

Welsh language Bill - White Paper – NEU Cymru response

About the National Education Union Cymru

- The National Education Union Cymru stands up for the future of education. It brings together the voices of teachers, lecturers, support staff and leaders working in maintained and independent schools and colleges to form the largest education union in Wales.
- The National Education Union is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). It is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

Together, we'll shape the future of education

NEU Cymru welcomes a long-term strategic view of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in Wales. We do have some concerns about the details within the strategy and overall would highlight the need for more resources, especially within the education sector.

We believe it is important to have a series of interim steps by which the success of the strategy is reviewed against. If the overall aim of 1 million Welsh speakers is to be achieved we need to know that the measures put in place are working.

We strongly believe that the education system is key to helping achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. Children and young people need the opportunities in school, college and university to learn, use and extend their knowledge of the Welsh language. Adults also need those same opportunities to ensure Welsh becomes a language which is used every day.

However, without clear funding commitment for CPD for current teachers, lecturers and support staff, changes to ITET and with cuts to the funding for adult and community learning over recent years,¹ it is difficult to see how the proposals will work.

Our membership is made up from teachers, lecturers and support staff who will all have a pivotal role in delivering the proposals. Our members tell us more money is needed in the education system as well as clear commitments on CPD and training.

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-25755799>

People – both children and adults – need opportunities to learn Welsh at every level. It is difficult to see how these objectives will be met within the current context of cuts in the post-16² sector and adult and community learning.

In the last few years the FE sector and community and adult learning has seen significant funding cuts. We believe that the current arrangements for community and adult learning arrangements must be extended to ensure that those who learn Welsh as an adult have the opportunity to do so on a full or part-time basis, at evening, weekend, daytime and residential courses in order to suit their own circumstances.

The expectations for ITET should be clearly set out, or if not, how the changes to ITET will help improve the number of Welsh speakers in Wales. In addition, CPD opportunities for everyone in the education system must include fully funded Welsh lessons so that the whole workforce is able to communicate in Welsh.

You cannot extend the rights of Welsh speakers without the adequate resources to meet any demand. Whilst it is clear that learners should be able to access Welsh at all levels of education, this is not realistic without an increase in resources to ensure that the teachers, lecturers and support staff have had training to deliver this.

We believe education should be given support to help with its contribution to the strategy. There should be a clear strategy to ensure that the education sector is given clear support and that the measures are supportive rather than a new series of expectations placed on the education sector without more resources. Rights and duties alone will not change behaviours if the workforce is not there to help with Welsh teaching and learning.

Mary van den Heuvel
NEU Cymru (ATL Section)
mary.vandenheuvel@neu.org.uk

Owen Hathway
NEU Cymru (NUT Section)
owen.hathway@neu.org.uk

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-41721307>