

Action plan to promote the role and development of support staff in schools in Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Date of issue: October 2013

Action plan to promote the role and development of support staff in schools in Wales

Audience	All support staff in schools in Wales, local authorities, governing bodies, headteachers and teachers.
Overview	This action plan has been developed to focus on implementing a range of activities for support staff in schools in Wales concerned with the development of introduction to school guidance, performance management guidance and opportunities to enhance professional learning development in the short term. In the longer term, work will develop concerning the setting standards and relevant qualification levels. This action plan also takes account of the opportunities for embedding some of these activities in legislation as part of the forthcoming Education (Wales) Bill 2013.
Action required	None – for information only.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Practitioner Standards and Professional Development Division Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ e-mail: supportstaffenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Learning Wales website at learning.wales.gov.uk

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Background

Over recent years, the role of support staff in schools in Wales has been developed and extended, largely due to implementation of the provisions contained within the *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload – a National Agreement* document, but also as a result of initiatives to improve provision for early years education. The deployment of support staff in new and enhanced roles has been instrumental in securing significant cultural change in the way that the school workforce is deployed and has been a key factor in the drive to raise standards through the provision of high-quality teaching.

This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of support staff working in schools who now account for approximately 44 per cent of the total school workforce. While the majority of support staff are deployed in the classroom supporting teachers and working directly with learners there are many others deployed in other support roles that schools depend on to ensure efficient administration and to enable teachers and headteachers to be freed up to focus on their core purpose of providing high-quality teaching and learning.

Overarching commitment

As a direct result of these developments, it is imperative that all school support staff are able to access appropriate support and training including progression routes. It is also essential that initial training qualifications and subsequent further qualifications are fit for purpose, so we can ensure we have a skilled workforce able to support the delivery of national priorities by meeting the needs of schools and their learners.

There is a need to support the embedding of consistent practice and processes for all school support staff across Wales. This national consistency needs to be focused on professional standards, performance management and continuous professional development (CPD) which, when working together explicitly and holistically, provides a sound basis for a national structure for all support staff. We refer to this integrated provision as the Practice, Review and Development Process.

All of this work however takes place in the context of the direct responsibility for the terms and conditions of support staff remaining with local government as indicated by the work currently being undertaken by them on the single status pay reviews.

Aim of the action plan

The action plan identifies a range of actions, some of which will be directly undertaken with key partners in terms of development activities while others are related to where training and support is being or will be provided directly to support staff as part of other programmes being delivered by the Welsh Government or external partners.

The action plan includes short-, medium- and longer-term actions which together we believe provide the foundations to meet the overarching commitment to support staff within schools in Wales. This will also assist in building capacity to deliver a highly skilled school workforce for all schools in Wales.

Action plan to promote the role and development of support staff in schools

Issue	Action
<p>Qualifications/Professional Standards</p> <p>In Wales, we do not currently have specific requirements for qualifications required to undertake various roles for all support staff in schools including those concerned with teaching and learning.</p>	<p>Welsh Government will undertake a project with unions and employers to consider what should be the content of qualifications for teaching and learning staff working at different levels within the classroom.</p> <p>This work will be linked with consideration of the professional and/or occupational standards that should apply at each level and also consider the range of qualifications currently available for these staff.</p> <p>This work will need to take account of current NJC job profiles as well as a range of other relevant evidence (reports and research) including the current Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) standards. The work will aim to develop a continuum that enables those support staff who wish to do so to have clear pathways to develop their careers and to make well-informed choices about the qualifications and professional development that would best suit their needs.</p> <p>This project will need to take account of whether it is desirable to introduce minimum requirements for qualifications for support staff working in specific roles and, if so, how such requirements might need to be phased in. Where this requires practitioners to improve their level of qualification consideration will be given to how this might be made available to those staff that are currently in post.</p> <p>Timescale: Engagement with stakeholders via a reference group to discuss proposals for the future content of qualifications and a report will be produced by March 2014.</p> <p>The report will be considered and a decision taken on next steps, including on how a wider consultation of the proposals will be undertaken by May 2014.</p> <p>Future action: Potential to make regulations under Education (Wales) Bill 2013 – see information on pages 10–11.</p>

