

NAHT Cymru response to the Welsh Government Budget Proposals for 2022-23.

NAHT Cymru welcome the opportunity to submit a response to this year's final Welsh Government budget. Rather than respond directly to all the questions we have chosen to outline our key concerns below and will reference questions throughout relevant to the education sector.

NAHT Cymru support the Welsh Government's priority to reduce and tackle poverty in Wales but are concerned that the root of inequality needs to be tackled as well as the affect.

NAHT Cymru is deeply worried by the lack of pay in the education profession, especially for support staff and teachers, many of whom are having to regularly use food banks and sit below the poverty line. Educating children and making sure that all children receive a valued and meaningful education that gives them the best start in life is key, but we must make sure that those providing that education are well supported, paid, and cared for. We must end this vicious cycle in education. If we don't pay professionals enough because school budgets are continually being slashed, that means we cannot recruit and retain the best, which in turn, has a detrimental impact on the delivery of education.

Statistics show that teacher retention and recruitment is quickly becoming a serious crisis. A recent study from the NFER showed that teacher retention rates in Wales for secondary classroom teachers are lower than in England, with 6.7% of classroom teachers in Wales leaving state-funded education.

Similarly, 6.7% is the rate seen in Primary classroom teachers as well. These statistics are particularly bleak when looking at NQTs. 17.5% attrition rate in Secondary and 11.3% in Primary across Wales. Senior leadership retention does not fair much better than the overall figures. 5% of senior leaders in Primary are leaving compared with 5.3% in secondary.¹

In a survey conducted by NAHT Cymru, it found that a quarter of senior leaders said that the recent pay decision has impacted their decision to remain in school leadership, with half stating they may seek another role outside of education and a third stating they might retire.

NAHT Cymru urge the Government to see that more preventative spending must be done in education. Education is the silver bullet and investing in education is therefore investing in a generation of learners who go on to be the nations leaders, thinkers, doctors, teachers. Funding education must be seen as a holistic practice that supports the education profession as much as it supports its learners. Schools must be funded properly and then can this generation of learners achieve their full potential.

¹ Faulkner-Ellis & Worth (2022). *Comparative analysis of teacher attrition rates in England and Wales*, NFER, Nuffield Foundation.

In a 'Review of School Spending in Wales', a report by Luke Sibieta for the Welsh Government showed that education in Wales is deeply underfunded. In 2020, it showed that there has been a 6% real terms fall in education spending per learner over the last decade, which is before acknowledging the higher costs facing schools. The Welsh Government has claimed that education is a top priority, but NAHT Cymru fails to believe this without seeing better all-round funding for education.

Further highlighted in this study is the inconsistent way in which schools are funded across Wales. With 22 different ways of funding schools, learners face a postcode lottery of how the schools they attend are funded. Sibieta states "Under the current system, similar schools and areas can receive quite different levels of funding per learner. Simpler and more consistent school funding formulae across local authorities would reduce differences in funding per learner across similar schools and make the reasons for any remaining differences fully transparent."²

NAHT Cymru wishes to highlight that it has been two years since the release of this report and Welsh Government has yet to tackle these inconsistencies in local funding. NAHT Cymru urge the Government to produce a formula for funding schools that is equitable across Wales.

In response to the question 'is the Welsh Government providing adequate support to the public sector to enable it to be innovative and forward looking through things like workforce planning?' NAHT Cymru wants to make clear to the Government that the public sector is in crisis and its sustainability is weakening. The NAHT Cymru funding report in 2021³ brought to light bleak findings. Two in ten school leaders predicted a deficit budget based on their current funding levels. A majority stated they only report a balanced or surplus because of the pandemic. Three quarters of leaders did not believe that they have sufficient capital funding to maintain their existing buildings and facilities and 92% of leaders reported that funding for pupils with ALN in their school is insufficient.

Because of this widespread underfunding, members have recently highlighted to NAHT Cymru that many will have to cut teaching staff and support staff at their schools to meet funding pressures.

It is not surprising that data shows large numbers of ITE teachers leaving the profession within the first five years. The NFER report on the teach labour market in Wales highlights that "This was highlighted in a recent Welsh Government review of the process of induction of teachers into the profession. The review calls for a strengthening of the induction process in order to better support early-career teachers."⁴ NAHT Cymru wish to highlight that the continued pay awards that sit below inflation compound the recruitment and retention problem.

NAHT Cymru has been pleased to see the additional funding from Welsh Government for the public sector this year, particularly noting the extra 9% for this year's 'Revenue Support Grant', however none of this funding has come to education. Whilst the budget has increased for education by 12% in the 2022-23 budget compared with 2021-22, this largely focused on the roll out of free school meals and does not address the issues of underfunding for schools overall.

² Sibieta (2020). *Review of spending in Wales*, Welsh Government.

³ NAHT Cymru (2021), 'A Failure to Invest', NAHT.

⁴ Ghosh and Worth (2022), 'Teacher Labour Market in Wales – Annual Report 2022', NFER, Nuffield Foundation.

In response to the question 'Support for children and young people whose education, development, and mental health and well-being have been affected by the pandemic. Is there enough infrastructure investment targeted at young people?' NAHT Cymru feel that Welsh Government has taken some positives steps in tackling this. NAHT Cymru support the 'Whole School Approach to Mental Health Initiative', however it fails to encapsulate support for all. There is currently no related support for school leaders. As a leader of school NAHT Cymru cannot emphasis more how important the health and wellbeing of leaders is for the whole school to a positive space that supports learner wellbeing.

NAHT Cymru further takes issue that some of the initiatives laid out place onus on teachers and school leaders to be experts in mental health when this is not their role. NAHT Cymru strongly encourages the Government to increase funding in related services, such as social work and CAHMS. If these continue to see cuts, then the education system bears the weight that would be better and more effectively provided by specialists. Schools should be able to focus on teaching first and foremost.

The consultation finally asks how the Welsh Government can invest to support 'Build Back Better'. NAHT Cymru want to highlight all that is said above, properly funding all services that support the wellbeing of future generations. We must invest in all services so that each issue can be tackled by the specialists in the field and best practice can be carried out in all areas across Wales.