

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Hybrid – Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel and video conference via Zoom	Naomi Stocks Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 17 October 2024	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 09.30	SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

(09.15 – 09.30)

Public meeting

(09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill – evidence session 13

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 43)

Dona Lewis, Chief Executive, National Centre for Learning Welsh

Meinir Ebbsworth, Strategic Director, National Centre for Learning Welsh

Dr Ioan Matthews, Chief Executive, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Rebecca Williams, Senior Manager for Language Skills and Workforce

Planning, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Paper 1 National Centre for Learning Welsh (Translation)

Paper 2 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol



Break

(10.30 – 10.45)

3 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill – evidence session 14

(10.45 – 11.30)

(Pages 44 – 51)

Rhian Edwards, Executive Director for Policy, Medr (Commission for Tertiary Education and Research)

Attached Documents:

Paper 3 Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr) (Translation)

4 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill – evidence session 15

(11.35 – 12.35)

(Pages 52 – 57)

Jonathan Morgan, Principal and Chief Executive of Coleg y Cymoedd and representing ColegauCymru

Amanda Wilkinson, Director, Universities Wales

Lisa Mytton, Strategic Director, National Training Federation for Wales [via zoom]

Attached Documents:

Paper 4 ColegauCymru

Paper 5 National Training Federation for Wales

5 Papers to note

(12.35)

5.1 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

(Pages 58 – 59)

Attached Documents:

Additional Information from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru following the evidence session on 02 October 2024

5.2 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

(Page 60)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from Mudiad Meithrin following the evidence session on 26 September 2024

5.3 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

(Page 61)

Attached Documents:

Additional Information from the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) Cymru following the evidence session on 02 October 2024

5.4 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 62 – 63)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip from the National Deaf Society Cymru

5.5 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 64 – 65)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Education

5.6 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 66 – 69)

Attached Documents:

Briefing note from Universities Wales on Welsh participation in higher education

5.7 Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?

(Pages 70 – 109)

Attached Documents:

Response to the Committee report from the Welsh Government

5.8 Speech, language and communication needs of young people in the youth justice estate

(Pages 110 – 112)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip from the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

5.9 Children and Young People on the margins

(Pages 113 – 114)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from NYAS Cymru

5.10 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

(Pages 115 – 117)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) following the evidence session on 2 October 2024

5.11 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

(Pages 118 – 119)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language

Private meeting

(12.35)

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(12.35)

7 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill – consideration of the evidence

(12.35 – 12.55)

Document is Restricted

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from National Centre for Learning Welsh

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ar Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

WLE 17

Ymateb gan: Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol

Response from: National Centre for Learning Welsh

1. Background

1.1 The National Centre for Learning Welsh was established in 2016 following a tender process by the Welsh Government. The University of Wales Trinity Saint David won the contract to establish the Centre. The duration of the original contract was five years. The contract was extended for a further five years in 2021.

1.2 The Centre's aim is to create Welsh speakers that enjoy using the language, by providing a national Learn Welsh strategy and services. Since its establishment, the Centre has transformed the Learn Welsh sector. The numbers learning Welsh have increased by 33%, and in 2022-2023 its courses were completed by 16,905 people. Both face-to-face and virtual tutored courses are available, as well as online self-study courses. There are also plans for specific groups such as families, workplaces and young people. We also work with a number of specific sectors and have developed tailored Learn Welsh programmes, for example for early years education and care, health and care, further education/higher education, local authorities and sport. Recently, the Centre has been given responsibilities for providing a national programme for the education workforce. The Centre also has a programme for confidence building and use courses to help speakers that lack confidence or are reluctant to use their Welsh.

1.3 One of the Centre's first duties was to develop a Learn Welsh curriculum. The curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR forms the basis of the Centre's curriculum and is therefore used across its various plans and courses. The curriculum includes overviews that show progress in the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) across the levels from A1 to C1. They can be used in conjunction with the functional overviews and grammatical syntaxes. As learners make progress, they will learn to use the language (speaking and writing) in an increasing number of contexts, moving from the familiar (A1) to a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar situations (B2), being able to undertake listening and reading tasks of increasing complexity, moving from simple language in familiar contexts (A1) to much more complex and abstract language in a wide range of styles and contexts (B2). They will also be able to benefit from a growing pool of vocabulary, styles and registers (formal

and informal); grammar and syntax and pronunciation features. They will also start using the language with more confidence and depth.

1.4 The Centre has also led the 700-strong Learn Welsh workforce to implement the curriculum by introducing resources and training to deliver courses throughout the levels from A1 to C1.

1.5 Learners praise the Centre's provision - 99% said that they enjoy learning Welsh (Dweud Eich Dweud (Have Your Say) 2023-2024 questionnaire, 4,803 respondents).

1.6 In August 2021, the Welsh Government carried out a rapid review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh. The report stated that the Centre is:

'...recognised as a body that coordinates, plans, delivers and develops Learn Welsh provision at a national level... In the second phase of its existence, this role as a key and strategic institution central to the acquisition of the Welsh language needs to be developed and strengthened.

1.7 The Centre has now been established for eight years and has proven its expertise in terms of learning Welsh. The Learn Welsh sector is inspected by Estyn, with the Centre being inspected every three years. In its inspection report on the Centre in April 2024, Estyn noted that it is:

'central to numerous initiatives to normalise the use of the language'

'Leaders are confident in adapting and evolving any aspect of the service and operate creatively to innovate continuously... which leads to successful linguistic planning in all aspects of their work'

'The successful performance of the Centre... contributes firmly to achieving the targets in the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers strategy'

1.8 Estyn recommends that the Centre continues to extend and share the expertise of the Learn Welsh sector, and continues to innovate by facilitating activities that integrate new speakers in their communities and in their work.

2. The general principles of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill and the need for legislation to deliver the stated policy intention

2.1 The Centre welcomes and supports the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. It agrees that an ambitious programme of change is needed that requires action on several levels with regard to the Welsh language in education in

order to ensure that Welsh belongs to us all. We believe that it is very important to recognise that Learn Welsh (lifelong) opportunities include the scope of the Centre's current work.

2.2 We believe that establishing a new statutory body to lead on Learn Welsh (lifelong) is a long-term solution that offers stability to the sector. This is different from the previous system of following a grant allocation process for a limited period. The new Welsh Language and Education Bill will give every child in Wales a fair chance to become a Welsh speaker, whatever their background and whichever school they attend. We believe that the Centre's successes in presenting one clear learning path for learners have laid the basis for the Institute to build on this work in supporting the Welsh Language and Education Bill.

2.3 We are fully supportive of including the target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 in law. We believe that setting targets for increasing the use of Welsh in the workplace and socially will provide a definitive focus and a means of measuring the efficiency and reach of the work. The Centre's work in terms of Learn Welsh in the community, in workplaces and in families is an integral part of this and we believe that this work needs to be continued as part of the Institute's (lifelong) learning strategy.

2.4 The Centre welcomes the aim of creating a continuum of skills for Welsh that's based on the CEFR, just as the Centre has done for adults. This has supported and facilitated the journey of adults learning Welsh, including in workplaces, and it would be good to extend this to learners of all ages. We believe that the Centre has the operational expertise in this area to work with the Government in creating a clear and seamless continuum that will be an integral part of the Institute's work, which will be crucial to the success of the Bill and to producing more Welsh speakers. We believe that the CEFR offers a suitable framework for (lifelong) Welsh learning and that it would be possible to apply and tailor elements of the CEFR to children of primary age onwards.

2.5 The Centre supports the linguistic outcome that all pupils leave statutory education with the ability to speak Welsh confidently. The Centre fully supports the principle of progression in skills and provision for pupils. The Centre has developed a Learn Welsh program for people aged 16-25, doing so along the continuum (from A1 to C2). It collaborates with the tertiary education sector to ensure that these opportunities are available for young people in further education, higher education and apprenticeships. Since 2017 the Centre has also led an advanced programme for upskilling the further education and higher education workforce, as part of its Working Welsh scheme.

2.6 We believe that the role of the Institute is essential to ensure that the expertise of Learn Welsh along the continuum is a core part of the offer available to

young people, and also to ensure key Welsh skills as they gain access to the labour market. We believe that the Institute's expertise in teaching Welsh will be key to leading this work, but this will need to be done in collaboration and discussion with organisations such as Medr and the Coleg Cymraeg in order to ensure strategic collaboration. We believe that an independent body is needed with specific expertise in language acquisition and learning, which is also involved in language planning, to lead the (lifelong) Learn Welsh work successfully.

2.7 The Centre's Working Welsh scheme, which has recently developed a partnership with the Welsh Language Commissioner in terms of the Welsh Offer, provides services to upskill workforces in a number of diverse sectors, which it does along the continuum (from A1 to C2). The Centre plans strategically to develop workforces to use more Welsh, which in turn enables them to provide services through the medium of Welsh.

2.8 One of the main objectives of the Centre's Working Welsh scheme is to support the Welsh language standards and increase employers' ability to increase the use of Welsh. Working Welsh has now worked with over 2,000 employers and has developed important Learn Welsh and Building Confidence and Use programmes with key sectors, including health and care. The Centre therefore welcomes the duty to review the Welsh language standards.

2.9 The Centre has developed significant plans with Mudiad Meithrin and Cwlwm to support the Welsh language skills of the early years education and care workforce. We believe that the continuation of this work within the Institute is essential in order to ensure that the continuum is active for every individual from cradle to grave.

2.10 The Centre supports the intention of creating a link between national targets and local targets for Welsh in education. It welcomes the aim of creating a link between the target of one million speakers and local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. The Centre is already collaborating with local authorities to provide Learn Welsh courses in schools where growth in provision is planned locally. This is happening as part of the work of the Learn Welsh Education Workforce programme.

2.11 The Centre believes that effective collaboration with a range of partners is essential in order to create better progression, experience and outcomes for learners as they become speakers. We believe that the Institute has a specific place in leading on many of the partnership discussions, and the Centre's work in this area is a good basis for further development.

Estyn has identified the Centre's partnership work as a strength:

'One of the Centre's notable qualities is the way in which leaders work together strategically to plan provision and opportunities to use the Welsh language through innovative collaboration with a range of valuable partners'. Inspection report 2024

3. Any potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions and whether the Bill takes account of them (including commencement and the United Kingdom Internal Market Act)

3.1 The importance of securing an education workforce that has the necessary skills in terms of the Welsh language is essential to the Bill's success. In 2024, the National Centre for Learning Welsh, through collaboration with the Welsh Government's Education Department, has published a Learn Welsh Education Workforce programme, and will extend the program in 2025 to include the current sabbatical courses. The programme matches the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Workforce plan. Therefore, by the time the Institute is established, the Centre will have implemented, evaluated and grown this programme, and we believe that this experience and expertise can be a sensible basis for the Institute to continue leading the work. We also believe that the Institute has an important contribution to make towards the development of the Welsh-medium workforce, in order to ensure that one continuum is being implemented consistently in all schools.

3.2 The Centre has worked closely with initial teacher training providers, providing consistent resource to help them to include 35 hours of Welsh learning training as part of the course along the continuum (from A1 to C2). This work allows further development for the education workforce within the Centre's Education Workforce Learn Welsh programme, and to do so by continuing along the continuum within their work placement. We believe that this collaboration is the basis for further development at the Institute to integrate more Welsh learning provision, including intensive opportunities, as an integral part of teacher training in Wales and to ensure a smooth continuation of the education workforce's professional development programme. An education workforce that's qualified in terms of the Welsh language will be key in ensuring the Bill's success, as well as realising the objectives of the Curriculum for Wales and the Additional Learning Needs Act.

3.3 We support the Bill further expanding the duties of the Institute with the work of developing the education workforce, building on the initial work that has begun by the National Centre for Learning Welsh. It is also important to recognise that ensuring fair time for the education workforce to develop its skills is essential, and so more clarity is needed on the approach for funding release time for local authorities. We believe that clarity must be ensured regarding the Institute's contribution to providing the language learning expertise along the continuum when training the future education workforce as well.

4. The appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation

4.1 We believe that the Bill gives sufficient attention to what will be in subordinate legislation and that the subordinate legislation will in turn provide more detail and appropriate references, which will assist in ensuring the success of the Bill.

4.2 We are specifically supportive of the subordinate legislation that gives power to confer additional functions to the National Welsh Language Learning Institute. Ensuring the description of the Institute's duties is crucial, and it is also important to ensure that the organisation can adapt, evolve and respond to what is needed when implementing the Bill.

4.3 We also believe that effective governance is key to the Institute and we supportive the appropriateness of being able to vary the organisation's membership and sub-committees.

5. Whether there are any unintended consequences arising from the Bill

5.1 We fully support the Bill's objective in terms of raising standards within English-medium schools, and to support moving along a language continuum. Understanding of a continuum in this context is crucial. It is important to ensure consistent support for every school and every pupil, including Welsh-medium schools.

5.2 The National Centre for Learning Welsh has been established since 2016 and is recognised as an organisation that operates successfully and to a high standard. It is important that the establishment of the Institute builds on these successes and allows the continuation of the work of a sector that operates so successfully. The Learn Welsh sector employs approximately 700 people, with the majority of these being tutors, and during 2023-24, 16,905 learners had completed 29,485 Welsh learning activities. It must be ensured that establishing the Institute does not destabilise the work that has taken place during (Stage 1 and 2) of the Centre's existence and that the Government takes advantage of the expertise and excellence of the sector during its establishment. We believe that, by operating in this way, the Institute offers stability to the Learn Welsh sector and allows long-term strategic planning for (lifelong) Welsh learning.

5.3 A lack of clarity as to the duties of bodies attached to the Bill, directly and indirectly, can lead to delays and duplication of work. Despite this, we believe that establishing an Institute as a body with specific duties and recognised as a body that leads on all elements of (lifelong) Welsh learning is a means of meeting this. Successful partnership working will be key to ensuring the efficiency of this.

6. The financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum)

6.1 We believe that the Centre's current work remains crucial for ensuring the growth of the Welsh language and reaching 2050 targets. We believe that assurance is needed that the role of the Institute in the future will continue to give a clear and deserving focus on this work as well as the other responsibilities that will form part of its functions. As a result, therefore, it must be considered that the Institute's budget enables the provision of (lifelong) opportunities to learn Welsh on the same scale as the Centre does currently and allows the extension of the work to support the Bill.

6.3 The current status of the Centre is a company limited by guarantee. The Centre's current aim is to create Welsh speakers that enjoy using the language, by providing national Welsh learning strategy and services. The Centre's current structure includes corporate services eg finance, data, IT as well as directorates that specialise in learning and teaching, marketing and communication, and developing workforce Welsh skills, including the statutory and post-16 education sector.

