
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

Estyn acknowledges the importance of Welsh language transmission in families if we are to realise the aims of Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers. Estyn views the Welsh language as an integral part of our vision for education in Wales. We note in the consultation document that *'now, the education system generates the majority of new Welsh speakers'*. However, we also acknowledge that *'not all of these new Welsh speakers necessarily speak Welsh with their own children later in life'*. We also agree that the evidence base, as a result of research in relation to linguistic planning, underlines clearly that a combination of two specific areas is at the heart of the process. One of these areas is language transmission from one generation to the next, and the other is education. We accept that it is unlikely that the Welsh language will thrive as a communal and social language if it relies solely on the education system. The fact that 43 per cent of speakers have learned Welsh at home as young children corroborates this.

We believe that this policy links suitably to the three main aims of Cymraeg 2050, namely:

- Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
- Increasing the use of Welsh
- Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context

Consultation Questions :

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:

1. This draft policy sets out our proposed actions to support and increase Welsh language transmission in families.
 - a. Will the actions we propose allow us to do this?

Estyn believes that this policy focuses appropriately on active use of the Welsh language between parents/carers and their children. The principles that underpin the draft policy are comprehensive and meaningful, and acknowledge valuably the reality of Welsh language transmission in families in modern day life. The fact that research is at the heart of the policy-making process is an obvious strength.

The document lists 22 actions usefully. These are cross-referenced clearly with specific policy objectives.

Actions 8 and 11 are interesting in terms of the effect of adult learning on language transmission in families. The document states on page 19 that research shows that 'the transmission of Welsh isn't a decision, but unconscious behaviour'. However, parents make decisions for their children's future and, at the end of the day, are able to decide on the language of the home. We also know that a significant number of learners in the Welsh for Adults sector are learning the language because of their children. We believe that both of these actions are linked with the Welsh for Adults sector, and the sector's provision for speakers who lack confidence (through programmes such as *Work Welsh*)

and programmes for parents and carers, such as *Camau*. We believe that evidence from our inspection reports on Welsh for Adults shows that it is possible to change behaviour through teaching. This is done by equipping people, who already have the will and the commitment, with the linguistic foundation necessary to transmit the language and use it successfully in the family context.

We welcome the content of action 7, which will build on the positive work that is being done in schools with initiatives such as the Welsh Language Charter.

b. Are there any actions missing from the draft policy?

The actions appear to be comprehensive. A flexible attitude towards experimentation and changing methods is evident throughout the document. As a result, it should be possible to refine or add actions where necessary in a beneficial and timely manner.

c. Should we take a different approach to some of these actions?

We believe that more attention should be given to actions 8 and 11. It is clear from the document that not enough former pupils of Welsh-medium schools transmit the language to their children, and the document lists some of the reasons for this. The document also identifies usefully that many respondents refer to Welsh-medium education rather than using the Welsh language at home, and fail to appreciate the link between the two.

Although we would accept that language transmission is essentially a behavioural process, the effect of statutory education on the behaviour and perceptions of former pupils of the education system cannot be ignored. For example, Estyn's Annual Report 2018-19 (p.49 *Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers*) identifies firmly,

'Around 20% of pupils who are in Welsh-medium education at the end of the foundation phase do not continue to develop their Welsh language skills to their full potential during their time in statutory education and do not gain a GCSE qualification in Welsh (first language) at the end of key stage 4. Similarly, too many pupils in bilingual secondary schools in a minority of local authorities do not receive enough opportunities to continue to develop and apply their Welsh language skills in subjects across the curriculum. These schools do not plan carefully enough to develop pupils' language skills, including promoting the advantages of pursuing courses through the medium of Welsh.'

On page 60, the same annual report states (post-16 education and training),

'around a third of learners say that they are only fairly confident orally at best, despite following courses in Welsh or having attended Welsh-medium schools.'

In addition,

'In Estyn's inspection reports on further education and work-based learning providers, a common recommendation in recent years has been to improve the focus on developing learners' Welsh language skills as an employability skill and to encourage learners to use and develop their language skills in the workplace. Across the post-16 sector, leaders and managers have not clearly linked the benefits of using the Welsh language to employment opportunities, despite competence in the Welsh language being in demand in a number of

geographical regions and learning areas.'

As a result, the term 'fluent Welsh speaker' encompasses a wide range of people and, due to issues such as those identified above, a significant number of statistical Welsh speakers are not active, confident speakers. They are not aware of the economic benefits of being bilingual. Economic factors affect people's perceptions of the Welsh language and the value, or lack thereof, of its transmission to the next generation. The above issues need to be addressed, but it also needs to be ensured that there is a way to target these speakers through a programme of interventions and lessons, so that they become active speakers rather than 'passive' speakers. Adequate resources will need to be ensured to implement actions 8 and 11 effectively.

2. This draft policy is intended to inform a ten-year programme of work. Are there any actions which should be implemented before others?

As we have outlined below, we feel that the four aims that are referred to in 3 lend themselves conveniently to four action plans, with four timescales that are suitable and appropriate to the areas in question within the 10-year framework.

3. This draft policy is based on how we want to:
- i. Inspire today's generation of children and young people to speak Welsh to their children in the future.
 - ii. Reignite the Welsh language skills of those who may not have used Welsh since their school days, or who have lost confidence in their language skills, to speak Welsh with their own children.
 - iii. Support and encourage use of Welsh within families where not everybody speaks Welsh.
 - iv. Support Welsh-speaking families to speak Welsh with their children.
- a. Does this policy give sufficient attention to each of these four aims?

We feel that these four overall aims provide a sound and suitable basis for the policy that will lead beneficially to four action plans, which will address different aspects of Welsh language transmission proactively. We have referred to the need to place a sufficient emphasis on aim (ii) in our response to 1c.

- b. Are there any other aims which should be addressed in the policy?

Action point 21 refers to the intention to '*establish a programme board to manage this work*' and '*include other stakeholders on it in order to advise, assist, and challenge us*'.

We believe that this management board should work closely with the Cymraeg 2050 Programme Board, namely the body that was established within the Government to scrutinise progress, provide advice, guidance and assurance in implementing Cymraeg 2050. (Page 44 Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers Annual Report 2018-19), in addition to the Linguistic Planning Group.