



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

POLICY AND STRATEGY

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Welsh Government strategy on the internal use of the Welsh language.

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1. Purpose: our 2050 goal

The Welsh language – y Gymraeg – is integral to our culture, our heritage and our daily lives. It is part of our shared inheritance and identity as a nation. But its future across Wales cannot be taken for granted. There is an onus on us to take proactive steps to support and increase the use of the language, and to pass it on to future generations. This is something we can all do together.

“ A million Welsh speakers by 2050.

“ The year 2050: the Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society and economy of Wales.” ”

This is the Welsh Government’s vision for the Welsh language in Wales ([Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#), Welsh Government, 2017). It is to see, by 2050, a million speakers using the language in every aspect of their

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lives, and doubling the percentage of people in Wales who speak and use the language daily. Implementing that vision will involve generational change, halting the decline of the last century.

An important part of the vision involves renewing the association between the language and the workplace. Welsh is spoken for cultural, commercial, social and emotional reasons, but it is also a vocational skill – a skill that should be better recognised and utilised. As a result the Welsh Government has already committed to “...leading by example by promoting and facilitating increased use of Welsh by our own workforce” (Theme 2 Increasing the Use of Welsh, chapter 6 The Workplace). The First Minister has also pledged to “mainstream” the Welsh language into the development of policy and to the way we work more generally.

Set in this context, the Welsh Government’s goal for the Welsh language within the organisation is that by 2050 all staff working for the Welsh Government will be able to understand Welsh. This will enable staff to work in Welsh from day to day and there will be a significant increase in the use of the language as a result.

So our goal is that the Welsh Government should gradually become a truly bilingual organisation; one in which it is routine for the Welsh and English languages to both be used naturally and interchangeably.

2. Principles: how we will reach the 2050 goal

Principles to be adopted in implementing the strategy

We are proud of the Welsh language and want it to thrive. It is something that can unite us as a nation. Statistics show that 86% of people across Wales feel that the language is something to be proud of. But while some are comfortable speaking Welsh – more often than not as the language was passed on to them by their families – many are not. We need to establish a common understanding that the Welsh language belongs to us all whatever our linguistic background. The language is not exclusive to those who can speak it today.

Our strategy on the use of Welsh in the workplace is, in many respects, set by the political direction and legal framework that have already been established; to promote the language and to increase its use. We are conscious of how using Welsh in the workplace can give the language more purpose and relevance. This is especially the case in so far as those learning Welsh in our schools are concerned, who should understand that the language will be a useful skill for them in the workplace. We know that what we do within the Welsh Government will influence other parts of the public sector in Wales. This is why our long term goal is to become a bilingual organisation.

However, we are conscious also that steps taken to increase use of the language must be reasonable and proportionate, which means that becoming a bilingual organisation will involve change that happens gradually. With that in mind this strategy is underpinned by the following principles.

- **Making a long term commitment and leading the way:** change will be incremental and will happen over time, but we intend to lead by example in the way we promote use of the language in the workplace.
- **Investing in staff and providing opportunities to learn Welsh and develop language skills:** it is crucial that effective and convenient training is provided, with people given both time and motivation to continuously improve their Welsh language skills.
- **Remaining an open, inclusive and diverse organisation:** everyone has the potential to be a Welsh speaker and this strategy does not conflict with our commitment to being open, inclusive and diverse – although Welsh language skills will progressively be needed for more posts, developing a bilingual workforce does not mean (or imply) those skills being a universal pre-requisite for joining the Welsh Government.
- **Continuously reviewing our ways of working to facilitate the increased use of Welsh:** when we introduce new internal policies and initiatives we will review the extent to which they provide further opportunities for staff to use Welsh in their day to day work.

Meaning of a bilingual organisation

It is important to be clear what is meant by a bilingual organisation. Eventually a choice of language will be available operationally within the organisation, meaning we will be able to routinely choose whether to communicate (orally and in writing) in Welsh or English, or indeed both. This has relevance that goes beyond being able to provide all outward facing services and internal formal communications in both languages.

This choice will be made possible by all staff being able to at least understand Welsh. This will of course take time and will require a long term commitment (firstly) to continuously improving our language skills and (secondly) to developing a working culture that understands and respects bilingualism. Our goal is to allow staff increased opportunities to acquire and then use their Welsh language skills in the workplace, and eventually allow for language choice.

