

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales. The three fire and rescue authorities and the three national park authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. This is the WLGA's evidence to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee Inquiry into the Welsh Government's new Welsh Language Strategy.
4. The WLGA has submitted its written response to the Welsh Government's Consultation on its new Welsh Language Strategy: A Million Welsh Speakers by 2050. The draft Strategy covers a wide range of areas, however, this evidence will focus on the matters requested by the committee, namely:

Improving workforce planning and support for practitioners for all phases of education; and

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

WLGA VIEWS

5. In order to increase the number of Welsh Speakers, as per the 2050 target of one million, education will have a key role to play. Unless

children come from a welsh-speaking family, it is through education that the ability to speak Welsh is acquired. To this end, it will be important that there is sufficient capacity in Welsh medium schools to meet demand. Ensuring that there are sufficient teachers of Welsh as a language subject within English-medium schools will also need to be considered.

6. Local Authorities are required to have three-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) which are reviewed on an annual basis. A WESP is required to set out:
 - The local authority's proposals on how it will improve the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area; the standards of Welsh medium education and the teaching of Welsh in its area;
 - The local authority's targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area and for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area;
 - Progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous plan or previous revised plan. Integral to these plans is the local authority's assessment of the demand for Welsh-medium education in its area, and what steps it will take to meet it.
7. Local Authorities across Wales are currently in the process of developing the next round of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) and this work has been discussed in bi-lateral talks between the WLGA and the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language.
8. In addition to meeting demand for Welsh medium education and capacity within English medium schools for Welsh learning, there is also a need to create demand if the target of 1 million speakers by 2050 is to be met. To this end, it would perhaps be beneficial to explore the demography of Welsh learners to identify groups who are less likely to

learn Welsh and the reasons why. Action could then be taken to address any issues and seek to remove any barriers.

9. If there is to be an increased demand for Welsh medium education there will be a need to ensure sufficient higher education places for teacher training through the medium of Welsh. This is alongside ensuring that there is sufficient capacity for teaching Welsh as subject in English medium schools.
10. Further and Higher Education institutions could also have a role to play in supporting the growth of the use of Welsh within other professions e.g. Social Work; nursing, medicine.
11. Having an education system which produces higher numbers of people with good Welsh language skills is not, however, sufficient to ensure that people use the Welsh language outside of the educational environment and upon leaving education. With a – hopefully – increased number of children and young people learning Welsh in education, there will be a need to seek to ensure that this translates in using Welsh outside of school and in the workplace.
12. To this end it is essential to identify those organisations that can help deliver on this strategy; ensure clarity of agreed outcomes and accountability. Funding streams should be similarly aligned and be sustainable in the medium to long term
13. Consideration also needs to be given as to how to increase opportunities for adults to learn or improve their Welsh as Adult learners.
14. Local Authorities can play an important role in supporting people to learn and/or improve their Welsh by offering workplace training schemes. This in turn will help authorities increase the number of services that they can offer bilingually.

CONCLUSION

15. The WLGA supports the development of a long-term strategy for the promotion of the Welsh language. The target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 is very ambitious and requires a significant change to cultural attitudes, education choices and delivery, and service provision across public, voluntary and private sectors in Wales. The Strategy will also require adequate resourcing. It is essential that the Strategy also recognises and acknowledges the variation across local authorities in Wales in terms of the number of Welsh speakers and the capacity for those areas to significantly increase the numbers, or proportion of Welsh speakers.
16. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Committee and hopes that the comments provided are helpful.

For further information please contact:

Rachel Morgan WLGA Policy Officer