

Flintshire County Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly Committee inquiry into the Welsh Government's (WG) Welsh Language Strategy.

A. Improving workforce planning and support for practitioners for all phases of education

We have considered workforce planning in terms of i) recruitment of Welsh speakers and ii) Welsh language training.

Improving Workforce planning

Recruitment of Welsh speaking employees

1. It can be difficult to recruit Welsh speaking employees and on occasions we have been unable to recruit Welsh speakers at all. The Council has had to work with organisations such as Menter Iaith and the Urdd to attract Welsh speaking job applicants and have been innovative in finding alternative solutions. For example, Leisure Services has recruited Year 12 pupils from the local Welsh medium secondary school to teach swimming through the medium of Welsh. Leisure Services pay for the pupils' coaching awards whilst the pupils will gain valuable experience helping them with University and job applications.
2. Without planning, there will not be a sufficient workforce within the next decade There is a significant shortage of teachers able to work through the medium of Welsh, particularly for certain subjects, such as physics. A number of subjects are not offered by the local Teacher Training provider through the medium of Welsh which adds to the skills shortage. There is a lack of courses offering training for teachers to be able to teach all aspects of the Design and Technology curriculum, for example, Food Technology. There is a national focus on health and

wellbeing and yet pupils are not being taught the essential skills to cook due to a lack of trained teachers. The Welsh Government need to work with Teacher Training institutions to ensure that a full range of Welsh medium courses are available regionally to train future teachers and meet the needs of the local student population. These courses will need to be supported by a targeted recruitment campaign to encourage potential students to fill these places. The local Welsh medium secondary school has found a lack of suitably qualified teachers in core subjects over the last three years. Examples include:

Mathematics:

during the academic year 2012/13 they were unable to fill a Mathematics post during a two term absence. A qualified primary school teacher was appointed who had studied the subject to “A” level.

Welsh first language:

a) during the academic year 2013/14 they were unable to fill a post to cover maternity leave. A qualified primary school teacher was appointed. This teacher spoke Welsh but was not trained to teach the subject. b) In October of this year, the Head of Welsh was appointed a similar post in a larger school in another county. An advert was placed but no applications were received. A current member of staff has applied for the post and the governors have accepted.

Science:

during the last three years appointed several science teachers have been appointed. On each occasion the pool of staff has been very small.

eg. Head of Physics – one applicant

Teacher of Physics – one applicant

Teacher of Chemistry –three applicants

Head of Chemistry – three applicants (one not a Chemist).

As far as the scarcity of applicants; Physics teachers are the rarest, followed by Chemistry teachers. There seems to be more Biology teachers.

English:

a) during the academic year 2012/13 only one application was received to fill a post to cover maternity leave. The applicant was suitably qualified but did not speak Welsh (English teachers that speak Welsh are a rare commodity in Welsh medium Schools).

b) during the academic year 2015/16 a maternity leave post received one application. The application was a graduate in English and Drama but did not hold a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The applicant was a former pupil and was appointed as a non-qualified teacher. He has since gone on to enrol on a PGCE course for 2016/17.

With the pressure to perform well against targets and the categorization of schools in Wales the lack of suitably qualified teachers is a major concern.

This school is situated in the North East of Wales (and with the English border so close) has a small pool of teachers from which to draw compared to schools in Conwy and Denbighshire that can attract staff from both North West and North East Wales. As it is a small school the Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payment are less than those of larger schools – this has been a factor that has affected the school.

3. Within Welsh medium schools, it is not just the teachers that should be able to speak Welsh. Schools depend on administrative and kitchen employees as well as external agency staff– finding suitably qualified Welsh speaking applicants is rare.

4. The Welsh Government needs to invest in Welsh speakers to enable them to develop confidence to use their skills in delivering services across the public sector, particularly specialised skills e.g.

Psychologists. Adequate provision of both further and higher education courses which support Welsh speaking students work bilingually in health, education and social care should be available. In addition, the curriculum on these types of English medium vocational courses should include Welsh language awareness and basic Welsh language skills

training which will equip those students who want to work in Wales with the right attitudes and basic skill set.

5. Targeted campaigns are needed to encourage Welsh speakers to take pride in their language skills and continue to develop their skills through choosing further and higher Welsh medium courses and increase confidence to work through the medium of Welsh.

Welsh language training

6. The length of time needed to learn the Welsh language and feel confident in practising with other Welsh speakers can be off putting and a barrier for both individuals and employers. A review of how Welsh for adults is taught and the best methods to accelerate the progress of learners needs to be undertaken if the Welsh Government Welsh Language Strategy is to be successful.
7. The costs for releasing employees from their day to day role to attend training is not only expensive but can also be logistically challenging. The services' priority will always be to deliver the service; managers will need to balance the available capacity with releasing individuals to attend training. The capacity of the organisation to deliver bilingual services is challenging at the best of times; the current financial situation makes this even more difficult.

Improving support for practitioners for all phases of education

8. The Welsh Government needs to invest in practitioners for all phases of education ensuring that the quality of Welsh medium education at every level is as good as or better than English medium courses. Good practice for teaching Welsh should be developed and shared at a regional and national level. Resources, including Apps, need to be made available that are easy for practitioners to access and use.
9. Flintshire County Council was the first North Wales Authority to pilot a sabbatical programme for classroom assistants in Welsh Medium

schools developed by Canolfan Bedwyr. Sabbatical schemes have proven to be successful and have had a significant impact; classroom assistants, teachers and Head Teachers have benefitted from these schemes.