6.4 In the context of the financial consideration of the costs for establishing the Institute, it is important to acknowledge the Centre's current list of functions and compare it with the Institute's list of functions.

The Institute's functions	The Centre's current functions
(a) to provide strategic leadership and direction for all Welsh learning providers;	<p>The Centre has established 10 Learn Welsh providers, who are experts in language acquisition and learning. They provide Welsh learning services on behalf of the Center for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Adults in the community or virtually (ii) Young people in tertiary education and schools (iii) Young people aged 16-18 (iv) Workforces (v) Families
(b) provide, or facilitate the provision of Welsh language learning materials;	The Centre has created a Welsh Learning Curriculum based on the CEFR, developing learning and

	teaching resources to support them at all levels from A1-C2.
(c) planning for the development of the education workforce for the purpose of improving Welsh language teaching;	<p>Since 2024, the Centre has developed a Welsh learning programme for the education workforce, which will extend in 2025 to include the sabbatical provision. The programme includes various provision for the education workforce in order to improve Welsh language teaching methods.</p> <p>Currently, the programme's reach in the 2024-25 academic year is approximately 2000 practitioners.</p> <p>We anticipate that this programme will need to grow significantly to support the Bill's objectives.</p>
<p>(d) Make arrangements to provide opportunities to learn Welsh</p> <p>(i) for the education workforce</p> <p>(ii) in the workplace, and</p>	<p>The Centre awards and manages contracts with 10 core providers and some additional providers in order to ensure quality opportunities to learn Welsh.</p> <p>Since 2024, the Centre has been leading the Education Workforce Welsh learning programme.</p> <p>Since 2017, the Centre has been leading the Working Welsh programme, which provides opportunities to learn Welsh in the workplace.</p>
(iii) for people over the compulsory education age;	<p>Since 2023, the Centre has been leading an Onwards with Welsh programme, which gives specific opportunities for young people aged 16-25 to learn Welsh. Community-based and virtual adult Welsh learning is a significant part of the Centre's work.</p>

<p>(e) make arrangements to provide opportunities to learn Welsh—</p> <p>(i) for the education workforce,</p> <p>(ii) in the workplace, and</p> <p>(iii) for people over the compulsory education age;</p>	<p>The Education Workforce Welsh learning programme</p> <p>The Working Welsh programme</p> <p>The Onwards with Welsh programme for 16-25 year olds</p> <p>Community-based and virtual adult Welsh learning</p>
<p>(f) design and develop Welsh language learning provision for people over the compulsory education age, or facilitate such design and development;</p>	<p>The Centre designs and develops Welsh learning provision, working in partnership to tailor and contextualise.</p>
<p>(g) develop and maintain a national Welsh language learning curriculum for people over the compulsory school age;</p>	<p>The Centre has developed and maintains a Learn Welsh curriculum. The curriculum draws on various other curricula in different contexts, and aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It also leads the 700-strong Learn Welsh workforce to implement the curriculum by introducing resources and training.</p>
<p>(h) collect and publish data, at least once every 12 months, on Welsh learners above the compulsory school age.</p>	<p>The Centre is a statutory data publisher and has established robust data structures to comply with the code of practice and publish data annually. The Centre's data includes post-16 learners that are learning Welsh, and forms the basis of all the Centre's planning work.</p>

We believe that, considering the Centre's current structure and funding, further extending the work programme for the Education Workforce will be the biggest additional cost in terms of the Institute's functions.

6.5 It's vital that sufficient funding is secured to plan and provide language training to the education workforce on a much larger scale than the Centre is currently able to do. The explanatory memorandum refers to moving resources from other parts of the system. The Centre has experienced this when attracting additional funding from various Welsh Government policy departments, and is therefore aware that operating in this way is possible. However, there is a need for certainty when establishing the Institute as to the exact budget that will allow a programme at the right scale for extending the Welsh learning programme for the education workforce.

The Centre is grateful for the opportunity to be part of the consultation process. It is excited about the possibilities of continuing to evolve its work as part of the Institute. The Centre supports the principles and ambition of the Welsh Language and Education in order to ensure that Welsh belongs to everyone.

Dona Lewis
Chief
Executive

The National Centre for Learning Welsh

[Estyn inspection of The National Centre for Learning Welsh April 2024](#)
[2021 Rapid Review](#)
[Annual Report 2023-24 The National Centre for Learning Welsh](#)

WLE 16

Ymateb gan: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Response from: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Written Evidence

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (the Coleg) welcomes this opportunity to submit written evidence and to come before the Committee to give oral evidence on 17 October as part of the scrutiny process on the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

The Coleg Cymraeg creates and promotes training and study opportunities in the Welsh language by working with further education colleges, schools, universities, apprenticeship providers and employers. We inspire and encourage everyone to use their Welsh language skills.

The aim of the Coleg is to build a Welsh language and bilingual education and training system that is open to everyone and to develop bilingual workforces, including the education workforce itself.

1. The general principles of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill and the need for legislation to achieve the stated policy intention.

1.1. The Coleg welcomes the general principles of the Bill and is of the view that legislation is essential to achieve the policy intentions. Legislating in this manner is the way to ensure that the policy intentions are a priority for all relevant stakeholders, and will lay the foundation for the type of collaboration that will be necessary to ensure success. Beyond legislation, there will be a need for sufficient funding and collaborative approaches that will generate enthusiasm and goodwill.

1.2. **Part 1: Promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh language:** We very much welcome the fact that the Bill places a number of elements from the Welsh Language Strategy on a statutory basis, including the target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050, and the requirement to set targets for increasing the use of Welsh in the workplace and socially. We are of the view that giving these provisions a statutory basis will be a significant and indispensable driver for action at local and national levels. Similarly, we welcome the principle of setting targets for increasing the provision of Welsh language education and increasing the number of people learning Welsh, and the emphasis placed on transmission of the Welsh language. We agree that setting criteria to measure progress is necessary, as is putting clear reporting arrangements in place.

1.3. The Coleg strongly agrees with the stronger role specified in the Bill for the Welsh Language Commissioner in relation to the Welsh Language Strategy. We also support the requirement to review the Welsh Language Standards in order to harness the potential of

their significant capacity to support the delivery of the Bill's policy aims, especially in order to reflect the proposed Code to describe Welsh language ability.

- 1.4. **Part 2: Describing Welsh language ability:** We see tremendous potential in the innovative intention of creating a Code to describe Welsh language ability based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The Coleg is of the view that such a code would create consistency that would lay a solid foundation for linguistic planning across sectors including statutory education, post-compulsory education and workforces, and facilitate strategic planning and collaboration to achieve the objectives of the Bill and the Welsh Language Strategy.
- 1.5. **Part 3: Welsh language education:** Since the education sector for pupils of compulsory school age is critical to any growth in the number of speakers and to increasing the use of the language – within the sector and far beyond – we welcome the fact that the Bill provides a statutory basis for mechanisms to plan and measure progress in the sector. We agree with the principle of designating a language category for each school, and that this provides a basis for statutory planning requirements at school level (delivery plans) and at local authority level (local strategic plans, in Part 4), including the requirement to provide and encourage demand for late immersion education. Although we support the general principles of this Part of the Bill, we have some more specific comments below in section 3 and sections 4.3-4.4.
- 1.6. **Part 4: Planning Welsh Language Education and Learning:** The Coleg agrees with the requirement for Welsh Ministers to prepare a National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh as a vehicle for planning and ensuring progress over time, including by imposing targets on other bodies and monitoring achievement against those targets, and reporting publicly on them.
- 1.7. However, there is one matter of general principle that is of significant concern to the Coleg which relates to the scope of the National Framework.
- 1.8. Currently, only indirect references are made in Part 4 of the Bill to tertiary education in the context of the National Framework:
 - 23(3)(e)(ii) and 28(2)(d)(ii) in relation to encouraging progression in teaching Welsh and education through the medium of Welsh for pupils of compulsory school age
 - 23(4)(c) in relation to opportunities to 'learn Welsh' in the sector; we interpret 'learn Welsh' as learning Welsh linguistic skills, rather than education through the medium of Welsh
- 1.9. At present, therefore, there is no direct reference in the Bill to Welsh-medium and bilingual tertiary education in relation to the National Framework. Estyn, in its written evidence to the Committee, has said "Apart from the duty to engage with Medr on the

framework, there is insufficient clarity of how the framework and other duties in the Bill fit into Medr's duties..."¹.

1.10. We understand that it is the Welsh Government's policy intention that tertiary education will fall within the scope of the National Framework. The Coleg would welcome this policy intention, but at present, Part 4 of the Bill does not provide clearly for this, and neither does the Explanatory Memorandum. As a result, we feel that a crucial opportunity is being missed to ensure a comprehensive strategic planning and implementation framework that would facilitate progression routes for learners.

1.11. Extending the definition of 'Welsh language education' in section 35 to include tertiary education would ensure that the policy intention, and the subsequent responsibilities and expectations, are completely clear.

1.12. Having confirmed that tertiary education is within the scope of the National Framework, it would be sensible to add the Coleg to the list of bodies that the Welsh Ministers must consult when preparing or amending the Framework, in section 26(1).

1.13. Furthermore, section 23(3)(e)(ii) specifically refers to encouraging progression. Such encouragement will not be sufficient in itself, without the existence of appropriate progression routes. The Bill could make provisions to reduce the risk of insufficient progression routes by amending the clause to refer to 'encouraging **and maintaining** progression'. The Coleg is of the view that this would likely lead to strategic planning that would focus on ensuring appropriate progression routes.

1.14. **Part 5: National Institute for Learning Welsh (the Athrofa):** The Coleg agrees with the basic principles of this Part of the Bill.

1.15. Resolving the issue we have raised regarding the definition of 'Welsh language education' in Part 4 of the Bill would avoid any potential ambiguity regarding remits and would provide a foundation for effective collaboration between Medr, the Coleg and the Athrofa.

2. Are there any potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions and does the Bill take account of them?

2.1. The Coleg sees the potential to strengthen the Bill in a way that would help to avoid some obvious barriers, and increase the likelihood of achieving the policy objectives.

2.2. **The education workforce:** In responding to the White Paper, the Coleg (and a significant number of other key stakeholders) noted concerns regarding the extent to which the Bill's laudable ambitions are dependent on ensuring a sufficient education workforce. We know how much of a challenge that is at present, and in order to achieve the ambition, an even bigger supply will be needed.

¹ business.senedd.wales/documents/s153928/Paper%206%20Estyn.pdf

- 2.3. We recognise the important role the Bill gives the Athrofa in relation to the 'development of the education workforce for the purpose of improving Welsh language teaching' and 'to provide opportunities to learn Welsh to the education workforce'. That is essential, but it is not in itself enough; there are wider issues that need consideration.
- 2.4. The Coleg supports the Welsh Language Commissioner's view in her evidence to the Committee that "this priority could be expressed more clearly by placing a duty in the Bill on Welsh Ministers to produce and publish a Welsh in Education Workforce Plan as part of the National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh."²

3. The appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation

- 3.1. We have a concern about one specific area, which relates to school language categories. The Bill outlines the three proposed language categories [9(2)], giving Welsh Ministers the power to make regulations to 'specify the amount of Welsh language education provided for each language category, including a minimum provision of Welsh language education' [10(1)].
- 3.2. The Coleg agrees that regulations are the appropriate place for the detail of the categories, and we recognise that the Bill makes some provisions regarding the categories that will help shape the work of Ministers in drawing up the regulations (e.g. setting Welsh language 'learning goals' by category).
- 3.3. However, we are of the view that the power to make regulations in this area is too open-ended.
- 3.4. Firstly, we suggest that it is necessary to state clearly on the face of the Bill that the 'amount of Welsh language education to be provided in the school' applies to all pupils within the relevant range (pupils of compulsory school age, within relevant school years, and, in two-stream schools, within the stream designated in the language category in question). There is a need to ensure that the 'amount of provision of Welsh language education' cannot be an average across cohorts within the school where some receive a higher amount of provision, and others a lower amount. If there are different amounts of provision for different groups within the school, they will need to be designated under different categories.
- 3.5. Secondly, there would be a risk to the policy objectives of the Bill if the regulations failed to define with sufficient clarity, in relation to the category 'Primarily Welsh Language', the equivalent of the current 3P category where pupils follow at least 90% of the areas of learning and experience, and school activities outside the classroom, in Welsh. The Welsh Government recognises the essential role of 'Welsh-medium' education for producing Welsh

² business.senedd.wales/documents/s153711/Paper%201%20Welsh%20Language%20Commissioner.pdf

speakers, from all backgrounds, who are confident to use the language in various contexts (including progression routes through tertiary education to the workforce).

3.6. We would not wish to see a lack of clarity on the face of the Bill leading to regulations that could allow the definition of Welsh-medium education to be weakened, which could in turn undermine the ability of the education system to reach the targets set through the National Framework.

4. Are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill?

4.1. The Coleg is concerned about possible unintended consequences in three areas:

- Tertiary education
- The protection of Welsh-medium education in schools
- Welsh as an academic subject

4.2. **Tertiary education:** The ambiguity we have highlighted above (1.8-1.11) regarding the definition and relevance of the tertiary sector in Part 4 of the Bill could lead to unintended consequences such as ambiguity and misunderstanding about responsibilities, and missed opportunities to ensure holistic strategic planning that would lay the foundations for progression routes for learners.

4.3. **The protection of Welsh-medium education in schools:** The Bill's intention to move all schools in Wales along a linguistic continuum is clear and to be greatly welcomed; this is the only way to ensure, over time, that every pupil in Wales will have the opportunity to become an independent or proficient Welsh user.

4.4. However, we are concerned that the lack of distinction in some parts of the Bill between 'Welsh-medium education' and 'teaching Welsh' (as a 'second language') could lead to a lack of focus on protecting and increasing 'Welsh-medium education', which is so essential in achieving the objectives of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy, and the Bill itself. The Bill must be crystal clear in this regard in order to provide a basis for the Framework to set clear, unambiguous targets. Any reduction in the number of pupils in Welsh-medium education would endanger progression routes through tertiary education and eventually into bilingual workforces.

4.5. **Welsh as an academic subject:** another element of the Bill in which a lack of clarity could lead to unintended consequences, and to important missed opportunities, relates to Welsh as an academic subject (e.g. GCSE Welsh, A level Welsh, Welsh degree).

