to workload and promote good practice by sharing resources and encouraging recipients to inform them of other examples.</p> <p><b>5j</b> Newsletters have been well received and a recent offer in one newsletter to share details of a local authority Disability Equality Scheme elicited over 200 responses.</p> <p><b>5k</b> Circulation of newsletters within schools is subject to schools' own internal systems so it is difficult to determine the extent to which all members of the school workforce beyond school leaders gain access to this useful information and guidance.</p> | <p><b>5.7</b> The panel should give urgent attention to updating the SWAP website and/or suspending its availability until suitable content is available. In its current form it undermines the current work of the panel and distorts stakeholder views of the panel's efficacy.</p> <p><b>5.8</b> The panel should consider using their website as a repository for good practice that stakeholders can use as a resource. As an example, the availability of downloadable resources would have removed the need for the Business Manager to recently handle over 200 requests for information on a good practice case study and would also have been an opportunity to attract positive attention to the website.</p> <p><b>5.9</b> The Business Manager should assess the operational requirements to maintain and develop the SWAP website and advise officials of any additional resources required.</p> <p><b>5.10</b> The panel should review the content and style of the Annual Report to ensure that it meets its intended purpose. This could include consideration of the value of providing an overview of bureaucratic burdens as informed by the panel's work and contact with stakeholders during the year in question.</p> |

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|  | <p><b>5l</b> Strong representations were received from one workforce union regarding improving the panel's relationship with the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG). More frequent contact was sought including regular reports from the panel on progress with its work.</p> <p><b>5m</b> The SWAP Business Manager recently gave a presentation to WAMG members that reported on changes to membership of the panel and details of its current Strategic Work Programme. However, engagement with WAMG is infrequent and WAMG members are not always familiar with the panel's work and current priorities.</p>   | <p><b>5.11</b> The panel should determine how it can best engage with WAMG and reach agreement with WAMG members on how this can be achieved so that it becomes a routine element of the panel's operation.</p>   |
| <p><b>6. Impact on bureaucratic burdens</b></p> <p>Impact on bureaucratic burdens – perceived and actual</p> | <p><b>6a</b> Given that much of SWAP's work has been about promoting better approaches to policy development and more efficient working practices it is difficult to quantify the impact the panel has had on reducing bureaucratic burdens.</p> <p><b>6b</b> Workforce unions, though acknowledging that much of SWAP's work is unseen, point to what they consider to be a continuing problem of excessive workload and bureaucracy and either deduce that SWAP has had minimal impact on reducing these burdens or find it difficult to quantify. The point is also made that absence of a panel could have worsened conditions still further. One local authority commented on there being little evidence of impact</p> | <p><b>6.1</b> Recommendation 1.2 refers to limits on the number of panel members changing at any one time. This is additionally important in ensuring that recruitment processes do not adversely impact on business continuity and overall impact of the panel's work.</p> <p><b>6.2</b> There should be a clear and easily identifiable link between SWAP's working priorities and those issues which will have greatest impact on reducing bureaucratic burdens. This will enable stakeholders to see how SWAP's work will positively affect their own experience.</p> |

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|              | <p>as schools were reporting greater levels of bureaucracy than before.</p> <p><b>6c</b> Workforce unions identify the Termly Notification, their own workload surveys and the OME teacher Diary Survey as evidence of continuing or increasing workload to support their concerns.</p> <p><b>6d</b> Despite having been in place for over 4 years it is only in the last 12-18 months that the panel has settled into an effective pattern of working that is guided by strategic planning. The strategic work programme identifies key issues that the panel will address but is less clear about specific intended outcomes beyond the general panel remit.</p> <p><b>6e</b> In its present form the panel is still relatively new with 6 out of the 8 members appointed since January 2008. Given the bi-monthly meetings structure the panel in its current form has come together on a relatively few number of occasions.</p> <p><b>6f</b> Panel members feel they are now a more cohesive group with a stronger sense of purpose and clear objectives. Panel members feel more confident of their ability to address issues in greater depth and achieve improvements. The role of Business Manager has been key to achieving this</p> | <p><b>6.3</b> Consideration should be given to how the impact of SWAP's work can be more accurately identified so that panel members, officials and stakeholders are able to reach sound judgements about the true impact SWAP has on addressing bureaucratic burdens. Incorporating intended outcomes into the panel's Strategic Work Programme would assist this process and better enable the panel to evaluate its own progress and plan accordingly.</p> <p><b>6.4</b> It is important that SWAP effectively communicates its successes to stakeholders and partners to both improve understanding and awareness of its work and also to build stakeholder confidence in its ability to positively impact on reducing bureaucracy. This should be considered in relation to the recommendation in 5.10 that SWAP reviews the content and presentation of its Annual Report.</p> <p><b>6.5</b> Improved communication should include contact with representative stakeholder groups, including workforce unions, where more detailed discussion can take place on key issues of concern.</p> <p><b>6.6</b> Recommendation 3.2 refers to earlier engagement with policy development and this</p> |