We want and need more Welsh Government staff to have Welsh language skills they can use in the workplace. This can be done in 2 ways; by existing staff starting to learn or improve and by more recruitment of those who already have Welsh language skills. Both of these will be required, as – crucially – is plenty of time and support to adapt.

Initial objective and actions for the first 5 years

This strategy envisages reaching its goal more than 30 years from now, so for obvious reasons it will need to be periodically reviewed and changed. We envisage a process under which the strategy and changes in policy adopted under it are reviewed every 5 years.

As well as setting a long term 2050 goal we are also setting a shorter term objective for the period up to 2025 and 10 actions designed to help meet that objective. These, in turn, contribute to reaching the 2050 goal. The shorter term objective will be reviewed in 2025 and a new objective and associated actions will be set for the following 5 year period – a process that will continue until the 2050 goal is reached.

Our goal is to become a bilingual organisation by 2050, but over the first 5 years our objective is to see the Welsh Government become an exemplar organisation in increasing internal use of the language when assessed against comparable public sector organisations in Wales.

Specific actions for achieving this are set out in Chapter 3, however in summary the actions are based on the following themes:

a. **Leadership**

The renewed focus on the language is to be led not just at the political level but also by senior officials. They will be expected to lead by example in promoting use of the language and making its importance to the organisation clear. They will help others to use, learn and improve their Welsh language skills – and develop skills of their own. Learning Welsh and facilitating its use by Welsh speakers in day to day work will be a business need across the organisation, and line managers will need to adhere to that principle by demonstrating personal leadership. An important element of leadership will also be to assess the extent to which use of the language is mainstreamed across the organisation; an issue that is relevant both to its increased use and to complying with our statutory obligations under the Standards.

b. **Learning**

One of the most fundamental elements to the success of this strategy will be the learning and development on offer to staff across all levels of proficiency. Our focus will be on encouraging people to learn and to continuously improve. The principle of continuous improvement over the long term will be based on the scale currently used to assess Welsh language skills. However this will be amended to introduce a new minimum level of “courtesy” Welsh and to more accurately reflect the notion of being able to understand written and spoken Welsh (which is what we need to enable bilingual working).

c. **Recruitment**

There have in recent years been only limited opportunities to recruit new staff and we do not expect this to change significantly any time soon. However, we need to bear in mind, firstly, that this is a long term strategy and, secondly, that (although this has not been done consciously) our recruitment processes have at times put insufficient emphasis on the importance of Welsh language skills. Our starting point will be to continue to aim to recruit the best people regardless of their background, with new staff being welcomed and supported to improve their Welsh language skills. However we will over time also need to recruit more people who already have Welsh language skills. This will be made easier by increases in the number of Welsh speakers in society, in particular as more pupils leave school with improved skills.

d. **Technology**

We will focus on use of technology to make it easier to work in Welsh. We also intend to make better use of technology to produce Welsh language material without always necessarily having to send work to translation services.

The context for the Welsh Government becoming an exemplar organisation is that we are already committed to “leading by example” in so far as our internal use of Welsh is concerned. This means that we must have regard to initiatives already pursued by other public bodies. The process of determining the actions in Chapter 3 has been informed by comparative analysis and most of the actions replicate existing good practice elsewhere in Wales (or internationally).

Governments and other organisations in many countries already operate bilingually (or even multilingually) and what we propose for the Welsh Government is far from unique. In countries such as Canada, Belgium, Switzerland and the Basque Country working in two or more languages is considered to be normal and an inherent part of modern, representative government. It has also been an important feature of European institutions.

3. Implementation: objective and actions for 2020 to 2025

The following are the actions to be taken to meet the initial objective for the first 5 year period of the strategy – to become an exemplar organisation in increasing internal use of the language when assessed against comparable public sector organisations in Wales. They are designed also to contribute to the longer term goal of becoming a bilingual organisation.

Action 1: Develop new, improved and innovative opportunities for Welsh language learning

(Theme: learning)

We will develop an innovative and wide-ranging choice of training. This will promote the value of the Welsh language to the organisation, and provide staff with a flexible and adaptable programme to address agreed organisational needs. The programme will acknowledge the fact that people learn differently by offering a range of learning methods, including face-to-face classes, e-learning, informal group conversations, mentoring and online networks. This will support the organisation's move to the 70:20:10 blended model of learning and development. This will be available to all staff, regardless of the nature of their posts, as the Welsh language is a business need across the organisation.