4.6. The Coleg is of the view that a specific focus is needed in the Bill, and within the National Framework, on Welsh as an academic subject, especially for learners above compulsory school age, and that this is not currently possible, as it cannot be distinguished from the categories listed in 23(1)(a)-(c).

4.7. Studying Welsh as a subject is necessary but insufficient to create independent Welsh users (B2). The study of Welsh as a subject must be reinforced with learning experiences through

the medium of Welsh in other areas of learning. A distinction in the Framework between Welsh-medium education and education in Welsh as a subject would allow the creation of levers and metrics to ensure that the 'amount of Welsh language education provided' in a school is deep enough and wide enough to create users who can use the language beyond the Welsh class.

- 4.8. Although Welsh is a mandatory part of the curriculum for every school year in the statutory period, including Years 10 and 11, the pattern of post-16 provision is extremely fragile. We know that it can be challenging to convince learners to study the subject, for various reasons; but even when a group of learners are keen to do so, the provision is not necessarily available.
- 4.9. Education in Welsh as an academic subject is the main means of creating proficient users (C1 and C2). In practice, it is only by protecting and promoting A Level Welsh (First Language and Second Language) that it is possible to create significant workforces with advanced skills (C1 or C2) in the Welsh language, especially teachers who can teach Welsh or teach through the medium of Welsh and Welsh tutors. Growing these workforces is key in order to achieve the objectives of the Bill.
- 4.10. We are of the view, therefore, that there could be significant advantages in including Welsh as an academic subject as one of the categories in section 23(1) of the areas Welsh Ministers will be required to address in the National Framework, in the context of the Welsh language strategy.

Agenda Item 3

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr)

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

WLE 18

Ymateb gan: Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil (Medr)

Response from: Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr)

1. Medr – who we are

- 1.1 The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr), as introduced by the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 (TER Act), became operational on 1 August 2024. Medr is responsible for funding and regulating tertiary education and research providers in Wales. We fund and regulate apprenticeship providers, further education Colleges, local authorities and Universities, providing oversight of adult community learning, apprenticeships, further education, higher education and local authority maintained sixth form provision.
- 1.2 In discharging our funding and regulatory duties, we have to take account of eleven strategic duties set out in TER Act.
 - Promoting lifelong learning
 - Promoting equality of opportunity
 - Encouraging participation in tertiary education
 - Promoting continuous improvement in tertiary education
 - Promotion of research and innovation
 - Promoting collaboration and coherence in tertiary education and research
 - Contributing to a sustainable and innovative economy
 - Promoting tertiary education through the medium of Welsh
 - Promoting a civic mission
 - Promoting a global outlook
 - Promoting collaboration between providers of tertiary education and trade unions
- 1.3 We are currently consulting on our draft strategic plan.¹ The plan sets out our strategic aims, which take account of the strategic duties above. One of the strategic aims we are consulting on is **“To encourage greater use of the Welsh Language, increasing demand for and participation in, learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh”**. In delivering on this strategic aim, supported by our new funding and regulatory levers, we are committed to meeting the policy ambitions the Welsh Language and Education Bill is looking to enable. Central to the delivery of our strategic aim is a commitment, working with other stakeholders, to develop a national plan

¹ This can be found on our website [Medr Strategic Plan 2024](#)

for tertiary education, responding to the Welsh Government's strategic priority² to:

“Develop a plan to increase and improve the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium education and assessment in the whole of the tertiary system recognising the role of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, as the designated person under Section 9 of the 2022 Act and Qualifications Wales as the independent qualifications regulator. This is a key part of the seamless pathway for learners into the tertiary education of their choosing.”

2. Overview

- 2.1 We support the bold ambitions set out by Government in Cymraeg 2050 to reach the target of a million Welsh speakers. Education, as a whole (early years, compulsory, and tertiary education), has a significant role in supporting Government to meet this target and to ensure that the Welsh language thrives and Welsh-speaking communities are supported and strengthened.
- 2.2 The Bill, as currently drafted, goes a long way to enabling the Welsh Government’s ambition in Cymraeg 2050, but our view is that some general improvements can be made in the high level areas set out below. These amendments should ensure that the Bill provides further clarity around the roles of different organisations, particularly reflecting the role of Medr and how the Bill fits in the wider tertiary education system. The use of clearer definitions reflecting the distinctions between the learning of the Welsh language, Welsh as a subject in itself, and learning delivered through the medium of Welsh or bi-lingually, will provide helpful clarity and direction for all stakeholders. There is also a need to be clearer on the financial implications of the change required, particularly in relation to the workforce and the cost of provision.

Clarity around roles of organisations

- 2.3 We understand the policy intention is to mirror current arrangements and, in the context of tertiary education, focus on increasing the number of people speaking Welsh and improving people’s ability to speak Welsh. However, it is our view that, the roles of some organisations in the tertiary education sector, particularly Medr and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, are not clearly set out in either the Bill or the explanatory memorandum. Whilst we recognise it is for Welsh Government to set high level policy, the absence of clearly referring to the role of Medr, provides some ambiguity around how the national framework will be developed. Additionally, clarity around the role of the new National Institute for Learning Welsh will be strengthened with reference to how it will operate in tertiary education alongside both Medr and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

² As set out on the Welsh Government website [Statement of strategic priorities for tertiary education and research and innovation \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

2.4 These comments are set out in the context of ensuring coherence and clarity for those who operate in the tertiary education system. Medr was established following recommendations set out in the Hazelkorn Review³, which highlighted the potential for coherence to be improved across the tertiary education sector in Wales. The Bill, as currently drafted, could be improved by having a greater focus on the practical benefits for learners of coherence in the tertiary sector, including Welsh Language provision. The changes proposed by this Bill may lead to increased demands on tertiary education providers and, unless properly understood and accounted for in the context of the whole system, this could negatively impact on delivery of the stated aims, or on the outcomes for the learner.

Need for clearer definitions

2.5 Further improvements could also be made through resolving some of the ambiguity in the language used throughout the Bill. We recognise that Medr also needs to pay further attention to the language it uses in this area. From our perspective, that ambiguity is largely manifested through the Bill when making references to types of learning that could fit into the definition of describing the learning of the Welsh language, Welsh as a subject in itself, and learning delivered through the medium of Welsh or bi-lingually. Also it needs to be clear where a catch all term may be needed. Increasing the numbers of people learning Welsh language skills, studying Welsh as a subject in itself, and learning through the medium of Welsh is critical to the achievement of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Resolving this ambiguity, alongside further descriptions of other organisations and their roles and responsibilities in this policy area, should help clarify arrangements.

2.6 In this area, we think the Bill has an opportunity to improve the clarity of definitions in use for the entire sector. It is likely that the terms and definitions used in this Bill will become the adopted language for all the organisations impacted by it, as they look to demonstrate compliance with the legislation. If the terms and definitions within the legislation are clear and recognisable, then it may be easier for organisations that are key to delivering this transformation to communicate the change effectively and deliver on our collective ambitions. We think that improved and clearer definitions, that can be widely understood, should be developed through discussions between Welsh Government officials and key stakeholders as this Bill develops.

Clarity on resources

2.7 To deliver the Welsh Government aspirations in Cymraeg 2050, we recognise the significant change that is required across Government, public bodies, education institutions and society as a whole. This requires collaboration and strong leadership which we, at Medr, are committed to providing within the tertiary education sector. However, we need collectively to recognise that

³ This can be found here on the Welsh Government website <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/towards-2030-a-framework-for-building-a-world-class-post-compulsory-education-system-for-wales.pdf>

fundamental reform and significantly increasing performance will be challenging with the current financial constraints and challenging budgets. Honest, transparent conversations will be required to target funding where these ambitions can most effectively be delivered, taking account of other challenges we, across the education system in Wales, have to urgently address, including improving participation, equity and reducing social disadvantage across Wales.

- 2.8 We have to be collectively cognisant that these reforms can only be delivered by a sufficiently well resourced and upskilled workforce across the whole education system in Wales. That also includes having sufficient capacity for research in the medium of Welsh, which is critical to supporting a knowledgeable workforce capable of teaching through the medium of Welsh. The workforce requirements to deliver this change are not sufficiently recognised in the Bill in terms of the financial implications. As the Bill is scrutinised during the different stages of the Senedd process, this needs to be recognised.

3. General Principles of the Welsh Language Education Bill

Part One – Promotion and Facilitation of the Welsh Language

- 3.1 As we have stated, we are supportive of the Bill, and recognise the policy rationale for including the target for a million speakers on a statutory footing, alongside the setting of some more specific targets in Section 1 of the Bill. As we collectively take steps to deliver the ambition of the strategy, it needs to be ensured that the intended policy outcomes are not seen solely through the lens of targets. There will need to be a more nuanced approach to balance monitoring of progress to achieve the targets with ongoing support to those that are taking all reasonable steps to meet targets, but may not be meeting them. If there is an intention to set targets for tertiary education providers then it should be for Medr, using its regulatory and funding levers, to set these targets.
- 3.2 We recognise that, with such significant legislation, appropriate measures need to be put in place to enable the Welsh Language Commissioner to use their powers to support the Bill's ambition. The amendments to standards proposed in the Bill appear proportionate to that effect. It is important to also recognise, however, that Standards themselves are not the only tool to support the Commissioner to deliver the policy intent in this Bill. The recent steps by the Commissioner to develop a co-regulatory approach and the setting of regulatory outcomes, of which we are supportive, is one example of this.

Part Two – Describing Welsh Language Ability

- 3.3 Establishing the concept of different types of Welsh language user will be a significant development for tertiary education providers, as they build common reference levels into their programmes of study and their own recruitment policies. We will work with tertiary education providers, and other key

partners, to explore the most effective way for common reference levels to be used across tertiary education in Wales. We will also work with other public bodies to build those levels into our recruitment policies.

Part Three – Welsh Language Education

- 3.4 We support the measures taken in Part Three of the Bill. However, we feel there is insufficient recognition of our planning role in tertiary education and as a funder of provision in school-based sixth forms. School based sixth-forms are critical to the delivery of Welsh medium education and ensuring that the language thrives. However, those sixth forms cannot be separated from an overall school's function and there is a risk that in taking a school approach to Welsh language delivery, which is the correct approach, without recognising Medr's duties in relation to sixth-form provision risks increasing incoherence. To mitigate this, we recommend that the explanatory memorandum highlights that when a school, with a sixth form, prepares a Welsh language delivery plan, they must take into account Medr's regulatory requirements, particularly as set out in the Learner Engagement Code.

Part Four – National Framework

- 3.5 Medr has a strategic planning role as the funder and regulator of tertiary education in Wales. We have a duty to deliver on our legislative responsibilities, largely set out in the TER Act, and to take account of Welsh Government priorities in our strategic plan. Part of our role is to ensure that when we set out funding and regulatory arrangements for tertiary education, they are cognisant of arrangements Welsh Government puts in place for compulsory education. This is critical to enable learners to progress from compulsory education through to tertiary education. Bringing arrangements for compulsory education and the learning of the Welsh language into one framework, provides the opportunity for Medr to develop a complementary national plan for tertiary education where it has clear oversight for Welsh medium education and Welsh as a subject. However, whilst we understand that the intention of the framework is to only cover the role of the learning of the Welsh language in tertiary education, we feel the Bill could be strengthened to ensure clarity. As we take forward our strategic commitment to develop a national plan, we are in active dialogue with Welsh Government officials to work through any interdependencies with the proposed national framework.
- 3.6 Whilst the Bill defines how the framework takes account of compulsory education, it is not explicit how the framework will take account of tertiary education, particularly given there is no clear definition provided for Welsh language learning. The lack of a definition and no explicit recognition of Medr's role in the explanatory memorandum means that references to the tertiary education sector could be read to imply that the framework covers Welsh medium education and Welsh subjects in tertiary education not just 'learn Welsh' provision. This particularly has the potential for creating confusion and incoherence in the tertiary education sector in the context of the references to tertiary education as set out in sections 23 (3) and (4) of the Bill,

and given that Welsh Government has set a strategic priority for Medr to develop a plan to increase and improve the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium education and assessment in the whole of the tertiary system. Our recommendation would be that, in the explanatory memorandum, the role of Medr is clearly set out in relation to Welsh as a subject and Welsh medium provision in tertiary education and being clear that it is not within scope of the Welsh Government framework. These additions will provide clarity of the context in which this national framework will be developed, and how it will be developed. This will provide certainty on the roles and responsibilities for Medr, Welsh Government, the tertiary education sector and other key partners such as the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (as the designated body to provide Medr with advice to promote tertiary education through the medium of Welsh).

- 3.7 In recognition of Medr's role, the Bill should also be amended to reflect that when a local authority prepares a local Welsh in education strategic plan it consults Medr and also takes account of any proposals for restructuring sixth-form provision in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- 3.8 We welcome the requirement that local education strategic plans include local further education institutions as statutory consultees. This should also include other tertiary education providers, including local higher education institutions, aligning with the TER Act's clearer driver for greater collaboration across education in Wales. There needs to be better join up of planning and information sharing at all levels of the education system, including between compulsory and tertiary education providers, so that clearer pathways are developed across education in Wales informed by learner's Welsh language skills. This will enable tertiary education providers to not just increase and improve tertiary education and research through the medium of Welsh, and Welsh as a subject, but also to encourage greater promotion of the Welsh language across learners' broader tertiary experience. Provision in the tertiary education sector should build on learners' existing language skills and confidence, as well as creating new Welsh speakers. This need will inform how we deliver on our strategic plan commitments and develop our new regulatory and funding system.

Part Five - National Institute for Learning Welsh

- 3.9 We view the National Centre for Learning Welsh as an important stakeholder and we are engaging in discussions with them as to how we can, collectively, provide clarity to the tertiary education sector. In the future, we will treat the National Institute for Learning Welsh (the Institute) in the same manner. We will work closely to ensure that: there is no duplication of our funding with its allocations; there is no additional administrative burden on providers between our requests and the Institute's requests for data; information is shared to enable both Medr and the Institute to make evidence informed decisions; and tertiary education providers work with the Institute to support learners to study through the medium of Welsh.

