

**Education and Lifelong Learning Committee**

**POLICY REVIEW: WELSH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION**

**PRESENTATION BY THE WELSH LANGUAGE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY COMMITTEE (WLSLTC)**

The committee welcomes the opportunity to present evidence and thanks the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee for the opportunity to do so.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 Speech & Language Therapists (SLTs) are generally employed within the NHS, those involved in services to children interacting closely with staff from the Education sector. In the statement of a child with special educational needs, SLT may be considered as educational or non-educational provision. If it is decided that it is educational, the responsibility lies with the LEA if the Health Authority cannot make provision. If it is non-educational, the LEA has a right to arrange SLT but is not under legal obligation to do so.

However, SLTs also work with children with a variety of communication disorders which do not necessitate a statement.

1.2 In addition to the above, there is a need to consider a 2<sup>nd</sup> dimension of education, that being the education and training of SLTs at Higher Education level.

1.3 As pointed out in 'Welsh in the Health Service' (2000) SLT is particularly relevant to the issue of Welsh language provision as it is "an area of work in which language and its use are essential and integral elements"

1.4 The shortage of Welsh speaking SLTs is well known, as is the general shortage of SLTs. The Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists estimates there is a shortage of between 2,500 to 3,000 SLTs in the UK. There are significant retention problems in the profession in all 4 countries and these are being addressed by a number of agencies.

1.5 Members of the profession in Wales share the concerns of many regarding the above - mentioned shortages and it is the intention of this presentation to describe some of the steps that have been taken to address these. Although the focus will be SLT and the Welsh language, issues relating to SLT generally will occasionally need to be included.

- 1.6 A recent survey indicates that there are 240 SLTs in Wales, of whom 44 are Welsh speaking. It will be possible to compare these figures with those provided from the workforce planning process when the latter become available later in the year.
- 1.7 Currently, of the SLT undergraduates being educated in Wales, 13.7% are fluent Welsh speakers. Percentages had remained steady for some time but there has been a recent increase in the number of Welsh speaking students -

- Graduating Summer 2001      2/18 11%    Welsh speaking
- Current year 4                    3/27 11%    Welsh speaking
- Current year 3                    2/21 9.5%    Welsh speaking
- Current year 2                    3/25 12%    Welsh speaking
- Current year 1                    6/29 20.6% Welsh speaking

A project is underway to attempt to further increase the percentage (see 5.4)

- 1.8 The number of Welsh speaking SLT students receiving their training outside of Wales is not known but informal enquires suggest that the numbers are very small.
- 1.9 First destination figures over the last 5 years demonstrate that all but 1 of the Welsh speaking graduates from Wales secured posts in Wales. The one who did not has since returned to work in mid Wales. All of the Welsh speakers in the current final year have obtained posts or are seeking employment in Wales.

## **2 The Welsh Language Speech & Language Therapy Committee**

- 2.1 In November 1997, the SLT team at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) called together a number of SLTs from all over Wales in order to consider the education and training of SLTs with reference to the Welsh language. A Steering Group was formed which later became the WLSLTC. The latter now has SLT representation from virtually all of the NHS Trusts in Wales. It also has representatives from the Welsh Language Board and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

2.2 At the November 1997 meeting there was a strong feeling amongst the SLTs present that to address problems of retention, the primary needs were -

- Support for Welsh speaking SLTs working in areas of Wales where they were few in number (this would be in addition to the general support offered by mentorship schemes established within the profession)
- Welsh language therapy and assessment materials
- A communication network for SLTs working through the medium of Welsh

This was in agreement with the Welsh Language Specific Interest Group (SIG: See Section 3)

2.3 Other issues have since been added and the WLSLTC is now involved with those issues outlined in 2.3.1. to 2.3.6

#### 2.3.1. Welsh Language Clinical Materials

In 2000 a grant of £15,000 was received from the NAW (Professional Education: NHS Wales) to translate English therapy materials into Welsh. A further grant of £18,000 was received in 2001 from the NAW (Welsh Language Board Unit), for the same purpose. Professional translators are involved but a great deal of time is also required from the SLTs on the Committee. The funds are administered by UWIC but all decisions relating to the monies are made by the Committee. In particular, a therapist in Ceredigion has dedicated much time to this work. Therapists in the NW Wales Trust are working separately on developing some materials.

#### 2.3.2 Welsh Language Resource Centre

A sub-group of the Committee is working with Dr. Daniel Cunliffe of the University of Glamorgan on establishing a Web-based Resource Centre for SLT and the Welsh Language. Some of the practical aspects have been developed in association with the Welsh Language SIG.

