

Raising Standards and Tackling Workload

Implementing the National Agreement

October 2007

 department for
 children, schools and families

Supporting Local Social Partnership and sustainable reform

Introduction

This note from the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG)¹ summarises comments collected from nearly 500 delegates at three Local Social Partnership (LSP) conferences organised by WAMG in July 2007. Over 5,000 individual comments were captured from delegates. This note summarises observations on the effectiveness of WAMG and LSPs and also details key themes and issues which delegates felt should be the subject of ongoing or enhanced focus of social partnership working, both nationally and locally.

This note also advises colleagues of key actions for each theme that WAMG proposes to take over the coming year in response to issues raised at the conference. These actions will provide continued support and challenge to support sustainable reform in our schools. WAMG is committed to ensuring that the benefits of sustainable workforce reform are felt by all staff who work in our schools and that these benefits contribute to improved outcomes for all children and young people.

The note also advises on actions that LSPs are recommended to take under each theme to ensure social partnership working remains at the core of education reform and that social partnership structures and activities remain fit for purpose and respond to local and school-level concerns.

The first step would be for LSPs to review this WAMG note at their next meeting and identify further actions the LSP can take and what support they would like to access from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) field force (England) or Local Authority Change Co-ordinators (Wales) which is working for, and on behalf of, the WAMG on these matters.

Role of WAMG

There was much positive feedback at the conferences about the work of WAMG, in particular about:

- its inclusive way of working;
- its orientation towards consensus, consultation and dialogue;
- the channel it provides for local groups to influence national policy;
- its communications role in filtering initiatives and agendas down to the local level;
- its impact, e.g. in implementing the National Agreement;
- its potential to achieve change in schools and its general positive impact on industrial relations.

Delegates also identified areas where the work of WAMG might be enhanced or developed further. These centred on communication and information and in particular:

- providing clarity and consistency around WAMG's role;
- providing strategic direction to local social partnerships;
- demonstrating appreciation of on-the-ground practice;
- developing WAMG's profile, especially at school level;
- regular reporting of progress;


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¹ The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group is composed of representatives from ASCL, ATL, DCSF, GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, T&G section of UNITE, UNISON and the Welsh Assembly Government, who are all signatories to the Agreement.

- effective two way communication channels between WAMG and LSPs;
- consistency of communication from WAMG and the Children's Workforce Development Council (England).

Local Social Partnership working

Delegates were also asked about their experience of LSP working. They reported that effective LSP working:

- has a track record of success in delivering change;
- encourages productive relationships;
- is an effective way of building consensus;
- shares responsibility for sustainable change among stakeholders;
- creates a climate for good industrial relations.

Delegates noted that some LSPs are less effective than others. It was also noted that in a few local authorities LSPs were apparently not operating. The main priorities, suggested by delegates, for improving LSP working were:

- clarification of LSPs' role/remit in order to maintain their focus;
- securing commitment to LSPs from members of participating organisations;
- better time and meeting management;
- improving the capacity of LSPs to influence schools;
- senior LA sponsorship taking an active part in the LSP and in some instances this may include chairing;
- regional networking to share effective practice.

Other common themes and issues

■ Support staff

Support staff issues were frequently mentioned as a priority. Progress was regarded as positive by some delegates who acknowledged that gains for support staff have been achieved. However, there was also a perception that support staff issues have been addressed after teaching staff issues and that further work is needed.

■ Engagement with schools

There was a lot of feedback around how to improve the engagement of school staff, headteachers and governors. The general view was that WAMG and the LSPs do not have a high enough profile within schools and that more needs to be done to promote their work.

■ Monitoring

Another key issue raised was the monitoring of reform implementation. While some delegates were positive about monitoring, more raised it as a problem – particularly the challenge of how to collect robust information on what is happening in schools. In addition, delegates wanted to know what to do about schools that may not be complying fully with either the provisions or the spirit of the National Agreement.

Key actions for social partnership under each of the themes

Role of WAMG

Key actions from WAMG to include:

- communicating WAMG's focus on issues and concerns related to the whole school workforce through publication of a WAMG work programme which clearly communicates the role of WAMG and its priority areas;
- developing a communications strategy to establish a stronger relationship between WAMG and LSPs and raise the profiles and impact of both e.g. WAMG will re-establish regular communication to LSPs, local authorities and schools through WAMG notes.

Key actions recommended for LSPs include:

- LSPs to feed into WAMG communications strategy;
- develop ways of how best to communicate with local schools.

Local Social Partnership working

Key actions from WAMG to include:

- providing example LSP protocols and terms of reference to stimulate discussions on ways of working;
- writing to Directors of Childrens' Services to highlight the importance of LSPs and senior sponsorship of LSPs;
- working with the TDA field force (England) or Local Authority Change Co-ordinators (Wales) in further developing senior local authority stakeholder interest in support for LSP working;
- over the coming term ensuring that the TDA field force (England) or Local Authority Change Co-ordinators (Wales) are available to support LSPs where appropriate and to take forward specific issues e.g. ways of working or cross regional collaboration;
- WAMG member organisations working within their own structures and channels to promote full participation in LSPs.

Key actions recommended for LSPs include:

- working to promote full and regular participation and commitment in LSP business by stakeholder groups;
- reviewing LSP protocols and terms of reference in the light of guidance and examples from WAMG;
- providing case study examples of good/emerging LSP practice for dissemination by WAMG;
- monitoring and providing feedback to WAMG on the effectiveness of LSP working;
- seeking to improve communications with schools, other LSPs and WAMG.

Support staff

Key actions from WAMG to include:

- refreshing/renewing case studies available on the TDA website, particularly ones which show new and/or enhanced roles for support staff;
- communicating the role and progress of the Support Staff Working Group.

Key actions recommended for LSPs include:

- endorsing support staff as equal partners in the reform agenda and securing their active participation in the work of LSPs as appropriate.

Engagement with schools

Key actions from WAMG to include:

- supporting LSPs in communicating effectively with schools.

Key actions recommended for LSPs include:

- working to promote full and regular participation and commitment in LSP business by stakeholder groups, including school representatives and governors;
- encouraging schools to establish representational groups or workforce change teams.

Monitoring

Key actions from WAMG to include:

- providing example LSP protocols and terms of reference to stimulate discussions on ways of working including monitoring.

Key actions recommended for LSPs include:

- monitoring local and school-level implementation of related policy areas. In the Autumn and Spring terms 2007/8 this will specifically include the monitoring of;
 - compliance with and sustainability of the provisions of the National Agreement
 - school-level progress in introducing revised performance management arrangements (England)
 - the use of split contracts for support staff in enhanced roles;
- providing case study examples of good practice in terms of monitoring;
- networking with other LSPs.