- 3.10 In the same context as our comments above, and given the references to tertiary education in this part of the Bill, the lack of reference to Medr's role and that of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, alongside the absence of definitions for language learning and language learning providers creates further potential for ambiguity. We understand that the Bill, as drafted, refers to Welsh language learning in this part of the Bill as solely learning to improve Welsh language skills in the tertiary education sector. Our recommendation would be that clearly setting out definitions to clarify this in legislation and the roles of Medr, the Institute and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in the explanatory memorandum would provide helpful context to frame the new statutory duties for the Institute.
- 3.11 We have general duties in section 52 and 53 of the TER Act around the quality of tertiary education. The introduction of the Institute would bring it within scope of some of Medr's quality powers. Clarity of how Welsh Government, the Institute, Medr and Estyn (which will inspect the provision offered by the Institute) operate in that context needs to be appropriately considered. We intend to discuss this further with all parties to ensure that there is sufficient clarity of arrangements for all organisations regarding roles and responsibilities, and to ensure coherence across the tertiary education sector enabling good learner outcomes.
- 3.12 Additionally, the proposals for providing powers for the Institute in relation to equality of opportunity, continuous improvement, and setting quality frameworks need to be considered in the context that the centres that deliver the provision for Welsh language learning are part of wider tertiary education providers subject to Medr requirements for the same matters. There is a risk with the Bill, as drafted, that providers could be subject to additional burden if the requirements imposed by the Institute and Medr are not aligned. Medr is currently set out as a statutory consultee when the Institute develops its strategic plan, but we would also expect the Institute to take account of the requirements set by Medr for tertiary education providers when delivering their duties in sections 39 and 40 of the Bill. This could be achieved through putting a duty in legislation on the Institute, or through expectations of ways of working, in the explanatory memorandum.
- 3.13 There could also be improvements to the Bill by ensuring that learner engagement is a duty for the Institute, taking account of the broader Learner Engagement Code that Medr will develop to fulfil the duties in the TER Act. This will be in line with the principle that learners are at the heart of the tertiary education system in Wales.

4. Any potential obstacles to the implementation and consideration of the provisions of the Bill (including the commencement and the United Kingdom Internal Market Act)

- 4.1 We have no comments to make on this matter.

5. The appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the Explanatory Memorandum)

5.1 Appropriate powers are being proposed to ensure the Senedd discusses significant changes made through regulations. As noted above, some of the areas potentially in scope of regulations would intersect with Medr's role but the suggested amendments should address this.

6. Financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum).

6.1 As we have noted in our overview, substantial investment will be required to implement the Bill in full. This includes recognising the comparatively high cost of delivering Welsh medium provision where provision is largely in English and substantial investment is required to maintain and grow Welsh medium provision.

6.2 There are also substantial challenges in relation to having sufficient numbers of teaching staff with the skills to deliver education and training through the medium of Welsh. Currently initial teacher education providers are struggling to recruit to their current trainee numbers, which has implications for the availability of future teaching staff, without whom it will be exceptionally difficult to deliver an increased volume and range of Welsh medium education.

6.3 Tertiary education providers are under considerable financial pressure in the current context, and delivering growth of Welsh medium provision without additional resources will be extremely challenging, and represents a risk both to the delivery of this Bill, and to achieving the targets set out in Cymraeg 2050.

Agenda Item 4

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ar Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee on the Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

WLE 20

Ymateb gan: ColegauCymru

Response from: CollegesWales

Re: ColegauCymru evidence on the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

ColegauCymru is an education charity; we promote the public benefit of post-compulsory education and learning. As the representative organisation of all colleges in Wales, we are well positioned to be able to outline to the Committee the further education (FE) sector's views on the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

ColegauCymru is supportive of the main aim of the Bill, to ensure that all pupils reach the end of compulsory school age as independent Welsh users, although we would welcome some clarity on a range of matters set out in this letter. The response is structured based on the Terms of Reference of the inquiry.

Promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh language

The Bill sets out ambitious targets for the promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh Language and, whilst we admire and support the ambition of the Bill, expanding Welsh language education at *all* levels is central to its success. The Bill's success depends on teacher recruitment and development, accessible programmes and support for non-Welsh speaking families, all of which will require investment from government. Significant community engagement activities could be required to achieve high level of buy in, especially in areas with lower numbers of Welsh speakers. Building confidence in learners' Welsh language skills is critical to their progression to the next stage of their learning or work through the medium of Welsh and this should be encouraged formally (for example, through the curriculum), and informally (for example, through extra-curricular activities).

Describing Welsh language ability

ColegauCymru believes that integrating Welsh language proficiency with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) will help to ensure consistency and credibility. This standardisation would allow for clear comparisons between Welsh and other languages. Further, we agree that developing a tailored Code for Welsh language proficiency provides detailed guidance specific to Welsh, addressing its unique linguistic and cultural context. As benchmarks are developed and established, it is important that due regard is given to assessment, ensuring that assessments are fair, inclusive and accessible to students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Welsh language education

Whilst we recognise a range of positive aspects, including clear structures for accountability for delivering Welsh education based on classification, and enhancing inclusivity and broader access to Welsh language learning, there are several potential concerns. Success of the Bill is dependent on: the workforce - in recruitment, training, and



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resourcing; as well as implementation timescales, especially in higher concentration English speaking areas.

We would welcome a greater breadth of qualifications being made available through the medium of Welsh, assuming funding is available to support the workforce to deliver them. There is a need to develop a coherent and connected system of qualifications that are flexible and valued by learners and employers alike. This would also mean having the workforce in place with sufficient Welsh language skills to deliver and assess these qualifications.

Due regard must be given to the implications of the proposed changes on the FE sector. If the B2 target is expected to be achieved at GCSE level, what is the expectation on FE colleges in supporting those learners who had not managed to meet the B2 level? Given the changes to the GCSE structures, this could be challenging to achieve. In this context it is worth noting the implications of the recent changes to the GCSE Maths and English qualifications. It is important that any implications for learners taking a Welsh GCSE resit in post-16 education are carefully and fully considered, both in terms of the legislation and also subsequent qualification development.

Planning Welsh language education and learning

We welcome the approach spanning all life stages - from nursery to adulthood, ensuring that Welsh language education is accessible at every age. Promoting and expanding Welsh medium education provision at all levels will help to increase fluency and usage among learners, vital for the language's growth. The inclusion of adult education in workplaces and communities is welcome, in supporting a more inclusive Welsh speaking society. That said, the workforce is a concern here - attracting and training enough Welsh-proficient practitioners, particularly in lower concentration Welsh speaking areas is a concern. The five-year review periods of the framework provides a welcome structure, although the framework may need greater flexibility to address challenges as they arise, without waiting for the formal review period. Structured planning is necessary to address any gaps in Welsh language provision and to ensure long-term growth. We recognise that long term planning requires an ongoing financial commitment, but it is critical that the sector is enabled to plan long term.

National Welsh Language Learning Institute

While the Institute has clear goals, including leadership in Welsh language education, developing materials, and planning workforce development, Colegau Cymru would welcome further clarity on definitions in relation to the tertiary sector to avoid any potential confusion. Currently, learning Welsh in the tertiary sector (the responsibility of the National Centre for Learning Welsh / the proposed Institute) is fairly well defined, but developing Welsh medium and bilingual provision in the tertiary sector (the responsibility of Medr and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol) is less well defined, and therefore potentially open to interpretation. Clear coordination with current multiple Welsh language and education bodies and agencies is critical to avoid duplication and ensure a unified approach. The effective implementation of the Institute will depend on adequate funding and resources, and should be adaptable to changes and feedback to remain effective as Welsh language education evolves.

Barriers to the Bill's implementation

Successful implementation of the Bill ultimately depends on resources - attracting and retaining Welsh speaking staff is critical. Workforce development is vital, and we must seek to protect the opportunities that currently exist for staff to learn



Welsh, as well as create new ones. Colegau Cymru wholeheartedly recognises the challenging squeeze on the public purse, but the total funding envelope must be increased. Only with adequate resources in place can this Bill meet its ambitions.

Financial implications

If Wales is to meet its target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050, significant investment in education, and specifically teacher recruitment and development is required. This includes not only recruiting new Welsh speaking staff, but also upskilling existing staff. We have seen the success of these initiatives across the FE sector. For example, Coleg Gwent, supported by Coleg Cymraeg Cendlaethol, has increased bilingual learners on key areas such as childcare and health care from 7% to 52% over the last five years. It demonstrates the importance of sustained and planned investment in professional development to improve the quality and availability of Welsh medium provision. Training programmes and professional development initiatives will need to be expanded, which could require significant government investment. It may also mean that incentives are required to attract Welsh speaking teaching staff to areas of low levels of Welsh language use.

If we are to meet the million Welsh speakers by 2050 target, it is essential that a whole education system approach is taken. The FE sector, with its well-established links to employers, is critical to the success of Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 targets and, therefore, consideration must be given to ensuring robust transition arrangements for the new cohort of learners as a result of the changes to compulsory school education enabled by the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. Sustained investment in the FE workforce and resources for post-16 curriculum are essential to maintain the momentum in facilitating the use of Welsh language beyond post-16. The changes in the education landscape are an opportunity for us to redesign learning pathways, so that we have a coherent curriculum which enables positive progression for learners - whichever pathway they choose to follow through our system. Supporting these pathways must be underpinned by a fundamental right to high quality and independent information, advice and guidance, particularly at the key transition points. This advice and guidance would help support learners transitioning from pre-16 to post-16 provision, growing the numbers of learners who are studying bilingually or through the medium of Welsh.

We look forward to providing oral evidence to the Committee on the 17 October 2024. If you need any further information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

With best wishes,



David Hagendyk
Chief Executive



Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ar Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

WLE 15

Ymateb gan: Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru

Response from: National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW)

As key stakeholders in the skills development and vocational education landscape in Wales, we at NTfW, welcome the opportunity to respond to the proposed bill aimed at promoting the Welsh language. We fully recognise the importance of achieving the target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and the broader role the Welsh language plays in shaping the cultural and professional identity of the nation.

In particular, the bill's provisions that relate to the statutory basis for Welsh language education, language standards, and the classification of Welsh language users have direct implications for our work. We are committed to aligning our apprenticeship programs with the Welsh Government's goals, but we also believe the following considerations are crucial to ensuring the successful integration of Welsh language requirements into the apprenticeship system:

Integration of Welsh Language in Apprenticeship Programs

Welsh Language Learning Opportunities: The bill should explicitly address how Welsh language learning will be integrated into apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships are already tightly structured to provide vocational skills, and adding Welsh language training must be carefully managed to ensure it does not disrupt the core vocational learning outcomes. Incidental Welsh is used in the provider setting and with staff as well as learners undertaking a Welsh language and Culture unit within their induction. This will need to be considered with the support of Medr as the strategic driver for Post 16 education in Wales as they develop their strategic plan and policies.

Tailored Language Support: It will be important to provide tailored Welsh language training that corresponds to the needs and proficiency levels of apprentices, especially for apprentices in sectors where bilingualism may be essential i.e., Health and Social Care.

Impact on Apprenticeship Providers and Employers

Resources for Training Providers: The bill should make provisions for additional resources, both financial and educational, for apprenticeship providers to implement Welsh language training effectively. This could include funding for bilingual training materials, Welsh language assessors, and support staff. Providers have received consistent support from colleagues at Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Our ask would be that this support continues to help strengthen the use of the Welsh language in the Post 16 sectors.

Employer Readiness: Apprenticeships are often a collaboration between training providers and employers. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may not have the capacity to support Welsh language education on top of their existing commitments. There should be guidance and incentives for employers to support Welsh language development within their apprenticeship programs.

Flexibility in Implementation

Sector-Specific Considerations: Not all sectors have the same language needs, so the bill should allow flexibility in how Welsh language goals are applied across industries. For example, apprenticeships in healthcare or public services may have different Welsh language requirements compared to apprenticeships in engineering or IT. The bill should consider sector-specific Welsh language benchmarks to ensure that the language goals are meaningful and relevant.

Phased Approach: We recommend a phased approach to implementing the Welsh language learning goals in apprenticeships. This would allow providers and employers time to build capacity and adjust their programs to include Welsh language learning effectively, without compromising the quality of vocational training.

Collaboration with the National Welsh Language Learning Institute

Partnerships for Welsh Language Learning: The establishment of the National Welsh Language Learning Institute ('yr Athrofa Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol') presents an opportunity for apprenticeship providers to collaborate in the delivery of Welsh language training. We suggest the bill outlines clear mechanisms for how the Institute will work with apprenticeship providers to create accessible Welsh language programs that complement apprentices' vocational education, we suggest this is undertaken with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol as they already provide support, training, resources and work closely with providers.

Monitoring and Accountability

While the bill seeks to create a chain of accountability between linguistic planning at school, local authority, and national levels, it should also include specific provisions for how Welsh language goals will be monitored within apprenticeships. This could involve regular reviews of how Welsh language training is incorporated into apprenticeship frameworks, and how it contributes to the overall linguistic goals of Wales.

Codes and data

The design of a code of Welsh language ability would be welcomed as there is much confusion in this field. Questions arise as to how WBL learners would classify themselves e.g., through questionnaire, online test, structured tests?

The adoption of a CEFR type code could potentially clarify the position of learners in the 'non-fluent' category which is extremely varied.

Conclusion

We believe the bill represents a significant step toward the revitalisation of the Welsh language, and we are committed to playing our part in this national endeavour. However, we urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the specific needs and challenges faced by apprenticeship providers and employers are addressed within the legislative framework. By working collaboratively and ensuring adequate resources and flexibility, we can help apprentices acquire both the vocational and linguistic skills they need to thrive in a bilingual Wales.

We look forward to continuing dialogue on this important issue and working together to meet the goals of this bill.

Agenda Item 5.1

Additional Information from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru following the evidence session on 02 October 2024

The Welsh Government wants to establish a “clear line of accountability” at a national, local and school level for the planning of Welsh language education. Do you agree with what the Welsh Government wants to achieve and to what extent do you believe the Bill does this?

- ASCL Cymru agrees with the intent of the Bill but not with the ability of our system to address it at this time.
- Accountability without a workforce, the basic resource to deliver the outcomes required, is not appropriate
- One of the enabling objectives of CfW is the establishment of a new and clearly defined data and information ecosystem to support the establishment of a collaborative school improvement system. Additional "add on" accountability could distract from this
- Findings from a Welsh Government commissioned research report (<https://www.gov.wales/research-exploring-new-information-system-schools>) states that' Prior to the introduction of the CfW, there was also a disproportionate focus on learner attainment ..in the school system, which created unintended consequences including fostering a culture in which the use of quantitative data was skewed towards scrutiny and accountability.'
- ASCL believes that setting a broad numerical target linked to acquisition of the Welsh language and prioritising educational strategies and resources in this area may have an unintended consequence of distracting from urgent priority areas and impede the essential progress required. It is essential that current priority lies within the main policy drivers in Wales, namely, closing the attainment gap by tackling poverty and poor standards in literacy and numeracy, increasing curriculum engagement to improve attendance and behaviour and support for ALN.
- Welsh Government is currently moving towards a self-improving system based upon collaboration between schools, local authorities and Welsh government following the middle tier review led by Professor Dylan Jones (Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements: letter to the minister [HTML] | GOV.WALES). It has been proposed that this is focused upon a culture of collaborative improvement and collective responsibility in raising standards driven by professional agency and effective collaboration. ASCL believes that the Welsh Government intent to establish 'a clear line of accountability' conflicts with these professional principles and will have the unintended consequence of

placing pressure on schools to prioritise Welsh language acquisition above it's other critical national drivers.

