

DWLP06

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Datblygu'r ddarpariaeth Gymraeg ôl-16 | Development of post-16 Welsh language provision

Ymateb gan Cymdeithas yr Iaith | Evidence from Welsh Language Society

Developing the ability to work and communicate in Welsh as well as in English is an essential educational skill of which no student should be deprived. Otherwise, it is an educational failure, not merely a failure in terms of the Welsh language.

This is particularly true of post-16 education, as the majority of those undertaking vocational courses and apprenticeships do so at local further education colleges, with a view to gaining employment locally.

These courses should prepare young people for the world of work in their local area, which means preparing people to work through the medium of Welsh.

There is a shortage of Welsh-medium post-16 provision, but not from a lack of desire amongst students to take Welsh-medium courses. According to a report by the Welsh Language Commissioner¹, Welsh-medium provision is “important” or “very important” to over 40% of young people when deciding on a college.

Furthermore, the lack of continuity of Welsh-medium education in the post-16 education sector undermines and devalues previous Welsh-medium education in schools.

The Coleg Cymraeg is already facing a real-terms cut. The Coleg Cymraeg was expected to see an increase in its budget over the 22/23–24/25 financial years, and despite an increase in the first two years, there will be no increase this year.

¹ [“Post-compulsory education and the Welsh language: the learners’ voice”](#) November 2023

A percentage of the budget is earmarked for expansion into additional areas of post-16 provision.

We are told that this year's budget will mean it will be possible to maintain the existing provision, but that work to increase or extend post-16 provision will not be possible. There is a risk therefore that redirecting a further £3.5 million could affect post-16 provision.

The National Centre for Learning Welsh has said that the demand for post-16 provision exceeds the funding available for the sector and that there is currently capacity to maintain provision for two or three post-16 pilot schemes.

The pilot schemes are very valuable. One Welsh language company has employed eight apprentices and with funding from the National Centre for Learning Welsh dedicates four hours a week to learning or developing the apprentices' Welsh language skills. Several of these apprentices will be employed by the company based on their Welsh language skills.

Yet again, reprioritising the £3.5 million could affect schemes such as this.

What is clear is that there are very many bodies involved in the provision of post-16 education: colleges, schools, employers, Local Authorities (where schools work with colleges on post-16 provision), the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, the National Centre for Learning Welsh, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research. There is therefore a danger that there is no clear co-ordination between all the various bodies. We see this as colleges maintain that there are not enough students wishing to undertake courses through the medium of Welsh to justify providing those courses, while employers say that a lack of Welsh-medium courses is the reason why they do not require trainees to have Welsh language skills. In this respect, a clear national strategy for post-16 education needs to be developed, so that the available funding can be used effectively.

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April 2024
