

The legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision

May 2023



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The legislative framework that supports Welsh- medium education provision

May 2023



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCulture

Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:
Delyth Jewell MS**
Plaid Cymru



Hefin David MS
Welsh Labour



Alun Davies MS
Welsh Labour



Heledd Fychan MS
Plaid Cymru



Tom Giffard MS
Welsh Conservatives



Carolyn Thomas MS
Welsh Labour

The following members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee also participated in the inquiry and reported back to their Committee on a regular basis.



Sioned Williams MS
Plaid Cymru



Buffy Williams MS
Welsh Labour

The following Members attended as substitutes during this inquiry.



Altaf Hussain MS
Welsh Conservatives



Jenny Rathbone MS
Welsh Labour

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Chair's foreword

In 2017, the Welsh Government set an ambitious target to ensure that a million people will be able to speak Welsh by 2050. The education system is central to achieving this target - both in expanding the capacity of the Welsh-medium sector and improving young people's development of Welsh language skills in English-medium schools. The success of this work is underpinned by Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plans ("WESPs") were introduced to support the development of Welsh-medium education provision across Wales, providing a mechanism by which the Welsh Government can ensure local authorities work towards national objectives and targets. The previous Education Minister stated that "we need to play a long game to get a million speakers" and that Welsh in Education Strategic Plans are a long-term strategic tool for local authorities to help achieve the national target of a million speakers by 2050.¹

Our inquiry set out to investigate the Welsh Government's policy, legislative and financial support for the provision of Welsh language education.

The general feedback from stakeholders tells us that on the whole, that WESPs are a good thing, but like most things, they are not perfect. The changes that need to be introduced to improve WESPs vary significantly in nature, and some will need to be placed on a statutory footing.

The current process for monitoring and evaluating WESPs has to be strengthened. Given that WESPs are now on a ten-year cycle (rather than the previous three-year cycle), an evaluation of what additional measures for regular monitoring and evaluating of these plans is essential. Ten years without regular review is too long.

In addition, the key role of WESP Forums needs to be considered by the Welsh Government. These Fora provide important opportunities for the development of WESPs by local authorities and their stakeholders, but the variation in how they are run is concerning. We think the Welsh Government must review the role of these Fora, how they are constituted and explore ways to ensure better consistency in their work across Wales.

¹ Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) – 21 January 2021 (PDF 1.2MB)

It is important to note here too the integral role of organisations such as the Urdd and Mentrau Iaith in supporting the development and the delivery of Welsh language provision across Wales. Their work, in partnership with local authorities and schools, provide pupils with opportunities to use Welsh within school grounds but outside the classroom through sports and other activities. Ensuring continuous support and development of such provision is vital if the targets within Cymraeg 2050 are to be met.

Finally, the future success of WESPs is predicated on ensuring that there is a qualified workforce readily available. We heard of concerns that there are not enough staff to deliver Welsh- medium education, nor Welsh-medium teaching in the English medium sector. The Welsh Government has to invest substantially in upskilling the current teaching workforce, providing greater numbers of teachers, teaching assistants and lecturers with the opportunity to undertake the Sabbatical Scheme.

We are all aware of the disappointing Census results published at the end of 2022. Despite this, there is no need to despair. There is an opportunity now to introduce change. The recommendations set out in this report, should they be accepted by the Welsh Government, will drive forward efforts to develop a bilingual workforce. A workforce that will ensure that learners have access to high quality Welsh-medium education to provide them with opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills which they will hopefully go on to use in their everyday lives. The Welsh Government must now grasp the opportunity to make the necessary changes, for the better, through its forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill to ensure it makes important strides toward the 2050 target.

This inquiry was also the first, of hopefully many, inquiries undertaken jointly by Senedd Committees on matters of shared interests. The model chosen for this inquiry worked well and I am grateful to Members of both Committees for their input. Likewise, I would also like to thank all those who assisted with the inquiry by sharing their views and thoughts with the Committee.



Delyth Jewell MS
Committee Chair

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Government urgently commissions a rapid review of transport policies of each local authority in Wales to identify the areas which inhibit access to Welsh-medium education provision. The review should also recommend what support is required to address the issue in the short term and whether or not further primary legislation is required to fix it in the long term. Should the Welsh Government be of the view that the review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 is the most appropriate way of doing this, then it should take into account this issue.Page 23

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government work with key stakeholders to identify suitable measures that would improve existing arrangements for monitoring the progression of WESPs. This should include exploring the possibility of an organisation, independent from Government, to have a greater role in monitoring local authority WESP progress.....Page 30

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that forthcoming primary legislation on Welsh language education includes measures that will allow it to monitor the progress of local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. This should include measures that allow Welsh Ministers to intervene and take action, if required, where it is apparent local authorities have failed to meet their targets.Page 31

Recommendation 4. We recommend the development of a national framework to ensure a consistent national approach to Welsh language education planning and delivery.....Page 31

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Welsh Government undertakes a short review to identify the time periods within the 10-year cycle which require additional monitoring and targets. Once identified, the Welsh Government should consider how this can be accommodated within the appraisal method for progression made against WESPs. The short review should also consider whether these issues should be included in the Government’s forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill.Page 31

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Welsh Government review new measures for encouraging and supporting cultural change in local authorities towards the benefits of developing Welsh language education in their area. Following this review, the Welsh Government should consider which of these

functions should be placed on a statutory footing and included in their forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill.....Page 32

Recommendation 7. We recommend the Welsh Government maintains a dedicated Welsh-medium education capital fund within the Sustainable Communities for Learning budget, in addition to the support Welsh-medium projects receive from the general fund. Page 38

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the role of Fora in the process of developing and monitoring WESPs, and to assess the varying structures and impact of Fora across Wales..... Page 46

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Welsh Government place Welsh in Education Planning Forums on a statutory footing, ensuring each local authority in Wales has a Forum in place to advise and monitor the authority's WESP progress.Page 47

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Welsh Government develops a national framework for Welsh in Education Planning Forums, ensuring a consistent and purposeful structure across Wales.....Page 47

Recommendation 11. We recommend that the Welsh Government supports and facilitates closer working between local authorities and partners in the early-years and Post-16 sectors to develop Welsh language provision locally.....Page 47

Recommendation 12. We recommend that local authorities should be required to consult and collaborate with early-years and Post-16 education providers both within their local areas and across the region in the development of future Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.....Page 47

Recommendation 13. The Welsh Government, along with local authorities and key partners must develop and improve robust and effective data collection measures to support the development of a bilingual workforce.....Page 54

Recommendation 14. We also call on the Welsh Government to ensure that the nursery workforce is represented in the School Workforce Annual Census survey in future years to improve data collection and analysis of Welsh language skills across the pre-statutory sector.....Page 54

Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Welsh Government explores the feasibility of a Welsh-medium accreditation system for teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh. This would ensure that teachers have the skills to

teach through the medium of Welsh where the linguistic and cultural needs of each school or area are different. This should include the need to look at how courses are designed and how teachers are trained to teach Welsh in English medium settings. Page 55

Recommendation 16. We recommend that the Welsh Government along with key partners explore the potential to integrate elements of the Sabbatical Scheme into Initial Teacher Training programmes to immerse and upskill the Welsh language skills of trainee teachers..... Page 55

Recommendation 17. We recommend that the Welsh Government needs to invest substantially in upskilling the current teaching workforce, providing greater numbers of teachers, teaching assistants and lecturers with the opportunity to undertake the Sabbatical Scheme..... Page 55

Recommendation 18. We recommend that the Welsh Government should consider whether the Sabbatical Scheme could be expanded to some early-years practitioners in Wales supporting Welsh-medium provision in the sector, or to promote and expand the Learn Welsh Scheme for Early Years Education and Childcare through Dysgu Cymraeg..... Page 55

1. Introduction

Background

1. It has been ten years since Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (“WESPs”) became operational, and placed on a statutory footing via provisions in the **School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013**. The Welsh Government said in guidance issued to local authorities in 2021 that:

“Our contributions today, and your contributions in implementing your Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) over the next 10 years, will help us get to a million Welsh speakers”²

2. In 2017, the Welsh Government set out its ambition to increase the number of Welsh speakers to a million by 2050, along with an increase in its daily use. The proposal was that the education sector would play a pivotal role in creating the bulk of new Welsh speakers. Data from the Welsh language use survey 2019-20³ found that children aged 3-15 years old were much more likely to have learnt Welsh at school or nursery compared to older age groups, who were more likely to have learnt at home.

3. The Welsh language strategy – Cymraeg 2050⁴ – set challenging targets for the long and short-term. This includes increasing the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22 per cent in 2017 to 30 per cent by 2031, and then 40 per cent by 2050. It also seeks to transform how Welsh is taught to all learners (including those in English-medium and dual-stream schools), with a target of 70 per cent of learners reporting by 2050 that they can speak Welsh when they leave school.

4. Such transformation requires a substantial programme of expansion in Welsh-medium education provision, driven by local authorities via their WESPs, as well as considerable changes to the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools.

5. On 22 November 2021, the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru published **The Co-operation Agreement**. This document sets out policy areas in which the

² Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) - 21 January 2021 (PDF 1.2MB)

³ Welsh Government: [Welsh language use in Wales \(initial findings\): July 2019 to March 2020](#)

⁴ Welsh Government: [Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy](#) – 10 July 2017

Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru will work together over a three-year period. The Agreement gives more detail on the existing Welsh Government's Programme for Government commitment to introduce a Welsh Language Education Bill. The Agreement explains that it will: "strengthen Welsh in Education Strategic Plans; set new ambitions and incentives to expand the proportion of the education workforce who can teach and work through the Welsh language; establish and implement a single continuum of Welsh language learning; enable existing schools to move into a higher Welsh language category and incentivise the increase of Welsh medium provision in all education settings".⁵

Cross-Committee working

6. Responsibilities related to Welsh language education fall under the remits of both the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee and the Children, Young People, and Education Committee. As such, it was agreed to explore ways to undertake a joint-inquiry on WESPs as it is an important issue for both committees.⁶

7. Welsh in Education Strategic Plans was raised as a priority by stakeholders of both Committees during exercises to inform priorities in summer and autumn 2021. Both Committees have also previously agreed to commit to joint-working with other Committees on issues of shared interests.

8. Following discussions between the two Committees, it was agreed that that the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee would lead the inquiry by considering oral and written evidence submitted. Rapporteurs from the Children, Young People, and Education Committee have participated in the oral evidence sessions as full Members of the Committee and reported back to their Committee on the inquiry's progress. It was agreed that the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee would be responsible for producing a report and making recommendations. The rapporteurs have contributed to this process and reported back to the Children, Young People, and Education Committee where required.