How effective do you believe the system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans has been to date? What, if any, involvement do school leaders have in local authorities' planning and improvement of the provision of Welsh language education?

Not aware of involvement of school leaders. Aware that this has existed for some time but not aware of any collaborative input from school leaders consistently across LA's.

Agenda Item 5.2

Additional information from Mudiad Meithrin following the evidence session on 26 September 2024

Thank you for your e-mail, here are some additional comments for your attention.

To expand on the response provided, we could look at the example of Gwynedd where all statutory education provision is in Welsh (in primary). There is sometimes one child a year who will leave a Cylch Meithrin to go to a private school in the County. Indeed, the data of the last few years shows a progression rate of 100% to Welsh medium education in Gwynedd. This suggests that the education policy of the Local Authority has not contributed to a shift to the private sector. We don't have access to the data of children who go to private nurseries or childminders, but a significant percentage would go to statutory schools.

Agenda Item 5.3

Additional Information from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) Cymru following the evidence session on 02 October 2024

•The Welsh Government wants to establish a “clear line of accountability” at a national, local and school level for the planning of Welsh language education. Do you agree with what the Welsh Government wants to achieve and to what extent do you believe the Bill does this?

NAHT's view is that a “clear line of accountability” for Welsh language education is crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of the bill. Accountability at national, local, and school levels enables a coordinated and transparent approach to planning and delivering Welsh-medium education. It ensures that each layer of governance is responsible for its part in expanding the language’s use, growth, and sustainability. At the national level, clear accountability can drive effective policy and resourcing, ensuring that Welsh education is prioritized in budgetary decisions. However, For school leaders there would be a concern that an accountability framework, introduces unnecessary workload and results in unintended consequences

It would appear that the Welsh Language Bill supports this intention by setting out statutory responsibilities for different levels of government and institutions. It strengthens the legal framework surrounding the promotion and use of Welsh, with mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress. However, while the Bill establishes these responsibilities, the challenge lies in its practical enforcement and the provision of adequate resources, ensuring that accountability translates into real, measurable outcomes for Welsh language education.

•How effective do you believe the system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans has been to date? What, if any, involvement do school leaders have in local authorities’ planning and improvement of the provision of Welsh language education?

NAHT has seen some good examples of this. For example, in Caerphilly there has been some real successful because the WESP has been driven from early years up. Strong links with sustainable community and childcare/non maintained setting have also been key. The LA has hit its targets in reception and now is looking to build on these successes. The WESP is regularly reviewed via the LA's SMT and headteachers attend on a rolling programme. Headteachers also engage through the WESP forum which includes a range of stakeholders. There are very ambitious targets and strong political support.

Dear Lynne Neagle MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice,

We are writing to you to express our dismay, despair and disappointment at the devastating news that development of the Made for Wales British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE has been suspended due to "practical challenges".

There has long been strong support for developing a made-for-Wales BSL GCSE – and, until yesterday's announcement was published, we were absolutely delighted that BSL users in Wales would have the opportunity to achieve a GCSE in their own, legally recognised language, just as they can with English and Welsh. In addition to eradicating the inequality of opportunity, the development of the GCSE is a real chance to celebrate deaf culture and history in classrooms and create a more inclusive education system.

Indeed, Qualifications Wales has previously acknowledged a wide range of reasons why a made-for-Wales BSL GCSE is needed, including;

- Raising the profile of BSL in Wales to enable a more inclusive society.
- Giving more young people the opportunity to learn BSL. BSL has been visible on prime-time television programmes which has raised its profile generally and the visibility of positive role models could lead to more people wishing to learn BSL.
- Giving schools time to build capacity to deliver BSL at the higher levels of the progression steps.
- Helping to build a critical mass of BSL users and those who can understand BSL in the workforce of the future.

On 1 October, only a few days ago, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice said: "I think it is really important that we look at what we are doing in Wales. You know that Welsh Government is making provisions to promote and facilitate the use of BSL and its tactile forms in Wales, and we do think that a more collaborative, inclusive approach will be effective if we can have a positive impact on the BSL signing community of Wales." Yet, less than 24 hours later, the announcement suspending development of the GCSE has delivered the exact opposite.

To be clear, we consider this decision to be a step backwards for equality, inclusivity, and for the BSL community of Wales.

The promises to develop a BSL GCSE, like the campaign calling for its establishment, span years. You will be aware that in October 2018 the-then Petitions Committee called for the creation of the GCSE, a call that the Welsh Government agreed to in principle at the time. Communication between the government and Qualifications Wales on this, by our records, goes back to at least 2017. Deaf children and their hearing peers have long been looking forward to having the opportunity to study the GCSE. To receive this news, only a few short months after being told that the GCSE would be delayed, is heartbreaking for them. Given the amount of time and dedication from yourselves, Qualifications Wales and other external organisations, that has already gone into the establishment of the GCSE, it is our strong belief that this effort should not be wasted by scrapping the plans to launch the GCSE.

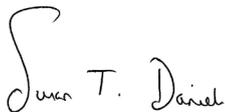
We're also deeply concerned about the message this sends to the people of Wales on the Welsh Government's commitment to support the deaf community and BSL, given it is also the government's intention to reject the upcoming BSL (Wales) Bill. Despite the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice's laudable comments on the floor of the Senedd highlighting the government's support of the language, the rejection of the GCSE and the Bill combined sends completely the opposite message.

In terms of the skills suite qualifications, it is our belief that this is not a sufficient replacement for the GCSE to facilitate wider use of BSL and to build that critical mass of BSL users for the future. The proposed BSL GCSE would have covered elements of deaf awareness, and deaf culture, which we know to be incredibly important context for students studying BSL. Additionally, a GCSE qualification would have unquestionable legitimacy in terms of progression into further and higher education, whereas we are unsure if this new qualification will hold that same standard. In short, the GCSE has the potential to greatly strengthen deaf children's opportunities in terms of post-16 education progression and consequently, their opportunities in later life.

We are keen to work with you to discuss the practical challenges to which Qualifications Wales has referred, and to demonstrate to you how the GCSE could be made a reality. We firmly believe that we can overcome these challenges and ensure the made-for-Wales BSL GCSE becomes a reality for those students in Wales who are so looking forward to taking the course.

We look forward to hearing from you and to meeting you to discuss this further at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive Officer
National Deaf Children's Society



Lindsay Foster
Executive Director
Signature

CC:

David Jones OBE DL, Chair of Qualifications Wales
Dawn Bowden MS, Minister for Children and Social Care
Jack Sargeant MS, Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership
Tom Giffard MS, Shadow Minister for Education
Cefin Campbell MS, Plaid Cymru Spokesperson for Education
Mark Isherwood MS, Chair of the Cross Party Groups for Deaf Issues and Disability
Buffy Williams MS, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Lynne Neagle MS
Cabinet Secretary for Education

10 October 2024

Young carers

Dear Lynne,

On 23 September I met with representatives of Carers' Trust to talk about the issues facing young carers in Wales. We discussed [the census data](#), which shows there are around 8,000 carers aged 5 to 17 in Wales, and the impact of education services on the lives of these children.

We discussed Carers' Trust's recently published report, '[Carers and classes: the education gap for young carers](#)', which finds that, in England:

- In 2022/23, young carers missed on average more than a month of their education (23 days of school), compared to 14 days for other pupils.
- Almost half (46%) of young carers at secondary school in England were persistently absent in 2022/23. This means they missed at least 10% of school. That's one day of school every fortnight.
- Almost half (48%) of young carers reported being bullied in the past year.
- More than two in five (44%) young carers frequently struggle to study for tests or exams because of the demands of their caring situation.

Unfortunately, the basic data underpinning these findings are not available in Wales as we do not have data that identifies young carers in education. In England, young carers were added to the school census for 2022-23, enabling us to understand better the potential educational impacts of having caring responsibilities for school-age children (and, consequently, to put in place interventions to help these children achieve their potential).

I note that Estyn's 2019 review stated that "there is a lack of reliable data to identify how many young carers there are in schools, PRUs and colleges across Wales", and that the Welsh Government committed subsequently to explore how to collect national data about young carers. However, I heard that little progress has been made in doing this. I understand, of course, that the pandemic has inevitably delayed the progress of work like this. However, it is now over 5 years since that commitment was made.

Please can you provide us with an update on this area of work? We would appreciate information about why there has been a delay in implementing the changes to the school census and the Welsh Government's next steps, including the timetables for implementing any proposed changes.

I would be grateful for your response no later than 22 November 2024.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Explainer: Welsh participation in higher education

August 2024

What do we mean by participation, participation rate and application rate?

When referring to *participation* in higher education, we mean anyone who has secured a place at university.

The *participation rate* is the proportion of 18-year-olds going to university. The size of the population can vary year-on-year, which is why the participation rate is a more helpful indicator of trends over time, rather than the number of people going to university.

The *application rate* is the proportion of 18-year-olds applying for university. Not necessarily everyone who applies will eventually take up a place at university.

What do the stats tell us?

Two key trends are cause for concern.

The participation rate in Wales has been dropping, and is lower than elsewhere in the UK. That means 18-year-olds in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland are more likely to go to university than their Welsh peers.

The latest UCAS data available demonstrates a continued drop in the proportion

Domicile	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
UK	36.0%	37.0%	37.5%	37.8%	38.9%	40.5%	43.3%	44.1%	42.1%	41.9%
England	36.1%	37.2%	37.9%	38.1%	39.5%	41.3%	43.9%	44.9%	43.0%	42.7%
Northern Ireland	48.2%	48.2%	47.7%	47.6%	46.9%	48.2%	52.3%	52.8%	51.1%	50.1%
Scotland	32.5%	32.8%	33.0%	32.8%	32.7%	32.3%	36.1%	35.8%	33.9%	33.9%
Wales	31.7%	32.9%	32.5%	32.7%	32.9%	33.6%	37.9%	38.1%	34.2%	33.8%
Total	36.0%	37.0%	37.5%	37.8%	38.9%	40.5%	43.3%	44.1%	42.1%	41.9%

of Welsh 18-year-olds applying to university.

The application rate is now **33.8%**, the lowest rate in the UK.

The gap between the rate in Wales and the rest of the UK has been increasing over time, and is now at its **widest point in 15 years**.

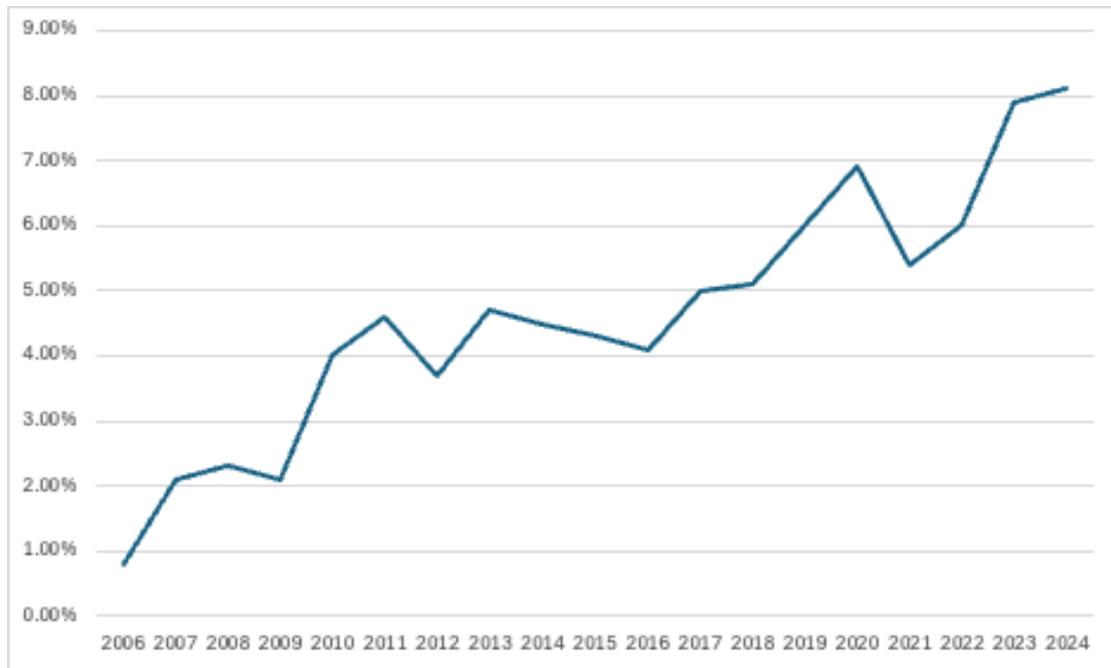


Figure 1: Gap in application rate between Wales and the UK as a whole, UCAS 30 June data

If we break it down to regions in England, only the North East of England (33.4%) has a lower participation rate than Wales (33.8%).

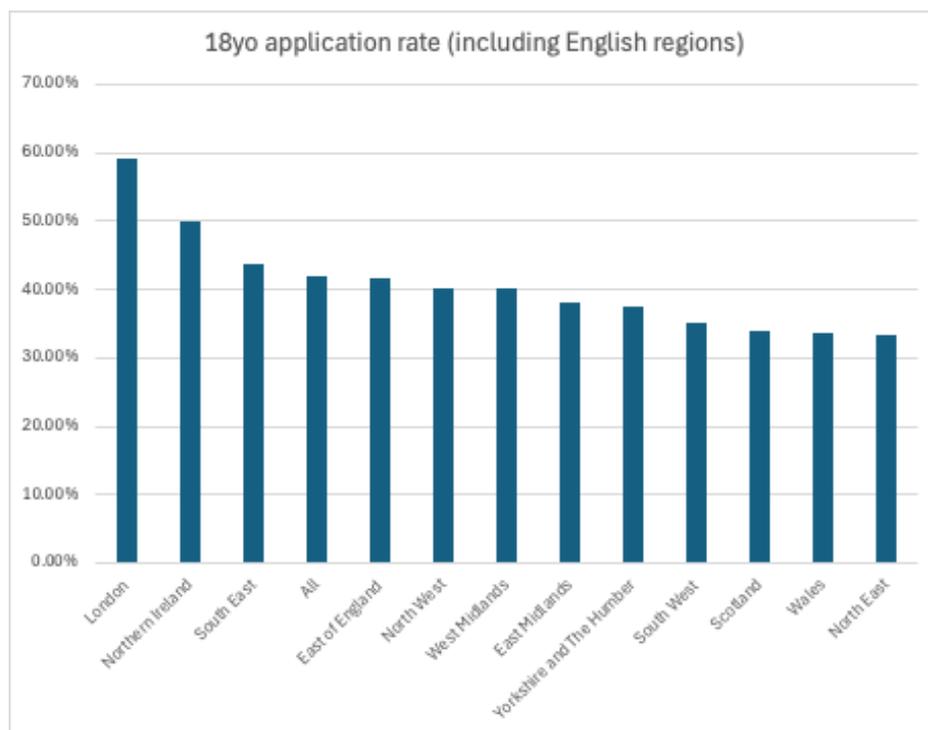


Figure 2: Application rate for 2024-25 academic year, by nation and English regions. UCAS 30 June data.

