Consultation on a Welsh Government draft strategy: a million Welsh speakers by 2050

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by 31 October 2016 to

Welsh Language Unit
Welsh Language Division
Education and Public Services
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: UnedlaithGymraegWelshLanguageUnit@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Question 1 – Do you agree with the approach of creating a long term strategy for the Welsh language?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
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Supporting comments

Yes, but in order to maintain momentum as well as remaining transparent about progress being made, Welsh Government should commit to reviewing, updating and reporting on the strategy on a regular basis.

Organisations across Wales need to work together in order to realise the strategy’s vision. It is the responsibility of Welsh Government to oversee this and hold organisations to account. Qualifications Wales would welcome the opportunity to work with others and agree how we can progress and review the strategy.

Question 2 – Apart from a million Welsh speakers by 2050, there are no specific targets associated with this draft strategy as it stands. In your opinion, are there any targets or milestones that should be used to map the journey and measure our progress towards a million speakers?

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Supporting comments

To make meaningful progress towards achieving the overall aim, it will be essential to set short and medium term targets and milestones. Qualifications Wales acknowledges the possible risks of setting targets: care will be needed not to undermine efforts to promote the use of Welsh language or damage goodwill towards the Welsh Language. To overcome this risk, achievable targets should be developed in a collaborative way with stakeholders, working on what has already been achieved.

A key target that Welsh Government needs to set for itself right at the outset is to improve the availability of data that can help to gauge the availability of and demand for Welsh language qualifications and training. Substantial and rapid investment is needed to significantly improve the availability and reliability of data on the demand for, availability of and take-up of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching, training and assessment, as well as data on the demand by employers for employees with Welsh language skills. This will require extensive coordination to develop common data standards and to ensure that data is gathered efficiently and reliably, and made available as widely as possible. (Please see further points below in response to Q5).

If Welsh Government is creating a national strategy, it is important for all organisations to be joined up. They need to be clear about what the expectations are. Welsh Government needs to identify who should contribute to achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050, and how they will be incentivised and held to account on those contributions.
Organisations also need to be clear about what Welsh Government is doing as it impacts on their work. A useful format was that used in Welsh Government’s Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Next Steps document which usefully outlines what has been achieved in the past 12 months and what Welsh Government commits to achieving in the coming 12 months.

Question 3 – Do you broadly agree with the six areas of development outlined in the strategy – Planning, Normalisation, Education, People, Support and Rights?

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<th>Agree</th>
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Supporting comments

N/A

Question 4 – How can you contribute to achieving the strategy’s vision?


Qualifications Wales has a role in bringing together stakeholders from different parts of the qualifications system to coordinate and target efforts effectively to identify and meet demand for Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications. We are committed to developing a policy that will make a positive and measurable difference to the availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications. Initially we will review the policy and associated action plan every six months as we focus on gathering information about the demand for Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications and the potential barriers that exist to their availability.

In the short-term we will seek to identify and target areas of greatest demand for Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications. We will continue to work with awarding bodies, learning providers and other key stakeholders to establish good practice and to work towards overcoming the barriers (perceived or otherwise) to provision with the aim of increasing the availability of bilingual and Welsh-medium assessment and qualifications.

Improved data would allow us to assess the baseline and measure our progress in increasing the availability of qualifications that support Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning. In doing so, we could consider whether there are targets we could agree to help us achieve this aim.

Our strategy for regulating vocational qualifications is another means by which we will help to achieve the strategy’s vision. In coming months and years we will be reviewing qualification provision in key employment sectors in Wales. As part of our approach we will be considering whether the availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications is sufficient to meet the needs of learners.
Question 5 – Are there any other objectives or actions that should be included in this document in order to improve planning in relation to the Welsh language?

| Yes | ☒ | No | ☐ | Unsure | ☐ |

Supporting comments

The way in which data on demand for and availability and take-up of qualifications through the medium of Welsh is collected and presented is currently inconsistent, difficult to navigate and not always captured in a way that can support its wider interrogation and application.

*Welsh-medium Education Strategy: next steps* (March 2016) sets out the detail of what needs to be done to strengthen strategic planning processes. It is useful to see what Welsh Government will be doing within a specific timescale as it directly impacts on our work. For example, the document notes that Welsh Government will be publishing best practice guidance on how local authorities should measure demand for Welsh-medium education. Improvements in data on demand will be of particular use to Qualifications Wales; it will help us to assess whether awarding bodies are ensuring that they are meeting demand.

In *Welsh-medium Education Strategy: next steps* (March 2016) Welsh Government makes a commitment to “*review data sources available and set revised targets for Welsh-medium and Welsh language education and training*”. We consider this to be a crucial step to ensure that progress towards the 2050 target can be targeted and measured, however this is not reflected in the Strategy document.

The Welsh Language Commissioner’s 5-year Report (Sept 2016) notes that: “*Where evidence and data does exist, be that by Governments, universities or organisations, very little effort has been made so far to bring this information together. This coordination is critical in ensuring that those who develop policy see the complete picture.*”

Qualifications Wales has reviewed all the sources of data available to us (including the census, LLWR and the Welsh Language Survey) relating to the availability, demand for and take up of Welsh-medium and bilingual education, training and assessment. Our intention being to identify trends in the use of the Welsh language to inform our policy development. We found that data comes from a range of different sources, gathered for various purposes and based on differing definitions. Where there is data available, it is often difficult to navigate or interrogate meaningfully.

