



## **Strategic Aim 1**

**To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the pre-statutory and statutory phases of education, on the basis of positive response to parental demand.**

**Do you agree with the intentions outlined in Strategic Aim 1?**

This section focuses on ways of improving the planning of pre-statutory and statutory Welsh-medium education and of the key role of the local authority. The aim could make reference to FE colleges in respect of their involvement in 14-19 partnerships.

**Are there other ways in which planning for these sectors could be improved?**

As above, reference could be made to the involvement of FE colleges in the work of local learning networks and in providing wider opportunities for vocational education and training through school – college and local authority – college links.

**Does the Strategy strike the right balance between the needs and responsibilities of learners, parents, providers and local authorities?**

Yes.

## Strategic Aim 2

**To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the post-14 phases of education and training, to take account of linguistic progression and continued development of skills.**

This section focuses on ways of increasing Welsh-medium provision in the post-14 sectors.

Welsh-medium provision must be viewed as an integral element of co-operative planning and delivery of provision in the post-14 phase and Strategic Aim 2 clearly overlaps with Strategic Aim 1 (see earlier reference to the need to refer to FE colleges under Strategic Aim 1).

- **Does the Strategy identify the correct priorities in terms of developing the 14-19 Learning Pathways?**
- **Are there any further ways of expanding Welsh-medium provision in the 14-19 phase which should be included in the Strategy?**

### Comments

#### Targeted strategy for Welsh-medium 14-19 provision

The Learning & Skills (Wales) Measure expects the breadth of provision in both English and Welsh to increase. In particular, it expects a broader number of vocational options to be offered at the ages of 14 and 16. However, neither the Measure nor the draft Welsh-medium Education Strategy gives guidance on the priorities for Welsh-medium vocational provision. The draft Strategy notes that current provision is “patchy” with “significant gaps” and “potential duplication” and goes on to declare that “Future investment in developing Welsh-medium education over all phases will be in a context of improved streamlined targeting within a clear national infrastructure” (p29 para 4.2). **The Strategy needs to explain how and when the “clear national infrastructure” will be developed. This must be a priority.**

The draft Strategy suggests that the “FE sector is not making sufficient use of Welsh speakers already on their staff” (p54 para 3.8), but in the absence of a clear national infrastructure, this is not surprising. There is little incentive for FEIs to release staff for an unaccredited three month training programme (the Sabbaticals Scheme). There is also little incentive for the staff themselves to undertake the training. Being able to deliver courses in two languages might give them better employment prospects – were there a national strategy in place for targeted increases in Welsh-medium vocational delivery, but at present, staff volunteering to undertake a training course might fear an increased workload (preparing and delivering courses/classes in two languages rather than just one) for no financial or professional benefit. A clear national infrastructure would help FEIs plan staff recruitment and staff development. This is linked to the need for the WAG to publish a Teachers Qualifications Framework – see comments under Strategic Aim 4.

### Assessing learner & employer demand

The draft Strategy recognises that “a **detailed picture of demand is essential** for successful forward planning in the statutory sector” (p42 para 6.1). However, it needs also to recognise the same imperative for the post-16 sector.

The draft Strategy notes that for post-16, Welsh-medium demand “from learners and employers... is not clearly articulated or well understood” (p54 para 3.6). Having noted the deficiency, the WAG needs to address the issue through this Strategy. Sector Skills Councils, the Wales Employment and Skills Board, Future Skills Wales surveys, all have a role to play in articulating employer demand that FEIs can then plan to respond to through the 14-19 Learning Pathways. **DCELLS needs to provide an evidence base for its six priority areas** (p56 para 4.5) – a list that has not been reassessed for a number of years, **and an indication of the timeline and process for when and how the WAG expects “in the near future to review priorities regularly”** (p57 para 4.5). fforwm suggests that hair & beauty and construction should be considered as potential additions to the list.

Assessing demand both by individuals and, critically, by employers (through Sector Skills Councils) is an essential tool in planning to increase provision in FE. It would help inform colleges’ staff recruitment and staff development policies, and it would help motivate staff to teach through the medium of Welsh – and to take up training opportunities such as the Sabbaticals Scheme where appropriate.