⁵ Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru: [The Co-operation Agreement](#) – December 2021

⁶ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee meeting minutes – 16 March 2022](#)

Terms of reference

9. The terms of reference for the inquiry were published on Tuesday 12 April 2022. The terms of reference asked stakeholders:

- Has the current statutory framework for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) improved since the recommendations published in December 2015 in the report of the ‘Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans’ by the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the Fourth Senedd?
- To what extent do Welsh in Education Strategic Plans contribute to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government’s Welsh Language Strategy – Cymraeg 2050?
- How are local authorities responding to changes to guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision, and are they meeting the Welsh Government’s ambition to increase Welsh-medium provision in English-medium and dual-stream schools?
- What challenges lie ahead in the planning and development of Welsh-medium provision, ahead of a proposed Welsh Language Education Bill?

Evidence gathering

10. We ran a public consultation between 12 April to 24 June 2022. We received 10 written responses to this consultation. We also considered oral evidence from a range of organisations in four separate evidence sessions with stakeholders between 6 July 2022 and 13 October 2022, and an evidence session with the Minister for Education and Welsh Language on 17 November 2022. An outline of both the written and oral evidence considered for this inquiry can be found in annexes 1 and 2 of this report.

11. We also hosted a focus group with representatives who are active in supporting the development of local authority WESPs on 20 October 2022.

12. Following the publication of Census 2021 data regarding the number of Welsh speakers in Wales, we decided to issue a further call for evidence.⁷ On 14 December 2022, we asked those who had already given evidence to the Committee to share their views with us on the implications of the Census data for

⁷ Committee consultation: [Implications of the Census data for the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision](#)

the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision. This closed on 16 January 2023. An outline of the responses received is outlined in Annex 3.

13. We would like to thank every individual and organisation who took the time to contribute to our inquiry.

2. Policy and legislative context

Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)

14. A Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) is a local authority's programme to improve planning and development of Welsh-medium education provision in its area. The Plan should also set out how it will seek to improve standards in Welsh-medium provision and the teaching of Welsh.

15. WESPs became operational in 2012, and placed on a statutory footing a year later via provisions in the ***School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013***. They are a mechanism by which the Welsh Government can ensure local authorities are working towards national objectives and targets. The legislation makes provisions for the Welsh Ministers to:

- approve a Plan as submitted;
- approve a Plan with modifications; or
- reject a Plan and prepare another Plan which is then to be treated as the authority's approved Plan.

16. Originally, Plans were set for three-year cycles, and reviewed annually. However, given the Welsh Government's objective to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050, the WESP cycle has been changed to a ten year cycle. The previous Education Minister, Kirsty Williams MS, stated in the Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans:

*"I recognise the need to give these developments time to settle in. That's why I support the long term planning of Welsh in education through WESPs - a 10 year planning cycle. We need to play a long game to get to a million speakers - we need to be strategic. We need to know where we're going and little steps will get us there."*⁸

17. Local authorities are expected to prepare WESPs "based on ambitious strategic targets, calculated using the methodology we've [Welsh Government] developed"⁹. The targets correspond with those in Cymraeg 2050, with the

⁸ Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) – 21 January 2021 (PDF 1.2MB)

⁹ Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) – 21 January 2021 (PDF 1.2MB)

Minister at the time noting that she expected to reach the milestone of 30 per cent of learners in Welsh-medium education by 2032.

2017 Rapid Review of WESPs

18. In March 2017, the then Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language, Alun Davies AM, announced a “rapid review of the current system for Welsh language education planning”¹⁰. The key aim of the review was to make recommendations on how to develop the WESPs. The review would also look at individual local authority plans which had been submitted at the time.

19. The report’s key findings¹¹ found that there was a need to “agree on activities and criteria at a local authority level which are then driven and monitored nationally”. The report went on to note:

“If Welsh Government decides to set national targets and criteria in order to reach the goal in 2050, then similar targets and criteria must be agreed for each local authority across Wales.”

20. A total of 18 recommendations were made, including:

- Creating a more open and challenging relationship between the Welsh Government and all stakeholders in the development of the WESPs especially in setting targets and agreeing outcomes.
- To review the existing outcomes and agree the most appropriate and relevant outcomes for the next round of WESPs to ensure an effective contribution towards the Government’s ambition for 2050.
- Simplify the process of linguistic categorisation for schools.
- Urgent planning and action to increase the number of teachers trained to teach through the medium of Welsh.
- There should be a legislative framework which provides support, advice and constructive feedback to organisations as they work towards meeting any legal duties relating to planning education (whether in the form of WESPs or otherwise).

¹⁰ Record of Proceedings: Plenary (Fifth Senedd) – 14 March 2017, paragraph 269

¹¹ Welsh Government: Rapid review of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (2017 to 2020) – 4 August 2017 (PDF 420KB)

Preparing and submitting WESPs

21. Local authorities need to take account of a number of factors during the development of their plans. For example, there are several statutory duties and obligations on authorities to consider, including:

- The **Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008** and Statutory Guidance¹² (currently under review¹³);
- 5-year Promotion Strategies made under the *Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015*¹⁴;
- School organisation¹⁵ and school admission¹⁶ codes;
- **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018**; and
- Local Development Plans¹⁷.

22. Local authorities will also need to consider education reforms, such as the new Curriculum for Wales, workforce development and post-16 provision in their area. It is expected that the Cymraeg 2050 milestones would provide a key driver¹⁸ for the plans over the next ten years.

23. The **Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019** (as amended¹⁹) make provision for the preparation and submission of ten year Plans for approval by the Welsh Ministers no later than 31 January 2022. The first ten year Plans will commence on 1 September 2022 and expire on 31 August 2032.

24. Local authorities are expected to use the Welsh Government's methodology for calculating the ten year target, which is set out in the guidance for local

¹² Welsh Government: **Learner travel: statutory provision and operational guidance** – November 2014

¹³ **Letter from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to the Childre You Committee** – 20 January 2023

¹⁴ Welsh Language Commissioner: **Promotion standards: assessing the achievement of the 5-year strategies (Effective practice guidance document)** – April 2021

¹⁵ Welsh Government: **School organisation code** – 1 November 2018

¹⁶ Welsh Government: **School admissions code** – 15 July 2013

¹⁷ Planning Aid Wales: **Local Development Plans**

¹⁸ Welsh Government: **Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans** – 21 January 2021 (PDF 1.2MB)

¹⁹ The National Archives: **The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020**

authorities²⁰. The methodology provides for a lower and upper target that each local authority is expected to achieve in terms of the number of Year 1 learners taught through the medium of Welsh.

25. The WESPs should also be arranged around seven key outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** More nursery children/three year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh;
- **Outcome 2:** More reception class children/five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh;
- **Outcome 3:** More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another;
- **Outcome 4:** More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh;
- **Outcome 5:** More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school;
- **Outcome 6:** An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018; and
- **Outcome 7:** Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

School categories according to Welsh-medium provision

26. On 16 December 2021, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language published new guidance for categorising schools according to Welsh-medium provision. The aim is to ensure greater numbers of school aged learners have the “opportunity of becoming bilingual citizens”²¹. As part of the Cymraeg 2050 ambition and delivering a new Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government

²⁰ Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) - 21 January 2021, section 2.2 (pages 10-13) and Appendix 2 (pages 36-43) (PDF 1.2MB)

²¹ Welsh Government: [Written Statement: Guidance on School categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) - 16 December 2021

wants to see more schools “move along the language continuum by increasing the amount of Welsh offered”²².

27. The key area of change is a simplification of the categories by reducing the number of categories that define the Welsh language provision in a school to 3 in the primary sector and 3 in the secondary sector:

- English-medium (Category 1);
- Dual language (Category 2); and
- Welsh-medium (Category 3 and 3P).

28. At the heart of the new arrangements is the principle that ‘no school should offer less Welsh-medium provision in the future’. The decision to change the guidance followed the publication of an **Independent Review Report to re-define schools according to their Welsh medium education provision**. The Report made a total of ten recommendations.

Previous inquiries

29. In 2015, the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the Fourth Assembly undertook an **inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans**.

30. The Committee’s report noted that despite initial optimism following the introduction of WESPs in 2012, many stakeholders were left disappointed by the lack of impact they had in practice. There was also growing concern that the WESPs were “not fit for purpose”, and that nothing heard as part of the inquiry “suggested that the Welsh Government and local authorities are working together sufficiently”.²³

31. The Committee noted at the time that it was unclear how Welsh Government intended to support the “improved planning action” that was necessary to meet its targets, and that when local authorities fail to meet the duties, “intervention by Ministers will be necessary”.²⁴

²² Welsh Government: **Written Statement: Guidance on School categories according to Welsh-medium provision** – 16 December 2021

²³ Children, Young People and Education Committee (Fourth Assembly) report: **Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)** – December 2015

²⁴ Children, Young People and Education Committee (Fourth Assembly) report: **Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)** – December 2015

32. The Committee made 17 recommendations for the Welsh Government, including:

- Welsh Government must ensure that WMES [Welsh-medium Education Strategy – *now replaced by Cymraeg 2050 and the **Welsh in Education Action Plan***] targets are reflected in WESPs and be more robust in its approval of WESPs to ensure they reflect Welsh Government’s ambitions;
- Review the process for changing a school’s category with the aim of simplifying it;
- The Welsh Government should be clearer with local authorities about its expectations in relation to the promotion of growth of Welsh-medium education so that all local authorities buy into the Welsh Government’s ambitions;
- The Minister should use the powers available to him under existing legislation to intervene where local authorities are failing to deliver their WESPs;
- Welsh Government should outline the reasons for the deficit between the percentage of Welsh-medium places available under Flying Start and its target for 25 per cent of seven year olds to be taught through the medium of Welsh by 2015 (and 30 per cent by 2020). Welsh Government should explain how it will address the deficit.

33. The Welsh Government responded to the recommendations on 9 November 2016²⁵.

34. Most, if not all the recommendations were accepted or acted upon, although some are only now coming into fruition, including the changes to guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision, announced in December 2021 by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS²⁶.

²⁵ [Letter from the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language: Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) – 9 November 2016 (PDF 746KB)

²⁶ Welsh Government [Written Statement: Guidance on School categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) – 16 December 2021

Stakeholders' views on the current statutory framework

35. Witnesses we spoke to during the inquiry were, on the whole, in agreement that the WESP framework had improved significantly since it was first established in 2012. Improvements noted by witnesses include more realistic targets, clearer guidance and a 10-year cycle which reduces the planning burden on local authorities.

