

WESP 04

Cynlluniau Strategol Cymraeg mewn Addysg - y fframwaith deddfwriaethol sy'n cefnogi Darpariaeth Addysg Gymraeg | Welsh in Education Strategic Plans - the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision
Ymateb gan Consortia Addysg Rhanbarthol | Response from Regional Education Consortia

Regional Consortia response to the inquiry into Welsh-medium education, with a particular focus on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

Context

The local authorities (LAs) are statutorily responsible for the **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESPs)**. As regional consortia, our contribution towards planning and implementing the WESPs varies from a significant input in some local authorities to examples of limited joint working in others. As a result, the clarity in terms of the roles of consortia within the Welsh-medium Education forums that plan and support WESP is an area that could be reviewed and strengthened in some places.

Our response

Has the current statutory framework for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans improved since the investigation into WESP 2015:

The expectations from local authorities on how the regional consortia and partnerships support the implementation of their WESP priorities varies considerably. Greater clarity is needed around this, and the role of the regional consortia within the Welsh-medium Education forums that plan and support the WESP needs to be clearly defined.

There is also ambiguity around how the funding for Welsh in Education that is provided through the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) and Regional Consortium School Improvement Grant (RCSIG) should be used to support regional and local priorities. There is an urgent need to review and evaluate how the grants are allocated and used to support Welsh in Education and the WESP.

Current arrangements within the Welsh Government apportion the Welsh portfolio across two departments. It would be useful if there was greater alignment between their work. For example, the monitoring requirements for the grant funding awarded through each department varies considerably.

To what extent do the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans contribute to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government's Strategy for the Welsh Language – Cymraeg 2050:

The regional consortia and partnerships offer a broad provision across Wales to support the Welsh Government's Strategy for the Welsh Language – Cymraeg 2050. The statutory responsibility for Welsh in Education rests with local authorities, and each authority's WESP sets out its priorities and objectives. The regional consortia and partnerships should work closely with the local authorities to realise the ambition of each authority's WESP, in line with Welsh Government priorities. However, roles and responsibilities are not always clear and the delivery models and planning processes vary within and across regions and local authorities. A national approach to professional learning would ensure greater consistency in provision.

A national 'Professional Learning Offer' could be created to support the Welsh language within

Curriculum for Wales. This would also contribute to WESP priorities and objectives, and the growth of the Welsh language towards a million speakers; this could be developed and promoted in the same way as the National Programme for Leadership Development.

Specific areas that could be addressed include:

- Welsh as a subject within the AOLE;
- Welsh literacy;
- provision and experiences relating to language and culture;
- a methodology for early immersion and late immersion;
- developing the language skills of the workforce and improving the Language of teaching staff;
- bilingual teaching methods;
- Language Charter Framework (primary/ Secondary and Cymraeg Campus);
- developing Welsh-medium sector support (sector specific) in areas such as additional learning needs (ALN), Welsh across the curriculum, family support and e-sgol provision.

How do local authorities respond to changes to guidance on school categories by Welsh-medium provision, and do they meet the Welsh Government’s ambition to increase Welsh-medium provision in English-medium and dual stream schools?

There needs to be a nationally clearly agreed definition of what we mean by a Welsh speaker in the context of moving towards the national aspiration of a million Welsh speakers. These skills would benefit from being laid out clearly on a continuum so that the challenges of reviewing and defining provision, supporting and developing the necessary workforce are clearly understood by all.

Regions can support the local authority vision for change by working closely on a comprehensive professional learning offer to develop a workforce with the capacity and capability to address the local challenges. This will include support to English-medium schools to increase their Welsh-medium provision, co-ordinated use of the Language Competence Framework. There is a need to develop a clear link between this framework and the provision available nationally, regionally and locally for improving the language skills of practitioners.

The local authority should be supported to establish and implement a package of support for each school which is converting from one language category to the next, including providing support to governing bodies especially around employing an appropriate workforce in going forward.

There is also a significant task in implementing the Framework for Welsh in English-medium education which will include challenges such as:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the aim of the Framework;
- How to use it in planning;
- Capturing learner progress and assessment;
- Supporting schools to prioritise the strategic development of the Welsh language – including developing the understanding of the governing body;
- designing the curriculum – considerations with regards to language balance in designing the curriculum, planning learning and supporting workforce development.

What challenges will arise in terms of planning and developing Welsh-medium provision, ahead of a proposed Welsh Education Bill?