#### 2.3.3 Perception of Need

A further sub-group is developing a questionnaire for the purpose of a short term project to look at the specific needs of individual clients and SLTs in a clinical setting. The questionnaire is to be used with new clients who come into the categories of Welsh/English bilingual or monolingual Welsh. The information is required to begin to build up a profile of need with reference to new referrals to SLT.

#### 2.3.4 Education & Training

In 1999 a questionnaire was sent from UWIC via the WLSLTC to all SLTs working in Wales. Questions related to their pre-registration SLT education, continuing professional development and the needs of the profession. All of these were with reference to the Welsh language and to bilingualism. The results of the questionnaire survey have been utilised in a number of ways via the WLSLTC, the Welsh SIG and the Higher Education Sector (see section 5).

#### 2.3.5 Longer-Term Projects

It was the opinion of the Committee that there was an urgent need for properly standardised Welsh language clinical assessments. Rough translations from existing English tests were not considered adequate. Several options were considered by the Committee and it was decided that funding should be sought for the following in the first instance -

(i) To support the application being prepared in the NW Wales Trust to produce a normed Bilingual Aphasia Test.

This test is for adults but is relevant to this presentation in that it will eventually add to the Welsh resources available to future trainee SLTs. It is also relevant in that it demonstrates one of the many demands made on SLTs in practice.

(ii) Translation and restandardisation of the English Test of Reception of Grammar. The original English test for children is being updated and restandardised and the author, Prof. Dorothy Bishop, is very supportive of plans to develop a parallel Welsh version. The latter is being developed by members of staff from UWIC's School of Health & Social Sciences (SLT & Psychology) & School of Education. No decisions have yet been made regarding potential sources of funding.

#### 2.3.6. Bilingualism

There continues to be a debate within the profession about the relationship between types of communication difficulties and the ability to develop 2 languages. This is relevant to decisions made regarding therapy for children exposed to bilingualism. Little systematic research exists, for example, on the sub-groupings of Specific Language Impairment with reference to bilingualism and on models of dual language therapy. The committee felt that a start could be made by examining case-study data and sharing experience in a more systematic manner. This work is in its infancy and will be developed in association with the Welsh Language SIG. However, in progressing this work, sharing of information should not be limited to Welsh Speaking SLTs. It is important that dissemination of knowledge and opinion includes monolingual SLTs working with Welsh/English bilingual clients.

### **3. SIG Welsh Language Therapy**

Specific Interest Groups are widely used within SLT across the UK in order to provide continuing professional development opportunities for therapists and to facilitate networking between them.

In the late 1990s a Welsh Language Therapy SIG was set up and registered with the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists. It operates on the same basis as other SIGs, whereby SLTs pay a membership fee and attend meetings as and when pressure of work and study leave allow. It aims to meet on average 3 times a year.

The SIG provides the opportunity for further study of -

- Welsh linguistics and psycholinguistics
- Relevant research and its implications for therapy
- Developments in Welsh language therapy
- Resources available for assessment and therapy

The needs of SLTs providing Welsh therapy and non-Welsh speaking SLTs supporting bilingual co-workers are examined. This includes research that therapists feel needs to be undertaken to further inform therapy interventions and the development of appropriate resources.

(See 2.3.2 regarding links between the SIG and the Web project)

### **4. Education & Health Services**

4.1 Managers of SLT services in Wales are aware of the shortage of Welsh speaking SLTs and of the need to set this shortage against the national shortfall in SLT. A number have commented on the need to link therapy services in a flexible manner to the diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds of children in Wales.

4.2 Despite this awareness, SLT services via the Welsh language and links with education differ between Trusts for a number of reasons. Some of the reasons are related to funding for SLTs and assistants and others to problems of recruitment and retention.

4.3 Various methods have been adopted by managers to address the above issues. Some are offering sponsorship to students in order to encourage them to work in particular Trusts and are looking, in the first instance, at sponsoring Welsh speakers. This is a positive development but has limited potential unless linked to increasing the number of Welsh speaking students (see 5.4).

Other managers are advertising SLT posts with a specific Welsh language remit. Again this is a positive recognition of need but will have limited impact while the 'critical mass' remains small.

Also there is concern among some managers that this strategy may not allow for the necessary development of clinical specialisms amongst Welsh speaking SLTs as a small number of therapists may be expected to cover a wide range of disorders.

In some cases, there are arrangements across Trusts for purchasing of services for Welsh speaking children. Such flexibility is useful but does not address the issue of shortfall in a long term manner.

