

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

We aspire to be an organisation that increases its bi-lingual capability, can meet the needs of its bi-lingual communities more readily, and can contribute positively to a generational growth in the numbers of local people with an ability to communicate and work in Welsh. We are committed to developing positive language and cultural strategies over time to achieve the incremental change in the number and percentage of Welsh speakers in the county. This is a long term goal; the Census 2011 identified that 13.2% of the county's population spoke Welsh, approximately 4% of the Council's workforce has stated that they speak Welsh fluently and just 5.2% of all secondary school pupils attend the Welsh medium secondary school.

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

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. 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. Educational

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.

Education provision

3. Without planning, there will not be a sufficient workforce within the next decade. There is a lack of Teacher Training courses offering training to teach all aspects of the Design and Technology curriculum, for example, Food Technology.
4. There is a significant shortage of teachers able to work through the medium of Welsh, for example, physics and chemistry. The local Welsh medium secondary school has found a lack of suitably qualified teachers in core subjects over the last three years:

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. No applications were received in response to the advert.

Science:

during the last three years there has been an extremely low response for science teacher vacancies, with only one applicant each for the Head of Physics and teacher of Physics. There were three applicants for a chemistry teacher and Head of Chemistry, one of whom was not a Chemist.

English:

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

b) during 2015/16 one application was received to cover a maternity leave position. The applicant was a graduate in English and Drama but did not hold a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The applicant was appointed as a non-qualified teacher and has now enrolled on a PGCE course for 2016/17.

5. 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. 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. Welsh medium schools situated in the North East Wales have a small pool of teachers from which to draw compared to schools in Conwy and Denbighshire that attract staff from both North West and North East Wales.
6. Welsh medium schools also depend on administrative and kitchen employees as well as external agency staff– finding suitably qualified Welsh speaking applicants is difficult.
7. 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.

8. The lead-in time for new initiatives such as introducing the long course Welsh as a second language, needs to take into account the planning and preparation time for teachers to become familiar with the qualification.
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.
11. The regional education improvement 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.

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

12. 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
13. We have already referred to the recruitment difficulties in in paragraph 4. 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. 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 applying for jobs in North East Wales.
14. 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 progressed to study Child care at University. The reduction in their 14–19 grant has meant they have stopped delivering this successful course and are therefore 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.

15. 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.

Potential actions

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 and to see the value of teaching Welsh and through the medium of Welsh.
- 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.

- 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.
- To achieve its ambition target the Welsh Government need to invest in the Welsh language and resource initiatives, such as Siarter Iaith. 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.
- 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.
- Increasing the number of Welsh speakers will require a stepped, generational 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.

- 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

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