



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

27 January 2016

Report by: Arwyn Thomas – Gwynedd Head of Education

Subject: The Welsh-Medium and Capacity-Building Network

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 Update GwE Joint Committee on the activity and outcomes of the above Network.

2.0 Background

2.1 Background to the Network

The Network was established with the aim of ensuring better access to Welsh medium education for learners across the region who wish to develop, improve or maintain their bilingual skills. The Network informs the agenda in order to ensure that the region responds to the requirements and principles of:

- the Welsh-medium Education Strategy
- Authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans
- Authorities' Language Strategies and Plans

Issues are discussed as set out in the Terms of Reference or as required by ADEW GC, GwE, the Welsh Government and ESTYN, and advice is taken as appropriate.

2.2 Network Budget

Education Improvement Grant (Welsh in Education element) = £2,468,930

3.0 Progress Report

3.1 Against the Work Plan

3.1.1 Extending the Language Charter across all counties in North Wales

Following positive reports on the success of the Charter in Gwynedd, the Welsh Government requested that Gwynedd's expertise and good practice be used to extend the project to other areas in Wales.

Gwynedd Council is providing a service on behalf of the Welsh Government to deliver 4 main elements, namely, raising awareness, holding a training conference, information sharing and hosting the online questionnaire, and the accreditation process.

Awareness was raised in the GwE Management Board business meeting in October 2015 and the strategic discussion was delegated to the Welsh-Medium and Capacity-Building Network.

Work has already started to provide support to other counties in establishing firm foundations for the implementation of the Language Charter, providing guidance and good practice on all practical aspects of the Charter.

Discussions took place in the Network during the Autumn Term regarding ensuring support within local authorities, to include ensuring that co-ordinators are appointed to implement the Charter in every county and further meetings have also been held to provide more concentrated support ahead of implementation within their counties .

A conference to officially launch the Language Charter will be held on 22 January 2016 when essential information will be shared as well as the support and ready made resources which are available. Therefore it is vital that all schools attend the conference as this information will be critical to support implementation and ensure the success of the plan.

3.1.2 Advisory Teachers on the Welsh Language / Language Centres

Meetings are held on a termly basis to share the good practice which exists across the region.

How authorities support children and young people in enabling them to blend into a bilingual society and participate fully in bilingual education experiences, providing incomers with a firm foundation in the Welsh language, is discussed in these meetings

3.1.3 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2014-2017

Estyn undertook a thematic survey (on behalf of the Welsh Government) focusing on the implementation of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans within local authorities. A cross-section of local authorities across Wales was visited during the autumn term in 2015. Gwynedd and Flint were chosen from the North Wales Region.

The review focused specifically on the following:

- The impact of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans in respect of improving local authority planning for Welsh medium education, up to making timely decisions regarding the development of new provision in accordance with the anticipated demand or local or national policy directives.
- The impact of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans on instigating and supporting actions to raise standards in respect of Welsh, Welsh as a second language and teaching other subjects through the medium of Welsh.
- To what degree the statutory responsibility of local authorities to produce Welsh in Education Strategic Plans allows collaboration with regional school improvement services and support from them.

During the visit, the 7 key outcomes of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans were discussed and evidence gathered, interviewing specific stakeholders and officers within the authorities.

Positive (informal) feedback was received and the regional collaboration was identified as a forte, and, specifically in the context of the network itself, the Language Centre meetings, extending the Language Charter across North Wales and training across authorities were recognized as good and/or excellent practice.

3.2 Against the Budget

N/A

4 Matters for consideration

4.1 None.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 None.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 None.

7.0 Equality impacts

7.1 None.

8.0 Implications for personnel

8.1 None.

9.0 Consultation undertaken

9.1 N/A

10.0 Annexes

10.1.1 Extending the Language Charter across all counties in North Wales - Implementation Plan

STATUTORY OFFICERS' VIEWS

Monitoring Officer: No observations in relation to propriety

Statutory Finance Officer: I understand that Welsh Government is providing a specific grant to cover the costs of expanding the language charter across north Wales