- 4.4 Opinions vary on the benefits of encouraging SLTs to learn Welsh. One manager expressed a desire for more locally-based opportunities and more funding for such learning opportunities while another warned that "sending a SLT to learn Welsh is not sufficient in delivering SLT through the medium of Welsh".
- 4.5 Opinions also vary on the models of services provision appropriate for children in Welsh medium education but from different linguistic (home) backgrounds. There is a need for more systematic sharing of information regarding the operation and effectiveness of the various models.
- 4.6 In Wales, as in other parts of the UK, SLTs working with children are likely to be interfacing with various personnel from the education sector. In 2000, the DfEE published a report entitled "Provision for Children with Speech and Language Needs in England & Wales: Facilitating communication between education and health services" One of the recommendations in this report was that the DfEE should encourage one or more voluntary organisations active in the area of communication difficulty to provide specialised joint training for teachers, learning support assistants and SLTs. Subsequently, the DfEE commissioned ICAN to produce what has become known as the Joint Professional Development Framework which is currently being implemented across the UK. It is important that the Welsh language sector is recognised in this process. This is particularly relevant in Wales, given the development of the Oracy Hour and the need to include children with special educational needs.
- 4.7 Within schools, SLTs may also work with SLT assistants employed by the NHS. Recently, there has been recognition of the need to agree standards and monitor the supervision and education of healthcare support workers in Wales. Such a drive to establish universality could be extended so that SLT assistants and learning support assistants working with communication-impaired children could receive joint training, perhaps on a three-centre basis, with a predetermined percentage of Welsh speakers.
- 4.8 Where bodies are set up to advise on special educational need and involve input from other agencies such as SLT, it would be beneficial if the needs of Welsh speaking children could be addressed in a systematic manner e.g. by forming specific sub-groups.

- 4.9 Frequent reference has been made above to the needs of children but it is also essential that the issues raised are considered in light of the lifelong learning agenda. A proportion of SLTs work specifically, for example, with adults with learning difficulties and the needs of the Welsh speakers in this population also necessitates recognition.

## **5. Higher Education**

- 5.1 Education & Training of SLTs in Wales is achieved via the 4 year BSc (Hons) Speech & Language Therapy course at UWIC. In Wales, as in all parts of the UK, expansion of student intake numbers is limited by the size of the profession and the consequent limitation on the numbers of clinical placements for student training purposes. Despite these limitations, the UWIC intake increased by 50% between 1997 & 2001.
- 5.2 The UWIC SLT team has been asked by the NAW: NHS Wales Department to increase its year 1 intake by a further 15% as of September 2002. The team has agreed to do this subject to certain conditions being met but has stressed that it remains concerned about the number of placements available. In order to facilitate the acquisition of placements the UWIC team recently embarked on the ambitious task of meeting individually with every SLT manager in Wales. By the end of April, members of the team will have met with 50% of the managers and it is hoped to complete the task by the end of the academic year. These are in addition to the regular contacts already established with managers.
- 5.3 One of purposes of the individual meetings is to explore flexible modes of delivery of clinical training so that areas of Wales currently under-used may be exploited more effectively, thus extending provision of Welsh medium placements.
- 5.4 Of course, an increased intake of students would not automatically lead to an increased intake of Welsh speakers. There is therefore a need for proactive marketing and promotion of the profession amongst potential Welsh speaking students. Significant work has been carried out in NW Wales via Welsh-medium career talks and open days in schools and tertiary colleges. In addition, there is a need for publicity on an All Wales basis. To this end UWIC has begun a project with a Welsh medium secondary school in Cardiff to prepare a Welsh/English bilingual video on the work of the SLT. The intention is to pilot the video in the above mentioned school and then distribute copies of the final version to all Welsh medium secondary schools in Wales. The Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists is supporting this

venture and is also liaising with UWIC on the development of a Welsh version of a CD as a recruitment aid.

- 5.5 Mention has already been made of the questionnaire distributed in 1999. It is not possible to include detail here but replies to the following question are of interest - "With reference to pre-qualification SLT training, please indicate your order of preference for the given items".

When all 192 replies were considered, the following rankings emerged -

Ranked	1 <sup>st</sup>	Some modules on Welsh language issues
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Use of the Welsh language as examples during the course
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Discussion of, and carrying out of, research into Welsh language clinical aspects
	4 <sup>th</sup>	Clinical experience in Welsh
	5 <sup>th</sup>	Selected lectures/tutorials through the medium of Welsh
	6 <sup>th</sup>	Whole course taught through the medium of Welsh

When replies from Welsh speaking SLTs were presented separately, the following emerged -

Ranked	1 <sup>st</sup>	Discussion of, and carrying out of, research into Welsh language clinical aspects
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Some modules on Welsh language issues
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Clinical experience in Welsh
	4 <sup>th</sup>	Selected lectures/tutorials through the medium of Welsh
	5 <sup>th</sup>	Use of the Welsh language as examples during the course
	6 <sup>th</sup>	Whole course taught through the medium of Welsh

These rankings demonstrate the view of most respondents that issues in the education of future professionals are not merely to do with medium of delivery.