### Increasing learner demand

Communicating employer demand for Welsh-language skills (once articulated), should result in an increase in demand and take-up of provision by learners. The Strategy needs to set out a **timetable for the development of a communications strategy** for increasing learner demand. Bodies that should be part of a communications strategy include: Careers Wales, careers advisors, FEIs and schools, the Welsh Assembly Government, the media, and Mantais.

### Monitoring provision

We welcome the inclusion of Welsh-medium monitoring in the Quality Effectiveness Framework (see p54 para 3.5 and p10 second box), but note that in order for monitoring to be fair and transparent, the WAG’s **priorities need to be made clear** – within the context of identified demand and public funding available.

### Transformation

fforwm considers that the WAG’s Transformation agenda provides significant opportunities to strengthen Welsh-medium and bilingual provision and is surprised that the draft Strategy considers that Transformation proposals could undermine existing strengths in Welsh-medium delivery (p57 para 5.2). Of course, the WAG must ensure its policies join up, such that the Transformation agenda and the aim to increase Welsh-medium/bilingual provision reinforce one another.

fforwm agrees that there is a need for different solutions in different parts of Wales, but wishes to point out that it should not be the exclusive preserve of “Welsh-medium providers to develop strong partnerships across local authority boundaries”. Rather, in order to promote and further develop Welsh medium provision particularly in vocational areas, there is a need to include bilingual providers – including the FEIs – in developing Welsh medium provision.

#### Basic Skills and confidence

All entrants to FEIs over the age of 16 who undertake courses of at least five hours per week are screened for basic skills needs. Investment in English-language basic skills provision has not been matched by investment in Welsh-language basic skills. There is evidence that a number of post-16 learners decide to study through the medium of English because they fear that their basic skills in Welsh are not sufficient to cope with the demands of the technical language used in specialist vocational programmes (see also the draft Strategy p67 paras 5.2 and 5.3). Whether this is a lack of confidence or a genuine assessment of their ability, **greater investment in basic skills diagnostic tools and basic skills provision in Welsh** would help to address the issue.

#### Collecting and sharing data

fforwm is pleased that the draft Strategy recognises that the importance and relevance of the review of data capture, currently being undertaken by fforwm with the support of the WAG (p58 para 6.2). However, it is a disappointment that no indication of the timeline is given for the recommendations of the project to be considered or for when the WAG will set future national targets for post-16 provision. The data capture project will be completed in autumn 2009. The Strategy needs to give the timeline for the next Implementation Programme.

#### National Interventions

The Bilingual Champions pilot project in three FEIs is currently being evaluated. fforwm understands that the evaluation is largely positive about the pilot’s successes. The draft Strategy should give a **timeline for the dissemination of the lessons learned and for the pilot’s refocusing or roll-out as deemed appropriate following the evaluation** (see p54 para 3.7).

- **How should local authorities, further education, work-based learning providers and higher education contribute to this agenda?**

There are a number of expectations placed on providers of statutory education in the draft strategy that could usefully be applied to FEIs. For example **FEIs could usefully be more explicit in their prospectuses on the current and short-term future provision/targets for Welsh-medium and bilingual provision** and the college’s language/cultural ethos, including partnership arrangements with Welsh-medium schools, and giving information on the numbers of students who follow subjects through the medium of

Welsh/bilingually and the choices that are available (see p48 paras 10.4 and 10.5 for statutory education).

Further, p44 para 6.11 notes that “the transfer of information between sectors” is important for planning primary and secondary provision. **Transfer of information is equally important between schools and colleges** in order for FEIs to be able to plan linguistic continuity more effectively. This is recognised to some extent in the draft Strategy (p58 para 6.3) but the associated action is weak. It states: “Opportunities for sharing data between providers should be used to their full potential”. fforwm would like to suggest that **procedures should be put in place for this transfer of information to take place on a systematic basis.**

The draft Strategy recognises that specific Welsh medium progression pathways would be helpful for particular vocations at HE level (p60 para 7.13), but the focus of Mantais currently is on the transition from academic studies to HEIs. fforwm suggests that **it would be helpful if Mantais could give greater consideration to progression into HE from vocational FE.**

#### **What should the priority actions be?**

- Clear national infrastructure
- Detailed picture of employer demand
- Communications strategy to increase learner demand
- Clear priorities published by WAG
- Act on the recommendations of the data review project
- Transfer of information between schools and colleges
- Rollout or refocusing of Bilingual Champions pilot
- Greater clarity of what the draft Strategy’s proposed actions entail – more definitive wording
- Greater investment in basic skills provision in Welsh.

