

# Enterprise and Learning Committee

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## Welsh Dyslexia Project

Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru (Welsh Dyslexia Project) welcomes the opportunity to provide both oral and written evidence to the Committee in respect of the 'Support for People with Dyslexia in Wales' report (July 2008) and the recommendations contained therein.

As an organisation that offers advice, support and signposting where appropriate to dyslexics of all ages in Wales, their families, and those individuals considered to be at risk of being dyslexic, -- whether they encounter difficulties with the Welsh language or English, Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru's Trustees fully endorse the recommendations and the fact that all of these have been accepted by the Minister in her written response to the Enterprise and Learning Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008, and looks forward to seeing them implemented in the near future.

### Background:

We are however concerned that the External Reference Group of key stakeholders mentioned by the Minister has not had any input to the moving forward and discussions on the implementation of the recommendations, and we were recently informed that this Group will not be meeting until after the report of the Expert group had completed their literature review, their efforts at coming up with a definition of dyslexia in Wales, and ultimately, the scoping study completed.

We have recently been advised that as far as the External Reference Group that has been in being dealing with Welsh language and bilingual special educational needs in the context of Welsh medium education ( following the March 2000 Report -Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg / Welsh Language Board.) that it has been disbanded, and that the work of this very efficient group of practitioners has now been delegated to the Welsh Language Unit of DCELLS.(Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. Welsh Assembly Government). That Unit is also now responsible for the production of, and collation of the views expressed during the recent consultation on Welsh -medium Education Strategy.(August 2009).

However, in the list of Strategic Actions in respect of Strategic Aim 1.-To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the pre-statutory and statutory phases of education, on the basis of positive response to parental demand, it includes in one of the Actions: "Review of Welsh-medium provision and services for additional learning needs, and monitor progress. Implementation date is given as: 2010-11. With implementation from 2011 -12.

Does this mean that Dyslexia in the Welsh language will not have any input to it in the current recommendations of the Rapporteur Group, and that it will be delayed and treated separately to Dyslexia in the English language in Wales? Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru seeks clarification on this matter, as it will certainly have a bearing on all aspects of AEN in the Welsh language sector. Will there be a separate Expert group appointed by the Minister to address the Welsh language, and will it be completely separate from any recommendations, reports of good practice, resources development made by the Expert Group that is at present looking to address 'Support for people with Dyslexia in Wales'. We would hope that the Minister will appoint some Welsh language or bilingual speakers/practitioners working in Welsh medium education to all External Reference groups relating to dyslexia, and indeed the whole area of Additional Learning needs.

Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru is aware that a sum of £118,000 has already been allocated for spending on the SpLD. scoping study— money which both Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru and a number of parents who have contacted us, feel could have been better spent in the first instance, on the development of Welsh and bilingual courses for both Learning Support Assistants (at an appropriate level) and teachers -without cost to the individual, and also on developing specific targeted-training on how to recognise, screen, assess and then provide appropriate support for children and young people in the schools of Wales who are at risk or have been assessed and found to be dyslexic.

We are aware of the existence of the WAG funded modular course (30 credit). that is available through University of Wales, Newport, but this covers Additional Educational Needs in its entirety --not just dyslexia, and is at Post Graduate Level 6. We understand that this is not a 'free course' for teachers and Sencos. However, the fee of £500 can be funded through their school's Inset budget, or by successful outcome to an application to the General Teaching Council for Wales for a Professional bursary. This course IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR LSA's, according to the University, as this is in line with the directions given by WAG. when the University was developing the course.

This therefore precludes Classroom and Learning Support Assistants from pursuing it. We also feel that such a course would be of benefit to those qualified teachers who cannot secure a teaching post at present, but who would like to develop their awareness and greater understanding on teaching and supporting pupils with special or Additional Educational Needs—especially dyslexia. By not being employed in a school, they are all precluded from following this Course, under the terms of application governing a GTCW application.

Glyndwr University is also running a 4 weekends Dyslexia Course (developed by Neil Mackay). The cost of the programme is £660 and is at Masters level and is worth 30 credits. At present the course is ran through English only

For LSA's, University of Wales Newport has developed a Course for Learning Support Assistants, at Level 4 -but this is held during the day.

