

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

REVIEW OF THE GEST ALLOCATION FORMULA FOR ACTIVITY 7 (WELSH)

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Membership

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Exemplifications of proposed approaches were provided by the Welsh Assembly Government, Statistics Directorate.

Aims and objectives

To consider, in the light of the work already undertaken for the remainder of the GEST Programme, the allocation formula for Activity 7 (Welsh) and make recommendations in respect of:

- the key factor(s) which affect the need for Activity 7 funding and how these should

- be reflected in the allocation formula ;
- the balance of weighting given to the numbers of pupils learning Welsh as a first language and the number of pupils learning Welsh as a second language; and
- whether the competitive bid element in support of Welsh should be (a) retained in its current form, (b) amended and, if so, how or (c) discontinued.

Competitive Bid

There was agreement that the competitive bid elements continued to serve a purpose in that it provided a mechanism for channelling resources to areas of need. It also offered scope for implementing new and innovative approaches to the delivery of Welsh as a subject - whether in terms of training for teachers, the development of materials to support teaching and learning or other strategies designed to address specific localised pressures (which it was recognised could vary considerably from authority to authority).

The Group acknowledged that competitive bidding represented an additional burden on authorities (sometimes with limited return), and that, arguably, setting authority against authority in addressing an all-Wales problem was not without its risks. However, in view of the findings of the ELL Committee policy review of Welsh in education (*Our Language : Its Future*) which seemed to point to the need for new strategies to be developed to raise the game on the delivery of Welsh it would, on balance, be wrong to deny LEAs and schools access to a source of funding which could reward new or different approaches. It was also acknowledged that ways needed to be found of enabling all authorities and schools to have access to the materials and good practice etc developed with competitive bid funding.

Recommendation 1: *The Working Group recommended the retention of the competitive bid element and that, insofar as overall GEST resources allowed, this should remain at no lower a level than the current (2002-03) programme.*

Formula adjustments

The Group accepted that a factor for deprivation was required. There was a correlation between deprivation and attainment. Including a factor for deprivation would also be consistent with the work of the earlier formula adjustment working group.

The Group further concluded that, whatever formula changes were thought appropriate, they could not cater specifically for the spread of circumstances and challenges which existed across Wales (or, for that matter, within individual LEAs). Guided by the fact that:

- there was a need to give greater recognition/weighting to issues related to first

language, but at the same time

- the main challenges were still in the area of second language

the Group considered that a modest increase in weighting (from the current 10%) towards first language would be warranted but that second language should, for the immediate future, remain the main variable. The Group were not prepared to endorse shifts in weightings which would - while still supporting the delivery of Welsh - have meant a significant reduction in the allocations for the areas of highest deprivation.

In coming to this conclusion, the Group emphasised that its recommendation was contingent on the retention of the competitive bid element. It recognised that a slight shift in favour of first language on the formula allocation would, in most cases, shift resources away from the more anglicised urban areas, but the retention of the competitive bid - with allocation based on need and merit - should enable LEAs whose formula allocations reduced to make up the shortfall. Authorities should also look to augment this further with Welsh Language Board funding. This should serve as a spur to greater synergy between GEST funding and resources made available by the Board.

Recommendation 2: *The Group recommended the following variables and weightings for Activity 7:*

VARIABLE	WEIGHTING
Deprivation	20%
Teachers* WFL	15%
Teachers* WSL	65%

*attaching the weighting to teachers produces the same result as attaching it to pupil numbers. In effect, the recommendation is: deprivation 20%, first language 15%, second language 65%

Recommendation 3: *The Group recommends that these variable and weightings are further reviewed alongside the next review of the formula for the programme as a whole.*