Furthermore, Wales has also seen a **drop in the application rate from quintile 1 of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation** (i.e. the most disadvantaged), whereas England and Scotland have seen an increase in application rate in the equivalent cohort.

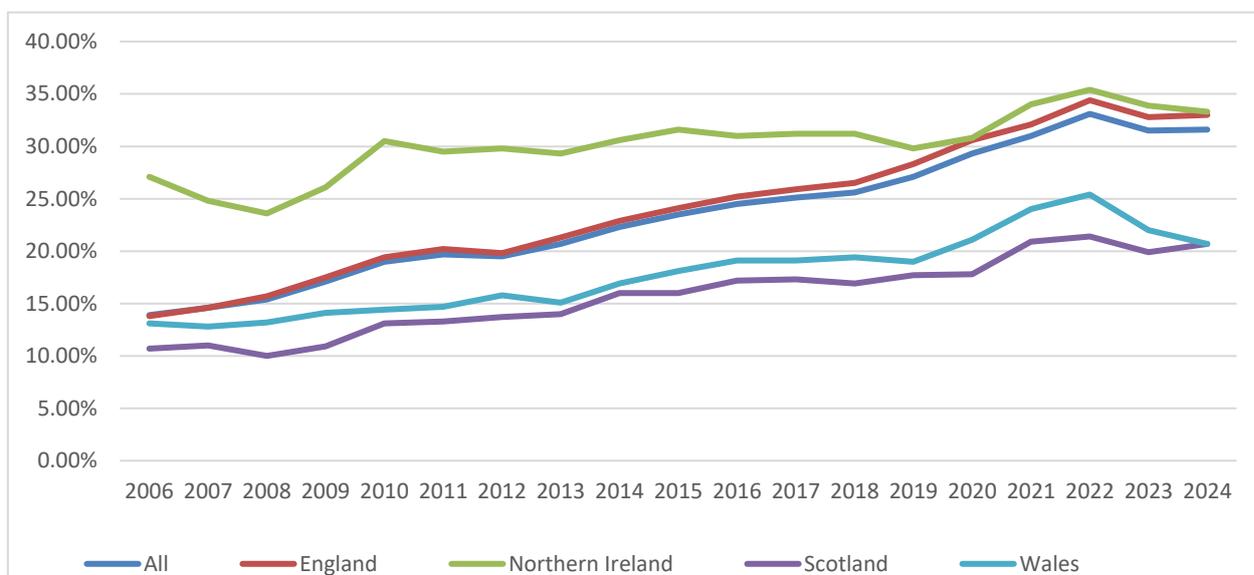


Figure 3: Proportion of those in the most deprived areas (Quintile 1) who applied to university. UCAS 30 June data.

Why is this a problem?

This trend rings alarm bells for a few reasons.

The support package on offer to Welsh-domiciled students (i.e. those living in Wales when they apply to university, rather than those studying in Wales, who could come from the rest of the UK or be international students), is the most generous of all UK nations with a particular focus on maintenance support for living costs.

So, despite the availability of grants and loans designed to facilitate access to higher education, Welsh young people are not taking up the opportunity to do so at the same rate as their peers elsewhere in the UK.

The future of the economy depends upon the nation being sufficiently equipped to capitalise on industrial, digital and societal developments, with increasing demand for graduate-level skills. If Welsh people are not gaining these skills, Wales' economy will find itself at an economic disadvantage compared to the rest of the UK which the proportion of graduates in the workforce will be higher. Wales already has a lower proportion of graduates in the workforce than other parts of the UK.

But crucially, we must remember the implications that this would have on individuals, and the opportunities that they may miss out on. There is a real chance of a generation that is be less well-qualified than their predecessors.

Why is this happening?

There could be a variety of factors at play, including a need to raise ambition or a lack of awareness of the availability of courses and financial support on offer.

Crucially, it's not just at 18 that young people are opting-out of education. Welsh Government figures indicate that an increasing proportion 16-year-olds are not progressing from Year 11 to education, training or work-based learning.

In 2017, 90% of school leavers were staying in education, training or work-based learning. [That's fallen to 80% in 2022.](#)

What can be done to address the problem?

Universities Wales would like to see Medr, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, and the Welsh Government, commit to tackling this issue head-on, firstly by addressing the need for better data to understand where our young people are going after school and further work to understand what lies behind the choices young people are making.

Are Welsh people going to university elsewhere?

These figures relate to people normally resident in Wales wherever they may be applying to, not just those who are applying to Welsh universities.

Welsh universities attract students from Wales, the rest of the UK, and international students. But for the resilience of the future Welsh economy, it would be beneficial to have more Welsh students entering higher education.

Are Welsh young people doing apprenticeships instead?

The drop in applications to university is not explained by young people accessing other modes or types of provision.

Looking beyond the volatility in apprenticeship starts caused by the pandemic, 18- and 19-year-old apprenticeship numbers have been broadly steady over a five year period. In 2018-19, there were 6,065 apprentices aged 18 and 19 in Wales. In 2022-23, there were 5,605. [The overall proportion of the 18-19 year old population entering work-based learning has slightly decreased over this period.](#)

Agenda Item 5.7

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children and Social Care

Our Ref: MA/LN/10177-24
Buffy Williams MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

30 September 2024

Dear Buffy,

Please find attached the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations made by the Children, Young People and Education Committee's report: Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?

We appreciate the Committee's in-depth examination of this matter and are grateful for the comprehensive recommendations provided.

We care deeply about access to education for all learners and are committed to addressing the challenges faced by disabled children, young people, and their families across Wales in a meaningful and sustained manner. We will continue to work local authorities, and all stakeholders to ensure that no child in Wales is denied their right to education or childcare and the opportunities that come with it.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for
Education

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health
and Social Care

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal
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Minister for Children and Social
Care

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

**Welsh Government Response to the
Children, Young People and Education Committee Report:
Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and
childcare?**

The Welsh Government welcomes the Children, Young People and Education Committee's report on the important issue of whether disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare in Wales. We appreciate the Committee's in-depth examination of this matter and are grateful for the comprehensive recommendations provided.

Conclusion 1 rightly points out that too many children and young people's rights to education, as outlined in Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are being breached in Wales. While we have made progress in some areas, we acknowledge that more must be done to ensure that these rights are upheld consistently across Wales. We are determined to work with schools, local authorities, and other stakeholders to remove barriers to education and ensure that every child has access to the learning environment they need.

The new ALN system has been designed to increase the rights of children and families, as well as decreasing the fight for support that they often faced under the old SEN system. We are still in the early stages of implementing this and we will continue working with our delivery partners to get this process right across Wales.

In addition to more than £107 million investment to support ALN implementation since 2020, capital investment of more than £170 million has improved facilities for learners with additional learning needs over the past 5 years. The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is investing over £750 million over the next nine years to continue to improve and expand existing facilities and create new specialist provision.

The 2022-25 £70 million Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme supports, maintains and improves existing and new childcare settings. There are two distinct workstreams: small grants funding and major capital funding. The small grants element of the Programme can be used by childcare settings registered with Care Inspectorate Wales to purchase ALN/Sensory equipment to help overcome the barriers in offering accessible provision. As part of the assessment process of all proposals for major capital funding considerations are made for the accessibility of the building / provision for children with additional learning needs (ALN).

Conclusion 2 highlights the impact that gaps in educational access can have on the emotional and mental well-being of children, as well as their educational outcomes. We are keenly aware of this and through our programme of reform our focus is on creating a system where the rights of all children, including disabled children, are fully respected and upheld, and where their wellbeing is fully supported. Where these rights have been denied we recognise the impact this can have not just on their emotional, mental, and physical well-being, but also educational attainment and future potential.

We also recognise the toll this takes on families and carers and the need for a more robust support system for families of disabled children and young people.

We have taken action to improve education practitioners' understanding of how to support children and young people's rights in education by working with partners, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Disability Wales, to create an online [professional learning package](#) on the UNCRC and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Conclusion 3 draws attention to the toll these challenges place on families. We recognise the strain that families face in navigating a system that can, at times, be difficult to access. We fully appreciate the burden this creates. We are committed to easing these pressures by ensuring that support is more readily available and that families do not have to fight to secure the rights and services their children deserve. Increasing multi-agency collaboration across public services, particularly between health and education continues to be a priority.

We are also taking a range of actions to increase the consistency of delivery of ALN reform and ensure the legislative framework is clear and understood. In addition we are developing our professional learning offer on child development and neurodivergence.

Conclusion 4 raises the issue of inconsistent provision across Wales, including those accessing Welsh-medium provision, leading to disparities in access to inclusive childcare and education. We have already acknowledged this, and we are strengthening the school improvement framework to focus on creating an inclusive education. We have also recruited a National ALN Welsh language implementation lead who is taking a Wales-wide, strategic approach to improve delivery. We are also embedding the enabling learning guidance. This guidance supports practitioners to deliver an inclusive, broad, and balanced curriculum that reflects the needs of learners.

We acknowledge that while some areas have developed good inclusive practices, these can be the result of individual determination rather than a consistent, structural approach. The existence of a postcode lottery in access to inclusive education and childcare, particularly in Welsh-medium provision, is unacceptable. We are committed to tackling the barriers that lead to this inconsistency.

Conclusion 5 identifies the complex and interlinked barriers to delivering inclusive education and childcare that span broad societal attitudes towards disability and difference, as well as practical challenges. Systemic change takes time and is still being done in the shadow of COVID. We must not forget the backdrop of the COVID pandemic which caused significant pressures on public finances and huge impacts on the workforce, and particularly disabled children, across Wales.

We recognise that childcare and education providers often face challenges in delivering inclusive services, and we understand that this is not a reflection on the dedication of the staff involved, who often work tirelessly to support all children and young people in their care.

However, we are determined to tackle these issues at every level, working with all relevant stakeholders to dismantle the barriers that prevent children from accessing the support they need. This includes a commitment to improving staff training and creating more inclusive environments within both childcare settings and schools.

Below, we have outlined our responses to the Committee's recommendations, including the actions we are taking and those we plan to take in response to the issues raised. We are eager to continue working collaboratively with the Committee, local authorities, and stakeholders to ensure that no child in Wales is denied access to the education and childcare they deserve, along with the opportunities they bring.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government sets out its views in relation to our key conclusions, and in responding to the recommendations set out the specific steps it will take to address the wide-reaching issues we've identified in the conclusions.

In responding to the Committee's conclusions, we acknowledge the seriousness of the findings in this report and the challenges faced by disabled children, young people, and their families across Wales. It is evident there are pressing issues that require prompt attention, and we are committed to addressing them in a meaningful and sustained manner.

We have outlined below our responses to the Committee's recommendations, detailing the actions we are taking and planning to address these issues. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Committee, local authorities, and all stakeholders as we work together to ensure that no child in Wales is denied their right to education or childcare and the opportunities that come with it.

Financial implications – N/A, this is an overarching recommendation

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government should ensure there is more research and data available on the gaps in childcare provision, which can help inform development of inclusive provision. As part of this, the Welsh Government should ensure that local authorities are collecting data when children and young people leave or move between childcare and education provisions and the reasons for this. This data should then be used to inform future reviews, training and assessments for childcare and education providers.

Response: Accept in principle

We are already working to improve the evidence base to understand more about and support children in the early years accessing childcare. Within the planned Welsh Government research and evaluations, the methodology can include primary research with specific groups of parents of disabled children who have accessed Welsh Government funded childcare to gather evidence about their experiences.

Welsh Government has recently published a review of the most recent Child Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) and research into the Additional Support Grant for the Childcare Offer for Wales, which provide evidence about access to provision for disabled children.

Registered childcare services complete an annual Self-Assessment Service Statement (Care Inspectorate Wales) which includes data on the number of children with ALN accessing the provision, and the type of ALN supported. The Welsh Government monitor the number of children being supported in registered settings that have ALN to monitor the trend over time.

We can explore the feasibility of undertaking further research to address any remaining gaps in data but there would be financial and staff resource implications of this because of the complexities of the work.

Financial implications - If additional research work was commissioned there would be a financial implication, consideration of allocating sufficient staff resource, and opportunity cost of de-prioritising other projects. The amount would depend on the scope and complexity of the research and prioritisation would depend on whether it aligns with the current evidence plan supporting Cabinet priorities. This would be subject to further advice.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Government should share its response to the recommendations in the Research into Childcare Sufficiency Assessment with us. In providing this, the Welsh Government should detail how it is ensuring recommendations are being implemented and how implementation is being monitored.

Response: Accept

We are considering the recommendations made by Arad Research, who were commissioned to undertake a review of the CSAs, which was published in March 2024 (Research into Childcare Sufficiency Assessments).

We will collaborate with our stakeholders to explore how we can improve CSA arrangements and ensure they remain fit for purpose in future, building on the recommendations within the review. We will:

- explore ways to improve the childcare sufficiency assessment process;
- review current regulatory requirements including statutory guidance;
- explore ways to reduce administrative burden on local authorities;
- review the format of the CSA assessment report to ensure it is more streamlined and impactful; and
- consider tools to assist local authorities in assessing and planning for childcare arrangements and ensuring data is accessible and fit for purpose.

We will provide a response on any changes required as a result of the review, including any regulatory changes or changes to the statutory guidance, which will be in place to support the development of the next round of CSAs in June 2027. We will provide written updates at key stages as we progress the work and will ensure our stakeholders are kept fully informed of developments.

Financial Implications – None, as will be funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should set out how gaps in childcare provision for inclusive and accessible childcare identified in CSAs should be met. This should include setting out how the Welsh Government and local authorities can work and support each other in ensuring positive action is taken to secure sustainable and inclusive childcare in all areas of Wales.