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<p>Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs)</p> <p>The HLTA scheme has now been running for seven years with over 1,800 Teaching Assistants successfully gaining HLTA status. The scheme works in partnership with local consortia and is undertaken by assessing a portfolio of evidence presented by candidates to determine if they meet the HLTA standards.</p> <p>This scheme has been instrumental in identifying those Teaching Assistants who are highly skilled and experienced and have the capacity to take on roles with increased responsibility for supporting learning and for line managing other support staff. This, in turn, frees up teachers so that they can focus on their core role of leading teaching and learning.</p>	<p>As the scheme has now been running for several years, officials have undertaken a short/sharp review of the scheme to ensure that it is continuing to meet its intended aims, as well as considering how the experience and knowledge gained by HLTAs could lead them on to further training and development, e.g. to access teacher training through accreditation of the HLTA standards.</p> <p>Timescale: September 2013</p> <p>Further work including engagement with the sector to be undertaken by December 2013.</p>
<p>Induction to working in schools</p> <p>A good induction programme can benefit the school and the practitioner.</p> <p>Support staff, as with any other practitioners, require absolute clarity of what is expected of them as well as how and where their role fits into the whole school improvement.</p>	<p>As part of work to introduce the Practice, Review and Development process for the school workforce the Welsh Government worked with a small group of practitioners to develop guidance that could be made available on the Learning Wales website which sets out best practice for all support staff before and as they start work in a school. This guidance should assist outcomes for support staff which relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being more effective in their job role • identifying early professional development priorities • encouraging more effective and consistent relationships with learners, which can help to raise standards of learner behaviour and attainment • receiving the same positive, consistent messages about the school, its values and policies. This consistency minimises potential misunderstandings and breaches of the school's procedures and protocols • higher morale, as staff feel valued and supported.

Issue	Action
	<p>The development of this guidance will enhance and support the development for those starting a new post in schools.</p> <p>Timescale: November 2013</p> <p>Future action: Potential to make regulations under Education (Wales) Bill 2013 – see information on pages 10–11.</p>
<p>Performance management for support staff</p> <p>The formal application of performance management can provide opportunities for support staff to have their contribution to the work of the school formally recognised, to compare their performance to the relevant professional or occupational standards and so provide a more consistent means of identifying professional development priorities.</p>	<p>The new performance management model policy for teachers is already clear in that we consider it good practice to include all school staff within a school’s performance policies. Officials will prepare guidance on effective performance management for support staff and continue to encourage schools to include support staff in their performance management policies.</p> <p>Timescale: November 2013</p> <p>Future action: Potential to make regulations under Education (Wales) Bill 2013 – see information on pages 10–11.</p>
<p>CPD</p> <p>The Welsh Government has introduced the Practice, Review and Development process as a means of integrating professional/occupational standards, performance management and CPD. This is a model designed to be applied to the whole school workforce and therefore needs to consistently include support staff so that the professional development of all members of the school workforce is linked to school and national priorities.</p> <p>However, there is currently very little information which assists support staff to develop their skills and knowledge. It is important that support staff are supported to identify where they need to gain additional information such as key topics/government initiatives and training. Such a process could also feed into their annual performance management process.</p>	<p>Funding streams such as the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) and the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) now enable schools to target support staff’s training and development alongside other school staff. It is for headteachers to decide how to direct this to meet school priorities – this is why we want a whole-school approach to staff development set out in school development plans regulations to ensure there is a coherent and transparent approach.</p> <p>1a. National support programme for literacy and numeracy</p> <p>The specification for the delivery of action which will support the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework makes clear that the contractor will be expected to consider the training and deployment of teaching assistants in school to enhance the learning in these areas alongside teachers. The contract for this work will start in March 2013 for a period of three years.</p>

Issue	Action
	<p>1b. Practitioners own literacy and numeracy competency</p> <p>As part of CPD provision for support staff we intend to promote opportunities for individual practitioners to address development needs, particularly their own level of literacy and numeracy, so that their proficiency is directly related to supporting learners' progress. The self-assessment programme described below will assist in identifying those practitioners who would benefit most from this provision.</p> <p>Support staff may also be able to access further support via the Wales Union Learning Fund to develop their essential skills and so boost their own skills and qualifications. There is already in place a provider network that can support such activity.</p> <p>2. Online self-assessment programme</p> <p>It is our intention to develop an online system which will allow teaching assistants to identify where they have a need to enhance their skills and understanding in key areas to support their work. This would be aligned with the NJC job profiles.</p> <p>Once the assessment has been undertaken, staff will be directed to further guidance, articles and resources linked to the outcome of their assessment and the particular needs identified.</p> <p>Key areas of assessment could be linked to such areas as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective communication and engagement with children, young people, parents and carers • child and young person development • safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child • supporting transitions • multi-agency working • sharing information. • the importance of literacy and numeracy skills for children and young people.

