

To all Welsh Council Leaders
Copy to all Chief Executive

Dear Leader,

Education Workforce Council (EWC) Fee for Learning Support Staff

As you will be aware, from April 2016, all Learning Support Workers working in schools in Wales will be required to be registered with the Education Workforce Council (EWC.) The registration fee is an annual payment of £15.00 per person.

UNISON's view is that registration could be a positive step for the profession. It is an acknowledgement of the important role that Learning Support staff play and should help to bring about more consistency and greater recognition for support staff roles. Whilst many of our members agree, the major concern for them is the £15.00 fee.

It may be your opinion that £15.00 is not a significant sum to worry about but registration will be mandatory. This means that already low paid, predominately female, term time only staff will have no choice about making the payment. Some are on flexible, short term contracts governed by the demands of the pupil numbers with little long term security. Many have already been hit during the past few years by the after effects of Single Status: the scrapping of retainers, loss of full year status and loss of allowances such as first aid and special needs allowance.

Add to this the effect that term time status has on long term pensions and the expense of only being able to take leave during the school holidays. UNISON analysis has shown that many of these members will also be affected by the drastic cuts to Working Tax Credits, some Teaching Assistants are set to lose thousands of pound a year (e.g. a teaching assistant with one child earning £16,300 pa will lose £1845.20 a year).

For the reasons outlined, UNISON is formally requesting that your Council reach agreement, with your NJC trade unions, to pay the fees for all EWC registered Learning Support Staff. In total this could amount to little more than £300,000 across all the councils in Wales. Whilst UNISON recognises that Councils' are being hit by drastic reductions in budget settlements, I would urge you to similarly recognise the difficult position our hard working Learning Support staff find themselves in.

A commitment, by your council, to pay this fee would be a well received gesture of support and appreciation for a professional group that makes an excellent contribution to the learning experiences of our children and would help this group through an extremely challenging time for household budgets.

I hope that you will be able to respond positively to this request and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic

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