As a first step the current training on offer will be evaluated to understand what will need to be adapted in order to support this strategy. In ensuring that sufficient support is put in place we will work closely with the National Centre for Learning on lessons learnt and best practice elsewhere. There will be a systematic approach to all Welsh language training based on learning plans tailored to the individual containing specific targets, including work-related targets where appropriate – something that will allow managers to contribute to the process. A strong emphasis will be placed on ensuring opportunities to use newly acquired Welsh language skills in the workplace. Opportunities for practice in a less formal context will be developed and we will consider how

classroom learning can be supplemented with practical opportunities to use the language as part of everyday work.

Action 2: Develop, refine and provide training on critical language awareness tailored for those in leadership positions

(Themes: learning and leadership)

Academi Wales and the Welsh Language Division are currently collaborating on a pilot project called Leadership in a Bilingual Country. This ties in with the Academi Wales Leadership Behaviours Framework and allows senior leaders to discuss how they will develop an organisational culture that supports bilingualism and mainstreaming promotion of the Welsh language in policy making. We will evaluate and refine this provision with a view to all Welsh Government senior leaders participating.

Action 3: Change the acceptance criteria for formal Welsh language learning

(Themes: leadership and learning)

At present staff need to demonstrate a “business need” within the application process for formal Welsh language training. In future Welsh language skills will always be acknowledged as a business need across the organisation. Line managers will only be able to refuse requests for training in exceptional circumstances and only on a short term basis.

The setting of reasonable and practical objectives for learning will be reviewed and line managers will be reminded of the need to support the commitment to training. Achievements of learners will be recognised as part of the ‘Let’s Talk’ performance management process.

Action 4: Increase use of Welsh language mentors

(Themes: leadership and learning)

The mentoring network will be revitalised in order to ensure sufficient capacity to support the learning process (in addition to other informal opportunities to use and practice skills).

Action 5: Develop a governance tool to measure mainstreaming of Welsh language policy, legal compliance and use

(Theme: leadership)

Mainstreaming the Welsh language as committed to by the First Minister is not straightforward. We will consider whether to introduce a governance model similar to the Canadian Government's "Official Languages Maturity Model" which is designed to ensure internal parity for the English and French languages. This could also be used to monitor our legal obligations.

Action 6: Review the skills required in existing posts with a view to gradually increasing the number of bilingual staff who join the Welsh Government

(Themes: recruitment and leadership)

The reference to "no Welsh language skills required" when advertising posts no longer reflects the requirements or ethos of the organisation. This is to be replaced, as a minimum requirement for all posts, with wording emphasising that Welsh language skills are an asset to the Welsh Government.

The process in place for assessing and categorising the skills levels required for all posts will also be reviewed. It will be revised to ensure that it reflects the

Welsh Government's needs and to ensure that Welsh language skills are properly taken into account by line managers. As now, due to their nature, some posts will require Welsh language skills upon entry – and we will reassess whether more posts should be designated in this way.

Action 7: Gradual introduction of a minimum “courtesy” level of Welsh language skills

(Themes: leadership, learning and recruitment)

All posts advertised by the Welsh Government will require candidates to demonstrate at least a basic “Courtesy” level of Welsh language skills within an agreed timeframe. Candidates will be expected to evidence those skills either on appointment or within an agreed and appropriate timeframe during their probationary period (usually within 6 months of starting in post).

Courtesy level Welsh is defined as an ability to:

- pronounce Welsh language words, names, place names and terms
- answer the phone bilingually, greet people or make introductions bilingually
- understand and use proactively everyday expressions and simple key words relating to the workplace
- read and understand short texts providing basic information, for example in correspondence, or to interpret the content using available technology
- demonstrate language awareness – which includes an appreciation of the importance of the language in society and an awareness of what is required to provide bilingual customer service.

We will make all candidates aware of the bilingual ethos of the organisation, along with the requirements, before applying for posts by ensuring Appoint (or any replacement system) and recruitment guidance documents contain the relevant information. In all cases (except those where Welsh language skills are essential) we will ensure that candidates understand that if they cannot demonstrate skills upon appointment, this will not be a barrier to applying for a post. But will make the requirements clear and emphasise that support is in place to ensure the skills are achieved within an agreed and appropriate

timeframe. This will be achieved by means of a basic Welsh language induction course that will support new staff to achieve basic level courtesy Welsh as defined above. This is intended to be the start of a process of continuous improvement in Welsh language skills supported by training and other development opportunities provided.

The requirement to demonstrate courtesy level Welsh will be gradually applied across the organisation during the first 5 year period, something that will begin with the Senior Civil Service. This again will be the start of a process of continuous improvement of our Welsh language skills.

