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Written Statement: Launch of a consultation on the proposed Education Workforce Council (Interim Suspension Orders) (Additional Functions) (Wales) Order

CABINET STATEMENT

Written Statement: Launch of a consultation on the proposed Education Workforce Council (Interim Suspension Orders) (Additional Functions) (Wales) Order

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

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Today I am pleased to launch the public consultation on draft legislation to enable the Education Workforce Council (EWC) to impose an Interim Suspension Order (ISO) where it considers this is necessary in the public interest. I believe this proposed legislation is critical to strengthening the safeguards in place to protect children and young people in Wales.

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Under current legislation, the EWC can only remove a person from their register at the conclusion of an investigation and disciplinary process. That means a person remains on the register, even if they are under investigation by the police for serious, credible allegations involving risk of harm to children and young people. The proposed legislation seeks to give the EWC the power to temporarily suspend a person's registration pending an investigation and a disciplinary hearing, in the most serious cases. This means the public would have assurance that no professional on the EWC's register is under current investigation for serious safeguarding concerns.

The draft Order addresses the recommendation of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, which recommended in its report on the Teachers' Professional Learning and Education inquiry for the EWC to be given legislative powers to impose ISOs. It would also bring the EWC's powers into line with the powers of other similar regulators in England and Scotland, and with regulation of other professionals in Wales, for example those registered with Social Care Wales.

Today's consultation builds on the EWC's own consultation on this topic, carried out in November and December 2018. It focuses on the reasons why the Welsh Government thinks these powers are necessary, outlines in detail the proposed way the powers would work in practice, and seeks views on the draft Order. I am grateful to the EWC for their feedback during the development of the draft Order. I now welcome and look forward to hearing the views of wider stakeholders on the substance of this draft Order to help ensure the legislation will work on a practical level. The closing date for responses is 4 December 2020.

<https://gov.wales/education-workforce-council-interim-suspension-orders>

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.

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