36. Estyn (the education and training inspectorate for Wales) told us that presenting plans over a ten-year period allowed for better planning²⁷ by local authorities. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) agreed, telling us that councils are generally happy with the realistic targets and that their specificity allows for tracking progress over the longer period²⁸.

37. However, it was also clear that the framework, whilst much improved, was not functioning as effectively as it could be. The Welsh Language Commissioner noted that not all of Aled Roberts' recommendations following the Rapid Review had been implemented, but that it was still:

*"Far too early to draw any clear conclusions on the extent to which the new framework will contribute to the outcomes and targets of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy."*²⁹

38. One teaching union, the NASUWT, was of the view that either the WESP system is somewhat deficient, or that procedures at a local authority level aren't effective. Among reasons provided include the varying quality of each authority's WESPs; different starting points for each school; and reductions in support to schools to deliver WESP requirements.³⁰ Another teaching union, UCAC, told us that while it accepted the situation on the ground was improving, there is a need for clearer and stronger structures, as well as better use of data on a local level.³¹

39. Most stakeholders were of the view that what's required is a process to strengthen and refine the framework, as opposed to wholesale changes. The Welsh Language Commissioner alluded to the fact that the framework isn't, as it

²⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 6 July 2022, paragraph 18

²⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 230

²⁹ Consultation response: [WESP08 Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (PDF 767KB)

³⁰ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 16

³¹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 11

stands, complete, and that a Welsh Language Education Bill is required to build on positive developments over the past decade and strengthen elements of the strategy.³² Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG) told us that:

“At the moment, legislation with regard to education is all over the shop. We need one central point, one central piece of legislation that ensures that all of these challenges can be faced, and that we ensure that Welsh education is accessible in the local area for every child, from the age of five to 19.”³³

40. In written evidence³⁴, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS reflected on the recommendations made by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in the Fourth Senedd, and subsequent Rapid Review undertaken by Aled Roberts in 2017. One of the recommendations of the Rapid Review was to “examine the legislation underpinning Welsh in education planning”. A WESP Advisory Board was established to address the recommendations. This led to new Regulations (The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019). Among the changes were:

- Removing the duty to carry out a Welsh-medium parental demand assessment;
- Extending the duration of a WESP from 3 to 10 year planning cycle;
- Strengthening links between Welsh-medium childcare provision and Welsh-medium education setting.

41. The Minister also told us in writing that the Welsh Government has committed to introduce a Welsh Language Education Bill in this Senedd term, noting that the purpose of the Bill will be to “strengthen and increase Welsh language education provision across Wales to meet our *Cymraeg 2050* targets”.

42. During our scrutiny session, the Minister told us that, while WESPs have been strengthened recently, there “is scope to strengthen even further what we have as a legislative framework in terms of Welsh-medium education. So, we have an opportunity in the Bill to do that, but, at the moment, we’re looking at the details

³² Consultation response: [WESP08 Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (PDF 767KB)

³³ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 190

³⁴ Response and written evidence from the [Welsh Government on the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision](#) – 4 November 2022

of what we're going to consult on".³⁵ We discuss this further in chapter 3 of our report ("Developing and delivering WESPs").

43. While the Minister was unable to comment on the specifics of the forthcoming Bill, he did note that he wants every part of the education system working towards increasing the number of Welsh speakers.

44. With regards to the current framework, the Minister told us that a lot of previous weaknesses have been fixed in the current system. This includes moving from a demand assessment to proactive planning, and better collaboration at the local level with local authorities designing WESPs with partners. However, the Minister recognised that there is more that could be done, such as aligning WESPs with other government plans and capital investment in schools.³⁶

45. The Minister also told us that one challenge of the current model is the geographic barriers to learner travel. The **Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008** requires local authorities to make specific provisions. The Minister said that:

*"Some have changed their transport policies so they perhaps don't support the regional picture in terms of education, if you like, even though they do support the local plans that they have. So, that's one element, perhaps, that can be challenging."*³⁷

Our view

46. As outlined, most witnesses are of the view that the current system is an improvement on the previous WESP framework, but that it requires further refinement and amendments. We heard from the Minister that many of the weaknesses identified within the system have been fixed. This includes moving from a demand led assessment of Welsh-medium education need to a proactive planning system on a ten-year cycle, as well as improving collaboration between local partners. Such changes are most certainly welcome.

47. A WESP is, at its most fundamental a local authority's strategy to improve the planning and development of Welsh-medium education in that area. We agree

³⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 14

³⁶ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraphs 21-22

³⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 33

that a WESP should focus on local needs and provision, and reflect the views of the local population.

48. However, we are also of the view that the delivery of Welsh-medium education in some cases also requires a much broader regional approach and collaboration. The two key issues that clearly require regional cooperation are matters arising from the implementation of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and access to post-16 education.

49. The Minister has recognised the geographic barriers and challenges of the current framework, but the fact that some learners' access to Welsh-medium education is inhibited due to local transport policies is of concern to us. The lack of transport provision and the distance to travel may discourage some parents and children from attending a Welsh-medium school, with an inevitable impact on the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 targets. We strongly believe that no parent or guardian should have to make decisions about the language of a child's education based on the availability of school transport or the distance to that provision from their home. We acknowledge the Minister's comments regarding the challenges around this, but call on the Welsh Government to review and rectify it as soon as possible. Awaiting for changes to the framework or for the implementation of primary legislation alone to address these issues, will be a wait too long for many learners.

50. We believe the Welsh Government should urgently commission a review to identify which local authorities are affected by this issue and how many learners are impacted. The review should also recommend what support is required to fix the issue in the short to medium term. We realise that a major review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 is currently being considered and believe that this should either include these issues or they should otherwise be considered in their own right.

51. Rectifying issues related to learner travel will also go some way to helping mitigate issues related to access to further education, given that many colleges now span several local authority areas. This work in turn will help prepare the ground for forthcoming primary legislation on Welsh-medium education.

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Government urgently commissions a rapid review of transport policies of each local authority in Wales to identify the areas which inhibit access to Welsh-medium education provision. The review should also recommend what support is required to address the issue in the short term and whether or not further primary legislation is required to fix it

in the long term. Should the Welsh Government be of the view that the review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 is the most appropriate way of doing this, then it should take into account this issue.

3. Developing and delivering WESPs

53. There are a number of factors associated with ensuring that the WESP framework works effectively. This section explores these factors.

Developing WESPs

54. The variation in standard and quality of the WESPs is still a significant issue according to witnesses, and raises questions about expectations on local authorities within the policy and legislative framework. While there was some criticism aimed at the framework itself, there was also criticism from some stakeholders of the local authorities themselves.

55. UCAC told us that that some local authorities do not sufficiently plan ahead, with WESPs often emphasising “what they hope to deliver”³⁸ rather than what they need to do.

56. The Welsh Language Commissioner felt that the framework had led to more ambitious and far-reaching strategic plans, but that there were obvious weaknesses in many of the draft plans at the time,³⁹ a view supported by the Coleg Cymraeg. The Coleg Cymraeg went on to state that one of the biggest weaknesses is that plans simply promise to undertake analysis work and planning, rather than undertaking it as part of the WESP process.⁴⁰ Welsh Government guidance⁴¹ around this is clear, with the Coleg Cymraeg noting that it raises serious questions about accountability arrangements.

57. On the other hand, NASUWT did have some sympathy for local authorities, although accepting that the variation in quality is an issue. As outlined in the previous chapter, it stated that authorities start their journey from different places, and that a stronger national overview is required to enable the Welsh Government to “see where in the nation the resources are most needed”.⁴²

³⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 23

³⁹ Consultation response: [WESP08 Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (PDF 767KB)

⁴⁰ Consultation response: [WESP07 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol](#) (Welsh only) (PDF 562KB)

⁴¹ Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#) – 21 January 2021 (PDF 1.2MB)

⁴² Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 77

Leadership and culture

58. Another area touched upon during oral evidence was the culture and political desire within some local authorities to fully progress and implement the approved WESPs.

59. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol noted that there are some positive signs that the revised framework has had a positive impact on WESP planning across local authorities compared to the past. However, the Coleg Cymraeg also questioned what happens when ambitious plans set out in the WESP “hits up against other priorities in a local authority”⁴³. It isn’t clear to the Coleg at present whether the culture has changed sufficiently to ensure that the general framework that supports the aims in the Plans would withstand a deviation in local priorities.

60. Some stakeholders also noted the potential for additional hurdles to effective implementation of WESPs locally. Dyfodol i’r laith stated its concerns about education leaders within local authorities:

“I’m concerned about the influence of directors of education or leaders of education in various counties on the whole process. If they’re supportive of the Welsh language, then the plans are implemented well; if they are not as supportive—and we in Swansea have had some great examples of those who aren’t as supportive—then the process can be sluggish and very difficult indeed.”⁴⁴

61. Dyfodol called for ensuring that WESPs are central to the whole education policy of a county, which it considers necessary, so that the “whims of individual officers don’t have such a great influence”.⁴⁵ RhAG made similar observations, telling us of the need for the Welsh language to be:

⁴³ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 87

⁴⁴ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 251

⁴⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 262

“at the heart of the plans of all our local authorities, and not some kind of bolt-on or add-on. The plans need to be at the heart of the education offer of every local authority.”⁴⁶

62. The Minister told us that progress is being made across different WESPs. The Minister also said at the time that he’s in the process of meeting with every local authority to re-emphasise his expectations in terms of the WESPs. He told us that:

“At present, I don’t have any reason to think that local authorities won’t respond positively to the things that they’ve agreed to do in the WESPs. They’re 10-year plans, of course, for the first time, so, certainly, things will happen in the meantime that will change the context and will bring challenges.”⁴⁷

Ten year cycle

63. There is general support for moving the WESPs from a three-year cycle to one over a period of ten years. This allows local authorities to plan over the longer term. However, there were calls to ensure that a robust system for monitoring and assessing WESP implementation is in place moving forward.

64. Cymdeithas yr Iaith had concerns that ten years is too long a period of time without robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure local authority accountability and progress, noting:

“There is no statutory force behind these plans. I think we’d need stronger and clearer leadership from the Welsh Government, and I think as well we need to ensure that there’s a review system for these WESPs, not by Welsh Government officials, but those who have the skills to do that, namely, Estyn.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 190

⁴⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 65

⁴⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 163

65. Meanwhile Dyfodol i'r laith were keen to see short, medium and longer-term targets included within the WESPs, with short term targets of five years and longer-term targets for 20 years.⁴⁹

66. Local government noted that a period of ten years increases the risk of 'slippage' with achieving the targets. Progress it stated, isn't linear, with more progress in some years over others. As a result, the need for monitoring is essential.⁵⁰ This was a view expressed by a number of stakeholders.