There are many organisations, including Qualifications Wales, with an interest in monitoring demand and take-up for education, training and qualifications in the medium of Welsh. Securing reliable data to support this will be vital to making and measuring progress towards achieving the Government’s aims for the Welsh language.

Currently, however, there are no common data standards, or a forum for those with an interest in collecting related data to develop and maintain these and the systems
that use them. We would welcome steps by Welsh Government to bring together policy makers, providers and users of Welsh-medium education and qualifications to agree what data is needed and how it can be collected most effectively to support policy development and implementation.

Question 6 – In your opinion, how else can we engender goodwill towards the Welsh language in order to further normalise it?

In our view the key is to focus on highlighting the benefits of learning Welsh and on the demand for it. To identify the demand, to raise awareness of it and to emphasise the potential opportunities it can bring for individuals, to businesses and service providers. And to focus efforts on ensuring that any demand is met with a high-quality response, so as to grow that demand for the future.

By identifying trends in the use of Welsh, whether in education, training, the workplace or wider communities, it should be possible to identify, celebrate and promote successes, through case-studies for example, to learn lessons, build upon good practice and to generate a sense of momentum behind the longer-term strategy.

Question 7 – What else is needed to convert positive attitudes towards the language into speakers?

Welsh Government should:
- continue to encourage employers to fund staff training on Welsh language courses
- market the use of the Welsh language to employers, cross-sectors, as a business opportunity
- in conjunction with the Welsh Language Commissioner, provide practical advice to employers on how to introduce the Welsh language in their workplaces

Question 8 – Are there any other objectives or actions that should be included in this document in order to increase the number of people who learn Welsh?

| Yes | ☐ | No | ☐ | Unsure | ☐ |

Supporting comments

Again, improvements in the data on the demand for, availability and take-up of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching, learning, assessment and qualifications will inform Welsh Government's and other stakeholders' understanding of where we are now, where the issues are and what the trends are so that we can make informed decisions about areas to prioritise.

Qualifications Wales agrees that one of the key objectives for Welsh Government should be to improve rates of progression between the different phases of education and the workplace. The percentage of learners that receive their education through the medium of Welsh in further and higher education continues to be very low compared to the percentage in schools. Using data from employers about the priority sectors that have the highest need for Welsh language requirements, Welsh
Government should work with and support Qualifications Wales to ensure clear progression routes for learners, with opportunities to learn and work through the medium of Welsh and bilingually, at every stage. Qualifications Wales has a duty to have regard to the extent to which the availability of Welsh-medium assessment and related products and services meet demand. We have, and will continue to, focus on this in the reviews of qualifications in the different vocational sectors we look at as part of our sector reviews into vocational qualifications.

It would be useful for Welsh Government to provide further detail on how Welsh Government will ensure that Welsh-medium courses are a natural choice for people in post-16 or higher education.

**Question 9** – Are there any other objectives or actions that should be included in this document in order to increase the number of people who use Welsh?

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**Supporting comments**

It has been raised in a number of fora that one of the reasons that learners do not choose to continue their education at further and higher education levels through the medium of Welsh is due to lack of confidence in their abilities. Qualifications Wales supports continued investment by Welsh Government to provide training and support to further education colleges and other providers in order to increase bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching skills. This should, in turn, help to encourage learners to continue their education using their Welsh language skills.

**Question 10** – Are there any other objectives or actions that should be included in this document in order to improve the infrastructure that helps people to use Welsh?

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**Supporting comments**

Lack of Welsh-medium and bilingual resources available to teachers and practitioners has been raised as a barrier to delivering qualifications through the medium of Welsh. For example, we have recently been notified that text books for the reformed GCSEs have not been available in Welsh. It is therefore reassuring to see the inclusion of the action “long-term investment in corpus, dictionary and terminology projects, as well as educational resources.” It is important that these are available in further education settings as well as schools.

More effective coordination is required across the education system to help ensure that, where Welsh Government support is available to secure provision of bilingual resources, these are aligned to areas of demand and in sufficient time to coincide with the availability of courses and qualifications aimed at meeting that demand. It is also important that systems are put in place to enable effective sharing of resources. Qualifications Wales is working towards improving coordination within the
qualifications system and would welcome continued collaboration with Welsh Government.

Increasing trends of online assessment have the potential for supporting greater availability of bilingual assessment, but may require greater up-front investment to achieve such benefits.

**Question 11** – Are there any other objectives or actions that should be included in this document in order to improve the rights of Welsh speakers?

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**Supporting comments**

The Welsh language has official status, legislation is in place which gives Welsh speakers the right to Welsh language services, we have a Welsh Language Commissioner to oversee the implementation of these rights. There is also a statutory basis for planning Welsh-medium education provision, and “a thriving Welsh language” has been included in one of the national well-being goals. We now need to build on these foundations.

**Question 12** – The Welsh Government will publish a series of detailed policies in specific policy areas during the strategy’s lifespan. Which policies do you think we should prioritise for publication during the first five years of the strategy?

One of the first priorities for Welsh Government at this early stage of the strategy should be improvements in data – both in the quality and coordination. It is important for us to know what the baseline is in order for us to track progress. A working group made up of relevant stakeholders, including Qualifications Wales, would be the advisable way in which to identify which datasets are needed.

**Question 13** – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

The document states that it is “vital to us all as a nation to take ownership of the challenge”. In order for Welsh Government to realise the ambitions set out in the consultation it is important to develop this strategy in collaboration with stakeholders, including Qualifications Wales.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: