

**Cyngor Addysgu  
Cyffredinol Cymru**

**General Teaching  
Council for Wales**

**Supply Teacher Survey  
Summary Report**

**June 2014**

## **Introduction**

Annually since 2007, GTCW has been providing the Welsh Government with a data extract from the Register of Qualified Teachers in order to assist with their workforce planning. However, supply teachers have always been excluded from the planning model due to the difficulty of Welsh Government officials in quantifying the contribution supply teachers make to the teaching workforce in Wales.

GTCW data confirms that approximately 14% of the total number of registered teachers undertake some form of supply work whether as their main employment or as secondary employment where they also have a part-time contract with a local authority. Each year, we have raised a concern with the Welsh Government regarding the exclusion of supply teachers from their supply model analyses given that a significant proportion of the teaching workforce undertake supply work.

It was consequently agreed that GTCW would conduct a survey which set out to collect detailed information relating to the work and experiences of supply teachers in Wales.

## **Executive summary**

### **Overview**

1. This report presents findings from a quantitative and qualitative research study carried out by GTCW between the 19<sup>th</sup> March and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014 on the experiences of GTCW registered supply teachers working in Wales.

### **Methodology**

2. An invitation to complete an online questionnaire was sent to all 5,223 registered supply teachers in Wales. Responses were received from 2,162 (41.4%) persons, with the respondent profile closely reflecting the total number of registered supply teachers in Wales.
3. The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:
  - Question 1: For how many years have you worked as a supply teacher in Wales?
  - Question 2: What is your primary reason for being a supply teacher (Please select just one option)
  - Question 3: Since September 2013, what is the average number of days you have worked as a supply teacher each week?
  - Question 4: Since September 2013, in which phase have you mainly undertaken your work?
  - Question 5: Since September 2013, which have been the main reasons why schools have required you to provide supply cover (tick all that apply)
  - Question 6: Since September 2013, what has been the most common way for you to obtain supply work?
  - Question 7: Since starting supply work, what is the longest continuous period you have worked as a supply teacher for in one school e.g. covering maternity leave or long term absence?

4. Respondent information was matched to the Register of Qualified Teachers in order to provide additional analyses relating to other variables, in particular age, gender and the number of years since Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
5. For the qualitative research, a small number of Local Authorities and private supply agencies were contacted directly and invited to discuss aspects of their supply teacher pools.

## **Key Findings**

6. The findings from the research study were:
  - Supply teachers in Wales were predominantly either (a) in the early part of their careers and undertook supply work largely due to a lack of permanent or temporary long term contracts or (b) towards the end of their teaching career or retired from a substantive teaching post. These two groups accounted for approximately 66% of the supply teachers who responded to the survey.
  - The average number of days each supply teacher respondent worked was 2.7. However, it was evident that those in the early part of their teaching career sought to work for as many days as possible (average 3.5 days per week). Conversely, those who qualified over 25 years ago, worked on average fewer days per week (average 1.8 days per week).
  - Supply teachers mainly worked in the primary phase (59.4%). This is consistent with other data the Council holds, which shows that it is more difficult to secure substantive teaching posts in the primary phase due to an over-supply of teachers in Wales in this phase.
  - The most common reasons for schools to require supply teachers are to cover for sickness absence in Wales (41.1%) and for permanent teachers to undertake professional development (32.9%).
  - Supply teachers who responded to the survey worked almost exclusively through supply agencies or through a direct arrangement with a particular school or schools. Very few supply teachers worked through a Local Authority supply pool and these are now very much in decline. Furthermore, those in the early stages of their teaching career worked mainly through private supply agencies, whereas experienced supply teachers towards the end of their careers obtained their work from schools who contacted them directly.
  - The highest percentage of respondents (45.6%) worked continuously for less than one term in any one school which suggests that the majority of supply cover work is provided for short term absence.