Response: Reject

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of the intent behind this recommendation the statutory duty to address gaps identified in the CSAs rests with local authorities not the Welsh Government. To help support local authorities address gaps in provision the Welsh Government provides them with funding through the childcare and play element of the Children and Communities Grant. When using this funding local authorities are encouraged to give special consideration for the childcare and play needs of families with children with additional needs, to help ensure childcare provision is inclusive and accessible. Given that childcare provision is largely operated by private individuals or businesses local authorities are however limited in the mechanisms by how far they can go to secure sustainable and inclusive childcare in all areas of Wales.

Effective partnership working is a core element of the childcare sufficiency assessment. Under the duty to secure sufficient childcare provision, local authorities work with partners to develop and implement the Childcare Sufficiency Action Plans, that remove shortcomings and maintain the strengths identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments.

Local authorities are required to ensure a sufficient contribution from a range of partners and organisations, in meeting their duty to assess, plan and secure the sufficiency of childcare provision in their area. National Childcare Umbrella Organisations and Family Information Services have a key contribution to make in assisting local authorities to plan and safeguard the sufficiency of childcare provision in their area.

The Welsh Government have issued statutory guidance to assist local authorities to discharge their duty to ensure sufficient childcare is available, undertake childcare sufficiency assessments, and provide information, advice and assistance relating to childcare to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child.

Financial Implications – None.

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Government should set out how it can seek to streamline the various different funding streams available to childcare providers to ensure that it is easier for childcare providers to know what support they can access and how best to access this.

Response: Accept in principle

To ensure that the childcare element of the Offer for three-and-four-year-olds is inclusive to eligible children who need additional support, help has been made available by means of a separate funding stream called the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant (ASG). Local authorities can draw on this funding to help ensure that eligible children with additional needs are able to access the childcare element of the Offer in the same way as other eligible children.

An independent review of the ASG was undertaken during 2023/2024. One of the recommendations put forward from the report was that Welsh Government might consider working with local authorities to jointly develop communications and information campaigns to providers and families to ensure that all those who are eligible and need ASG support have access to it. Officials will explore the recommendation made in the ASG independent review and develop specific campaigns to align with the findings of the research and improve monitoring reporting requirements.

Flying Start commissioned childcare providers are supported directly by their local Flying Start Childcare Advisory teams in meeting the needs of individual children. However, there is no dedicated funding stream to support children aged three years who are not eligible for the Childcare Offer or those from birth to three years who are not eligible for Flying Start but attend childcare in the non-maintained sector. Local Authorities have adopted different approaches to meet needs and are able to draw upon the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) to support them in doing so. Officials, working closely with our delivery partners, will continue to explore the potential barriers to accessing funding and ways of addressing these barriers. We will also continue to explore the feasibility of streamlining existing funding streams within existing resources.

Financial Implications – Work which is currently underway to map funding streams and review recommendations made as part of the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant independent review will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government must ensure that financial support for childcare is based on a child and setting's needs and not on parental eligibility. In line with Recommendation 16, the Welsh Government should consider the use of ring-fencing to ensure that funding aimed to support inclusive provision is used for this specific purpose.

Response: Reject

While our longer-term ambition is to ensure that financial support for childcare is based on the needs of the child and the setting, rather than parental eligibility, we have already outlined our current support program within the constraints of the existing budget.

Flying Start Outreach provides an integrated approach to family support services utilising the structures and systems delivered by the programme. Outreach provides the flexibility to provide some or all of the core elements of the Flying Start programme (including childcare at aged two years) to children and their families who have been identified as being in need but living outside a Flying Start area. Each local authority can allocate up to 25% of their allocated numbers of children they receive funding for.

Most local authorities have Early Years Panels that accept referrals from Health Visitors or the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer for children identified with emerging needs and those with ALN who live outside Flying Start areas. Children with ALN aged two to three years who require childcare to meet developmental needs can (subject to resources) be supported via Flying Start.

The Children and Communities Grant (CCG) enables local authorities to deliver services flexibly to promote joint planning and commissioning of services to mitigate and remove disadvantage for vulnerable children, young people and adults.

The Childcare Offer for Wales is the Welsh Government commitment to providing 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare for 3 and 4-year-old children of eligible parents for up to 48 weeks of the year.

The Offer has been designed to take account of barriers that eligible parents may face in accessing the childcare element, in particular, those who have children with additional support needs including learning, physical and sensory disabilities. To ensure the childcare element of the Offer is inclusive to eligible children who need additional support, help has been made available through the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant (ASG). Local authorities can draw on this funding to help ensure that eligible children with additional needs are able to access the childcare element of the Offer in the same way as other eligible children.

In 2023/24, £2m was allocated across local authorities to respond to these needs, however this is a demand-led grant and we are committed to providing support to parents and childcare settings where needed. 2023/24 was the first year where

demand was higher than anticipated. For 2024/25, an additional £500,000 has been allocated to address anticipated continued pressure.

An independent review of the ASG was undertaken and the report findings and recommendations were published in May 2024. The review team issued a survey to all 2500+ childcare providers registered to deliver the Offer to develop a better understanding of providers concerns in accessing support and funding for those children with additional support needs that use their services. Views were also sought of parents accessing the Offer, including those who have received support via the ASG, to better understand how this support may be promoted, accessed, and coordinated. Officials are reviewing the recommendations from the report and will be putting advice on next steps to Welsh Ministers to consider.

Financial Implications – None. Any decisions which either flow from the independent review or which need to be taken more broadly will need to be considered by Welsh Ministers and assigned through the normal budget process. This would need to be subject to further advice.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government confirms the scope of the review into the ALN Act and Code, and outlines the timeline for completion of this review, and whether the findings of the review will be published.

Response: Accept

The Cabinet Secretary has communicated the Welsh Government commitment to review the ALN legislative framework to ensure it is clear and understood and delivers for all children and young people in Wales.

Work is underway to examine the legal framework to consider the clarity and accessibility of the Act and statutory guidance, to identify next steps to increase consistency of implementation across Wales.

The scope of the review will be completed by November 2024, and an update to the Senedd on the progress and findings of the review is expected by Summer 2025.

Financial Implications – The review will be managed and funded from within existing resources.

Recommendation 8

Explore the feasibility of the development of a suite of training, guidance and resources for childcare settings on the ALN Act and Code. As part of the feasibility work, the Welsh Government should give specific consideration to how childcare providers would be able to access and fund such training.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government will explore the feasibility of the development of a suite of training, guidance and resources for childcare settings on the ALN Act and Code. We will work closely with the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO)'s in local authorities and Cwlwm to consider existing arrangements and any additional guidance, training or resources that may be required. The existing arrangements are set out below:

- Local authorities have a statutory duty to have an Early Years ALN lead officer who should make arrangements, if appropriate, to train those in their local area on early years and ALN.
- The Welsh Government provides funding to Cwlwm and Play Wales to support their members across the childcare and playwork workforce. The Welsh Government is working with the Cwlwm partnership to support the childcare sector to understand their roles and responsibilities concerning the ALN Code.
- Cwlwm partners provide training, information, advice and guidance for settings to support and embed ALN changes. For example, a blog is available on the [Cwlwm website](#) providing information and guidance on the ALN code and Act. Mudiad Meithrin have developed a video on the ALN system which will enable its members to understand their obligations under the ALN Code. National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Cymru have planned a free webinar - 'Additional Learning Needs in Wales' to deliver in summer 2024, exploring the ALN Act and code, what it means for settings and how to embed effective practice.
- EYALNLO's are responsible for making arrangements for providing guidance to childcare providers, including those delivering funded nursery education in non-maintained nursery settings, on meeting the needs of children attending their settings.
- Local authorities receive funding via the Children and Communities Grant to support a range of training for childcare settings, from mandatory to effective practice training, to be determined by local authorities and based on local need. This can include ALN training or courses.
- Childcare qualifications and the All-Wales Induction Framework contain a focus on understanding the needs of disabled children or other additional needs and sourcing support via additional advice or adaptations. Childcare

qualifications assess on these elements as well as understanding of the legal frameworks that apply to the provision of services to children with additional needs.

- The Level 4 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development (CCPLD) qualification in professional practice aims to develop the knowledge, understanding, behaviours and skills that underpin Professional Practice within the children's care, play, learning and development sector. To achieve the qualification learners must take one of three pathways including 'Recognising and supporting children with Additional Learning Needs'.
- In addition to any training requirements outlined in National Minimum Standards, all childcare staff within Flying Start settings must undertake at least five days Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or professional learning per year, as designated by their Childcare Advisory Teams and, as far as possible, implement strategies recommended by the Childcare Advisory Team.

Financial Implications –the current training, guidance and resources to support childcare settings is undertaken within existing budgets, but if further work as a result of exploring feasibility is agreed, then this would result in financial implications that will be considered at that time and further advice will follow.

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should issue guidance for all childcare providers about what they are expected to do in supporting local authorities in discharging their duties in the ALN Act and Code. This guidance should provide concrete examples of what providers are expecting to do. This guidance should be regularly updated to ensure it remains up to date, relevant and useful.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government accepts in principle the recommendation to issue guidance to childcare providers about what they are expected to do in supporting local authorities in discharging their duties in the ALN Act and Code. We will re-consider the recommendation once the feasibility study at recommendation 8 has been completed.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to designate an Early Years ALN Lead officer with responsibility for co-ordinating the functions under the ALN Act and Code in their area for children under compulsory school age who are not attending maintained schools. This role should be promoting collaboration with childcare providers and making arrangements for providing guidance and sharing information to providers on meeting the needs of children in their settings with ALN.

Financial Implications – Any work in this area will be managed from within existing resources.

Recommendation 10

The Welsh Government considers reviewing accessibility strategies and plans across Wales, with a view to issuing directions to any local authority or school who is failing to discharge their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government is committed to creating a Wales which will provide fair access to services for all and deliver fairer outcomes for our diverse people and communities across Wales. Our [National Equality Objectives](#) and equality plans, such as the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan provide a strong framework, helping to reduce complexity and further embedding equality into our policy making.

The preparation of accessibility strategies is a responsibility of local authorities, with schools in turn required to have up to date accessibility plans. ADEW have stated that they have issued model policies to schools and governing bodies and that they will be undertaking further training for schools on their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. We will work with ADEW to ensure all schools are reminded of their responsibilities in this respect, and of the need to review and update their plans in consultation with children and families.

We will review our guidance, 'Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils, with a view to considering whether it can be strengthened any further and whether there is scope for further alignment with the requirements of Welsh Building Standards.

Financial Implications – There are no financial implications with regards to reviewing our guidance, as this will be absorbed into 'business as usual' and funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Government working with the EHRC should develop practical guidance for all schools on understanding the social model of disability and how to ensure this approach can be adopted across all aspects of school life. This guidance should be as practical as possible, and should be developed in conjunction with children, young people and their families, as well as disability organisations. The guidance should be regularly updated to take account of developments. Estyn should undertake regular monitoring and evaluation to see how schools are implementing this guidance, and the impacts it is having on the experiences of children and young people.

Response: Accept

Understanding the social model of disability is integral to supporting the provision of inclusive education services. An initial meeting with the EHRC to discuss the premise of joint guidance has been held and further discussions around scope and timescales will take place in the autumn.

It should be noted that we are accepting the aspects of the recommendation directed at the Welsh Government. We are not able to comment on the aspects aimed at Estyn or accept this part of the recommendation on their behalf, given their independence. However, we will discuss how Estyn considers these issues and when would be an appropriate time to table this for consideration as one of their thematic reviews.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or low, implications associated with the development of the guidance and its ongoing maintenance. There may be some low-level costs associated with engaging key stakeholders including children and young people schools and parents, but these can be met from within existing budgets.

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government should undertake a comprehensive review into how non-teaching staff both within schools and local authorities can best support inclusive provision across Wales. This should include identifying best practice examples from across Wales. Such work should also consider the funding implications of best practice, and how local authorities and schools can be best supported to deliver.

Response: Accept

We recognise that non-teaching staff within schools and local authorities provide a range of support to increase inclusive provision in Wales. Although the employment arrangements of teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff are the responsibility of local authorities and / or schools, we intend to work with them to understand best practice in respect of supporting inclusive provision. This area is being looked at by the Schools Social Partnership Forum (SSPF) and a sub-group focused on Professional Learning for LSWs/TAs.

Financial Implications – None.

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Government commissions research into the use of reduced timetables, which includes the length of time children and young people are on them, the reasons for them being used, and the steps that are taken to return children and young people to a full timetable. This research should also review the mechanisms that are used when the guidance is not being followed, to ensure that reduced timetables are only used when appropriate, and that a child centred approach is taken when making decisions on their use.

Response: Accept

In October 2023, we published [guidance](#) into the use of part-time timetables. Whilst it is too early to evaluate the impact of this guidance, we acknowledge that we currently do not collect data about the number of learners who have a part-time timetable.

To address this, we are exploring how we can collect data about the number of learners who have a part-time timetable, via PLASC and the EOTAS Census. Introducing such changes is a lengthy process and, as such, in the first instance we will be undertaking an analysis of attendance data to estimate the number of learners who have a part-time timetable.

In the longer-term, we will explore opportunities to evaluate the impact of the effectiveness of the part-time timetable guidance in terms of whether these arrangements are being used appropriately.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or low, implications associated with the work to review existing data and explore ways of collecting additional data. Any such costs can be met from within existing budgets. Advice on the costs of collecting additional data, for both the Welsh Government and stakeholders, will be provided to the Cabinet Secretary once that work is complete. If additional research is required this would need to be costed at the time, with advice provided to the Cabinet Secretary. Additional costs would need to be considered in the context of the Education MEG and the wider Welsh Government budget.

Recommendation 14

In responding to the findings of the review of school funding, the Welsh Government should outline publicly how it will take forward any recommendations or actions arising from it and set out a clear timeline for delivery of these actions. In particular, they should outline how improved consistency will help ensure children and young people get the support they need in schools.

Response: Accept

The independent Review of School Spending in Wales highlighted the complexity of the funding system. We have previously published an update to the CYPE Committee on progress.

We are currently conducting a review of local authority school funding formulas. Through this analysis we intend to better understand the complexities and decision-making processes around these formulas across Wales. This review will help us to consider how the system can be improved.