67. The Minister stated in his written evidence that all 22 Plans received in January 2022 for assessment included "a clear commitment to the ten-year target proposed by the Welsh Government".⁵¹ This is the first time, he noted, that authorities have prepared Plans based on Welsh Government targets as opposed to their own. Nevertheless, the Minister concedes that some Plans required "more input than others". The Minister goes on to note that the Welsh Government has set "clear expectations for local authorities in meeting their ten-year targets".

Monitoring and accountability of the implementation of WESPs

68. Local authorities have a legal duty to submit annual review reports to Welsh Ministers on the progress and steps made during that period. The Minister noted in his written response to the Committee inquiry that he expects local authorities to submit an action plan for the first five-years of the Plan, and this will be monitored annually. The Welsh Government's written evidence states that the regulations enable WESPs to be reviewed and replaced within the ten-year period "if appropriate progress is not being made...enabling a more responsive approach to the process of monitoring and reviewing the Plan".⁵²

69. RhAG wanted to see greater flexibility, honesty and courage from local authorities to revise the WESPs as and when required, but is already hearing the narrative "it isn't in the WESP".⁵³

70. Cymdeithas yr Iaith believes however that the WESPs system has failed, and called for "stronger and clearer leadership from Welsh Government" and action plans from local authorities. Cymdeithas yr Iaith said that a review system for

⁴⁹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 208

⁵⁰ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 247

⁵¹ [Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government](#) – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

⁵² [Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government](#) – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

⁵³ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 212

WESPs is required and should be undertaken by Estyn, not Welsh Government officials.⁵⁴

71. The question of whether there should be an external body that monitors the progression of WESPs also arose during our evidence session with Estyn where they told us that there is potential for the inspectorate to contribute to this work. We were told that they [Estyn] already have “associate inspectors” in local authorities in Wales, and that there may be opportunities for looking at annual reports. However such work would require additional resources made available to Estyn and further clarity on their role, possibly through their remit letter.⁵⁵

72. Should local authorities fail to achieve the aims of their WESPs, the Minister told us that:

“...there will be discussions with the local authorities to ensure that more progress is made in the plan. If that doesn't happen, there will be a requirement from me to present a new plan. If that doesn't happen, we can't force local authorities to do that.”⁵⁶

73. The Minister told us that the legal structure is clear if local authorities don't adhere to their responsibilities to consider the impacts on Welsh-medium education when developing education plans. This includes a “risk that the plans that they have will face a legal barrier in terms of them progressing.”⁵⁷

Our view

74. The development and delivery of a WESP is a complex process with a number of interdependent factors relying on their success.

Monitoring and reviewing in a ten year cycle

75. Unlike the predecessor framework, the current WESP framework requires local authorities to plan their Welsh-medium education provision over a 10-year period. As part of this process, there is a duty for local authorities to submit an

⁵⁴ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 163

⁵⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 6 July 2022, paragraph 91

⁵⁶ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 93

⁵⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraphs 99 and 101

annual report to the Welsh Government on its progress against their WESPs. While there was general support from stakeholders for moving from a three-year to a 10-year cycle, there were a variety of concerns reported to us regarding this. This includes calls for a stronger process for monitoring and assessing the implementation of WESPs.

76. We are of the view that the current processes for reviewing and monitoring WESPs seems inadequate, and that powers available to the Welsh Ministers are limited. The Minister told us that even following intervention by the Welsh Government, Ministers are unable “to force local authorities” to do what is required. We think the current framework leaves the Welsh Government somewhat toothless as a result.

77. The Minister indicated in his oral evidence that the Welsh Government was considering whether to address this through the forthcoming Bill⁵⁸, although when questioned further, declined to give any further details other than to say consideration and discussions were taking place⁵⁹.

78. We are of the view that there needs to be a suite of measures that will allow the Welsh Government to regularly measure the progress of WESPs, and if required, intervene and make changes. The Welsh Government should work with local government, education unions and education representative bodies to identify suitable measures to improve the arrangements in place for monitoring the progression made by local authorities in their WESPs. We heard during evidence that there is scope for a body like Estyn to undertake some of this work, however this would require further consideration than has been done within this inquiry.

79. Given the current framework doesn’t provide the necessary powers required, we recommend that the forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill places these measures on a statutory footing. We think that placing these measures in law would provide better clarity to all stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of WESPs.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government work with key stakeholders to identify suitable measures that would improve existing arrangements for monitoring the progression of WESPs. This should include

⁵⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraphs 16, 76, 85 and 95

⁵⁹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 136

exploring the possibility of an organisation, independent from Government, to have a greater role in monitoring local authority WESP progress.

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that forthcoming primary legislation on Welsh language education includes measures that will allow it to monitor the progress of local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. This should include measures that allow Welsh Ministers to intervene and take action, if required, where it is apparent local authorities have failed to meet their targets.

Recommendation 4. We recommend the development of a national framework to ensure a consistent national approach to Welsh language education planning and delivery.

80. We agree with most stakeholders in that the 10-year cycle is to be welcomed, but we also share concerns that this is a long period for implementation. As discussed in this chapter, while there is general support for the new 10-year cycle, it does have its potential pitfalls. Local government told us that such cycles are at a risk of “slippage”, while another witness told us there should be regular targets set to monitor progress.

81. As such we think that a short review is required to identify the time periods within the WESP cycle that require additional monitoring and targets. Once these have been recognised, the Welsh Government should consider how the current WESP appraisal method can be changed to include these. The review should also consider which of these changes should be included in primary legislation.

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Welsh Government undertakes a short review to identify the time periods within the 10-year cycle which require additional monitoring and targets. Once identified, the Welsh Government should consider how this can be accommodated within the appraisal method for progression made against WESPs. The short review should also consider whether these issues should be included in the Government’s forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill.

Leadership and culture

82. It was clear from our evidence sessions with stakeholders that while there has been progress of late, there are still concerns about whether there’s been enough of a change with regards to leadership in local authorities in how they treat WESPs. The Minister told us at the time he was in the process of meeting every local authority to emphasise expectations with regards to WESPs.

83. We think that the Welsh Government should review what else it can do to encourage and support cultural change in some local authorities towards the benefits of developing Welsh-medium provision in their area. This could include facilitating better sharing of good practice from other local authorities or through regional consortia. It could also include providing additional support via targeted funding for “quick wins” in areas that need greater development of provision.. Following such a review, the Welsh Government should consider whether any new functions should be placed on a statutory footing and included in their forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill.

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Welsh Government review new measures for encouraging and supporting cultural change in local authorities towards the benefits of developing Welsh language education in their area. Following this review, the Welsh Government should consider which of these functions should be placed on a statutory footing and included in their forthcoming Welsh Language Education Bill.

4. Capital funding

84. Capital funding is key to any programme that seeks to develop and increase educational provision. As such, the success of the WESPs are similarly dependent on sufficient capital funding streams. Sustainable Communities for Learning (formerly called 21st Century Schools) is the way Welsh Government provides capital funding for major school projects (new builds and major refurbishments or extensions), which includes Welsh-medium schools. Creating closer links between targets in the WESPs and capital and grant funding, specifically in relation to the Sustainable Communities for Learning funding stream, is an area that requires further attention by the Welsh Government.

Clarity and coordination of funding

85. The Committee heard that local authorities cannot always commit to longer-term developments as they are heavily reliant on Welsh Government funding and approval. Local authorities in written evidence called for funding streams and associated guidance to be:

“aligned with the Welsh Government framework and legislation and its timeline for the WESP. This would assist in long-term planning and would allay any uncertainty.”⁶⁰

86. Local authorities also sought greater clarity on the “sources of finance and the financial mechanisms available to support the implementation of the WESPs”. They noted that there was “too much ambiguity regarding the various grants and precisely how they may be used in support of Welsh in Education”.⁶¹

87. Bringing together funding sources is important for the delivery of WESPs according to the Welsh Language Commissioner’s Office, who noted that:

“we need co-ordinated funding arrangements, that is, to ensure that the Welsh Government funding facilitates its policies. And what that means is that the capital funding system should support the WESPs. The ultimate destination in that regard is that there should be no new developments without them aligning with the local WESP. Legislation might be needed to

⁶⁰ Consultation response: [WESP16 Welsh Local Government Association \(WLGA\) and Association of Directors of Education in Wales \(ADEW\)](#) (PDF 3MB)

⁶¹ Consultation response: [WESP16 Welsh Local Government Association \(WLGA\) and Association of Directors of Education in Wales \(ADEW\)](#) (PDF 3MB)

ensure that that happens, but that is what does need to happen to ensure that the funding and the policy are co-ordinated.”⁶²

88. In addition to this, there were calls for a more coherent and sustainable funding system. This was a view broadly shared by the Welsh Language Commissioner, RhAG and local authorities themselves.

89. The Minister told us of steps he had already taken to improve alignment of the WESPs with Welsh Government funding programmes, highlighting a:

“more flexible method now of investing through the capital programme, through sustainable communities for learning, so that authorities can develop plans more swiftly, if that aligns with their Welsh in education strategic plans. That provides that newer flexibility that is to be welcomed. The new nine-year plans that are to be introduced by authorities will align with the 10-year WESP period and, therefore⁶³, make it easier for the two plans to be aligned in general.”⁶⁴

90. The Minister also noted that additional capital funding has been provided specifically for the development of Welsh-medium provision. This funding, which is in addition to the general capital programme for building schools is 100 per cent funded by the Welsh Government and amounts to £112 million since 2018. The Minister’s written evidence said that the first £76 million of this will create over 3,700 additional childcare and school places, and 285 places in additional late immersion centres or units.⁶⁵

91. We asked Senedd Research to provide information on Welsh Government funding for major capital projects in schools for the Welsh-medium and English-medium sectors respectively. This is summarised in the bullet points and the infographic below. Details are provided for both Band A of the 21st Century Schools Programme, which ran between 2014/15 and 2018/19 and Band B of the current Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, which began in 2019 and is scheduled to run until 2024. The research found that:

