

**UNISON Cymru/Wales submission to Education Workforce Council consultation on the revised Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Registrants with the Education Workforce Council**

1. UNISON Cymru/Wales represents roughly 22,000 members of staff across all sectors of education, principally learning support workers, and notes the proposed revisions to the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Registrants with the Education Workforce Council.
2. As the main trade union representing Teaching Assistants (TAs) in Wales, UNISON Cymru/Wales is pleased to be able to respond to this consultation and welcomes the improvements in the revised Code of Conduct. The new Code will help form the foundations for positive professional experiences and the knock on effects that will have on the learning environment.
3. Schools cannot survive without Teaching Assistants; they help to support Special Educational Needs children and those underperforming, help teachers to cope with big classes, release teachers for preparation time and help those with English as an Additional Language – but this can only be done with a commitment on the behalf of the employer to both training and ongoing support. Too many TAs are thrown in the deep end without proper professional development and left to get on with it.
4. The majority of TAs are women; they suffer low pay, a lack of career opportunities and institutional discrimination that belittles their role. Part-time, casual and term time working, dominate. Previously, UNISON Cymru/Wales has embraced Welsh Government's professional registration of TAs as a first step.

5. However, to have continued improvement in standards, there must be further investment in the professional development of TAs, a proper career structure with transparent fair pay and conditions, uniformly applied across the whole of the country and a spirit of inclusiveness in schools that recognises their contribution.
6. Many employers across Wales join UNISON Cymru/Wales every year in celebrating '*Stars in Our Schools*' which celebrates all those who go unsung in helping run our schools; TAs, administrators, caterers, midday supervisors and cleaners. These celebrations must be followed up with actions that do not simply celebrate those unsung heroes but reward them with the standards and training necessary to allow them to progress.
7. It is incredibly unfortunate that some TAs feel they have to pay for additional training or to attend UNISON's free training which is held on weekends, during their own free time. Due to austerity, many schools are having to tighten their belts and can no longer afford to send TAs on courses or even provide a better salary on completion of training. Yet, thanks to the dedication of school support staff, both schools and pupils benefit.
8. Teachers have nationally agreed, uniform rates of pay, but the salaries of Wales' tens of thousands of TAs vary depending on where they work; pay is set by each of the 22 local authorities and their experience and responsibility are not always recognised in the pay structure. Some TAs work without a proper written and agreed job description; you can have the same job title doing very different duties, receiving vastly different pay across Wales.
9. There is an urgent need for transparency and a career structure linked to uniform rates of pay and grading and a qualifications framework paid for by the employer.
10. UNISON Cymru/Wales welcomes commitments in the revised Code for registrants to engage fully with training and development. This commitment for registrants to reflect and

evaluate their practice needs to come with a commitment on behalf of the employers to provide additional training and qualifications at no cost to the registrant. There must also be time and computer access provided for registrants to engage in CPD during their standard working hours.

11. UNISON Cymru/Wales also welcomes the Code's commitments that registrants should work collaboratively. Again, this should be partnered with a commitment from employers to work collaboratively with support staff to ensure the best outcomes for both staff and learners, with an expectation that employers demonstrate their duty of care to registrants by only directing them to undertake work commensurate with their job description and grade.
  
12. Given that budget and staffing cuts mean that support staff are becoming increasingly over-worked and stressed about learners' wellbeing, UNISON Cymru/Wales believes that the commitment in the Code for registrants to be mindful of their professional responsibility for the health, safety and well-being of other colleagues is a very positive step forward in recognition of mental health in the workplace.
  
13. UNISON Cymru/Wales believes the improvements in the Code should offer reassurance to learners, parents, guardians and the general public about the conduct and practice of the education workforce. Having support staff named and recognised in the document will hopefully contribute to them being more widely recognised by the public at large as big contributors to school life.