INTRODUCTION

1 This paper sets out for ratification, progress in supporting ITT Partnership in Wales and proposed next steps.

BACKGROUND

2 Education Data Surveys (EDS) were commissioned by HEFCW to undertake a study of ITT partnership, commencing in February 2004. The brief was to examine, in particular, the cost and operational aspects of ITT partnership as well as building on the good practice already developed across the HE sector in England and Wales. The final report was received in July 2004, and was circulated to the sector in October 2004 following Council consideration (Circular W04/63HE refers).

3 The recommendations and conclusions of the report were considered at the late September 2004 Council meeting. Members agreed that future Council action should fall into two areas:

   i. Issues that could be pursued immediately, namely: (a) publishing the report; (b) establishing an internal officers group to examine the financial recommendations arising from the study; and (c), initiating discussions of the study outcomes with Estyn and Welsh Assembly Government officers.

   ii. Issues for further consultation with the sector, including: (a) the possibility of reforming the system of ITT partnership payment; (b) mechanisms to oversee ITT partnerships in Wales; (c) mechanisms for enhancing the commitment of schools; and (d), the development of a unified approach to administrative arrangements.

4 Authority was delegated to the Chief Executive to finalise consultation arrangements. It was agreed that the outcomes of the consultation process would be considered at a future Council meeting.

PROGRESS REPORT ON IMMEDIATE ISSUES

5 Following publication of the report in October 2004, officers initiated a series of internal discussions on the financial recommendations of the study, taking account of the uncertainty across the sector of the impact of the Assembly review on ITT provision, due to be completed in Autumn 2005. As indicated in the report, many ITT providers subsidise their secondary phase provision by recruiting well to primary phase provision. Reductions in primary targets applied by the Assembly from 2005/06 onwards may therefore impact upon the viability of some smaller departments and institutions, including those offering Welsh Medium provision, and support for ITT partnership arrangements. At its March 2005 meeting, the Council were advised of these concerns and ratified the allocation of funding to ensure the ongoing viability of ITT provision until the outcomes of the ITT review are known (HEFCW/05/25 refers). Officers will continue to monitor the financial and operational aspects of ITT provision, including partnership arrangements, and raise financial viability issues directly with the team undertaking the Assembly review.
The report recommended that the Council should consider the effectiveness of its Hyfforddi Athrawon/Teacher Training (HATT) initiative as a means of increasing provision via distance learning and whether additional research into distance learning is necessary. Members are advised that this initiative ended in March 2005. The final report on the HATT initiative is available upon request. Officers are now in the process of confirming arrangements for an evaluation of HATT to be undertaken in Summer 2005, which will feed into considerations regarding the future of this provision. The evaluation will consider the effectiveness of the materials developed through HATT in supporting bilingual open and distance learning and its role in future related developments. The outcomes of this evaluation will be presented to a future Council meeting.

Council officers met with colleagues from the Welsh Assembly Government and Estyn in November 2004 and March 2005 to consider actions against six of the recommendations presented in the study, including the possibility of establishing: (a) a partnership promotion scheme for Wales; (b) a strategic body to oversee the development and operational aspects of partnership; (c) a national system of recognition and training for partnership schools; (d) mechanisms for additional school based support for improving the Welsh of trainees in Welsh medium schools; and (e), mechanisms for enhancing the commitment of all schools involved, and not yet involved, in ITT to provide quality training. Officers will continue these discussions at a meeting scheduled for June 2005.

Council is invited to note progress in addressing the outcomes of the ITT Partnership Study

CONSULTATION EXERCISE - OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Following Chief Executive’s approval, Circular W04/77HE, Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Partnership In Wales: Consultation, was published in December 2004. The consultation ended in late February 2005. Annex A provides further information on the responses received. As part of the consultation process, a seminar was held in Cardiff on Friday 11 February 2005. The seminar was well attended by all ITT providing institutions and other interested organizations, such as Estyn and the General Teaching Council for Wales. Breakout groups had an opportunity to discuss consultation issues in depth and this was welcomed by participants. The detailed outcomes of the seminar have informed the proposals for future action. A copy of the notes of the breakout groups is available on request.

Overall, respondents expressed unanimous support for the approach proposed by the Council, emphasising the need to share good practice and establish benchmarks and standards for ITT partnership activities across Wales. Respondents reiterated the importance of cross sector collaboration to develop innovative and imaginative solutions for ensuring the long-term stability of ITT partnership arrangements in Wales.

Respondents acknowledged the complexity in the external environment, particularly in light of the Welsh Assembly Government’s review of ITT, cuts in primary intake targets and the reconfiguration and collaboration agenda. Emphasis was repeatedly directed at the importance of cross-sector and multi-agency collaboration on ITT partnerships. Colleagues from partnership and non-partnership schools, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), the Assembly Government, Estyn, the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW), the Teacher Training Agency and HEFCW were identified as having a role to play, alongside the sector, in responding to the outcomes of the study.

