

## Aithris – Luchd-teagaisg

### Introduction

Bòrd na Gàidhlig provides professional advice and support to Local Authorities relating to the development of Gaelic-medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learners' Education (GLE). This includes financial support around developing the workforce for GME and GLE. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has a dedicated officer whose remit is the promotion of teaching careers in GME. In addition the Early Years remitted officer supports career development in GME Early Years provision across the country.

It has been apparent that there are specific challenges in Gaelic education workforce recruitment within Highland, Argyll and Bute and the City of Aberdeen. The underlying factors include the following:

- Rural nature of Highland and Argyll and Bute
- the distance from existing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers for all three Local Authorities
- Relative scarcity of school placement uptake in ITE courses
- Concomitant factors such as housing challenges, connectivity, transport.

It is recognised that specific challenges are also impacting on GME and GLE development in other parts of the country including in large urban authorities. Some of the major issues relating to these contexts will be noted in Section Two.

In discussion with colleagues in the Gaelic and Scots Division at Scottish Government it was agreed that the Director of Gaelic Education at Bòrd na Gàidhlig would provide a paper detailing challenges and offering potential solutions. Remitted officers in all three Local Authorities have provided information and proposals for this paper. It is in two sections as follows:

Section One – issues specifically relating to Highland, Argyll and Bute and Aberdeen City Councils

Section Two – wider issues relating to national contexts and proposals for further action.

### **Section One: Highland, Argyll and Bute and Aberdeen City.**

Context.

- All three Local Authorities have GME Early Years, Primary and Secondary provision and GLE Primary and Secondary as part of the 1+2 Programme (L2 and L3).
- All three authorities continue to have a range of vacancies across Early Years, Primary and Secondary GME provision including Class Teacher, Promoted Posts, Maternity Cover and Pupil Support Assistant vacancies.
- Highland has been unable to develop a new GME Primary service in Applecross (initiated under the Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education) due to inability to recruit a GME teacher for the new provision.
- Aberdeen City has experienced challenges in recruiting GME teachers to both Primary and Secondary provision.
- Highland has a range of GME Primary provision and standalone schools.

- There are very limited promotion structures in Argyll and Bute and Aberdeen, although the latter has recently expanded, and no standalone GME Primary provision.
- Aberdeen has begun developing a promotion structure with the advertising of a GME Principal Teacher post in October 2022.
- There are significant challenges relating to maternity cover, short-term contracts, part-time contracts and GME supply cover.
- Factors relating to rural communities and perceived remoteness impact particularly on Highland and Argyll and Bute (housing, connectivity, transport, challenges for island communities, depopulation etc.). In addition the relatively high cost of housing impacts on Aberdeen City.
- School placements as part of ITE are not always as readily available in the three Local Authorities.
- Probationer teachers do not always access probationer placements in the 3 Local Authorities.
- Uptake of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig Immersion Support programme has been relatively low across all three Local Authorities (see proposals)

Some Potential Developments (compiled in liaison with Local Authority Officers):

1. Incentivising GME (and potentially GLE) posts more effectively. There exists currently a relocation package within Highland (see proposals).
2. ITE providers receive additional support from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to provide student teacher placements in the 3 Local Authorities. This would include additional support for tutor visits, accommodation for student teachers and tutors etc. (see proposals).
3. The provision of Probationer placements would be reviewed. This would include potential incentives and the selection of Highland or Argyll and Bute being more specific to particular areas (whilst this may not improve uptake in particular parts of these local authorities it has the potential to reduce the challenges in the Inverness or Oban areas, for example).
4. Although an immersion option is provided at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig which is within Highland this has not attracted significant uptake by the Local Authority. The potential for online delivery and further face-to-face delivery should be reviewed (see proposals).
5. In addition a wide range of other proposals which are included in Section 2 which although national in nature will have the potential to impact positively on provision in Highland / Argyll and Bute and Aberdeen City.
6. Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the three Local Authorities will provide written responses to all relevant national consultations on issues relating to, for example, housing, connectivity, National Islands Plan etc. Wherever possible Bòrd na Gàidhlig will alert the Gaelic Officers in the three local authorities where public consultations may impact on these issues.

