

UCAC is a union representing teachers, school leaders, tutors and lecturers in all sectors of education across Wales.

1. The ten-year target

We note that the plan does not set a specific ten-year target, but rather mentions the range of progress from the 'lowest' (720/27%) to the 'higher' (825/31%) set by the Welsh Government, in terms of the expected increase in Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh in the local authority area.

We consider that the COUNTY Borough Council should be setting a specific target, and that that target should be ambitious – that is, closer to the 'higher' end of the range.

2. Outcome 1 – More Nursery/3 year olds receiving their education through the medium of Welsh

We welcome the update to the 'Being Bilingual' booklet, as well as the distribution methods outlined. We ask whether the midwives, health visitors, and Flying Start placement staff who distribute the booklet have received training on the benefits of Welsh-medium education? How many Welsh speakers are there among these teams? It is very likely that parents will seek their views, and it is important that they feel confident to give a full and accurate response.

Similarly, we feel that the promotion of Welsh-medium education and the learning of Welsh should be a central part of the new-look Welfare and Resilience Service Health Programme, including training for the relevant staff to ensure that they are confident and informed to provide the best advice.

Our plan mentions effective promotion and marketing, but it lacks detail on how this is to be achieved.

We appreciate the information outlined regarding discretionary transport. The core of provision within easy reach of families cannot be overstated. If it is too far, or unwieldy in terms of transport routes, families will not choose Welsh-medium provision. This is the case from nursery provision and all the way through the subsequent reorganisation system.

The Plan does not provide an explanation for the reduction in the number of cylchoedd meithrin over the last 5 years or the reduction in the number of children attending. It would be important to understand the reasons for this in order to be able to start work on increasing provision again, on a community-friendly basis. Is it the location, or the timing of the sessions that poses a problem?

We note that there is also no reference here to any other existing Welsh-medium provision, for example, day nurseries or childminders. It would be important to identify this as a baseline for measuring progress.

We are extremely disappointed that the Plan promises a 'mapping exercise' – why was it not done in time to include it in the Plan itself, as it is essential evidence for the strategic planning process? That has led to far too vague proposals for developing the provision in this section of the Plan; there is no mention here at all of the provision of specific types in specific settings and of closing the gaps in families' ability to reach Welsh-medium provision easily.

The Plan sets 720 as the target for Year 1 learners in Welsh-medium education by the end of the Scheme period in 2032, but it must be emphasised that this is the minimum aim prescribed by the Welsh Government. We strongly press the County Borough Council to be more ambitious than that.

The link between the proposals and the numbers in the 'Key Data' table is not sufficiently clear. How exactly are these numbers to be reached?

3. Outcome 2 – More reception/5 year olds receiving their education through the medium of Welsh

Again, in this section we are extremely disappointed that the mapping has not been undertaken to inform the strategic planning in the Plan. The target of Year 1 learners is referred to here as 720, rather than a more ambitious figure than the minimum prescribed.

We must highlight the contradiction in the Plan, between trying to locate provision closer to families in order to create more convenient access, and the plan to move Welsh-medium provision from Cilfynydd (Ysgol Pont Sion Norton) to the Heol-y-Celyn site.

We welcome the willingness to explore alternative methods of providing for late entrants. However, we would like to see more concrete proposals in this area. What is the evidence that current provision is 'working effectively' – what is the data that underpins this statement?

Again, the link between the proposals and the numbers in the 'Key Data' table is not clear enough. How exactly are these numbers to be reached?

4. Outcome 3 – More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another

We ask why it is not possible to accept an estimate of the number of children leaving Cylchoedd Meithrin to attend Welsh-medium primary schools. It should be possible to work with the circles to gather information from families.

The statements in this section are generally very general and not sufficiently based on robust figures. For the transition from nursery to primary cycles, data from the previous four academic years is said to show that the percentage 'is increasing' – but what are the figures? They need to be referred to here in the text, not just in the annex; they need to be analysed and interpreted. The estimated transition rates for learners between each Key Stage for primary and secondary schools are said to be 'not a

cause for concern' – but what are the figures? They need to be mentioned, analysed and interpreted. This is inadequate as a basis for strategic planning.

There is recognition here of the need to locate pre-school provision close to Welsh-medium schools. Again, it is therefore ironic that a thriving Welsh-medium primary school in the Pont Sion Norton area is being moved further away from the community of Cilfynydd.

5. Outcome 4 – More learners studying for Welsh qualifications (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh

This section is characterised by one of the shortcomings in terms of data, mapping, and detailed proposals for the ten-year life of the Plan.

There is recognition that greater collaboration is needed in order to expand options, but there is no concrete plan or proposal in this respect, only vague suggestions. There needs to be more than 'the Council is optimistic' – the Council must plan in detail, purposefully and truly strategically to achieve the growth.

6. Outcome 5 – More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school

As above.

7. Outcome 6 – Increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with Additional Learning Needs

Again, the lack of robust planning is very disappointing.

8. Outcome 7 – Increase in the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and through the medium of Welsh

We recognise that the authority cannot solve this problem on its own, and that increasing the Welsh-medium workforce is largely dependent on national, as well as, to some extent, regional plans.

Having said that, the figures provided for staff who have completed a sabbatical course are staggeringly low.