10. The introduction of the Siarter Iaith in Welsh medium schools is having a major positive impact and the Siarter for Welsh Second Language will improve the quality of Welsh in the English medium sector which could have a positive impact on encouraging pupils to access a Welsh medium secondary education and become fully bilingual. The Welsh Government need to invest and continue these initiatives.
11. School Governors need to be aware of their responsibilities and contribution to the Welsh Government Strategy, Governors Wales has a key role to play in contributing to Governors awareness and understanding.
12. The regional service, GwE, has developed an innovative continuum of professional development for leadership at all levels, from newly qualified teachers, through middle leadership and ultimately to senior leadership and headship. Higher numbers of Welsh speaking potential leaders will need to access this programme and progress to headship in the Welsh medium sector. Leadership positions can be more static in this authority because of the smaller number of Welsh medium schools and limited opportunities for promotion.
13. Statutory powers could be used to promote staff competence in the use of Welsh, for example, through regulations related to Performance Management, School Improvement Plans, Annual Reports to Parents and the deployment of the Education Improvement Grant.
14. A critical issue for English medium secondary schools is the phasing out of the short GCSE course and the requirement to deliver a full course

from September 2017. Head Teachers are already experiencing difficulty recruiting quality Welsh Teachers resulting in reliance upon non-specialists. With the demands of the long course, highly skilled Welsh speakers/teachers will be a necessity but they are not available. There are concerns about the use of non-specialist teachers who are native Welsh speakers but are not trained or experienced in teaching the language.

15. A further issue is the new specification and guidance for this GCSE which will not be available until the Spring 2017 for delivery in September 2017. This means there is limited time for planning and for teachers to become familiar with the qualification. This is placing an additional pressures on schools. There is no clarity about how much teaching time this will take. As schools are already beginning to plan their teaching groups and timetables they need to know how much time to allocate for this.
16. Education providers need time to plan any future changes and, the guidance and support needs to be available well in advance of the implementation date.

B. Ensuring a sufficient workforce for Welsh-medium education and teaching as a subject.

17. Promoting positive attitudes to Welsh language will be a critical component of the Welsh Government Welsh Language Strategy, to encourage people to:
 - Use their Welsh skills (whatever their level of Welsh), particularly when they leave school;
 - Learn Welsh;
 - Educate their children through the medium of Welsh

18. With regard to the recruitment of teachers, there is a scarcity of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh. This is a major problem, particularly in core subjects and the sciences. As a border county, many trainee Teachers/newly qualified Teachers train in English institutions and come to work in the county with no Welsh skills at all. This means that we have to continue investing in the workforce to ensure that they are ahead of the pupils. The proximity of the county to England seems to deter Welsh speaking job applicants from North West Wales.
19. The Welsh Government need to have a robust action plan to support the development of the future Welsh medium teaching workforce. Continuing in the same way will not produce the changes needed. There will need to be a radical re-think about how this can be achieved. This may mean working with Teacher Training institutes in England as well as Wales. The local Welsh medium secondary school delivered a CACHE course (childcare) through the medium of Welsh until the summer of 2015. This course was very successful in providing post 16 students with a course that allowed them to spend a significant amount of time in a primary school or nursery setting gaining first-hand experience as well as the academic study. Each student gained a place in a local primary school as a Teaching Assistant in the foundation phase or went on to study Child care at University. The reduction in their 14-19 grant has meant they have stopped delivering this successful course which means they are unable to provide young people with opportunities for employment in this field. So many English speaking parents send their children to Welsh primary schools because they acknowledge the benefits of bilingualism but if the foundation phase has a lack of suitably trained staff then this will cause significant difficulties.
20. Opportunities to undertake vocational and academic training through the medium of Welsh need to be available and for potential

learners/students to see the value of enrolling on these courses. There needs to be a targeted campaign to promote these opportunities and encourage people to consider teaching in Welsh and through the medium of Welsh.

21. Welsh in Education Strategic Plans are important vehicles to increase Welsh medium education and raise the standards of teaching Welsh as a subject – these need to be adequately resourced to have an impact. Welsh Government should consider providing additional financial support to Local Authorities, particularly in those areas where there are low numbers/ percentages of Welsh speakers to ensure their successful implementation.
22. Increased opportunities (i.e. sabbatical/secondments/intensive free courses/ bursaries) for Welsh speakers to develop confidence and enhance their skills which will enable them to teach Welsh or teach through the medium of Welsh need to be available. Mature students who have not used Welsh since leaving school would benefit from these opportunities.
23. Using Welsh socially as well as at work and in education is important to enable people to develop and maintain their language skills. Opportunities to use Welsh socially need to be included within any discussions about work force planning and Welsh medium education. Pre-school education is also an important vehicle in introducing families to the Welsh language and Welsh medium education, workforce planning needs to take into consideration the needs of the workforce in this sector.
24. To achieve its ambition target the Welsh Government need to invest in the Welsh language and resource initiatives. Specific investment and a separate approach will need to be taken in areas where there are lower numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers and there are limited

opportunities to use Welsh outside of education. The Welsh Government needs to consider regional and sub-regional approaches within its Strategy.

25. Increasing the number of Welsh speakers will require a stepped change which will involve inculcating positive attitude towards Welsh language. Teachers employed in English medium schools should undergo Welsh language awareness training and be encouraged to look for opportunities to celebrate Welsh culture through the curriculum. Teachers should also be able to use basic Welsh in English medium schools, being able to meet and greet pupils in Welsh and use Welsh phrases throughout the school day will raise the visibility and audibility of the Welsh language, encourage its use in daily life and normalise Welsh language.

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