## Section Two: Wider National Issues and Proposals from Bòrd na Gàidhlig

### Wider Issues:

1. It is important to acknowledge that simplistic or “quick fix” solutions for complex issues will not be successful. Therefore simply providing more spaces in ITE courses will not impact significantly as there is no evidence that there is a large pool of prospective ITE students who have been unable to access places or that ITE providers lack funding. The Scottish Funding Council has, for example, provided potentially 25 places for Strathclyde University for the session 22-23 with only 5 places being filled. UHI overall has been provided with funding for approximately 200 places with a minimal uptake for GME ITE. It would be helpful if UHI were to evaluate the success of their ITE offer relating to GME and to then implement actions to improve impact on the sector.  
Progress will be dependent on carefully considered, planned interventions, which are packaged, together and synchronised with any new Gaelic Education Strategy (resulting from the Scottish Government Consultation on Gaelic and Scots).
2. National Statistics compiled by the Scottish Government indicate that a deployment factor is potentially an issue, with approximately one third of teachers who are able to teach in GME currently not doing so. [Current statistics](#) indicate the following:  
GME Primary – 370 teachers able to teach in GME with 244 employed in the sector  
GME Secondary – 170 teachers able to teach in GME with 112 currently employed in the sector.  
In addition evidence from the recent GTCS Survey of Scottish Teachers indicated a range of interest in Gaelic Education across the country (see proposals).

### Proposals:

1. A National Working Group be set up and led by Bòrd na Gàidhlig to review current issues and advise on next steps. The Group would feed into the Teacher Recruitment Work stream within Faster Rate of Progress and would have high-level representation from the following:

Bòrd na Gàidhlig  
Scottish Government Gaelic and Scots Team  
Local Authority Representation  
GTCS  
SFC  
ITE Provider Representation

The National Working Group would consequently report to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills through the Faster Rate of Progress initiative and be conducted within existing resources. A clear timeline for interim and concluding reports would be established from the onset and activity synchronised with the National Plan for Gaelic 2023-28 and the outcomes of the Scottish Government Consultation on Gaelic and Scots (2022).

2. In addition, the [Teacher Workforce Planning Advisory Group](#) would have a clear remit to consider GME Teacher provision and include specific information and recommendations relating to GME in all its publications. It is recommended that the Group includes expertise

relating to Gaelic Education and that a review of outputs takes place so that the Advisory Group impacts on GME and GLE provision. Currently none of the outputs from the Advisory Group appear to reflect the principle that Scotland provides education through either Gaelic or English. Bòrd na Gàidhlig can provide professional support and advice for the Advisory Group (again this can be delivered using existing resource).

3. A national statistical package using Scottish Government Data relating to GME and GLE data would be compiled annually which can be used to monitor and track development (e.g. percentages of teachers able to teach in GME currently doing so etc.)

Where additional research might be beneficial, Bòrd na Gàidhlig would commission this as appropriate (e.g. perceived barriers amongst fluent speakers transferring to GME from English-medium, perceived barriers relating to applying for immersion courses etc.)

4. The National Working Group would review Incentive Packages with a specific focus on the 3 Local Authorities. Evidence of impact would be assessed and monitored with Incentive Packages being promoted across all vacancies. Additional incentives would be considered. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has proposed in our submission to the Consultation on Gaelic and Scots that the STEM Programme is extended to Gaelic Teacher Education (becoming STEM+G). Currently STEM supports both English and Gaelic-medium candidates for STEM subjects. Gaelic-medium and Gaelic language candidates should be included in the STEM programme. Additional support and professional advice for the STEM team can be provided by the Bòrd na Gàidhlig Education Team.

