

# Raising Standards and Tackling Workload

## Implementing the National Agreement

February 2008

department for  
children, schools and families

### Updating local social partnerships on the programme and priorities

#### Introduction

This note from the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group<sup>1</sup> (WAMG) provides an update on WAMG work programme priorities, which were originally established in April 2006 through WAMG Note 15. WAMG committed to provide this update in October in Note 18.

Tuesday 15 January 2008 marked the fifth anniversary of the National Agreement and of social partnership's influence on the national education agenda. The Agreement does not end with the contractual changes for teachers; sustainability is now a key priority and the Agreement marked the start of a process of workforce reform and remodelling that extends beyond the contractual changes. Five years of National Agreement and social partnership have delivered significant benefits, and progress in the last quarter of 2007 has seen the formation of further local social partnerships.

Independent reviews by OFSTED and Estyn have endorsed the benefits of the National Agreement. The recent OFSTED survey found that "the reforms have resulted in a revolutionary shift in the culture of the school workforce. Teachers' time and work are now focused more directly on teaching and learning and the substantial expansion of the wider workforce at all levels is allowing the schools to extend the curriculum, provide more care, guidance and support for pupils, and use data more effectively to monitor pupils' progress." It went on to observe that schools believed strongly that standards were rising. Similarly, Estyn reports that "the impact of remodelling on teachers has been very positive" and that the deployment of support staff in new and enhanced roles has brought about positive changes and fresh perspectives for schools and their pupils.

This diverse workforce includes a significant increase in support staff since the National Agreement was signed. Total full-time equivalent support staff numbers have increased by over 35% since 2003 – they now stand at over 305,000 in England. In Wales, there has been a similar rise of 29% over the same period with total full-time equivalent support staff numbers now over 15,000. (Source: *National Statistics – January 2007.*)

WAMG, schools and local social partnerships will need to build on the success so far and broaden and deepen efforts by focusing on remodelling and developing workforce capacity and capability. Essential ingredients to the next phase are support staff training and development with appropriate deployment, pay and grading, ensuring the implementation of statutory provisions and the conditions of service entitlements of teachers and headteachers, and monitoring implementation at school level. With the recent publication of the Children's Plan in England, these actions will be crucial in ensuring its successful implementation.

The main body of this Note provides local social partnership colleagues with information on the key activities relating to WAMG's six priorities that will be WAMG's focus going forward in its work across England and Wales. This is followed with a section highlighting how colleagues can support WAMG in this activity and sustain and extend the gains already made.



<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Ongoing focus on the priorities set out in WAMG Note 15

For each of the six priorities set out in Note 15, WAMG has a number of key activities that it will focus on going forward. These are detailed against each priority below.

### 1. Delivering fair play and rewards for support staff

#### **Key activities**

- A shadow body will be set up in early 2008, which will develop proposals for the new negotiating council in England to address pay and conditions issues for support staff in England. This follows the announcement in September 2007 by the Minister for Schools committing the Government to the new negotiating council.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has committed itself to establishing a national structure for classroom assistants. Research work has been commissioned on school support staff in Wales and this, along with the recent audit of professional development opportunities for school support staff, will inform the nature of this structure.
- A review of areas where higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) deployment is significantly less than the number of support staff with HLTA status.

### 2. Improving the performance of the whole school workforce

#### **Key activities**

- Ensure that the benefits of the revised performance management arrangements in England are realised, and specifically that the new arrangements impact on raising standards.
- Developing a culture where teachers and headteachers feel confident and empowered to fully participate in performance management, and acknowledge professional responsibility for engaging in continuous professional development (CPD) and the importance of contributing to the professional development of others.

### 3. Developing and extending the school workforce and thinking through the workforce implications of schools providing an increasing range of services

#### **Key activities**

- Promote the deployment of support staff roles, training and professional development that address workload issues and support the raising of standards through an increased focus on teaching and learning.
- Reviewing relevant education policy strands to ensure workforce implications have been properly considered.
- Ensuring that extended services, in England, has a positive impact on raising standards and creates further opportunities for downward pressure on the workload of staff.

### 4. Ensuring improved work/life balance for all school staff with a particular focus on headteachers

#### **Key activities**

- Continued focus on sustaining the National Agreement and ensuring further downward pressure on hours for all staff by reviewing the results of the Office of Manpower Economics survey 2007.
- Examination of barriers to achieving work/life balance and dedicated headship time is under way – options to address these issues, including working with governors, are being developed and will be the subject of a later Note.
- WAMG continue to work on clarifying ‘rarely cover’, including developing guidance for issue through a later Note. WAMG will also provide further guidance on the deployment of support staff who provide cover.

## 5. Ensuring schools have a high-quality capacity building programme at local and national level

### **Key activities**

- Strengthening local social partnerships, through dissemination of best practice terms of reference, working protocols and case studies.
- Ongoing work by TDA regional delivery partnerships in England and Change Co-ordinators in Wales maintaining a core focus on the National Agreement and workforce reform.
- Build on the local social partnership conferences.

## 6. Ensuring sustainability of remodelling and pay/restructuring reforms (seeing through the National Agreement changes)

### **Key activities**

- Research and analysis to assure contractual provisions are in place.
- Promotion of good practice case studies and exemplars.
- Use the outputs of the recent local social partnership online effectiveness survey in England to help define appropriate tools and techniques to support schools to tackle issues.

Further information on the work of WAMG can be found at [www.tda.gov.uk/wamg](http://www.tda.gov.uk/wamg).

## **The role of local social partnerships in sustaining and extending progress**

WAMG and local social partnerships must continue to work together to deliver the workforce reform agenda. National social partnership should be mirrored by local social partnerships working at a local level. They continue to have a crucial role to play by offering support for workforce reform that is both aligned to WAMG's programme and priorities and sensitive to the local situation.

The role of the local social partnership should include the following.

- Continuing to champion the National Agreement and monitor compliance and encourage sustainability of its provisions, particularly downward pressure on hours, planning, preparation and assessment, dedicated headship time, work/life balance and rarely cover.
- Endorsing support staff as equal partners in the reform agenda and ensuring their active participation in local social partnership work.
- Building increasingly effective communication links with schools and LAs and engaging regularly in two-way dialogue. The local social partnership role should be both positive and proactive, working as part of the LA/school team so that they help to resolve emerging issues and constructively influence the way forward in addition to monitoring implementation.
- Playing a positive role in helping to realise the benefits of the revised performance management arrangements in England for teachers and headteachers.
- Providing effective support and challenge to the implementation of workforce reform agendas, including monitoring support staff deployment in line with WAMG guidance.

The role of local social partnerships will continue to be crucial as school communities are involved in the introduction of extended services, the development of 14-19 provision and integrated children's services. This is likely to involve working in more cohesive ways alongside other children's services.

Following on from WAMG Note 18 in October of last year, the key areas of activity for local social partnerships over the coming months are:

- engagement with schools to promote full and regular participation and commitment in local social partnership business by stakeholder groups, including school representatives and governors;
- monitoring local and school-level implementation of key policy areas;
- identifying the local evidence of the impact that reforms are having on standards and quality of pupil experiences.