Local authorities will need to have a long-term vision of how they will meet the linguistic aspirations of Welsh Government. This vision will have to be supported by a clear operational plan as how this will take place. This will include a review their school infrastructure and how this will be

remodelled over time to offer enough places to ensure the number of pupils will be sufficient to contribute to the national target.

Welsh Government will need to review their grant funding allocation in the EIG, RCSIG and awarding of funding to support future 21st century school programmes to ensure that local authority and regional consortia spend grant awards within new clear parameters to meet their aspirational target of Welsh speakers.

Grant conditions and governance

- Welsh Government guidelines are not specific enough therefore the interpretation/emphasis placed in terms of 'developing the workforce' by the regions is different. There are inconsistencies and grey areas with regard to the big picture and what is to be achieved. The main outcomes we are all working towards are not absolutely clear.
- There is wide variation in the governance of the RSIGs and EIGs therefore it is not possible to report in a systematic and consistent manner e.g. neither on the use or impact of EIG allocations in every instance.
- The capacity to deliver varies within and across local authorities and regions. This depends on funding models, and local governance of the budget.
- Staffing levels to support the work varies greatly across regions and local authorities. Two consortia deliver all services for the Welsh language. In other areas, there are variations in terms of local authority provision under the consortia's central umbrella. In counties in mid Wales, Welsh language services lie entirely with the local authorities. Consequently, there is great inconsistency in the capacity and nature of local priorities. The financial allocation for schools is vast in some areas whilst the majority of funding is spent specifically on the Welsh language and capacity for developing the central workforce in other areas.

Possible way forward

1. A clear and unambiguous Welsh language continuum needs to be clearly defined and articulated to allow everybody's progress to be captured in a similar way to effectively measure progress towards a million Welsh speakers.
2. The propriety and suitability of the current grant arrangements should be reviewed in order to ensure that the Welsh language has high status and that all partnership roles are clear. These roles should be reflected in grant funding objectives and conditions.
 - Ensure clarity on the minimum number of specialist officers the regions need to implement plans and deliver the Government's aspirations (i.e. Welsh and literacy, Welsh-medium provision, and Welsh in English-medium schools).
3. The purpose of current budgets should be reviewed and aligned with agreed work streams that support main Welsh Government strategies in order to achieve a better focus and clear and stronger outcomes.
4. A national strategic board consisting of sub-groups should be set-up to strengthen strategic planning, ensure consistency of approach and to report back on progress on a regular basis to ensure strong governance for developing the Welsh language. Membership of the strategic board should consist of:
 - relevant Welsh Government senior officers;
 - strategic Leads from every region (or representation from any local authority that does not work within a regional model);

- ADEW representation
5. The Strategic Board's operational sub-groups should be set-up and formed in accordance with the 7 outcomes in WESP, and supports the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Workforce Plan. This can potentially strengthen the regional and national discussion by:
 - ensuring input from key stakeholders;
 - ensuring that operational responsibilities are clear for local authorities and the regions;
 - establishing working parties consisting of practitioners;
 - working with and sharing best practice to recruit and retain middle and senior leaders with specific and appropriate linguistic skills to promote and develop the Welsh language in all sectors.
 6. Current arrangements should be reviewed for the purpose of consistent and clear national strategic planning and agreement on:
 - Siarter Iaith and Cymraeg Campus (primary and secondary);
 - Immersion Grants, RCSIG, EIG noting expectations for collaboration between local authorities and consortia.
 7. A national Professional Offer should be created for the areas relating to Curriculum for Wales and increased Welsh language provision for the million speakers (promoted in the same way as the national offer for developing leadership), e.g.,
 - Welsh as a subject within the AOLEs;
 - developing skills;
 - Welsh literacy;
 - linguistic and cultural provision and experiences;
 - early and late immersion methodology;
 - developing the language skills of the workforce and polishing the language of teaching staff;
 - bilingual teaching methods;
 - Siarter Iaith Framework (primary / secondary and Cymraeg Campus);
 - developing Welsh-medium support (sector specific) in areas such as additional learning needs (ALN), Welsh across the curriculum, support for families, e-sgol provision.
 8. The development and status of the Welsh language along the professional learning pathway should be supported through developing leadership in the Welsh and English medium sectors by:
 - Self-evaluation and planning for nurturing and developing Welsh provision in all schools.
 9. The new WG School Improvement Guidance should include the duty on schools to report on progress they have made in contributing to their local WESP and a million Welsh speakers.
 10. Identify best practice in Welsh linguistic development which have been robustly researched and have a strong and successful evidence base.