5. Language Assistant teams within Local Authorities providing GME could be systematically developed with support from the Specific Grant Scheme. This will provide the following benefits:

- ❖ GME teaching becomes more attractive and staffing immersion delivery becomes more effective.
- ❖ Where supply and maternity cover remain challenging, English-medium supply will be augmented by Gaelic-language delivery in the classroom from Language Assistants ensuring there is bilingual delivery.
- ❖ Language Assistants would be provided with clear pathways into GME teaching. This may not be suitable for all Language Assistants but would be available and monitored over a period of time. Regular events and training opportunities for Language Assistants would highlight the pathways. As this workforce begins to grow Bòrd na Gàidhlig would provide focused opportunities for Language Assistants to find out more about GME teaching and devise an additional online promotional resource similar to DèanDiofar (the English resource <https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/train-to-be-a-teacher> is also a possible reference point for the creation of new promotion materials).

6. The National Working Group would review probationer allocations and ITE school placements in Highland, Argyll and Bute and Aberdeen City and devise improvements which will impact on the following:
- i) New structures and support for ITE providers and student teachers to improve the uptake of ITE school placements in the three local authorities.
  - ii) Review of probationer allocations including potential incentives and the ability to select specified areas for probation within Argyll and Bute and Highland.

7. The National Working Group would review the provision of GME ITE and recommend improvements in the following areas:
  - i) Bòrd na Gàidhlig will continue to deliver a range of promotional activities across Scotland focusing on teacher recruitment and devise new ways to support ITE providers in their promotion of GME ITE courses.
  - ii) The ITE immersion route into GME teaching for candidates without Gaelic, currently only available at the University of Edinburgh and currently accounting for 44% of all student teachers on GME ITE courses. The impact of this route into GME teaching cannot be over estimated. The National Working Party would devise new ways to promote this pathway and support other ITE providers to deliver similar courses. The current pathway at SMO (Cùrsa Comais in Year 1 with 4- year Degree course follow-up is currently being reflected on by the SMO team so that a clear 5 year pathway may be available). Discussions have also begun between Aberdeen University and Bòrd na Gàidhlig and a Liaison Meeting with Strathclyde University will take place in December 2022 (Bòrd Education Team and ITE team at Strathclyde). Please see additional information note \*

8. Bòrd na Gàidhlig provides financial support for English-medium teachers to undertake immersion and transfer to an appropriate post in GME. This is available at the following:

University of Glasgow  
SMO  
UHI Innse Gall

The National Working Group would reflect on where additional immersion programmes can be encouraged and specifically whether a hybrid online / face-to-face immersion course can be provided. This will have the potential to address challenges cited by Highland Council relating to accessing immersion for English-medium teachers unable to relocate for a full education session. In addition the potential for the provision of an extended part-time immersion course would be assessed.

9. All Local Authorities providing GME would address the provision of career progression within GME. This will entail the following:
  - a) Extending the availability of Principal Teacher / Depute Head Teacher/ Faculty Head posts in dual language schools.
  - b) Extending the number of standalone GME schools so that GME headship posts are more frequently available (currently only available at Primary in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Highland and at Secondary level only in Glasgow).
  - c) Gaelic Language Plans and the Specific Grants Scheme can provide strategic direction and additional resource to support the delivery of career structures in GME.
10. All Local Authorities would review current delivery of GME Secondary in the following areas:
  - a) Conduct a review of the deployment of GME Secondary Teachers to ensure they are delivering a full timetable within GME.

- b) Contractual arrangements to ensure that all GME Secondary Teachers have clear remit to deliver GME with full timetable delivery and that GME staffing is calculated alongside the School Staffing Quotient (each school would have a GME and EME Staffing Quotient).
- c) Through Annual Development Planning and Standards and Quality Reporting, where GME teachers are not currently deployed fully in GME delivery, a clear timeline would be established for when each school will deliver this target.
- d) The national statistics which indicate that around a third of those able to teach in GME are currently not doing so would be used by each Local Authority to identify teachers within this category and devise a strategy to encourage the use of this staffing resource more effectively.