With this in mind, Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru has and is still involved in the development of an e-learning course at Level 4 (probably to be accredited through Agored Cymru (formerly Open College Network Wales) or Trinity University College—with whom we are in partnership on dyslexia development projects ) which will be open to ALL, and will be made available through the Virtual learning environment through either Blackboard or Moodle. We will soon be looking for expert teachers in the field of dyslexia in Wales to work with us in a Working party that will develop the modular content in both Welsh and English . .This will have no restriction as far as participation is concerned, and can be undertaken by individuals in their own time. Again, in order to move the provision or lack of it, as we see it for dyslexia in Wales, we are looking to external organisations (charities, trusts etc). to help us fund the costs involved in course development.

All projects that Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru could contribute to ease the burden on dyslexics in Wales costs money, and at the present time we are having to look to outside charities and Trusts—most of whom are from outside Wales for funding to help us develop resources etc, in both Welsh and bilingually. Our existing funding—which was provided as the result of a 2 year grant from the Big Lottery Fund , comes to an end in December 2009..

In order to continue with the good work (as everybody seems to say !!) that we do addressing dyslexia in Wales, we would again ask M/s Jane Hutt. A.M. Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Skills to consider providing Welsh Assembly Government Funding to enable us to cover revenue expenditure, at least until 2011, pending our application -in the next cycle of bids via the Children and Families Organisations Grant (CFOG) scheme. We will also in the next 2 years, be targeting to meet /raise at least 50% of our revenue costs through direct and indirect income generation.

There is according to draft data we have obtained from the Welsh Assembly Government, based on PLASC -January 2009 information, from schools, a total of 7605 pupils in Primary Schools ( of which 266 have a Statement of Educational Needs) and 9278 pupils ( 879 with Statements) in Secondary Schools with Specific Learning difficulties. Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru is certain that the percentage of 3.7 of the total school population of 455832, who have recognised SpLD is on the very low side, and this leads us to believe that a vast number of pupils are unrecognised as being dyslexic and thus not receiving appropriate support and teaching strategies.

It was mentioned in the Rapporteur Group recommendations that accurate statistics on dyslexia in Wales should be obtained, and that PLASC would be an useful avenue for obtaining the data. Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru is concerned and disappointed that there has been no move on this, and is shocked to be informed that "WAG officials have since established an internal group to consider whether or not we need to amend the category of Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) further in PLASC in order to analyse specific difficulties separately i.e. dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. However, consideration will need to be given to disclosure rules and concerns that robust conclusions cannot be drawn from data based on small numbers of individuals."

Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru is aware that existing research shows that around 10% of population could be dyslexic. Therefore, if we consider this as the norm, and to be the case in Wales, the number of dyslexics in schools will be estimated at 45,000. -certainly not a small number of individuals !

Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru was under the impression that this data would be gathered in the 2009 PLASC returns in line with one of the Enterprise and Learning Committee's recommendations, but apparently not !! Data of this nature will undoubtedly provide information on the amount and kind of support needed and the financial implications for the Welsh Assembly Government and schools in Wales.

We have recently heard and read of the £10 million (Rose Report) being provided to address the needs of the dyslexic in schools in England, through the Westminster government. Not only does this cover the provision of one trained/qualified dyslexia teacher in each school, it also includes funding for both Dyslexia Action and British Dyslexia Association (BDA) for the ongoing provision of services. Indeed there is £150,000 in the allocation towards the BDA's telephone help line for a period of 2 years.

Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru offers a similar service—in Wales, a bilingual service available at present between 5 p.m and 8 p.m. Monday to Friday ,funded through a Wales Council for voluntary Action grant, which runs out in March 2010. Again, we feel that because of the geographical layout of Wales, people making use of the service do not have to get face to face service provision and advice from trained volunteers, --but it can be accessed by phone, we would ask the Welsh Assembly Government through the Enterprise and Learning Committee to look at possible ways of funding the Free Help line Service in 2010/ 11 (in the sum of £15000 —which covers revenue expenditure). We would like to expand the service to one available from 1.00p.m.to 8.00p.m.

Early recognition of dyslexia is deemed vital if the remainder of the children in our education system are to achieve their potential. We understand that development work is already going on in Bridgend LEA with the expert Group on Dyslexia, to produce a Welsh Dyslexia Screening Test for the Foundation Stage.

Can we as Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru now ask the Minister and the Enterprise and Learning Committee to approve funding for the development of a further screening test in the Welsh language, based on the Dyslexia Screening Test (Junior) that is already available in the medium of English. This will involve the collection of Welsh language norms, and then its piloting in Welsh schools. Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru fully supports this idea as we feel that it is unjust and does not give equality between the Welsh and English language in our schools, for pupils taught in Welsh to be screened in the medium of English, nor for those parents who wish to have their children screened in the medium of Welsh (which could also be the child's home or first language !!).