Action 8: Increase use of Welsh language ICT resources and develop a friction-free experience for users

(Themes: technology and learning)

We will ensure that Welsh-speaking staff can access Welsh language interfaces of technology we use, without them having to request to do so. Expecting individual members of staff to request Welsh language ICT provision rather than have it proactively offered to them, will perpetuate the current situation we have: one in which most Welsh-speaking staff have their ICT interfaces in English - research in the field of behavioural sciences shows that humans tend to 'go with the flow' or with the default option presented to them (most software in the UK, out-of-the-box, defaults to English). Moving from this 'English as default' situation in ICT will give Welsh speaking staff a great deal more 'contact time' with the Welsh language, and will not affect the language of whatever content an individual staff member is working on at a given time. This will, of course, have no bearing on the ICT provision of those staff members who don't speak Welsh.

We will ensure that any digital applications developed or procured for internal staff use will automatically be available to staff bilingually wherever practicable. We will also embed advice on Welsh language requirements in the process of gaining approval for procurement of new digital services, for staff and for external users, through the Solutions Design Authority Board.

Action 9: Review how and why we use translation

(Themes: leadership, learning and technology)

Our Translation Service provides an invaluable service to the Welsh Government, and our obligations and ambitions in relation to the Welsh language would not be met without it. However, having a service of this kind means the Welsh language can be compartmentalised rather than mainstreamed. The specialist skills we have could be used, at least in part, to facilitate more use of Welsh by others across the organisation.

In order to increase our use of the Welsh language in the workplace, we will focus on developing new ways to assist people to produce bilingual text. Our intention is to make it easier to use the Welsh language and to produce relevant Welsh language material without always necessarily having to send work to translation services. This may involve, for example, the Translation Service providing more editorial services and fewer translation services.

We will also look at emerging translation technology and automation to ensure that all our translation activity – both internal, and outsourced – is undertaken in the most efficient way possible.

Action 10: Instigate pilot projects to consider how best to increase the use of day to day Welsh within the workplace across the Welsh Government

(Themes: leadership and technology)

A series of pilots will be devised, implemented and evaluated to consider how best to increase the use of the Welsh language within geographical locations and within teams or networks that already have a high proportion of staff who have Welsh language skills. As part of this initiative we will consider how to make the best use of those who already have Welsh language skills within the organisation, and to find ways of reducing barriers to using Welsh. This may

include matters such as the way in which responses to Senedd Questions and ministerial correspondence are commissioned and how we arrange our teams.

4. Process: statistical analysis and review

Trajectory to 2050: review and 5 year milestones

An important element of our review cycle over the 5 year periods up until 2050 will be statistical analysis. A model is being developed to better assess existing levels of Welsh language skills (looking for example at the demographic of those with skills, their grade and their location) and then to consider the extent of change required to reach the 2050 goal. The model will assess the upward trajectory we will need to follow between now and 2050. The starting point will be to establish a baseline by considering what would happen if there is no change to current practices and policies. This will underpin a tool that will assess the extent of improvement required to reach the goal. The tool will assess both the rate of improvement in learning (i.e. the rate at which progression to at least understanding Welsh will be needed) and the net increase in Welsh language skills needed between those leaving and joining the Welsh Government.

Currently, 23.6% of the Welsh Government's workforce can understand Welsh (Levels 3 to 5). At these levels a person has the ability to understand most or all work related conversations at least. In addition a further 10% are currently at Level 2 (which means they can understand basic conversations about everyday topics) and have the potential to progress to Level 3. The trajectory will assess progress to level 3 and above and the corresponding investment needed in Welsh language training to achieve that.

We will set targets for improving these figures based on the required trajectory. These will be reviewed at the end of each 5 year period in the run up to 2050.

Policy changes

Changes in HR policies will be needed to reflect the strategy and this will be

done by amending the specific policies that already exist, most notably on recruitment and training. In accordance with the principle of “mainstreaming” there is to be no stand-alone Welsh language policy and similarly this strategy forms part of the broader Welsh Government people strategy.

5. Background: Welsh language policy and legal context

History

Many of us are unfamiliar with the history of the Welsh language. This is relevant because events of the past set much of the context for what aim to do in the future.