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|              | <p>way of working as has the leadership of the current Chair who, together, work effectively in steering the work of the panel.</p> <p><b>6g</b> Panel members are confident of achieving greater impact through earlier engagement with those responsible for national and local policy development.</p> <p><b>6h</b> The panel have recently increased their focus on identifying and sharing good practice and see this as a key driver in tackling excessive workload and bureaucratic burdens. Despite some early successes there is further progress to be made before stakeholders generally perceive SWAP as a consistent resource of good practice and a consequent reduction in workload is observed. Panel members are working to achieve this through encouraging stakeholders to share their good practice in addition to that identified by the panel through the course of its work.</p> <p><b>6i</b> In respect of internally generated bureaucracy in schools the impact of SWAP's work is difficult to isolate from that achieved through wider remodelling strategies and other provisions of the National Agreement. Given the close relationship and common origins of SWAP and remodelling in the National Agreement this is not necessarily a</p> | <p>should be arranged so as to increase the overall effectiveness and impact of SWAP's activity.</p> <p><b>6.7</b> Officials should consider how the Termly Notification could be better presented to counter the perception that all publications are targeted at all schools and stakeholders. A simple reference or index system could enable recipients to quickly identify which documents are applicable to them. This would help to address those stakeholder perceptions of workload which do not accurately reflect reality.</p> <p><b>6.8</b> There would also be value in considering how the Termly Notification should link with impact assessment processes. There is scope for the termly notification to be an output from a process that assesses the cumulative impact on schools of policies and applies gatekeeping principles to regulate the overall load. This would enable the Termly Notification to act as more of a tool in regulating burdens on schools rather than a purely descriptive summary of DCELLS outputs.</p> <p><b>6.9</b> The panel should continue to promote the sharing of good practice. In line with recommendation 6.2 this should be selective so as to support priorities that will have greatest impact on addressing workload concerns and reducing bureaucratic burdens.</p> |

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|  | concern so long as strategies are complementary and seen to be 'joined up'.  | <b>6.10</b> The impact of SWAP's work should not be considered in isolation from the remodelling strategies arising from the National Agreement and promoted by WAG and social partners. Officials should take account of the work of SWAP in planning policies relating to workforce remodelling.   |
| <b>7. Future Lifespan and Remit</b><br><br>Scope for further work<br>Future remit<br>Status<br>Panel profile | <p><b>7a</b> The majority of respondents, including panel members, were consistent in reporting that levels of bureaucracy and workload in schools remain high and require further action to address their negative impact on schools capacity to operate effectively. One local authority referred to Head teachers experiencing a "continuous avalanche of bureaucracy".</p> <p><b>7b</b> There is clearly no case to be made for claiming the panel's work is done and that there remains no further need for action in this area. The strength of feeling expressed about the effects of workload on schools and their workforce suggests there is a strong case for extending the lifespan of the panel, in some form, for a further period of time.</p> <p><b>7c</b> There is widespread recognition and support for the aims of the SWAP panel but was accompanied by some calls for the panel to have increased powers to achieve greater impact. This may, in part, be due to the perceived view of SWAP, its operation and impact which, in turn, is a product of the nature</p> | <p><b>7.1</b> The point has not yet been reached where the services of the panel can considered to be no longer needed and there remain enduring challenges to be addressed in reducing workload and bureaucratic burdens. It is therefore recommended that the lifespan of SWAP be extended for a further term.</p> <p><b>7.2</b> On the basis that it should reasonably be assumed that bureaucratic burdens and excessive workload can be effectively addressed over time an extension of the lifespan should be for a time-limited. Given the nature of issues involved and the need to secure cultural change and new ways of working at all levels a further period of 5 years should not be considered excessive.</p> <p><b>7.3</b> An extended lifespan should include provision for ongoing monitoring of performance and periodic review to inform any future decisions concerning lifespan and remit.</p> |