## Strategic Aim 3

**To ensure that all learners develop their Welsh language skills to their full potential and encourage sound linguistic progression from one phase of education and training to the next.**

This section focuses on ways of enabling pupils and students to improve their language skills in Welsh.

**Do you agree with the general direction of the actions noted in Strategic Aim 3?**

The draft Strategy places too great a focus on the continuity between primary and secondary education to the detriment of continuity between other phases of education. It needs also to address continuity between secondary and further education and in building continuity from vocational FE to HE (see comment above under response to Strategic Aim 2).

Two of the Supporting Actions are of direct relevance to FEIs: “Encourage FE and WBL providers to offer suitable Welsh-language support and courses appropriate for post-16 Welsh-speaking learners taking vocational courses” and “Build on the current ‘Vocational Welsh’ pilots to develop provision and accreditation for language courses suitable for learners taking vocational courses”.

fforwm considers the wording of the Supporting Actions to lack specificity and clarity. For example, the draft Strategy does not explain how it will “encourage... providers to offer suitable Welsh-language support” or what kinds of opportunities it considers that “should be developed for pupils to maintain and improve their language skills” (p74 para 9.5). FEIs in South East Wales approached DCELLS two years ago with a business plan to develop Welsh-language support for FE learners across the south east, but their approach was not successful. It would be helpful if the draft Strategy gave an indication as to the kinds of “suitable Welsh-language support” that would succeed in gaining DCELLS support in future (see also p74 para 9.3).

The ‘Vocational Welsh’ pilot qualification – *Yr Iaith ar Waith* - has been embraced enthusiastically by FEIs in all corners of Wales. The FE sector considers this development to have great potential.

- **Are there any specific actions that need to be prioritised?**

One of the factors given in the draft Strategy that influence pupils’ choices in choosing the linguistic medium of their studies is “their perception of the usefulness of Welsh” (p64 para 2.5). As explained in the comments above in response to Strategic Aim 2, fforwm considers that the “usefulness of Welsh” needs to be established – e.g. through SSCs, and that once established, a communications strategy should be agreed using a range of stakeholders.

Secondly, and given that the FEIs have previously been turned down by DCELLS when they put forward a plan that would have allowed learners “to

use their language in meaningful and functional contexts” (p74 para 9.3), it would be helpful if DCELLS gave clarity on the types of opportunities it would support – and a timeline for their consideration.

**What scope, if any, is there for the use of Welsh as a medium of learning within English-medium settings?**

There is a need to increase and target Welsh courses and bilingual courses for specific workplaces in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The increasing use of bilingualism in the workplace needs to be reflected in delivery practices which support the use of both English and Welsh being the medium of instruction in a classroom, workshop or studio setting.

## Strategic Aim 4

**To ensure a planned Welsh-medium education workforce that provides sufficient numbers of practitioners for all phases of education and training, with high-quality Welsh language skills and competence in teaching methodologies.**

This section focuses on ways of preparing and supporting the workforce to deliver more effective and extensive Welsh-medium provision and Welsh-language teaching.

**Are the intentions with regards to initial teacher training realistic and achievable?**

fforwm fully supports this strategic aim. Increased attention needs to be paid to the training of new entrants to the teaching profession in the learning and skills sector. This needs to include both the possibility of accessing training through the medium of Welsh and of receiving specific training in practices associated with teaching through the medium of Welsh and bilingually.

The LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, trainers and tutors in the lifelong learning sector in Wales underpin all initial teacher training for the sector **and the recommendations for the reform of the Teaching Qualifications Framework for the lifelong learning sector in Wales (TQFW) should be implemented as a matter of urgency.** The delay in the approval of the TQFW is of serious concern to the sector and is hindering the capacity of the sector to increase the supply of sufficient numbers of practitioners with high-quality Welsh language skills and competence in teaching methodology.

Linked to the approval of the TQFW is the need to regularly quantify the supply of Welsh-medium and bilingual teachers, trainers and tutors along with assessors, verifiers and learning support staff in the post-compulsory sector. This is an essential element of developing and monitoring the capacity of the sector to provide a workforce fit for the purpose of delivering the Welsh-medium strategy.