⁶² Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 245

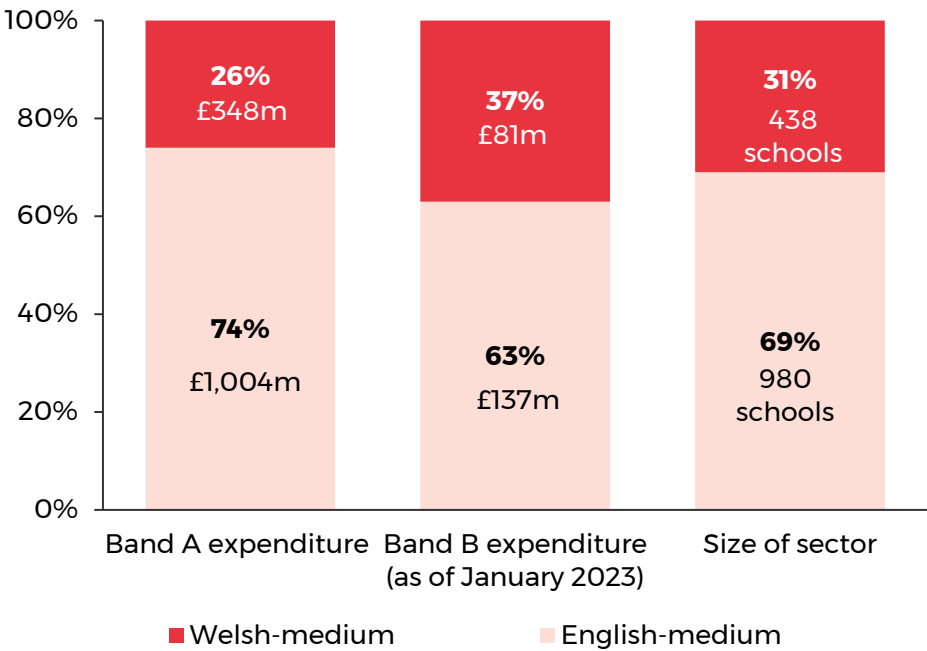
⁶³ Record of Proceedings: Plenary – 31 January 2023 paragraphs 339-350

⁶⁴ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 111

⁶⁵ [Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government](#) – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

- 26 per cent of the expenditure on Band A was spent on Welsh-medium schools, whilst 74 per cent was spent on English-medium schools.
- 37 per cent of the expenditure on Band B to date has been spent on Welsh-medium schools, whilst 63 per cent has been spent on English-medium schools.
- For context, 31 per cent of schools in Wales are Welsh-medium and 69 per cent are English-medium (as of January 2023).⁶⁶
- There is also a separate Welsh-medium Capital Grant, which wholly supports Welsh-medium settings (£112m has been allocated since 2018).⁶⁷

Figure 1: Expenditure on 21st Century Schools / Sustainable Communities for Learning programme by language-medium sector (as of January 2023)



* The data is as of January 2023 and for Band A and Band B refers to completed projects only, while data for the Welsh-medium capital grant includes approved but not yet completed projects. Note that spending on FE colleges and Special schools, as well as projects that included both English-medium and Welsh-medium schools, under the programme has been disregarded for the purposes of these calculations.

⁶⁶ Welsh Government, [Address list of schools](#)

⁶⁷ Note that Welsh Government funding for Band A projects had to be 50:50 match funded by local authorities, whereas the Welsh Government contribution rate for Band B projects is 65 per cent (with higher rates of 75 per cent for special schools and 85 per cent for schools with a religious character). The Welsh Government meets 100 per cent of the costs of projects supported under the Welsh-medium Capital Grant.

Incentivisation

92. Estyn, during oral evidence suggested tying school reorganisation and the prospect of successful application for capital funding to the WESP of that local authority, which would provide “bait for local authorities to ensure that, for any plans they have to open new schools or to reorganise in a different manner, the funding follows the desire and the targets that they have in their strategic plans”.⁶⁸

93. With the WESP framework now delivered over a period of 10 years, the need for aligning capital and grant funding is of greater importance. The challenge for local authorities at present is that Welsh Government grant funding doesn’t span the lifetime of the WESPs, which makes it difficult to fully implement or commit to their long-term ambitions.

94. ADEW (the Association of Directors of Education in Wales) also noted the need to align grants and budgets to support schools to move along the language continuum (changing categories according to Welsh-medium provision – see paragraph 153):

“If we are serious about moving schools through these categories, then there’s a very real cost of moving a school from category 1 through into T2 and then to 2... They are real costs, they are revenue costs, and they are costs over a period of time. So, how do we align the resources that we have in terms of grants in one place, so that those grants can be a real driver to meet the targets of the WESPs?”⁶⁹

95. The WLGA concurred, noting that there is a need to “focus the financial support on those transitional schools in categories T2 and T3”⁷⁰, rewarding councils that are on the journey.

96. The Minister noted in his evidence paper that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 changed the statutory planning cycle from 3 to 10 years to:

⁶⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 6 July 2022, paragraph 54

⁶⁹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 262

⁷⁰ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 263

*“encourage better strategic planning not only aligned to Cymraeg 2050, but also to Welsh Government funding programmes (e.g. capital funding programmes, Flying Start)”.*⁷¹

97. Furthermore, the Minister has recently approved a “new approach to future investment” through the Sustainable Communities for Learning capital funding programme, which will allow authorities to “progress their plans with greater flexibility”. Each authority will be required to submit a 9-year investment plan by March 2024 which will be assessed against the approved WESPs.⁷²

98. During scrutiny, the Minister said that:

*“I’ve already said in the letters that I’ve sent to local authorities approving their strategic plans that the wider investment plans are assessed against the WESPs to ensure that they do align. So, that link has been made. The expectation is clear, and I’ve re-emphasised that in the one-to-one discussions that I’ve had with individual leaders.”*⁷³

Our view

99. We heard that the Welsh Government holds a dedicated Welsh-medium capital budget, which it uses to provide grants, which local authorities do not have to match fund. This is in addition to the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, through which the Welsh Government meets between 65 and 85 per cent of project costs with local authorities making up the remainder⁷⁴.

100. We think that there is a benefit to maintaining a separate pot of funding within the existing budget for Sustainable Communities for Learning for Welsh-medium education, particularly as local authorities do not have to match fund grants. We are concerned that if this was to be removed, the amount of funding allocated to support Welsh-medium provision could be reduced. That is not say it would happen, but we do think the current system recognises the importance placed on supporting local authorities to develop their provision, and should be maintained for the long-term. To avoid any doubt, the dedicated Welsh-medium

⁷¹ ~~Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government~~ – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

⁷² ~~Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government~~ – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

⁷³ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 113

⁷⁴ Welsh Government: ~~Sustainable Communities for Learning: business case guidance~~ – 20 October 2022

grant should be additional to the general fund, which Welsh-medium projects should continue to receive their fair share from.

101. We also call on the Welsh Government to consider how it can further incentivise local authorities, through capital funding programmes. Our inquiry didn't explore this issue in enough detail to make specific recommendations on what these incentives should be.

102. Despite the extensive programme of investment outlined above, and calls for further investment, we recognise the challenges ahead for the Welsh Government in funding public services. However, without sustained investment in Welsh-medium provision, the Welsh Government's aims in Cymraeg 2050, in our view, simply cannot be achieved.

Recommendation 7. We recommend the Welsh Government maintains a dedicated Welsh-medium education capital fund within the Sustainable Communities for Learning budget, in addition to the support Welsh-medium projects receive from the general fund.

5. Increasing learning of Welsh in the English-medium sector

103. It is clear that achieving the ambition of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 cannot be achieved via the Welsh-medium education sector alone. The percentage of children assessed in Welsh as a first language or who learn Welsh as a first language has remained stable for the past decade (between 22-24 per cent). The Welsh Government's current target of ensuring 70 per cent of learners able to speak Welsh when they leave school will, as a result, require far-reaching changes to the teaching of Welsh in the English-medium sector. Evidence suggests that this will be challenging, but achievable with sufficient investment and planning.

Welsh-medium provision in English-medium sector

104. Almost all witnesses expressed the view that developing Welsh-medium provision within the English-medium sector is critical if the target of Cymraeg 2050 is to be achieved. Cymdeithas yr Iaith however called for all education provision in Wales to be delivered through the medium of Welsh by 2050:

*"In our view, every school should be a Welsh-medium school by 2050, and what we need to do is to plan to ensure that. We shouldn't be opening new English-medium schools. Every new school should either be a Welsh-medium school or a bilingual school."*⁷⁵

105. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol noted the significant challenge ahead if the English-medium sector is to generate the numbers of fluent Welsh speakers required, stating there is a "distance to travel in that regard. It's going to be difficult".⁷⁶

106. In order to succeed, significant emphasis on teacher development and raising skill and proficiency levels within the profession will be required. There are a number of schemes to support teacher development, including the Sabbatical

⁷⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 243

⁷⁶ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October, paragraph 189

Scheme which provides staff with time away from the classroom to undertake Welsh language skills training and immersion. Mudiad Meithrin told us that:

“There is a need to ensure that every member of staff who works across the English-medium sector has the opportunity to develop those skills... there’s a need to extend the sabbatical scheme so that some of the teachers in that sector can develop their skills and confidence to teach through the medium of Welsh.”⁷⁷

107. Following the publication of Census 2021 data, a number of stakeholders highlighted the role of the English-medium sector and moving schools along the linguistic continuum as critical if Census results are to be reversed. The Welsh Language Commissioner said that the results show that the English-medium sector has made only a “limited contribution to the aim”⁷⁸ of creating a million Welsh speakers in Cymraeg 2050. NASUWT’s response was equally robust in its assessment of what the Census results seem to show, stating that its members have told them that there is “no evidence (at the moment) that suggests that English-medium education pupils will be fluent speakers”⁷⁹. NASUWT claims that the loss of specific Welsh Government grant funding (the previously ring-fenced Welsh in Education grant was moved into a more general Education Improvement Grant in 2015) has impacted on local authority ability to support those in the English-medium sector.

108. In October, the Minister published a **Framework for Welsh in English-medium education**. The Framework, developed by practitioners and stakeholders has been “developed to help English-medium schools and settings develop genuine purpose and authenticity in learning and teaching Welsh in their curriculum”⁸⁰. During oral evidence, the Minister told us that the Welsh Government wants to support this with additional resources to allow teachers to use the framework.⁸¹

109. However the Minister recognised the scale of the challenge of staffing to achieve their goals. He told us:

⁷⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 194

⁷⁸ Consultation response: [IOCD09.Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (PDF 841KB)

⁷⁹ Consultation response: [IOCD07.NASUWT](#) (PDF 375KB)

⁸⁰ Welsh Government: [Framework for Welsh in English-medium education](#) – 18 October 2022

⁸¹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 118

“...that’s why the link between the 10-year recruitment plan and the WESPs is so important, and that’s why too the element of local ownership, not just to deliver the WESPs, but also ensure that there is a supply of staff available—that that local dimension is there too, and that’s important.”⁸²

School categories and language continuum

110. New guidance⁸³ on school categorisation according to Welsh-medium provision seeks to simplify the process of categorising a school by reducing the number of categories that define the Welsh language provision in a school. However, as this was published by the Welsh Government shortly before local authorities were due to submit their draft WESPs, only a few had included matters relating to this issue within them. To rectify this, the Minister for Education and Welsh language asked for further revisions to the WESPs by all local authorities over the summer.