The Welsh language emerged around 1500 years ago having evolved from the Brythonic language spoken across Britain. It was spoken by nearly all of the people of Wales until the middle of the 19th century, with the vast majority able to speak Welsh only. Despite Henry VIII’s “Laws in Wales” Acts of 1535 and 1542 prohibiting use of Welsh in the courts and requiring those holding public office in Wales to be able to speak English, English only become the majority language in Wales relatively recently. The 1911 census recorded a decline of those speaking the language to below 50% for the first time. Despite the lower proportion of Welsh speakers, increases in population also mean, however, that 1911 was a high point in the number of recorded speakers, at nearly a million people. There has been a steady decline ever since and according to the 2011 census the proportion of speakers in Wales had fallen to 19%.

After the Laws in Wales Acts, the official status of the Welsh language remained unchanged for four centuries. A petition, demanding equal status for the Welsh language, was launched during the 1938 National Eisteddfod. More than 250,000 signatures were gathered, and the principle was supported by 30 of 36 Welsh MPs. This eventually led to the partial repeal of the 1535 Act by Courts in Wales Act 1942. But it was not until the advent of the Welsh Office in the 1960s and the passing of the Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993 that any proactive action was taken to protect or promote the language.

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Statutory requirements

The 1967 Act provided only for an expansion of the circumstances in which Welsh could be used in the courts and to allow use of statutory forms in Welsh. Notably, however, it also repealed the provision of the Wales and Berwick Act of 1746 that had created a statutory definition of England that included Wales. It was not until the Welsh Language Act 1993 that more wide ranging policies were adopted. The 1993 Act, some of which is still in force, established the Welsh Language Board and provided that certain public bodies should give effect (“so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable”) to the principle that the Welsh and English languages should be treated equally in the conduct of public business in Wales. To further this, bodies were required to prepare Welsh language schemes setting out the steps the body will take in relation to the use of Welsh when providing services to the public.

Welsh language schemes continue to exist but are gradually being replaced by a Welsh language “Standards” system instigated by the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011. The 2011 Measure was significant as it gave the Welsh language official status and it is underpinned by the principle that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language. Standards specify requirements which must be met in relation to the Welsh language. They are, in effect, a series of rights relating to use of the language. The Standards apply, most notably, to providing services to the public, but they also apply to the development of public policy and the internal administration of public bodies. This includes requiring public bodies in Wales to have a policy on using Welsh internally “for the purpose of promoting and facilitating the use of the language”.

As a result of this legislative framework the Welsh Government now routinely provides information and services to the people of Wales in both English and Welsh. Operationally, the Welsh Government must have the capacity to comply with these statutory duties and the skills of our staff are vital to this.

Welsh language policy

The Welsh Government wants to do more to protect and promote the Welsh language across Wales. To achieve this aim the Welsh Government published a new Welsh language strategy in 2017: “Cymraeg 2050 – towards a million Welsh speakers”. An important element of the strategy relates to the workplace. Increased use of Welsh in the workplace and enhanced career opportunities that result from having Welsh language skills, are an essential part of the rationale for learning Welsh. As well as the strategy committing the Welsh Government to leading by example by promoting and facilitating increased use of Welsh by our own workforce, the Strategy goes on to say that:

“ “Strong and visible leadership is...required across all sectors to embed bilingualism as a natural part of the workplace – not only to ensure compliance with legislation, but to ensure a culture shift towards recognition of the benefits that an increasingly bilingual workforce can contribute within the economy. The workplace is central to our day-to-day lives, and provides an important context for an individual’s linguistic development...the workplace provides opportunities to use, practise and learn Welsh. We will therefore increase the emphasis on the workplace as a strategic location for promoting and facilitating an increased use of Welsh.” ”

This strong commitment is also mirrored in the political direction provided by the current First Minister, Mark Drakeford, in his manifesto to become leader of the Labour Party in Wales. The manifesto referred to his intention to:

“ “Mainstream the promotion and development of Welsh through all government activity, at a Welsh Government and local government level”. ”

This relates not only to our outward facing policy and services but also to how we work as an organisation.

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Wider context

The strategy also forms part of the Welsh Government's related, wider aspirations for its own workforce and for the people of Wales as a whole. A thriving Welsh language and cohesive communities are among our goals under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and changes to our National Curriculum should eventually ensure that 40% of our children are educated through the medium of Welsh, with the remainder also leaving school with high level Welsh language skills. These initiatives and how we develop our workforce (and the Welsh public service workforce more generally) are inter-related. The strategy forms part of our over-arching People Strategy which (among other things) will seek to ensure that we have a strong presence across Wales – reflecting the communities we serve – and a more cohesive and integrated approach to working across the public service in Wales.

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