The Sabbaticals Scheme is a well respected scheme, but it would be improved by being accredited. As it is only available to teachers who already have teaching experience, it does not take the place of the TQFW.

**Do you agree with the intention of developing a national infrastructure for in-service training in Welsh-medium methodologies and Welsh-language skills?**

Comments

Yes

The provision of in-service professional development in Welsh-medium and bilingual methodologies and skills needs to be in line with the Application Guides produced by LLUK for tutors of “Welsh for Adults” and for “bilingual

and Welsh-medium teaching” published in 2008. It would be helpful to raise the profile and use of these guides to support the implementation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

### **How can we effectively extend training in Welsh-medium teaching methodologies and Welsh-language skills throughout the workforce?**

Comments

- Sabbaticals Scheme already in place
- Sgiliaith also offers in-service training to FEIs on bilingual teaching methodology.

The LLUK Application Guides referred to above should also be used to inform professional development activities across the lifelong learning workforce in Wales. Teachers, trainers and tutors can use the Guide to identify their professional development needs and develop their knowledge and skills. Additionally, HR and staff development officers can use the Guides for INSET and professional development activities, in recruitment and appraisal, and to promote the improvement of quality in teaching and learning. The Guides are also valuable to awarding organisations to support curriculum and qualification development.

Again, in order to extend training opportunities in Welsh-medium teaching methodologies and Welsh-language skills throughout the post-compulsory workforce, **fforwm urges acceptance and implementation of the recommendations for the reform of the TQFW for the sector.**

## **Strategic Aim 5**

### **To improve the central support mechanisms for Welsh-medium education and training.**

This section focuses on ways of building a support framework for Welsh-medium provision.

fforwm would wish to be involved as a key stakeholder in supporting:

- A co-ordinated approach to professional development in Welsh-medium and Welsh-language methodological skills
- Wider developments in Welsh-medium ITT and CPD
- The wider application of the Welsh language sabbaticals scheme
- The further development of accredited frameworks for Welsh for Adults tutors

### **Do you agree with the actions identified?**

Agree with most of these.

### **Are there other areas which should be included here?**

Comments

Approval of the TQFW recommendations as outlined in response to Strategic Aim 4 above.

### **What targets could be used to measure the success of this Strategic Aim?**

Comments

## Strategic Aim 6

**To contribute to the acquisition and reinforcement of Welsh-language skills in families, in the workplace and in the community.**

This section focuses on some key links between formal learning and use of the language in informal settings in the community.

**Have we identified the most important areas that provide opportunities for learners to reinforce their language skills outside the classroom?**

Again, as previously commented on above, it was very disappointing that the FEIs in South East Wales did not win DCELLS support for their plans to provide opportunities for learners outside the classroom. Is it the case that DCELLS would reconsider such a plan if it were resubmitted now? What is the timeline? P104 para 2.16 says “all schools and FEIs are encouraged to provide Welsh-medium or Welsh-language extra-curricular activities...” but this is not the experience of all FEIs. What does “encourage” mean? Planning extra-curricular activities is costly and when core funding is squeezed, extra-curricular activities will have to be cut unless they attract funding/resources.

Strongly agree with p105 para 3.3.

Also accept para 3.4 – but shame that this is confined to learning Welsh as a language, rather than as a medium of instruction.

**What are the most effective ways of engaging with parents, families and young people as these opportunities are developed?**

Comments

There is a significant role for family learning - a key focus within Adult and Community Learning - in facilitating engagement with parents, families and young people. fforwm is strongly supportive of learning that takes place in a cross-generational context. Family learning schemes are frequently a way of providing second chance for parents and grandparents to return to learning.

**Outcomes and targets.**

**Are the targets noted in the draft Strategy appropriate and realistic?**

No. Dearth of targets for post-16.

If WAG doesn't know right now what the post-16 targets should be, it should at the very least provide a timeline explain when targets will be inserted into the Strategy – e.g. in two years' time, or at a mid-term review of the Strategy...

**What other measurable outcomes or targets should be included to cover the other Strategic Aims?**

Comments

## **Any other comments**

### Comments

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