

CFA06 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymraeg i bawb? | Cymraeg for all?

Ymateb gan: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol | Evidence from: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

1. What are the main barriers that prevent wider use of the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers, and what might help to change this?

- Opportunities to use the Welsh language

2021 census data shows that the percentage of 16-24 year olds who can speak Welsh is much lower than the percentage of 3-15 year olds who can speak Welsh.

There is a need to ensure formal opportunities in education and training for young people leaving statutory education to maintain and develop their Welsh language skills. There are gaps in the Welsh and bilingual provision available to learners, and in the encouragement and support to follow them. Learners who do not continue on the Welsh or bilingual pathway tend to lose confidence in their ability to use Welsh and by the time they reach the workforce feel unable to work bilingually. This is more evident in areas with fewer Welsh speakers where there are fewer opportunities in the community to develop Welsh-language skills.

The Welsh Government, Medr and local authorities should plan together to ensure that there are continuous education pathways for learners in these areas. But for that to happen, we need staff who can teach in Welsh. The Coleg supports vocational and higher education provision in a number of the areas concerned, but recruiting to vocational teaching positions is challenging. Upskilling schemes such as Cymraeg Gwaith help, but wider schemes are needed across the sector to ensure an adequate supply of qualified staff who can learn through the medium of Welsh. In FE in particular, the recommendations of Dr Steve Bell's report on

initial teacher education should be implemented

(<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-05/towards-a-new-vision-for-initial-teacher-education-in-the-post-compulsory-education-and-training-sectors-a-review.pdf>)

A wider workforce is needed to serve Welsh speakers in these areas as well, so that Welsh speakers can use the language with individuals in positions that serve the public. The Welsh Government should plan what skills public sector workers need in these areas, and work with Medr to plan what Welsh and bilingual tertiary education/training should be offered to meet this need.

Some HE students have noted that obtaining Welsh-medium university accommodation is a challenge in parts of Wales, making it harder to live Welsh-medium life outside the classroom. In order to increase the percentage of the population who speak Welsh on a daily basis, this social element of provision is crucial, alongside academic provision.

- Encouragement to use the Welsh language

The National Framework on Welsh Education and Learning Welsh will impose duties on local authorities to encourage demand for Welsh education. Similarly, Medr has a statutory duty to encourage demand for Welsh tertiary education. This is to be welcomed.

Research on behavioural change among HE students commissioned by the Coleg (not yet published) highlights a specific cohort of young people who are influenced by others around them. These individuals have a perception that Welsh is for a certain type of person ("someone else and not me") so they don't feel that they and their friends are the kind of people who would choose to study in Welsh. The Coleg will use specific marketing methods to influence the choices of this cohort.

Further research is needed to understand what kind of interventions might encourage individuals like this to use their Welsh in other contexts.

2. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?

Within the tertiary education sector, Welsh-language spaces and Welsh-medium and bilingual provision should be safeguarded and supported.

In areas with fewer Welsh speakers, for 16-19 year olds, Welsh-medium provision and Welsh-language monolingual spaces are mainly found in Welsh-medium schools' sixth forms. It is important to maintain these spaces.

It is also important to protect the Welsh language as a subject. Every young person should be able to choose to study Welsh to a high standard, including in areas where the use of the language is limited. This is not currently the case, as some centres do not offer Welsh A Level (particularly Second Language) due to financial constraints.

In FE colleges, as well as strategic planning to increase formal learning opportunities, informal opportunities for basic users to continue to engage with the Welsh language should be expanded. The Mentrau Iaith could be supported to strengthen the link between young people, their community and the economy. There are examples of good practice (e.g. collaboration between Menter Iaith Caerdydd and Cardiff and Vale College), and this could be built on by encouraging Mentrau Iaith to specifically engage with learners in FE colleges. This could be a means of opening the door for learners to use more Welsh socially and to practise Welsh as a skill for the workplace.

There is also a responsibility on tertiary education providers to promote the Welsh language. Welsh-medium spaces can be found in several colleges and universities (e.g. Shwmaeronment Coleg Merthyr, Y Lle Cardiff University), as well as in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools.

3. Can you share examples of successful initiatives or activities that have encouraged Welsh language use in areas where use of the language is limited?

Within tertiary education, the Coleg funds and co-ordinates schemes where individuals in specific contexts facilitate and promote the use of the Welsh language at grassroots. For example:

- Facilitators in FE colleges: individuals in subject-specific positions who provide individual or small group
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support to enable vocational learners to complete some of their studies in Welsh. Their aim is to help build learners' confidence and ensure that they hear Welsh as a 'living language'.

- Branch officers in HE institutions, who are responsible for supporting students studying through the medium of Welsh, organising social activities and increasing the opportunities available to students to study university courses through the medium of Welsh.
- A "language animateurs" pilot project at two universities, including Cardiff Metropolitan University. The animateurs work closely with learners to encourage and support them to take advantage of Welsh-medium provision.
- Ambassadors who promote the benefits of studying in Welsh and using Welsh among their peers.
- The Coleg has established a PGCE Network this year, to create a sense of community between students studying PGCE Secondary courses wherever they are in Wales. The number of Welsh-speaking students studying a PGCE course in a particular subject at one university can be very small; so creating a link between students studying PGCE Physics, for example, can give confidence and opportunities to communicate in Welsh to those students who would otherwise be isolated.

