

PAPER 4: A SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER DRAFTED IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE ON ISSUES RELATING TO THE NBAR REPORT AND SPECIFICALLY, MATTERS ON TRAINING ON BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE.

The entire first six months of the NBAR Review exercise was spent collecting data on professionals' needs from a range of specifically-arranged meetings throughout and across Wales (eg at St Asaph). These meetings were attended by a wide range of professionals from different LA's, schools, health, social service and voluntary body organisations. They included for example, behaviour support staff, education welfare officers/education social workers, head teachers, deputies, middle managers, new teachers, classroom assistants, learning school mentors, etc. At these sessions, a series of questions and issues were presented and discussed using a rotating group methodology and feedback process. The detailed findings gathered were collected and fed back and agreed and amended as necessary by the delegates. The evidence gathered from these regional meetings was then collated after being further evaluated and analysed and provided the basis of the interim Report (NBAR, 2007).

The idea behind the Interim Report was to present our initial evidence and particularly to provide at an all-Wales level, a degree of coherence and clarity on the training needs of staff engaged in managing pupils' behaviour and attendance; not least for all those engaged in schools and in supporting schools. The evidence gathered also provided the clearest possible recognition of the required training fields and the areas which needed to be covered. Therefore, the Report containing the detailed analysis was approximately fifty pages long.

After completing a draft of the Interim Report (2007), at a meeting held in Carmarthen, we were told two things by the DCELLS representatives:

- 1) They wanted a much shorter Report; it was suggested three or four pages would suffice;
- 2) They required us to hand over all the evidence which we had collected for their safe keeping.

Following a seriously heated debate, we refused to either amend, change or reduce the scale of our interim Report which had taken a considerable amount time to draft, edit, analyse and plan as this represented the evidence provided by the practitioners in the field. However, despite our reservations, we reluctantly agreed to hand over the evidence for their safe keeping.

The contents contained in the Interim Report provided a clear, concise record of the national training needs of appropriate staff in Wales based on good practice in research evidence gathered from in-service and professional development studies.

In the final NBAR Report (2008, pages 45-67), we presented further evidence on training gathered from the second stage round of evidence gathering, more especially from the practitioner working groups. Training was also one of the key issues from the sub-group findings (see pages 83-102, more especially pages 99-102) Training recommendations featured prominently in both the core and supporting recommendations (see pages 9-19, 137-140 and 141-153). These recommendations, including those on training, featured prominently at the launch of the Report and in follow up work and discussion with the Minister (J H).

The importance of the training needs of staff in Wales, and of the NBAR recommendations, appeared to be well understood by all concerned. For example, they were widely endorsed by the Welsh Assembly Government, professionals, professional bodies and teaching unions in a wave of sustained good publicity and media coverage, including support from the Children's Commissioner's Office. The event at the Senedd included representatives from the primary, secondary, and out-of-school children who had participated in the CAZBAH (2008) study into children's views on behaviour and attendance; a world first.

This recognition was further endorsed by the official response from the Welsh Government in *Behaving and Attending: Action Plan Responding to the National Behaviour and Attendance Review* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). In fact, professionals' training needs were at the heart of the response (see especially pages 33-37 and 38-48).

After a meeting to agree *Behaving and Attending*, and an official launch of the Welsh Government's response which was held at Cefn Hengoed School, the Minister and I participated in the formal launch, which included a press release and a key announcement on training which again, was widely welcomed by the profession and served to heighten professional expectations.

From this point onwards, things started to spiral downhill for a variety of reasons. First, I was told that I no longer had any future role in any of the implementation and follow up work by an official inside DCELLS; something which was subsequently repeated on several occasions to me in person and on the phone, despite the Minister clearly asking me to follow through with the work. Indeed, prior to the NBAR launch, she specifically asked me to undertake several tasks. Subsequently, I completed them all. However, she said that: 'for my part, I will ask my officials in DCELLS to arrange for you to be engaged in a number of follow up tasks' which she then listed. Subsequently, none of these were ever arranged or, to the best of my knowledge, occurred. Around this time, the special educational need MAG Group (which was doing much good work) was also disbanded without any prior warning.

Around a year later, I was asked to attend a second new Implementation Group meeting at Merthyr Tydfil. The membership, composition of the Group, Chairmanship, and terms of reference of this new Group had changed, and, apart from one other person, no longer contained any other of the original NBAR members. A new document was produced which included new priorities. I tried to ascertain why some of the changes were being made but did not get any clear responses. My question on training needs which was at the heart of *Behaving and Attending* was met with silence; it was almost as if this document no longer existed. Clearly, some strategic changes had been made within DCELLS; but without any discussion with myself.