111. There was no single coherent view among stakeholders on whether to place school categorisation according to Welsh-medium provision on a statutory footing. The guidance is currently non-statutory, but sets out the arrangements for categorising schools according to the amount of Welsh-medium provision in the school. The guidance states:

“One of the core principles in introducing the new arrangements is that no school should offer less Welsh-medium provision in the future, in both its curriculum and separately its non-curricular activities, than has been done in the past.”⁸⁴

112. UCAC stated its disappointment with the lack of progress around school categorisation and dilution of the aim to move schools along the continuum. It noted that the responses it had seen were not adequate at present, and looked forward to seeing proposals within the White Paper for the proposed Welsh Language Education Bill.⁸⁵

⁸² Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 119

⁸³ Welsh Government: [School categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) – 16 December 2021

⁸⁴ Welsh Government: [Guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) – 16 December 2021 (PDF 935KB)

⁸⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 90

113. NASUWT stated in oral evidence that schools are grateful it isn't a statutory requirement considering the current financial circumstances. If the proposed Bill does include provisions for this, schools would require support and resource.⁸⁶

114. ASCL told us that:

*"I wouldn't particularly go down the route of statutory requirement. We need hearts and minds to be won with this. However, what I would say is that I do have schools here saying they just don't know what is required of them to move along that continuum."*⁸⁷

115. Adding that:

*"I would say there are some quick wins that could happen, but they again will require time. That professional learning offer needs to be very high quality; it needs to be very compelling and it needs to be something that people really want to do."*⁸⁸

116. Cymdeithas yr Iaith, Dyfodol i'r Iaith and UCAC shared some concerns about the new system for categorising schools by Welsh-medium provision. Dyfodol called on the Welsh Government to revisit it to ensure it "reflects the desire to promote Welsh-medium education across the sector"⁸⁹. Cymdeithas yr Iaith noted the system had proved to be a "backward step"⁹⁰ in areas such as Gwynedd. Similarly, UCAC noted its concerns that the new system would enable bilingual schools to describe themselves as Welsh-medium schools, even if the provision isn't entirely in Welsh.⁹¹

117. The Minister noted in his written evidence that "several authorities have made clear commitments in their WESPs to move their English-medium or dual language schools on a linguistic continuum by changing the language category of schools". The Minister asserts that these commitments are not be taken lightly,

⁸⁶ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 100

⁸⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September, paragraph 98

⁸⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September, paragraph 93

⁸⁹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September, paragraph 251

⁹⁰ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September, paragraph 253

⁹¹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September, paragraph 90

but that it is “not without their challenges”. The paper later notes that eight authorities have committed to move one or more schools along the continuum.⁹²

118. When asked during our scrutiny session, whether it should be of concern that only eight local authorities have made clear commitments to progressing with the continuum, the Minister responded:

“I don’t think so. I think that that is ambitious; I wouldn’t expect to see the same profile in every local authority. There are some local authorities where Welsh-medium schools in the primary sector are the only ones that they have, so the picture is different in every part of Wales.”⁹³

Engagement and all-age approach to planning Welsh-medium provision

119. The inquiry in the Fourth Senedd⁹⁴ called for the Welsh Government to work with local government and stakeholders to “strengthen the role of fora (Welsh in Education Planning Forum)”. Estyn notes in its evidence that the evidence across Wales suggests that little has changed in how much influence the fora have had on the whole. Estyn also noted during oral evidence that the role of fora and joint-working are “central to some of the best plans”.⁹⁵

120. The lack of effective co-operation and collaboration, according to Estyn, means opportunities have been missed to improve and co-ordinate Welsh-medium education planning, such as post-16 provision.⁹⁶ This view is echoed by Colegau Cymru, which notes that local authority “relationships and ongoing engagement with some colleges could be substantially strengthened”, although there are signs of improvement in some areas.⁹⁷

121. The variable degree of engagement with the further education sector was illustrated by Colegau Cymru during oral evidence:

⁹² [Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government](#) – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

⁹³ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 132

⁹⁴ Children, Young People and Education Committee (Fourth Assembly) report: [Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans \(WESPs\)](#) – December 2015 (PDF 1.6MB)

⁹⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 6 July 2022, paragraph 18

⁹⁶ Consultation response: [WESP01 Estyn](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 335KB)

⁹⁷ Consultation response: [WESP05a Colleges Wales](#) (PDF 1MB)

“There’s one college in south-west Wales whose Welsh-medium education plan is now part of the WESP, because they have been integral part of developing the WESP. I’m head of a college where we’ve got totally different experiences across three authorities. We’re not even on one of the WESP monitoring committees in one authority and they haven’t consulted with us at all; another authority has consulted with us extensively and we’ve provided a wording for the WESP; and another one has consulted us and ignored what we’ve said.”⁹⁸

122. Mudiad Meithrin emphasised the importance of including both childcare and early years education in planning Welsh-medium provision and the WESPs process. They pointed to a perceived difference between the two sectors, although families do not distinguish between them. For Mudiad Meithrin, consideration needs to be given to how children arrive at Welsh-medium primary school provision and what needs to happen before then to generate sufficient volume of intake. They also highlighted the importance of retaining these children within the Welsh-medium education system, ensuring linguistic continuity.⁹⁹

123. RhAG noted that effective forums are essential if WESPs are to succeed, with a strong local voice within the process.¹⁰⁰

124. The Welsh Language Commissioner’s office told us that:

“local-level interaction and engagement is vital, not just in terms of developing the plans, but as they are implemented and as we move forward too, and I would expect that the evidence and that local input is a contribution towards the monitoring of the plans going forward. That’s vitally important.”¹⁰¹

125. The Welsh Language Commissioner’s office also agreed that local-level interactions and engagement plays an important role in developing the WESPs,

⁹⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 207

⁹⁹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraphs 109-110

¹⁰⁰ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraphs 202-203

¹⁰¹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 259

but that this should extend to monitoring local authority and school implementation of the plan.¹⁰²

126. Members of WESP Fora across Wales were invited to participate in a focus group organised by the Senedd Citizen Engagement team. A summary report has been prepared.¹⁰³ Key issues to arise from the engagement work include:

- Too many forums (including sub-groups/committees);
- Unclear what influence the for a have on decisions;
- Limited understanding of the issues on a political level;
- Change and progress too slow.

127. The Minister noted that there is a requirement in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 for local authorities to “set out how they worked in partnership with their Welsh in Education Planning Forum to prepare the authority’s Plan and oversee its future implementation and evaluation”¹⁰⁴. This does not however place any requirements on an authority to have a forum in place or the weight an authority should place on any recommendations it makes.

128. In oral evidence, the Minister told us that for the first time, there is a requirement for WESPs to look at “early years through to the later years”. He noted that the transfer from early years to statutory education is high, and WESPs must now state targets for early years. With regards to post-16 education, the Minister accepted that the situation is weaker. He said however, that there are duties placed on the new Tertiary Education Commission to increase numbers and the scope of sixth form education. He concluded that through the combination of the new WESPs and the Commission that things are moving forward.¹⁰⁵

Our view

129. Welsh in Education Planning Forums, where established, play an integral role in advising and supporting the local authority’s work in developing a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. However, not all authorities have established a forum in

¹⁰² Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 259

¹⁰³ [Inquiry engagement summary](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Response and written evidence from the Welsh Government](#) – 4 November 2022 (PDF 202KB)

¹⁰⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 34

their area, preventing vital input from those with the knowledge and expertise in language planning and need in the community.

130. Where forums have been established, their role is not always clear, with inconsistent approaches applied locally. The emphasis placed on the work and role of the fora is different in each area, with some of those involved on the forums telling us they're not sure what sort of influence the forums are having.

131. We also heard as part of our engagement work that the capacity of organisations that attend forums are stretched, with some attending multiple forums across their specific region. We heard of some authorities where sub-committees have been established to feed into the main forum, which is stretching resources further. In one local authority area, we were told that there is an 'identity crisis' with too many forums. One individual called for re-structuring the forums, and possibly establishing a strategic WESP umbrella group.

132. We don't believe that the current framework for the Welsh in Education Planning Forums is sufficiently robust or structured, with little or no consistency across Wales. Local authorities are not harnessing the potential of the Forums, with little evidence of the impact or influence of the forums feeding through to the development of the WESPs locally.

133. There are also questions around the role of the forums, where these have been established, in monitoring and reviewing local authority progress with their WESPs. The change from planning Welsh-medium provision from three to a ten year cycles requires closer scrutiny and accountability of local authority delivery.

134. Given all this, we think the Welsh Government should review the role of Welsh in Education Planning Forums in the process of developing and monitoring WESPs. This should include considering the difference in structures employed in different local authorities in Wales. In addition, as we don't think the current Fora are sufficiently robust or structured, the Welsh Government should place such Fora on a statutory footing. Such a move, we believe, will help ensure each local authority has a strong forum in place to provide advice and to monitor WESP progression. Finally, we think that developing a national framework for WESP Forums will ensure a consistent and meaningful structure across Wales.

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the role of Fora in the process of developing and monitoring WESPs, and to assess the varying structures and impact of Fora across Wales.

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Welsh Government place Welsh in Education Planning Forums on a statutory footing, ensuring each local authority in Wales has a Forum in place to advise and monitor the authority's WESP progress.

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Welsh Government develops a national framework for Welsh in Education Planning Forums, ensuring a consistent and purposeful structure across Wales.

135. We also heard of a perceived lack of collaborative working between some authorities with pre and post-16 education providers, which is a concern to us. While there are signs that many local authorities are now planning Welsh-medium provision from early-years through to post-16 education and training, this remains fragmented and inconsistent across Wales. The lack of effective co-operation and collaboration with all partners means opportunities have been missed to ensure there is linguistic continuity for children from childcare and early-years settings through to post-16 settings. We call on the Welsh Government to encourage all local authorities to work closely with partners in the pre and post-16 sectors to develop Welsh-medium provision locally. We also believe there should be a statutory requirement on local authorities to include these sectors for future WESP development.

Recommendation 11. We recommend that the Welsh Government supports and facilitates closer working between local authorities and partners in the early-years and Post-16 sectors to develop Welsh language provision locally.

Recommendation 12. We recommend that local authorities should be required to consult and collaborate with early-years and Post-16 education providers both within their local areas and across the region in the development of future Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

6. Staffing resources

136. A Welsh Language Commissioner Briefing Note¹⁰⁶ in 2020 suggested the challenge of ensuring sufficient numbers of Welsh-medium teachers was “an enormous one”. It warned of a “real danger that a shortage of Welsh-medium teachers will undermine” the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. The late Welsh Language Commissioner, Aled Roberts, called for “significant intervention and a total change of mindset”.