Costs of ITT Partnerships

There was general agreement amongst respondents over the benefits of HEFCW establishing a common and transparent financial framework and a willingness to work with the Council to develop good practice guidelines. Any such guidelines would need to be informed by agreement over the relative entitlements and expectations of all three partnership partners (HEIs, schools and trainees). The development of minimum standards and payment thresholds was championed as a mechanism for clarifying roles and responsibilities, providing a baseline across Wales, while enabling individual institutions to continue to operate arrangements above the baseline, where appropriate.
Concerns were expressed that if partnership agreements were to be more formalised or standardised across Wales, the goodwill and working relationships already built up through current partnership arrangements could be endangered. However, it was acknowledged that existing arrangements were already under enormous strain. At the same time, it was recognised that there is considerable variability in the payments made to schools, often derived from circumstances that applied at the time when the initial agreements were set up in the early nineties but may no longer apply today, so that a review of the financial terms of agreements was now timely.

One mechanism suggested for facilitating the introduction of standardised agreements would be the establishment of a kitemarking scheme for good school partners. This would raise the profile of partnership within schools and recognise the role of schools in ITT. The kitemark would identify the baseline of expectations from partnership, possibly based upon the generic expectations from current agreements, which could be shared more widely amongst providers. It would be possible to tie such a development into the Workload Agreement as well as developments on Professional Standards, where mentoring is seen as an important role. The need to build ‘enhancements’ into the partnership agreements was also highlighted, particularly in relation to free or reduced fee continuous professional development (CPD) and consultancy.

Operational Aspects of ITT Partnerships

Broad support was expressed for the establishment of a unified approach to the operational aspects of ITT partnerships. Respondents saw merit in the establishment of guidelines or even mandatory procedures in relation to: (i) mentor training and recognition, (ii) assessment criteria, (iii) school-based professional studies, (iv) ‘kite-marking’ of partnership schools, (v) links to induction standards and, (iv) trainee entitlements. Respondents identified that the sector itself would be best placed to develop many of the unified arrangements proposed within the study, based upon the wealth of best practice already available across England and Wales.

Significant advantages were identified with the establishment of a strategic body to coordinate the aspects identified above. It was suggested that the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers in Wales (UCET Cymru), an established sector body for ITT providers in Wales, could be involved in the development of such an entity. The consultation response from UCET Cymru outlined that it was already exploring collaborative working arrangements operating in England and planned to develop a proposal under the Council’s Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund to take similar arrangements forward in Wales.

Council is invited to note the outcomes of the consultation exercise.

NEXT STEPS

Council officers will continue to discuss the recommendations of the study with Welsh Assembly Government and Estyn officers at regular meetings. Officers will also continue to engage in discussions on the financial aspects of ITT partnership, in advance of, and in response to, the outcomes of the Assembly review of ITT.

With regard to the costs of ITT partnerships, officers will work with the sector to establish a common and transparent financial framework for ITT partnerships supplemented by good practice guidelines. As part of this, a minimum common payment to schools should be established although this must be linked to agreed roles and responsibilities. The guidelines should also take account of the need for sufficient funding to be made available to support the three elements of the partnership (the HEI, the school and the trainee).

To address the operational aspects of ITT partnerships, officers will assist the sector, where appropriate, in its endeavours to establish unified ITT partnership guidelines and procedures across Wales in relation to: (i) mentor training and recognition, (ii) assessment criteria, (iii) school-based professional studies, (iv) ‘kite-marking’ of partnership schools, (v) links to induction standards and, (iv) trainee entitlements, including through a proposal to the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund.
Council is invited to ratify proposals for Council officers to continue working alongside the sector, the Assembly, Estyn, and other related bodies, to establish a unified approach to enhance the financial and operational aspects of ITT Partnerships.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

19 There are no financial implications arising directly from this paper.

PUBLICITY IMPLICATIONS

20 The outcomes of the consultation process will be shared with the sector later this month.

RISK ASSESSMENT

21 Until the outcomes of the Assembly review of ITT provision are known, we will need to take a cautious approach to implementing the outcomes of the ITT Partnership Review. However, if partner schools chose to withdraw from ITT partnership arrangements HEFCW funded ITT providers in Wales would be unable to operate. It is essential, therefore, that the Council secure effective ITT partnerships to ensure that all ITT trainees across Wales have access to good quality school placements. The proposals set out in this paper, together with the interim financial measures approved at the March 2005 Council meeting will help to minimise these risks.

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

22 The tender specification for the study confirmed that the contractor was expected to ensure that any financial and operational recommendations proposed took account of the impact on Welsh medium provision. The proposals to unify operational aspects of ITT partnerships will help ensure the viability of small ITT providers, including those who offer ITT through the medium of Welsh, as the establishment of streamlined processes and procedures, based on best practice, will alleviate many of the current administrative burdens experienced by rural partnership schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23 The Council is invited to:

(i) note progress in addressing the outcomes of the ITT Partnership Study;
(ii) note the outcomes of the consultation exercise;
(iii) ratify the proposal for Council officers to continue working alongside the sector, the Assembly, Estyn, and other related bodies, to establish a unified approach to enhance the financial and operational aspects of ITT Partnerships.

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