Issue	Action
	<p>Online system and supporting materials are to be launched by January 2014.</p> <p>Once the second stage has been completed, we will need to consider how this system can be used to engage with the wider support staff group, e.g. business managers.</p> <p>3. Professional learning communities (PLCs) PLCs are a relatively recent initiative intended to promote collaborative learning and development between school-based professionals. PLCs focus on addressing issues of common concern relating to improving standards of teaching and learning and using high-quality resource materials to inform and support activities.</p> <p>Their membership can be from both within and across schools and promotion has so far focused on teachers and headteachers. We will use evaluation of PLCs to identify those schools where support staff have been successfully deployed as part of a school's PLC, and use these examples to encourage this good practice to be adopted more widely.</p> <p>4. Resources to support CPD The Learning Wales website provides access to a range of high-quality resource materials that are relevant to the CPD of support staff as well as teachers. The range of resources is being continually extended and we will consider how provision can be enhanced to better support CPD activities of support staff.</p> <p>5. Welsh language The Welsh-language Sabbatical Scheme offers a five-week Entry level course to primary practitioners working in English-medium schools to provide them with the necessary vocabulary and linguistic skills. This training is now offered in six locations across Wales and is planned to operate until summer 2014.</p>

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<p>Education (Wales) Bill 2013</p> <p>The Bill gives an opportunity, for the first time, to remove the barriers to cooperation and mobility among the education workforce by placing a requirement on school teachers, school learning support workers, further education teachers and further education learning support workers to register with the reformed body. This will establish a single coherent system for the wider education workforce.</p> <p>The Bill will enable us to ensure all education practitioners have access to well-designed support and development.</p> <p>The Bill also proposes giving the Welsh Ministers the regulation-making power to make provision about induction, and appraisal, so that they are appropriate to the workforce for whom they are being developed. This proposal also ensures that there is flexibility to meet the challenging needs of the education workforce both now and in the future and make certain that arrangements meet the different requirements of the wider workforce.</p> <p>A regulation-making power exists to establish qualifications for teaching and learning assistants.</p> <p>The Bill was introduced for consideration by the National Assembly in July 2013. If agreed the new work of the reconfigured body whose first purpose will be to undertake registration of key groups will begin in April 2015.</p> <p>Further work to develop, engage and consult on the areas outlined below will be taken forward on an incremental basis.</p>	<p>There are proposals in the Bill that has been introduced that will give Welsh Ministers powers to consult and publish a set of standards for this group alongside other groups who will be required to register as part of the wider workforce.</p>

Issue	Action
<p>Qualifications and standards</p> <p>Induction to schools</p> <p>Performance management</p> <p>Workforce data</p> <p>Historically there has been little information collected about support staff who form a significant part of the overall school workforce. This means there is little information about the current roles, pay levels, qualifications and development needs to inform policy developments and interventions.</p>	<p>Subject to consultation with stakeholders, the Bill will also introduce a provision allowing Welsh Ministers through regulations to set required qualifications or minimum qualification requirements in order for the education workforce, including support staff, to register.</p> <p>A guide to induction to schools will be published which should assist schools in developing a comprehensive list of requirements that support staff should be aware of and use as they start a new post in a school.</p> <p>The Bill contains regulation-making power allowing the Welsh Ministers to make provision for induction for all staff that are required to register under the Bill. The regulations will require detailed consultation and engagements to ensure that any regulations introduced are fit for purpose.</p> <p>As we have stated, the formal application of performance management can provide opportunities for support staff to have their contribution to the work of the school formally recognised.</p> <p>Within the proposals contained in the Bill, Ministers will be able to introduce through regulation the requirement that support staff undertake a performance management process with their line managers.</p> <p>We will work with stakeholders to agree the scope of the information collected by the registration body so that we can use the data to develop policy approaches and measure progress against the aspirations of this plan.</p> <p>In developing the register we will consider how we better communicate with support staff to enable us to inform them about the changes and issues affecting them.</p>