



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response to Children and Young People Committee Children's Budgeting Enquiry.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

Consultation Questions

1. To what extent do you think that budget setting and allocating resources for children and young people is transparent at national and/or local level?

ATL Cymru does not believe that budget setting and allocation of resources for children and young people is suitably transparent at national or local level.

There is a need to promote a funding framework which is standard, transparent and comparable across LEAs. At present there is considerable variance in expenditure across LEAs. There needs to be a universal system established for the way LAs set, evaluate and monitor school budgets. At present funding does not always meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people.

ATL Cymru believes that the bulk of school funding should come via a developed and comprehensive needs-based formula rather than one simply based on pupil numbers.

The number of additional funding streams for schools needs to be reduced as they make the system of funding overly complicated. ATL Cymru welcomes the proposed introduction of 3 year budget cycles. This is a small step towards establishing clearer funding mechanisms for schools.

Devolving more funding to individual schools would help ensure that budget setting and resources are transparent across Wales. At present, LAs are increasingly providing services independently and without consideration of individual schools. Devolving and delegating funding to schools would ensure accountability for spending on pupils is clear and it would be easier to identify who is responsible for standards.

2. To what extent do you think children and young people taken into account in budget setting and allocation decisions in policy areas not obviously related to them, e.g. transport, housing, planning?

ATL Cymru believes that children are more often than not ignored when the budget setting and allocation decisions in policy areas not obviously related to them are considered.

When many LEAs set their education budgets they do not always fully consider the transport needs of children. One ATL Cymru member commented that there should be an extension to the catchment area policy for FE and 16-plus. It is uneconomical to see young people being bused across considerable distances when it is often perfectly feasible for them to attend a school sixth form or college closer to home.

3. To what extent do you think that departments within national and local government are joined-up in terms of what they spend on children and young people? Do you have examples where this is or isn't happening?

ATL Cymru does not believe that departments within local and national government have a joined-up approach in terms of what they spend on children and young people. There is a need for more cross-boundary working across portfolios.

4. Do you think there is enough forward planning about how funding is allocated to deliver policies and programmes for children and young people? Please give examples.

ATL Cymru does not believe that there is enough forward planning into how funding is allocated to deliver policies and programmes for children and young people. A systematic programme for LEA funding is necessary. The introduction of a 3-year budget cycle will be a small step towards establishing clearer funding mechanisms for schools and will also enable schools to better forward plan and target pupils who need assistance the most.

At a national level, the controversy surrounding the implementation of funding for the Foundation Phase illustrates a lack of forward planning on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The current cuts in FE expenditure also illustrate a lack of forward planning. In a time of economic recession when the country

needs to build on its current skills base, the cuts in FE expenditure are utter folly. Cutting funding means there will be fewer places available for 16-19 year-olds to continue in training and education. The short notice of the budget cuts gives schools and colleges no time to plan. Job cuts amongst teaching and support staff are likely pushing the unemployment rate even higher.

The Welsh Assembly Government should be practising what it is aiming to preach. It needs to ensure that forward planning is enacted to enable effective delivery of policies and programmes for children and young people in Wales.

5. Do you have any examples of cost benefit analysis being undertaken on policies affecting children and young people (i.e. assessing the costs and benefits of the impacts of an intervention or policy)? Is this something you would like to see done more routinely and made more transparent?

ATL Cymru does not have any examples of cost benefit analysis being undertaken on policies affecting children and young people. This is something which ATL Cymru would like to see being done more routinely and made more transparent.

6. Tackling child poverty is seen as a high political priority in Wales. To what extent do you think budget allocations reflect this high priority? To what extent is budget allocation and actual spend in Wales 'pro-poor'?

The current lack of transparency in various budget allocations make it difficult to reflect how high a priority child poverty is for the Welsh Assembly Government. At present it would appear that budgetary allocations to tackle child poverty are not being effectively targeted. In 2008 child poverty increased to 150,000 from 144,000 in 2007. This equates to 25% of children being affected by poverty in Wales. ATL Cymru believes that this is an unacceptable level and clearly shows that the Welsh Assembly Government policies in this area are not working.

LEA funding for schools does not reflect child poverty as a high priority. As stated earlier, the bulk of school funding should come via a developed and comprehensive needs based formula rather than one based on pupil numbers. This funding system means funding is not being targeted effectively and not reaching children facing poverty. LEA budget allocations are not sufficiently pro-poor.

ATL Cymru fears that the current emphasis on 'social exclusion' that drives many of the Westminster government's policies on poverty is inadequate. We believe that there needs to be a better understanding between socio-economic status and educational outcomes. ATL Cymru believes a systematic focus on social class would lead to more comprehensive and effective policies addressing the cause of poverty and deprivation. We believe that specific groups of people are systematically disadvantaged due to structural discrimination on the basis of, or a

combination of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, family status and religion/belief. Social exclusion by contrast focuses on discrete individuals in poverty. This focus can seem to suggest that poverty is the responsibility of the individual concerned who must attempt to lift themselves out of it. The Welsh Assembly Government needs to move from a concentration on individuals in poverty to a renewed and systematic focus on social class.

7. To what extent do you think children and young people are enabled to participate in budget setting and allocation decisions at a national and/or local level, and do you have any examples of this happening?

ATL Cymru does not believe that children and young people are enabled to participate in budget setting and allocation at a national or local level in Wales. We have no knowledge or evidence of this occurring.

8. What would you like to see change to make it easier to monitor spend on children and young people?

As stated earlier, ATL Cymru would like to see LEA funding for schools to come via a developed and comprehensive needs based formula, rather than one based on pupil numbers.

To enable more effective monitoring of spending on children and young people, ATL Cymru calls for the devolution of certain funding to individual schools to help ensure that budget setting and resources are transparent across Wales. At present, LAs are increasingly providing services independently and without consideration of individual schools. Devolving and delegating funding to schools would help ensure accountability for spending on pupils is clear and it would be easier to identify who is responsible for standards.

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