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National Assembly for Wales

Children and Young People Committee

Education (Wales) Bill : Stage 1

Response from : New Directions Education

Introduction

New Directions Education Limited was established in 1999, and has quickly established itself as one of the UK's leading agencies, specialising in the recruitment and training of education professionals and ancillary staff. New Directions Ltd is an umbrella body for the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and has links with teacher training universities across the UK, as well as professional associations such as the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT).

In 2012 New Directions were awarded the Agency Framework Agreement for the supply of staff to the education sector in Wales by the Welsh Purchasing Consortium (WPO). The business was previously a preferred supplier to a number of Welsh local authorities for the provision of education staff.

We have worked closely with the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) in the past, and welcome the opportunity to comment on the Education bill for Wales.

Our response is focused on the areas that concern the registration and regulation for staff working in the education sector and also the agencies that work within this sector.

Our Response

New Directions Education fully supports the Welsh Governments commitment to ensuring that standards of Teaching in Wales are improved. The formation of the Education Workforce council to succeed the GTCW is welcomed by New Directions Education, we believe that the council is necessary to ensure that standards are raised and maintained within the teaching sector.

As a supply agency we recognise the importance of the role supply teachers within schools. Schools rely on agencies like ours to supply staff to provide cover for many reasons, including when permanent staff are attending training courses and of course unexpected absences. We would like to work with the Education Workforce Council to ensure that the quality of teaching is maintained during these periods so pupils do not suffer as a consequence.

We believe that the work our supply teachers and other education staff carry out is of paramount importance to the children they teach and has a direct effect on the standards of teaching across Wales. We are committed to ensuring our staff have the necessary qualifications and are properly vetted. We have a dedicated in-house Compliance

department who work exclusively to ensure that all our teachers meet the required standards.

We also invest in the continuing professional development of the staff we supply; we do this by providing training opportunities to all of our supply staff. Training courses range from basic literacy programmes such as Read, Write Inc. to more bespoke training including Team Teach.

We are also committed to ensuring that we continue to improve standards in the way we work. As a member of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) we abide by the REC Code of Professional Practice which governs our activities as a Recruitment Agency.

We feel the reintroduction of the Quality Mark standard which was delivered by REC on behalf of the Welsh government between 2007-2011 would be a positive step in ensuring that standards across the industry were improved. We believe the Quality Mark should be a mandatory standard that should be implemented for all agencies that offer recruitment provision for the education sector.

We endorse the principles in Section 37, which refers to the supply of information from agents and contractors, to arrangements made by one person (the "agent") for a registered person to provide relevant services at the request of or with the consent of a relevant employer (whether or not under a contract). We would welcome guidelines which make it clear on what our obligations are to supply information to the Council and also how we need to supply this information.

Conclusion

New Directions Education recognises the importance of continued improvement within the teaching sector and supports the efforts of the Welsh Government to improve standards in the quality of teaching across Wales.

We feel the establishing of the Education Workforce Council is a significant move forward by the government in improving the quality of teaching. We feel it is vitally important that the Council works in conjunction with all stakeholders including REC and ourselves.

We also feel that part of the Council's remit should include a scheme like the previous Quality Mark to ensure agencies are meeting requirements. The scheme could be run in conjunction with REC as before. We feel this Quality Mark should be mandatory to instil confidence in schools, parents and the wider community about the level of teaching provided by supply teachers.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the changes and look forward to working with the Welsh Government in improving standards in our schools.