All the above schemes are taking place across Wales, including in areas where the day-to-day use of the Welsh language is limited.

Further, the Coleg's Sbarduno Scheme focuses on promoting the Welsh language among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people. Its purpose scheme is to inspire the next generation of Welsh speakers to gain confidence and develop their Welsh skills when making decisions about the future. Mentors run five online mentoring sessions with young people aged 16-19.

The first few years of the scheme have been successful, with the young people giving positive feedback. If individuals who come from areas or are part of a group where the use of the language is limited, we have seen that having the additional opportunity to use their skills outside the classroom with a mentor can have a

significant impact on their confidence and willingness to use Welsh.

<https://colegcymraeg.ac.uk/en/pages-a-z-content/sbarduno-scheme/>

4. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?

- i. Resources based on virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence etc can give learners and trainees the opportunity to practise using their Welsh in a 'safe' environment. For example, the Coleg has commissioned simulation-based health training (SBET - Simulation-Based Education and Training) resources so that prospective practice health professionals can use their Welsh with patients, regardless of their ability; and Fferm Ddiogel is an augmented reality resource that helps learners identify, understand and avoid potential hazards on the farm (<https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/collection/fferm-ddiogel>).
 - ii. More traditional digital resources can also be a means for learners and trainees to gain confidence, e.g. Prentis-iaith is a set of short online courses commissioned by the Coleg for apprentices in specific sectors, with the aim of increasing the apprentice's confidence and enabling them to complete part of their course through the medium of Welsh (<https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/group-collection/prentis-iaith>).
 - iii. Academic research on the interface between the Welsh language and technology is crucial in order to explore trends and identify good practice to be used among Welsh language users, and to develop new methods and techniques for learning and testing ability in Welsh. The Welsh Government and other partners should ensure continued support for research of this kind. A recent example is CorCenCC, which has led to the creation of tools to be used in learning and using Welsh (such as Y Tiwtiadur and TestunRhydd/FreeTxt). The Coleg itself also funds research of this kind, e.g. Gwenno Griffith's (2018) PhD on 'Newid Ymddygiad Ieithyddol: Cynyddu'r niferoedd sy'n defnyddio rhyngwynebau cyfrifadurol yn Gymraeg' (Changing Linguistic
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Behaviour: Increasing the number of users of Welsh-language computing interfaces) and Beca Wyn Owen's PhD (forthcoming) on the use of artificial intelligence within Welsh education.

<https://corcencc.org/>

<https://ytiwtiadur.corcencc.org/>

<https://freetxt.app/>

<https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/110345/>

- iv. Continuing to invest in standardising terminology for the world of education and work and promoting that work, is key to supporting Welsh language users and educators across sectors and subject areas.

5. What impact, in your view, do cultural events such as national Eisteddfodau or Welsh language festivals have on Welsh language use, particularly in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?

Events like this can have a positive impact on staff and students' attitudes towards the Welsh language and provide a focus for academic activities and outreach. For example, FE and HE institutions have told us about the positive effects of the 2024 Rhondda Cynon Taf National Eisteddfod and the 2025 Wrexham National Eisteddfod:

- Coleg y Cymoedd: a member of management staff said - "In terms of the staff who took part by working on the stand, running events, supporting events, their attitudes to the Welsh language have been completely transformed. A number have set out to learn Welsh. The students who competed and worked on the stand have enjoyed having the opportunity to use their Welsh and many have volunteered for other Welsh-medium events."
 - University of South Wales: A member of management staff said - "A full programme of events and activities was provided at the USW stand on the Maes at Ynysangharad Park, as well as welcoming hundreds of guests to stay in the halls of residence at the Treforest Campus, and hosting
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events and tours of the University's facilities at the Treforest and Glyntaf campuses.

"With over 60 colleagues volunteering to work during the week, visitors enjoyed workshops and demonstrations from a range of subject areas, including Psychology, Sport, Science and Technology, Healthcare, Education, Fashion, Film, Photography and many more, with numerous opportunities to promote the Welsh medium academic provision offered by USW. Colleagues in the Catering team also benefited from Welsh lessons, learning common phrases to use when interacting with Eisteddfod guests on campus. Informal sessions were provided to team members over a few weeks, to develop their confidence in using Welsh with customers.

"We are extremely proud of the collective effort to make the Eisteddfod such a success. From the early stages of development, colleagues from across the University worked hard to make sure everything ran smoothly so that we could showcase all the things the University has to offer."

- Wrexham University: University to offer short course about the Eisteddfod in bid to offer insight into Welsh heritage (<https://wrexham.ac.uk/news/articles/university-to-offer-eisteddfod-short-course-in-bid-to-offer-unique-insight-into-welsh-heritage/>)

6. How might these events (whether large or small in size) be adapted or improved to better serve communities with fewer Welsh speakers?

7. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committees attention about the Welsh Government's approach to supporting the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?

Transport can impair learners' ability to access Welsh education. Free transport for Welsh-medium post-16 education should be provided as part of a wider commitment to provide free transport for post-16 education in general.

Regional variations should be recognised in planning. For example, we expect that Medr's national plan for the Welsh language will be tailored to the linguistic needs and skills of particular areas,

with different expectations for tertiary education providers in areas with a higher number of less confident/lower-ability speakers.