Education workforce

137. The WESPs play an important role in the framework to develop capacity within the Welsh-medium workforce. Authorities are required to identify their Welsh-medium workforce requirements under Outcome 7:

“Increasing the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.”¹⁰⁷

138. Authorities are also required to work out any anticipated shortfall over the lifespan of the Plan.

139. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol told us that developing the Welsh-medium education workforce is “beyond the role and responsibilities of local authorities”. Workforce planning, it states needs to happen on a national level, but supported at a regional and local level.¹⁰⁸

140. The **Welsh in Education Workforce Plan**, published by the Welsh Government in May 2022 states that it will analyse the WESPs and work with schools and authorities to improve data analysis on a local level. It will also seek to ensure SWAC (the School Workforce Annual Census) is completed annually and is a current reflection of the nation’s teaching workforce skills.

141. Nevertheless, local authorities have told us in their written evidence that data collection measures need to improve to “obtain timely and reliable data to support effective planning”. The requirement for more specific data would also assist authorities with planning and applying “effective targeted interventions”.

¹⁰⁶ Welsh Language Commissioner: [Briefing Note: The Welsh language and the statutory education workforce in Wales](#) – 6 August 2020

¹⁰⁷ Welsh Government: [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans - 21 January 2021](#) (PDF 1.2MB)

¹⁰⁸ Consultation response: [WESP07 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol](#) (Welsh only) (PDF 562KB)

The sector also calls for the nursery workforce to be represented in the School Workforce Annual Census.¹⁰⁹

142. Since the publication of the Census 2021 results, Dyfodol i'r Iaith told us that there needs to be a sufficient supply of teachers and support staff, underlining a need for up to 17,000 teachers to undertake Welsh language sabbatical training. This, it says, will allow more Welsh language teaching through the medium of Welsh, as well as increasing the number of extra-curricular activities in Welsh.¹¹⁰

143. Mudiad Meithrin and Colegau Cymru shared similar views to other stakeholders, with the latter noting that “one of the main challenges will be ensuring sufficient staffing levels and staff with adequate Welsh language skills to deliver the WESP”.¹¹¹ Mudiad Meithrin notes in its evidence paper that the main challenge for the coming years will be:

“ensuring a sufficient supply of practitioners that have the necessary professional skills, along with Welsh language skills at the highest possible standard for the Childcare, Early Years and Playwork workforce.”¹¹²

144. Workforce planning is critical according to Mudiad Meithrin to ensure “momentum at these crucial crossroads” is not lost. It states that a Welsh language skills audit for all staff working and supporting schools and early years sector, from Welsh and English-medium sectors is required, and that it will:

“provide an opportunity to identify where the ability to work in Welsh is, and where additional investment is needed from the Welsh Government and local authorities.”¹¹³

145. On the challenges with regards to recruitment, the Minister told us that:

“This is a significant challenge and that’s accepted by partners across the sector. I should say that the recruitment challenge is one that is common in education systems everywhere, so it’s not specific, but it is particularly challenging in the Welsh-

¹⁰⁹ Consultation response: [WESP16 Welsh Local Government Association \(WLGA\) and Association of Directors of Education in Wales \(ADEW\)](#) (PDF 3MB)

¹¹⁰ Consultation response: [IOCD12 Dyfodol i'r Iaith](#) (PDF 1MB)

¹¹¹ Consultation response: [IOCD03 Colegau Cymru](#) (PDF 375KB)

¹¹² Consultation response: [IOCD04 Mudiad Meithrin](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 738KB)

¹¹³ Consultation response: [IOCD04 Mudiad Meithrin](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 738KB)

medium context, for obvious reasons. So, I'm open to any creative suggestions in terms of how we can change the system to support that."¹¹⁴

146. The Minister also noted that it is important to look at the “recruitment ecosystem”. That is recruiting teachers is important but there needs to be consideration for other posts such as teaching assistants.¹¹⁵

Accreditation, training and courses

147. There were calls for improvements to the training and support available to existing staff to enable them to contribute to Cymraeg 2050 targets. Mudiad Meithrin noted that there is a need to keep our current staff before even considering expanding the workforce:

*“So, if we attract people to work as teachers in schools, and that's seen as a relatively high-status position, that then removes people who may have trained to work in the childcare sector, or the post-statutory sector, where salaries and working conditions aren't necessarily at the same level.”*¹¹⁶

148. Professor Enlli Thomas, Bangor University, wants to see a Welsh-medium accreditation system in Wales. Teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh are trained to teach children a broad range of topics, but not necessarily to teach in different settings – for example, if they move from a school with high number of children from Welsh speaking backgrounds to one where the natural language is not Welsh. This requires specialist training as the linguistic and cultural needs of each school and area is different she notes. She also noted the need to look at how courses are designed and how teachers are trained to teach Welsh in English medium schools.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 130

¹¹⁵ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 17 November 2022, paragraph 134

¹¹⁶ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 215

¹¹⁷ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 6 July 2022, paragraphs 129-131

149. Estyn suggested integrating elements of the sabbatical scheme into initial teacher training “could create more speakers on their journey to become teachers, and that it is a qualification available to anyone who wants to teach in Wales”.¹¹⁸

150. In its response to our call for evidence after the publication of the Census data, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol highlighted the important role of Initial Teacher Education partnerships in developing the bilingual workforce of the future for the school system as a whole. It notes the current work within the Welsh Government to revise the accreditation criteria for initial teacher training courses. The Coleg Cymraeg says that the revised criteria does reflect the “key role” of the ITE partnerships within this context, but that it is “inconsistent” and “not always reflective of the Welsh Government’s recent policy announcements”.¹¹⁹

151. Teaching unions also saw a need for increased training and support for teachers. ASCL told us that if you want to acquire a language:

*“It needs to be frequent, in short bursts, and it needs to be very regular, if it’s not an immersion course. To do that, you need to have time in the working week in order that that can actually be delivered.”*¹²⁰

152. NASUWT told us that “it’s crucially important that there are as many possibilities available as possible for them to be immersed and to be proficient in Welsh”, and that you need time allocated for this.¹²¹

153. Local authorities also noted the importance of professional learning and immersion courses for teachers, and called for a national system of immersion to be put in place. ADEW noted the need to invest substantially in the short and medium-term to support teachers and schools, but that over time, less investment will be required as the education system will produce the bilingual workforce for the future.¹²²

154. Following the publication of the Census results in December 2022, the Welsh Language Commissioner told us that “there needs to be a revolution in the way

¹¹⁸ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 6 July 2022, paragraph 140

¹¹⁹ Consultation response: [IOCD02.Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 553KB)

¹²⁰ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 120

¹²¹ Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 28 September 2022, paragraph 124

¹²² Record of Proceedings: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee – 13 October 2022, paragraph 305

we develop the Welsh language skills of the education workforce”.¹²³ The Welsh Language Commissioner goes on to say that without intervention, we are likely to see a continuation of a shortage of carers, teachers and lecturers who can work through the medium of Welsh. A similar view is shared by Professor Enlli Thomas (Bangor University) who calls for continued upskilling of staff¹²⁴, and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol who stated that those who aren’t fluent or confident should be provided with additional support to develop their Welsh language skills.¹²⁵

Funding Welsh-medium workforce development

155. There are currently two different routes for teachers to develop their Welsh Language skills.

156. For existing teachers, the Welsh Government operates a sabbatical scheme¹²⁶, whereby teachers in English-medium schools are released from the classroom for periods of intensive study to develop Welsh language skills and gain confidence in bilingual and Welsh- medium teaching methodologies. This is free of charge and the Welsh Government provides a grant to schools toward the costs of supply teacher cover and to reimburse travel costs for course participants.

157. For new teachers, the Welsh Government provides incentive grants through the Iaith Athrawon Yfory scheme.¹²⁷ This is available to those undertaking initial teacher training on a programme which leads to Qualified Teacher Status, and enables those eligible to teach in secondary schools through the medium of Welsh, or Welsh as a subject. £2,500 is available upon completion of initial teacher training. A further £2,500 is paid upon successful completion of induction in a Welsh-medium or bilingual school, or in an English-medium school if they teach Welsh as a subject. These incentives are additional to subject-specific teacher training incentives¹²⁸.

¹²³ Consultation response: [IOCD09.Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (PDF 841KB)

¹²⁴ Consultation response: [IOCD08.Professor Enlli Thomas, Bangor University](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 253KB)

¹²⁵ Consultation response: [IOCD02.Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 553KB)

¹²⁶ Welsh Government: [Developing the Welsh language within your school: Welsh language Sabbatical Scheme](#)

¹²⁷ Welsh Government: [Iaith Athrawon Yfory Incentive Scheme: guidance for students](#) – 8 June 2022

¹²⁸ Welsh Government: [Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) priority subject incentive: guidance for students 2022 to 2024](#) – 25 November 2022

158. Both UCAC¹²⁹ and NASUWT¹³⁰ unions shared concerns with us around dedicated funding streams to support workforce planning and targets in this sector. The Welsh Language Commissioner believes that a key funding consideration for the Welsh Government is the bilingual education workforce. This, it asserts is “key to the success of WESPs, and more broadly Cymraeg 2050 objectives”¹³¹. Estyn in its response seemed to agree, noting that funding is critical in providing professional learning opportunities for practitioners, with Carmarthenshire Council calling for additional funding to support the development of the language skills of teaching and support staff. ColegauCymru similarly calls for increased resource to support bilingual workforce development, and notes a particular need for “intensive Welsh language training for staff”. Its paper states that one FE college had commented that the “National Sabbatical Scheme has proven to be an excellent opportunity to generate more Welsh speaking teachers, and that this scheme would contribute towards building staff capacity”.¹³²

159. NASUWT also called for funding to enable more existing post-holders to have “paid-release” from teaching and support duties to improve their Welsh language skills.¹³³

160. Additional funding and resources are key to resolving future workforce issues according to some stakeholders in response to the Census 2021 data.

161. The Minister confirmed in May following the announcement of the Welsh in education workforce plan that:

“A further £1 million is being allocated in 2022-23, with further indicative increases of £0.5 million in 2023-24 and £2 million in 2024-25. This new funding is in addition to existing funding, which includes £0.785 million for Iaith Athrawon Yfory, £6.35 million for the sabbatical scheme and regional or local support for professional learning in Welsh, £0.7 million for the conversion programme, and £0.145 million to support activities to increase the number of learners studying Welsh as a subject.