Second, staff responsibilities within DCELLS had changed as a result of new appointments being made following internal reorganisations, and a crucial staff transfer (and subsequent retirement). Some of the new appointments were either on fixed-term or temporary contracts.

Third, a new agenda was starting to be promulgated focussing upon school effectiveness and raising school standards.

For a while, I had no involvement whatsoever. Then, immediately prior to the New Minister's (LA) 20-point plan speech given at Cardiff University in February, 2011, the Minister called me to his

office. He was extremely positive about both NBAR and my role. He announced a renewed review of the Report. He asked me to provide him with an update document on attendance (given to you as Paper 3 last week). We had an enjoyable and productive meeting thereafter. He seemed very pleased with my document. We discussed at length both the original NBAR Report and its aftermath. He asked for me to be re-engaged by the now renamed DfES. This instruction was given in my presence.

As training needs focussed in our discussion and in my paper, a meeting on this issue was soon arranged. This involved Helen Arthur, Head of Professional Development in the DfES and one of her colleagues. I asked for Mark Provis (Director of Education for Torfaen and a specialist behavioural psychologist) to be allowed to accompany me and this was agreed. At this meeting we were told that:

- a) The Department apologized for the slow progress made on the issue. We were told this was because of an internal review on future training needs and priorities.
- b) Nothing further would happen without another consultation with us as nothing was likely to occur in the near future for a variety of reasons.
- c) We were asked if we would be prepared to advise them on specific training needs and content on any future behaviour and attendance courses/modules and we agreed to do so. They told us they would come back to us with their proposals in due course.

We reminded them of the needs analysis conducted by NBAR and of the content of the Interim Report. Since then, we have heard no more.

Thereafter, a meeting was held with a senior official (CB) and some of his key staff on behaviour and attendance. At this meeting, the professional training needs of staff in Wales on behaviour and attendance was raised once again. It was agreed that I would be called into the Department regularly to be given an update and for my advice to be sought in a constructive manner. This has never since occurred.

Therefore, I will now outline some of the main issues on professionals' training needs.

First, NBAR provided a systematic and informed schedule of training needs on behaviour and attendance required at all levels across Wales by staff engaged in this work.

Second, we stressed the needs for this work to be properly accredited.

Third, we stressed the need for a national plan of coherent training which was properly co-ordinated and evaluated. We even suggested some models for how this training could be best delivered.

Since then, I understand some ad hoc training on behaviour with sums of money allocated have been given to some LA's/consortia by the DfES. If so, although meeting training needs is always welcome, this would not necessarily conform with the suggested NBAR objectives or the perceived Welsh training needs or meet with the professional development good practice agenda. Why?

First, different LA's/consortia would follow different priorities, methods of delivery and tackle differing staff needs on a semi-random and ad hoc basis.

Second, there would be no systematic record of proper evaluations in clearly-defined areas of national need.

Third, there would remain no national plan on behaviour and no clearly conceived implementation strategy.

Fourth, the programmes would not connect up with any other emerging opportunities such as the new master's degree for NQT's.

Fifth, there appears to be no plan on school attendance; a much neglected area.

Sixth, the money being spent on behaviour, without any corresponding coherent strategy, fails to show how this work relates to or is embedded through schools/LA's without having pre-defined clear criteria.

Seventh, it is not clear how these ad hoc programmes would meet either the needs or requirements of children and young people or of teachers' concerns about the perceived erosion of their authority and of recent professional and trade unions' warnings about either violence towards staff, verbal abuse or safety fears.

Eighth, given the economic downturn, the impending welfare reforms and their consequent pressures upon families, it is likely that more of our children and young people will at times bring their problems and difficulties to school. We need to see it as a duty that these young people, experiencing difficulties, are taught by confident, competent, well-trained professionals who are skilled in sustaining their interest in learning. This is particularly so for those pupils who have special or additional learning needs and/or those who emanate from deprived, working class or low socio-economic backgrounds or have related mental health or other medical needs.

Finally, as NBAR recognised, the Welsh Government has an obligation to help teachers to manage behaviour and attendance appropriately and to give them the relevant skills training at a variety of hierarchical levels; both at a classroom level after taking account of pupils' learning needs as well as at a managerial one. This requires a great deal of careful thought and appropriate strategic planning.

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