



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response to the WAG's Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and Delivery Plan

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.

ATL welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We applaud the WAG's aim to reduce child poverty by 2020. In 2010 1 in 4 children in Wales (180,000) live in poverty. This is an unacceptable figure.

ATL agrees with the three strategic objectives set out by the Welsh Assembly Government. The WAG is right to tackle families living in workless households. Pupils from deprived backgrounds have lower aspirations for their futures.¹ Children growing up in low income families are more likely to leave school without achieving their full potential.² The long term consequences of child poverty are wide-ranging and long lasting. The consequences cost society more in money than the government spends in trying to counter the effects of child poverty.

Education of children is a key route out of poverty but currently the average budgeted spend per pupil on local authority education in Wales in 2009-10 was £5,429. This is £527 per pupil lower than in England.³ Once money has been through the LEA and allocated to individual schools many are missing out on funding and pupils.⁴ Money

¹ The Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4, March 2009*

² As JRF research illustrates, even before the recession the problem of growing up in a low income household was already rising sharply, to the extent that half of the previous improvement in child poverty had already been lost. JRF, *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales 2009*, <http://www.poverty.org.uk/reports/wales%202009%20findings.pdf>

³ Local Authority Budgets for Education: Wales and England Comparisons, 2009-10, 27th January 2010, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/localgov2010/0127/?lang=en>

⁴ In Gwynedd the mean spending in 2009-10 is £3305 per primary pupil and £4277 per secondary pupil. One member reported that in their secondary school the funding per pupil is £3902 per head.

needs to be targeted at those in greatest need. For example, in 2008/9 seven authorities in Wales were spending less than the average Wales spend per pupil.⁵

An increase in spending on education is a necessary but not sufficient way of tackling the effects of child poverty on children's education. Other issues include:

- **The Curriculum:** Deprived pupils typically have less access to a broad curriculum, and extra curricular activities which pupils from more advantaged areas often take for granted. Disadvantaged pupils often find the curriculum they are taught irrelevant to their future or unchallenging or un-engaging.
- **Lack of support:** Disadvantaged children often need extra support in order to be given the same opportunities as an average child. This support more often than not requires extra resources.⁶
- **Clear strategic direction:** A strategic plan that seeks to increase the performance of children in Wales year on year, narrowing the gap with their English counterparts, is necessary.

ATL has the following recommendations for the WAG

- Narrow the gap in per pupil spend between Wales and England year on year until it becomes zero or even negative.
- Develop national benchmarks and targets for improvements in the outcomes of disadvantage pupils. Local Authorities and schools need to be challenged on the performance of disadvantaged learners.⁷
- Involve the profession more on decision making, using professional expertise to decide how money should be spent
- Spend where it makes an impact – target deprivation as the main focus for spending.⁸
- Include a rigorous rural impact assessment in policies and initiatives.⁹
- Encourage Local Authorities to develop a multi-agency working approach. Agencies should work with deprived families co-operatively and share information and resources to enable a single worker to be the point of contact for each family rather than having a worker from each agency.

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⁵ These authorities were Torfaen, Denbighshire, Cardiff, Newport, Flintshire, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, Local Authority Budgets for Education 2008-09: Wales and England Comparison, January 2009 <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2009/090128sb42009en.pdf>

⁶ JRF, *Estimating the costs of child poverty*, October 2008

⁷ ATL Cymru agrees with the recommendations proposed by the recent Estyn report into RAISE funding for disadvantaged pupils Estyn, *Tackling child poverty and disadvantage in schools*, January 2010, http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports/Tackling_child_poverty_and_disadvantage_in_schools_January_2010.pdf

⁸ Research by the DCFS implies that an increase of £1,000 in the average school expenditure per pupil would raise the number of pupils attaining the expected standard at age 11 by 2.2, 2.0 and 0.7 percentage points in English, Maths and Science. (*Research Brief: Impact of School Resources in Attainment at Key stage 2*, June 2008, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RB043.pdf>)

⁹ ATL, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in rural areas position statement*, 2008, <http://www.atl.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/campaigns/rural-poverty-campaign.asp>