11. The following may strengthen the image of GME teaching and attracting applicants:

- a) e-Sgoil has the potential to provide additional input, which would strengthen the image of GME Secondary education and extend the curriculum provision available through the medium of Gaelic and therefore attracting people into the sector. As noted in the submission to the Consultation on Gaelic and Scots the impact of e-Sgoil on the GME sector would be reviewed and further development agreed. The National Working Party would consider any materials relating to the impact of e-Sgoil and work with partners to develop this further.
- b) The cultural richness of GME delivery may attract applicants and a review of cultural input and additional wider curriculum input from a range of additional sources such as Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Spòrs Gàidhlig, CNAG officer team would be conducted. This may be a task for Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which would then submit a review paper with recommendations to the National Working Party.
- c) Bòrd na Gàidhlig has provided a detailed response to the GTCS Consultation on Teacher Registration with clear proposals relating to GME Registration. National recognition of GME teaching skills will enhance the professional image of the sector.
- d) Bòrd na Gàidhlig has provided professional advice and support to SMO on piloting additional training relating to GME. This may include a national training module for English-speaking GME Leadership and a module for fluent-speakers considering Secondary Subject delivery through the medium of Gaelic. The National Working Party would specifically consider the training opportunities available to GME teachers and propose further development (this will include, for example, opportunities provided by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Stòrlann Nàiseanta and Education Scotland). An improved national CLPL programme will also enhance the image of GME teaching.

12. The GTCS Survey of Scottish Teachers provides valuable evidence of interest in Gaelic Education across Scotland. The following tasks would be agreed:

- a) The National Working Party will work directly with the GTCS to ensure all Local Authorities access the information on their workforce.
- b) Local Authorities will be encouraged to evidence how they have used this information to deliver areas of work in their Gaelic Language Plans (in new editions and through annual monitoring reports).

- c) The GTCS with support from the Bòrd Education team and in liaison with GLAN, will devise an action plan using the survey results for sessions 23-24 and 24-25 and outline planning for a further survey and/or focused surveys on specific themes.

\* Ireland and Wales are able to demonstrate 2 routes into Welsh-medium and Irish-medium teaching – through uptake from people from Welsh or Irish medium provision and from people who learn the languages in English-medium provision (Welsh or Irish as a Modern Language). Scotland has a very poor record in teaching Gaelic as a Modern Language within the English-medium sector:

a) Gaelic accounts for less than 1% of all National 5 / Higher/ Advanced Higher certification in Modern Languages.

b) Gaelic is rarely taught in the English-medium sector and extremely rarely by teachers who are not GME teachers (this can consequently negatively impact on the ability to expand GME as GME Teachers often provide Gaelic as a Modern Language courses)

c) The ATQ Gaelic currently piloting at Strathclyde University and fully funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig will be assessed at the beginning of 2024 following conclusion of the course for the current cohort. This will provide Modern Languages teachers with the ability to add Gaelic to their GTCS registration. Ensuring Gaelic is more widely available as a Modern Language has the potential to impact substantially on the GME workforce but this will take some time.

d) In comparison with other Modern Languages, Gaelic is rarely an L2, as it is not available across a wide range of Secondary Schools. Encouraging greater provision of Gaelic, as an L3 is amongst the priorities for Bòrd na Gàidhlig in all new Gaelic Language Plans for Local Authorities. The Bòrd is working with all local authorities to ensure measureable targets are included in all local authority Gaelic Language Plans for provision of L3 (in 2022 appropriate percentage targets were agreed with North Lanarkshire, Argyll and Bute and Stirling for example).

e) It should be noted that building immersion into an ITE course is far more cost-effective than providing immersion support for teachers who are currently employed in English-medium education (where annual supply costs are a significant spend from Bòrd na Gàidhlig resources – 80% of supply cost for an education session and course fees etc. with local authorities contributing 20% of supply teacher replacement costs).

f) The ITE route for applicants with little or no Gaelic and the SMO routes are essential elements in any strategy as they address the current deficit in the English-medium system. Extending the availability of this provision whilst building the provision of Gaelic as a Modern Language longer term in the English-medium sector are key priorities.