- 5.6 As seen above, research was ranked as the first priority by the Welsh speaking respondents. Reference has already been made to this in 2.3.5 and 2.3.6.

Within the HE Sector, with reference to 2 members of the UWIC SLT team (one linguistic & 1 SLT), virtually all of their research relates to Welsh language issues in children.

Outside of the HE Sector, SLTs in NW Wales are seeking funding to research the developmental patterns of Welsh syntax, morphology and

mutations, in order to provide a sampling procedure for clinical use. They are also liaising with SLTs in other Trusts in Wales with regard to developing a phonology pack for clinical purposes.

- 5.7 Ranked 6<sup>th</sup> above was 'whole course taught through the medium of Welsh'. With regard to this issue, a feasibility study was undertaken by Melhuish & Evans on behalf of the (then) Welsh Office in 1992. This study considered the establishment of a SLT course in North Wales, reportedly with specific reference to the Welsh language. The details of the resulting report were not available to the authors of this presentation at the time of writing. Given that the study is now 10 years old, it would seem reasonable to undertake a new feasibility study.
- 5.8 Clinical experience was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> above and the issue of clinical placements has already been mentioned in 5.2 & 5.3. In addition, UWIC has, for several years, run a Welsh language paediatric clinic on behalf of its local NHS Trust. This is a teaching placement for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students, administered and funded by UWIC.
- 5.9 'Use of the Welsh language as examples during the course' was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> above. Such exemplification is utilised in a number of the modules on the UWIC SLT degree course but it is recognised that this, in itself, has very limited potential for developing a bilingual ethos.
- 5.10 In order for such development to occur, and in order that there is continuity of provision for Welsh/English bilingual SLT students, there is also a need to consider the role of Welsh medium teaching and literature. In 2001, monies became available from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales for the development of Welsh medium provision. While the Council recognised the importance of increasing this provision in SLT, it expressed concerns about the use of its allocation for this purpose given that SLT courses are now funded by the NHS. The council was willing, for a limited period, to support the small element of the grant being directed towards the production of resources and so work began on purchasing Welsh language materials for students and on translating some of the course literature into Welsh.

It was also the original intention to develop teaching by bilingual methods (see 5.11) but the Council felt that if UWIC wished to use its funding for developments in SLT, the Council would need to take a decision on whether or not this was allowable and would expect UWIC to seek clarification on the matter from its NHS funders. Such clarification is being sought.

- 5.11 For many years, the SLT course in Wales has included a compulsory Bilingual Studies module, within which is a Welsh option. The aims of the module have always been to raise awareness of the challenges, characteristics and benefits of bilingualism, and to examine the

application of theories of bilingualism to clinical and educational contexts. It seemed reasonable, therefore to begin the process of bilingual delivery of teaching with this module and a framework has already been put in place. It is recognised that -

- This is only one module among many
- There are several models of bilingual teaching
- There are opportunities for liaising with other Universities (see "Acknowledging Need" 2001) but it is the beginning of a long term, time-consuming and complex development.

5.12 Mention has already been made of the DfEE (2000) publication. Following this publication, members of the UWIC SLT team met with staff from UWIC's School of Education to consider ways in which undergraduate SLTs and teachers could be joint-taught. There is potential to develop this with regard to the Welsh language but it has to be borne in mind that staff teams concerned are small. Furthermore, developments would need to be considered in light of the existing heavy course content in both SLT and teacher training courses. With regard to SLT lecturing staff, it could be argued that more Welsh speakers are required in order to ensure commitment to the Welsh language. With this in mind, every advertisement over the last 7 years has specifically mentioned that applications from Welsh speakers would be welcome. The lack of success of this strategy is perhaps not surprising given the difficulty in recruiting teaching staff to SLT courses, a difficulty likely to be exacerbated in light of recent pay increases to NHS SLT staff and the consequent disparity between remuneration in the two sectors.

## **Summary**

The issues linking SLT to the Welsh language in education (in its various forms) are multi-faceted. Attempts are being made to address these issues within the profession but the number of people involved in driving forward projects is small. Furthermore, these people are already dealing with conflicting demands and pressures.

It is recognised that responses to date, albeit enthusiastic, have lacked strategic vision and co-ordination. Ultimately, it would be beneficial to secure funding to facilitate developments in this area in a unified fashion. However, in order to achieve this, a useful first step would be funding for a systematic review of the many issues involved. The remit of the reviewer would be to work closely with members of the profession to establish an agreed strategy with realistic objectives and priorities.

It is recognised that a review of Welsh language SLT provision could be undertaken under the umbrella of health care provision generally. However, the status of the language in SLT and the nature of the links with education are unique, thus meriting a profession-specific review.