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|              | <p>of the hitherto inconsistent communication between the panel and stakeholders.</p> <p><b>7d</b> The panel's independence is valued both by panel members and stakeholder groups. Some workforce unions would like to see this strengthened with a "power of veto" over government policies and a more vigilant gatekeeping role across government departments. This would represent a radical change from the current terms of reference and assumes there remains no scope within the present constitution to achieve more effective working and greater impact. Evidence presented elsewhere in this report suggests there is further scope for more effective operation without recourse to such powers.</p> <p><b>7e</b> There was also support for consulting with stakeholder groups when determining any future remit or terms of reference. Related to this was expressed the need to link the remit and work of the panel more closely with social partnership arrangements in WAMG. Comparisons were made with the Implementation Review Unit (IRU) which is the parallel body operating in England which shares its origins with SWAP in the National Agreement.</p> <p><b>7f</b> Whilst it is generally understood that the current remit of the panel focuses on monitoring and reducing bureaucratic burdens on schools there is scope for greater clarity to define the extent or limits,</p> | <p><b>7.4</b> It remains important, both for effective operation and credibility with stakeholders, that the panel retains its independence and powers of scrutiny. The current powers should be considered sufficient but with the proviso that they are deployed so as to achieve greatest impact.</p> <p><b>7.5</b> An extension of the panel's lifespan provides an opportunity to re-state its remit so that panel members, officials, stakeholders and partners have a shared understanding of the panel's function.</p> <p><b>7.6</b> Any future remit should retain the scope for the panel to structure its work programme so it is able to target those areas which will deliver greatest impact in reducing bureaucratic burdens. The panel should therefore establish clear criteria for identifying priorities and regularly test these with key stakeholders and partners.</p> <p><b>7.7</b> In re-stating the terms of reference the opportunity exists to involve key partners and stakeholder groups in re-launching the panel demonstrating a shared commitment to tackling workload and bureaucracy.</p> <p><b>7.8</b> Consideration of extending lifespan and/or re-stating the remit should be aligned with other strategies aimed at reducing workload. These</p> |

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|              | <p>if any, of the panel's activities. During the current lifespan the panel has variously focused on bureaucracy generated by DCELLS, local authorities, other agencies and schools themselves. This is a broad spectrum which may, depending on the criteria it adopts to determine its work programme, conflict with the time and resources available to the panel.</p> <p><b>7g</b> The panel's current remit is exclusively focused on schools and reflects the particular issues that the National Agreement sought to address. There is presently no similar provision covering the post-compulsory education provision that also comes under DCELLS' responsibility.</p> <p><b>7h</b> There is currently a wide variation in the way the panel can potentially operate ranging from involvement with the detailed content of a particular policy or procedure to operating at high-level engagement with policy design and strategic impact assessment.</p> <p><b>7i</b> There is evidence that the panel in its present form is commanding greater confidence in stakeholders and officials and is recognising the need for more effective and strategic engagement with stakeholders and partners.</p> <p><b>7j</b> Views expressed by some panel members suggested that a re-launch of the panel should</p> | <p>include engagement with social partnership and developing local authority and regional capacity aimed at supporting remodelling.</p> <p><b>7.9</b> Recommendation 1.4 addresses the status of current panel members and how this might be taken account of if the lifespan is extended. The current leadership and operation of the panel has promoted a new sense of common purpose and there would be value in supporting continuity, subject to the provisions of R1.4.</p> <p><b>7.10</b> The continuation of a Business Manager role is an essential component of these arrangements. This has proved to have been a successful arrangement and, subject to the recommendations in section 3 regarding organisational positioning, should be retained to assist in ensuring the panel provides value for money in its operation and impact.</p> <p><b>7.11</b> Officials may wish to consider whether the work of the panel should be replicated to cover post-compulsory education to reflect the wider responsibilities of DCELLS. Consideration would need to include whether a single panel could provide the range of experience needed or whether separate, but complementary, arrangements would be more effective.</p> |

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|                     | accompany any extension to the lifespan which would be beneficial in raising awareness of the Panel's work. |                        |