¹²⁹ Consultation response: [IOCD10.Undeb.Cenedlaethol.Athrawon.Cymru.\(UCAC\)](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 465KB)

¹³⁰ Consultation response: [IOCD07.NASUWT](#) (PDF 375KB)

¹³¹ Consultation response: [IOCD09.Welsh.Language.Commissioner](#) (PDF 841KB)

¹³² Consultation response: [IOCD03.ColegauCymru](#) (PDF 375KB)

¹³³ Consultation response: [WESP11.NASUWT](#) (PDF 1MB)

And this brings the total funding to nearly £9 million in 2022-23, which is a significant investment.”¹³⁴

Our view

162. Building a bilingual workforce is one of the greatest challenges facing the Welsh Government and its key partners. We recognise that there are challenges recruiting teachers, in both Welsh and English, across the board. However, a shortage of Welsh-medium teachers could undermine Cymraeg 2050 and the targets within it.

163. We heard evidence that data on the Welsh language skills of the teaching workforce is not sufficiently robust or timely, hampering effective planning of Welsh-medium provision locally. Ensuring reliable and timely data on the teaching workforce is crucial if local authorities are to succeed in reaching their WESP targets. We call on the Welsh Government to work with key partners to improve data collection measures and to ensure more ‘real-time’ data to assist with planning. We were also surprised to hear that data on the early-years workforce is not represented in the School Workforce Annual Census, and therefore we call on the Welsh Government to improve data collection in the pre-statutory sector.

Recommendation 13. The Welsh Government, along with local authorities and key partners must develop and improve robust and effective data collection measures to support the development of a bilingual workforce.

Recommendation 14. We also call on the Welsh Government to ensure that the nursery workforce is represented in the School Workforce Annual Census survey in future years to improve data collection and analysis of Welsh language skills across the pre-statutory sector.

164. We also heard of the need for a step-change in how we upskill and immerse our teaching workforce in the Welsh language. If the Welsh Government is serious about its aim to “transform how we teach Welsh to all learners in order that at least 70 per cent of those learners report by 2050 that they can speak Welsh by the time they leave school”¹³⁵ (Cymraeg 2050), then continuing as we are is not an option. If we expect local authorities to successfully implement their WESPs, to

¹³⁴ Record of Proceedings: [Plenary – 24 May 2022, item 5](#)

¹³⁵ Welsh Government: [Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy](#), page 12 – 10 July 2017

expand Welsh-medium provision and to move schools along the linguistic continuum, then supporting the teaching workforce to upskill must be a priority.

165. We call on the Welsh Government to invest in immersive programmes to allow the teaching workforce to upskill at pace. We also believe that greater support is needed for early-years practitioners to improve their Welsh language skills. We call on the Welsh Government to consider whether the Sabbatical Scheme could be expanded to include this sector, or to promote and expand existing provision through Dysgu Cymraeg. We note that the Senedd's Children, Young People, and Education Committee in its Draft Budget 2023-24 report called for the Welsh Government set out in more detail its plans for promoting take-up of the sabbatical programme amongst schools and teachers¹³⁶.

Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Welsh Government explores the feasibility of a Welsh-medium accreditation system for teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh. This would ensure that teachers have the skills to teach through the medium of Welsh where the linguistic and cultural needs of each school or area are different. This should include the need to look at how courses are designed and how teachers are trained to teach Welsh in English medium settings.

Recommendation 16. We recommend that the Welsh Government along with key partners explore the potential to integrate elements of the Sabbatical Scheme into Initial Teacher Training programmes to immerse and upskill the Welsh language skills of trainee teachers.

Recommendation 17. We recommend that the Welsh Government needs to invest substantially in upskilling the current teaching workforce, providing greater numbers of teachers, teaching assistants and lecturers with the opportunity to undertake the Sabbatical Scheme.

Recommendation 18. We recommend that the Welsh Government should consider whether the Sabbatical Scheme could be expanded to some early-years practitioners in Wales supporting Welsh-medium provision in the sector, or to promote and expand the Learn Welsh Scheme for Early Years Education and Childcare through Dysgu Cymraeg.

¹³⁶ [Children, Young People, and Education Committee report: Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24](#) – February 2022 (PDF 699KB)

7. Responding to the Census 2021

166. The Office for National Statistics published its [Census 2021 Welsh language data](#) on 6 December 2022. Despite the data showing a drop¹³⁷ in the number of 5 to 15 year olds who were able to speak Welsh, the percentage of people in this age group who are able to speak Welsh is still higher than any other age group. This shows the key role that education plays in increasing the number of Welsh speakers. Given this, we were keen to understand the thoughts of participants of this inquiry of the impact of the recent Census data on the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision and Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)¹³⁸.

167. On the whole, the additional evidence we received suggests that the Census results, on their own, do not have direct implications for current WESP planning, although they might impact on reaching some targets. However, some stakeholders are of the view that the WESP framework has proven to be ineffective, or will need to be revisited following the results.

168. Dyfodol i'r laith told us that the drop in the number of Welsh speakers registered in the 5 to 15 year old cohort was as a result of parents' interpretation of their children's language skills, which were impacted by the pandemic.¹³⁹ UCAC also shared concerns over the uncertainty in the data regarding interpreting language skills by parents. They added that this could have an impact on whether or not local authorities are able to achieve the targets set out in their WESPs.¹⁴⁰

169. The Welsh Language Commissioner doesn't believe there is a "need to despair", but that there was a need for honesty in understanding what the data highlights and the challenges that exist. The Commissioner's response to our call for evidence states that there are "Obvious gaps and weaknesses in the implementation of key elements of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy." Most notably, these are in the planning and development of the bilingual workforce.¹⁴¹

170. Cymdeithas yr laith told us that the Census highlights the scale of work still to be done, and the importance of education to increasing the number of

¹³⁷ Welsh Government: [Welsh language in Wales \(Census 2021\). Ability to speak Welsh](#) - 6 December 2022

¹³⁸ Committee consultation: [Implications of the Census data for the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision](#)

¹³⁹ Consultation response: [IOCD12 Dyfodol i'r laith](#) (PDF 1MB)

¹⁴⁰ Consultation response: [IOCD10 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru \(UCAC\)](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 465KB)

¹⁴¹ Consultation response: [IOCD09 Welsh Language Commissioner](#) (PDF 841KB)

speakers. It took the view that the WESPs system was in operation during most of the Census period, which is “proof that it isn’t effective”. It calls for the WESP framework to be replaced by a “national statutory framework” setting actions and targets for each local authority. Such a framework would accompany a new Welsh Language Education Act would provide for purposeful planning and setting the aim that “all children receive an education in Welsh in a specific period”.¹⁴²

171. Colegau Cymru thinks there might be a need to revisit some WESPs, particularly where the Census data shows significant decreases in the number of Welsh speakers. It asserts that the “delivery of WESPs will become even more critical and will require greater commitment and increased efforts by all agencies”.¹⁴³

172. A number of stakeholders mentioned the importance of extracurricular activities through the medium of Welsh and to support language transmission to create more confident Welsh speakers. Professor Enlli Thomas for instance notes that the Census has shown that with a decrease in the number of speakers in “Welsh-speaking heartlands” and fewer transmitting the language in the home, it is imperative that “schools create the conditions so that children can acquire the Welsh language naturally”.¹⁴⁴

173. Investment is of course a key aspect to transforming the fortunes of the language, with Mudiad Meithrin calling for further investment in its work in the early years sector. It also highlights the need to consider the “relationship between Mudiad and policy makers within the local authorities”.¹⁴⁵

174. Carmarthenshire County Council warns that the Census data might provide an opportunity for those who are “not supportive of the WESPs to question their value and to challenge the policy of creating bilingual learners”. Its paper also states that the Census results could also be used as an argument by some against moving schools along the continuum.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Consultation response: [IOCD04.Cymdeithas yr Iaith](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 285KB)

¹⁴³ Consultation response: [IOCD03.ColegauCymru](#) (PDF 375KB)

¹⁴⁴ Consultation response: [IOCD08.Professor Enlli Thomas, Bangor University](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 253KB)

¹⁴⁵ Consultation response: [IOCD04.Mudiad Meithrin](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 738KB)

¹⁴⁶ Consultation response: [IOCD01.Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (English Translation by Senedd Commission) (PDF 514KB)

Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Date	Name and Organisation
6 July 2022	Clive Phillips, Assistant Director, Estyn Hayden Llewellyn, Chief Executive, Education Workforce Council Arwyn Thomas, Managing Director, Regional School Improvement Consortia Enlli Thomas, Bangor University
28 September 2022	Eithne Hughes, Director, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Ioan Rhys Jones, General Secretary, Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC) Siôn Amlyn, Policy and Casework Official, NASUWT Heini Gruffudd, Chair, Dyfodol i'r Iaith Toni Schiavone, Education Group Chair, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Dyfan Sion, Strategic Director, Welsh Language Commissioner's office Elin Maher, Acting National Director Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg (RHAG)
13 October 2022	Angharad Morgan, Policy Manager, Mudiad Meithrin Aled Jones-Griffith, Principal Coleg Meirion Dwyfor and Coleg Menai, CollegesWales Dafydd Trystan, Registrar and Senior Academic Manager, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Date	Name and Organisation
	Darren Price, WLGA Spokesperson, Carmarthenshire County Council Meinir Ebbsworth, ADEW Spokesperson, Ceredigion County Council
17 November 2022	Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language Welsh Government

Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Reference	Organisation
WESP 01	Estyn
WESP 02	Children's Commissioner for Wales
WESP 03	Education Workforce Council
WESP 04	Regional Consortia
WESP 05	CollegesWales
WESP 5a	CollegesWales
WESP 06	Qualifications Wales
WESP 07	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
WESP 08	Welsh Language Commissioner
WESP 8a	Welsh Language Commissioner
WESP 09	Mudiad Meithrin
WESP 10	Individual
WESP 11	NASUWT
WESP 12	Cymdeithas yr Iaith
WESP 13	Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
WESP 14	Dyfodol i'r Iaith
WESP 15	Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg (RHAG)
WESP 16	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Annex 3: Additional written evidence

At its meeting on 8 December 2022, the Committee agreed to seek additional evidence on the impact of the recent Census data on the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision and Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). The following people and organisations participated in this call for evidence. All responses are available on the Committee's website.

Reference	Organisation
IOCD 01	Carmarthenshire County Council
IOCD 02	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
IOCD 03	CollegesWales
IOCD 04	Cymdeithas yr Iaith
IOCD 05	Education Workforce Council
IOCD 06	Mudiad Meithrin
IOCD 07	NASUWT
IOCD 08	Prof Enlli Thomas, Bangor University
IOCD 09	Welsh Language Commissioner
IOCD 10	Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
IOCD 11	Estyn
IOCD 12	Dyfodol i'r Iaith