In the autumn, we will provide a further update to the CYPE Committee detailing how the Welsh Government has further progressed the recommendations of the review. We will also set out a timeline for future planned work in this area.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or limited, implications associated with providing an update on taking forward the recommendations of the review and will be funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Government identifies the most common conditions, such as dyslexia, which would benefit from universal provision and support being developed and provided to all schools. This should be done in consultation with children, young people and their families, as well as education professionals, local authorities, and health professionals. Once this work has been done, the Welsh Government should provide a clear timeframe for roll out of this universal provision. This provision should be free for all schools.

Response: Reject

This is rejected because work is already underway with the roll out of the Curriculum for Wales which has been developed to be accessible and inclusive to all, enabling every school and setting to develop a curriculum that reflects their context and their learners.

In particular, the '[Enabling learning](#)' section of the [Curriculum for Wales](#) guidance has been developed to support practitioners in planning, designing and implementing a developmentally, pedagogically appropriate curriculum for all learners from 3 to 16. It provides the firm foundation that all learners need to support development, at their own pace, towards realising the four purposes of the curriculum. The guidance focuses on key principles essential for holistic and meaningful learning for all learners. This includes child development, which is integral to teaching and learning, and is expressed as five developmental pathways: belonging, communication, exploration, physical development, and well-being. We recognise that taking a learner centred approach, working collaboratively with families and partners can support holistic development. We shall continue to embed this guidance throughout schools and settings working with senior leaders and practitioners to raise awareness.

The Welsh Government is continuing to work with third sector organisations, parents and practitioners to develop helpful resources to support learners and practitioners. For example, this year, a set of learning modules was developed and published in collaboration with the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA). These modules aim to help practitioners improve their knowledge and understanding of various learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, and disabilities. They also offer strategies for supporting learners with specific needs. The modules are available on the Welsh Government's [Hwb page](#).

Financial Implications – None

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Government should issue guidance clearly setting out the responsibilities and duties of local authorities and schools to ensure they are providing the necessary support so that all children and young people are able to access their right to an education. They should also consider whether ring-fencing would be an effective and appropriate way of ensuring that money that is intended to support these groups of children and young people is spent in that way.

Response: Accept

The ALN legislation and ALN Code set out the responsibility and duties on local authorities and schools to ensure they are providing necessary support for children and young people with ALN. As part of the review of this legislation next steps and actions will be identified to ensure the legislation and the Code are clear and understood.

The Welsh Government issues guidance via the school governors' guide to the law setting out schools' responsibility in respect of equality legislation. This includes the reasonable adjustments duty, ensuring barriers to education for learners with disabilities are anticipated and actions are taken to remove these barriers as far as reasonably possible.

In taking forward the work on recommendations 11 and 31 we will consider whether or not additional information should be included in the school governors guide.

Local authorities have a duty to ensure the availability of suitable education provision in their area. In considering ringfencing, it's important to note that the Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities to support their funding of pre-16 provision in schools in Wales mainly through the local government revenue settlement. The settlement is not ring-fenced; the funding allocated to each authority is available to the authority to spend as it sees fit across the range of services for which it is responsible, including schools. This is in line with the Welsh Government's policy that local authorities are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances and to fund schools accordingly.

Although funding for schools in Wales is mainly provided through the local government settlement, the Welsh Government's education budget also supports spending in and on schools, teachers and wider education programmes.

Financial Implications – There should be no, or low, implications associated with the work to review existing guidance, or the work to consider financial controls and will be funded from existing budgets.

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Government should revise the criteria for ITE to strengthen the requirements around disability and additional learning needs. This should ensure that all teachers at the end of their ITE have a basic level of skills and understanding in issues around disability and ALN and have the confidence to be able to support all children and young people they teach. It should also ensure that ITE keeps up with the latest clinical knowledge so that newly qualified teachers have the most up to date information and knowledge to help inform their practice.

Response: Accept

We have refreshed the [Criteria for Accreditation of ITE programmes in Wales](#) for courses that will operate from September 2024. These refreshed criteria have strengthened the requirements for ITE programmes to ensure that all student teachers have an understanding of the needs of learners who have Additional Learning Needs. Sections 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 specifically relate to the requirements for student teachers to be able to identify and meet the needs of ALN learners.

In addition to these specific sections, there are requirements throughout the Criteria that set out the understanding that all student teachers must have around equality, inclusiveness, safeguarding and well-being for all learners.

All ITE programmes have a requirement that student teachers must be research informed and continue to develop their knowledge and skills based on the most up-to-date research.

Specifically, we have introduced into the Criteria an Appendix 4: Specialist primary phase ITE provision for ALN, that allows ITE Partnerships to submit for accreditation a pilot PGCE Primary programme with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) that includes an ALN specialism. Under this Appendix the Caban ITE Partnership at Bangor University has recently been successful in achieving accreditation for a PGCE Primary programme with QTS with a specialism in Neurodiversity. We are working with the partnership to monitor and evaluate the programme. This will include uptake rates, destinations of those undertaking the programme and an assessment of whether the programme meets the quality and professional standards required for the award of QTS.

We are working with partners to arrange a workshop with all stakeholders to identify and better understand the barriers to engagement between ITE and special schools. This will provide more empirical evidence for any changes that can be made in order to meet the needs of the sector.

Financial Implications – None as will be managed within existing budgets.

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Government provides an update on its work around ITE provision for the special school sector.

Response: Accept

The Special School sector is already able to join ITE Partnerships and provide periods of clinical practice on programmes. School experience placements may take place in a special school or ALN unit. In these cases, Partnerships should ensure that no more than 30% of school experience is undertaken outside a mainstream learning environment to ensure that student teachers are prepared to teach both in mainstream and ALN environments. We are continuing to engage with ITE Partnerships and Special Schools to identify how we can increase engagement with the sector whilst ensuring the core requirements of ITE provision continue to be delivered. This will be informed by the evaluation of the PGCE Primary with ALN that is being piloted by the Caban ITE Partnership.

Financial Implications – None as will be managed within existing budgets.

Recommendation 19

The Welsh Government commissions the development of a mandatory training module for all school staff on disability awareness. This should cover the social model of disability, and equip all staff in a school with a basic level of awareness, as well as signposting them to other resources if they want to develop their skills and expertise. It should also be in line with the latest research and clinical knowledge, and is kept up to date to reflect any subsequent changes or developments.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government does not mandate professional learning in relation to specific areas of professional practice. The only exceptions apply to professional qualifications for example routes to teaching and specific training stipulated by employers e.g. GDPR. Research evidence demonstrates that voluntary engagement in professional learning and enquiry-based learning is the most effective way to develop practitioners' knowledge and improve learner outcomes.

Our national mission commitment is to establish a culture of mutual responsibility in relation to professional learning, through the [National Professional Learning Entitlement](#). Well-led professional learning should be bespoke to, and driven by, practitioners in the context of school, national, wider professional and personal priorities.

We are focused on ensuring that the development of education practitioners is continuous, collaborative and evaluative, rather than a one-off, isolated, prescribed experience. There are no direct powers to enforce specified mandatory professional learning for all education professionals. However, in some instances the Welsh Government will use existing levers to promote professional learning in priority areas e.g. the professional standards, INSET and the Professional Learning Grant.

The Welsh Government has worked with education consortia and regional partnerships, and local authority participation workers, with support from the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Disability Wales, to create an online [professional learning package](#) on the UNCRC and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

This national professional learning resource supports practitioners, headteachers, governing bodies and local authorities to develop an awareness and understanding of the UNCRC and UNCRPD. A consistent professional learning offer was required to support schools to meet the requirements of Section 64 of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). The first two modules were made available in 2023 via our [Hwb](#) learning platform.

The first module provides a universal introduction to children's human rights, including a useful tool for all public sector organisations to broaden their understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNCRC and UNCRPD. This module also includes a short video providing a simple explanation of the social

model of disability and its relevance within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The second module provides a more in-depth exploration of how headteachers, governing bodies and local authorities can embed the UNCRC and UNCRPD in their new curricula. To date, the modules have attracted over 2,600 views and also link to additional resources produced by Disability Wales, The Children's Commissioner for Wales, UNICEF and other appropriate organisations.

A third module is currently under development and will support practitioners to understand ways to plan, design and review their school curriculum in relation to the UNCRC and UNCRPD, by providing practical case study exemplars. This new module will be published later this year.

We are also working with partners to develop professional learning to support the implementation of the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing which will include professional learning on child development and neurodivergence.

The Welsh Government established the Disability Rights Taskforce to bring together people with lived experience, representative organisations, and Welsh Government policy officials to consider recommendations required to achieve improvements for disabled people in Wales, which the Welsh Government, wider public services and disabled people will work together to deliver on. The Taskforce's key findings will inform the development of Disability Rights Action Plan.

One of the key priorities of this Taskforce was to consider recommendations for children and young people. To do this, the Taskforce's Children and Young People working group consulted with parents, disabled children, and their educational settings. The group's recommendations are rooted in promoting and embedding the social model of disability and to address the challenges that impact disabled children's full participation in education, in areas such as play.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 20

The Welsh Government should issue guidance to schools and local authorities to ensure that either new buildings, or changes to current school estates are based on the experiences and evidence of children, young people, families and staff with lived experience. This engagement should also ensure that future needs are considered so that buildings are fully accessible to all who may attend in the future.

Response: Accept

Any new build or major alterations of a school requires to follow both regulations and guidance. Building Regulations Part M is a set of regulations that sets out the requirements for access to and use of buildings. The aim of Part M is to make buildings accessible to everyone, regardless of their disability or mobility impairment. Further guidance on design and space requirements is currently under review, with a new Welsh Building Guidance – Area Guidelines for Schools in Wales being published this Autumn to replace the Building Bulletin 98, 99 and 104. Welsh Government’s expectation and good practice in designing any new facility is to consult with all relevant stakeholders including staff, pupils, and the community which it serves. This will be included within this guide and within the wider Sustainable Communities for Learning Business Case Guidance.

Financial Implications – No financial implications as this will be absorbed into ‘business as usual’

Recommendation 21

The Welsh Government should develop further mechanisms to ensure there are greater opportunities to share and disseminate good and innovative learner travel practice. This could include an annual summit with the relevant Cabinet Secretary or Minister.

Response: Accept

The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) already hold school transport sub-groups to discuss issues and share practices on school transport. However, as outlined in the Learner Travel Recommendations Report published in March 2024, the Welsh Government recognises that there is some excellent practice taking place across Wales to support a diverse range of travel options for children and young people. The Recommendations Report concluded that, in partnership with delivery partners, a suitable platform to promote innovative learner travel practice and support the sharing of best practice resources should be established. The Welsh Government are working with ATCO to establish a forum for local authorities to meet regularly to develop this network of good practice and share resources.

Financial Implications – None as will be managed within existing resources.

Recommendation 22

The Welsh Government prioritises the review and publication of the suite of statutory learner travel guidance. In responding to this report, the Welsh Government should provide a clear timetable for the work reviewing this with a definitive date for publication, and when the revised guidance will come into force. They should also set out how they will ensure there is a consistent application of the guidance across Wales.

Response: Accept

Work has begun updating the statutory learner travel operational guidance and the All-Wales Travel Behaviour Code.

The updated guidance document will go out to consultation before the end of 2024 with the intention of the guidance being published by Summer 2025, giving local authorities sufficient time to update their guidance document to come in to force by Summer 2026.

The Welsh Government agrees with the sentiment behind the recommendation of the need to improve consistency of delivery across local authorities whilst recognising that local authorities have different needs, geographies, and priorities so there may be variances according to these local requirements. Welsh Government's position remains that local authorities are in the best place to make decisions that reflect the needs of their communities within the framework of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure and supporting guidance documents.

The on-going work of ATCO as well as the Learner Transport Forum being established will provide a forum to support consistency of application of the guidance across Wales.

Financial Implications – £10,000 has been allocated to support the engagement and development of the guidance documents.

Recommendation 23

The Welsh Government explores ways of ensuring there are appropriate training opportunities for transport companies and staff to build up confidence and skills in supporting children and young people. As part of this, consideration should be given to developing accreditation for staff.

Response: Accept in principle

As set out in [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#) the Welsh Government is committed to transforming the customer experience of public transport including reliability, punctuality and training for staff and drivers, so people are more confident about using services.

Transport for Wales has already begun this process by developing a range of initiatives to support the provision of an inclusive and accessible rail service including the introduction of trained and skilled Travel Companions, the establishment of the Confident Traveller Programme and representative groups to ensure the voice of the traveller is embodied in TFW's developments including the Accessibility and Inclusion Panel alongside the Children and Young People's Advisory Group.

There are several challenges to delivering bus driver training with significant competing demands on time and resources within the current model of delivery.

Our future plans for delivering bus and taxi services in Wales provide potential opportunities to look at how and what training is currently delivered and to enhance it for the benefit of the workforce and users.

In the meantime, the Learner Travel Forum will provide an opportunity for local authorities to share common understanding and best practice on embedding skills and training requirements in to contracted provision for home to school transport.

Financial Implications – None at present

Recommendation 24

The Welsh Government undertakes further work to ensure a streamlining of services to deliver fully on a no wrong door approach across all public services, but with particular reference to the interaction between health and education services. This work should identify the barriers to effective coordination between services, as well as identifying best practice, and mechanisms for sharing this best practice.

Response: Accept

Increasing multi-agency collaboration across public services, particularly between health and education continues to be a priority.

Further work is being done through the ALN Multi-Agency Collaboration Working Group with representatives from health, education and other organisations, to develop solutions and agreed positions to emerging issues resulting from implementing ALN reforms. Work is in train to develop a national consensus on section 20 referrals, to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Health Boards/Trusts to monitor progress against ALNET Act statutory duties compliance, develop guidance and share effective practice, revise the supporting Learners with Healthcare Needs statutory guidance. These are critical actions to assure that Health boards are fulfilling their ALNET Act statutory duties including data on referrals and timescales, as well as providing data to identify areas of variation and concern.

Our ambition is for all schools in Wales to be Community Focused Schools (CFS) - responding to the needs of their community, building a strong partnership with families and collaborating effectively with other services.

As part of a Community Focused Schools approach, multi-agency engagement includes:

- Collaborating effectively with other key services and agencies to ensure that all children thrive and learn.
- Sharing information so that children and young people and their families are able to access the appropriate support at the right time.
- Supporting access to wider services which may be co-located in a school premises or located elsewhere within the community.

Financial Implications – No additional financial implications are anticipated in relation to the continuation of ongoing work in this area.

Recommendation 25

The Welsh Government must ensure that services align and adjust their timelines when working across different services and professions to ensure support is holistic and best supports access to childcare and education.

Response: Accept

We will continue to work cross-government and co-constructively with our partners to align delivery of different services to ensure support is available for disabled children and young people to access childcare and education.

The ALN Multi-Agency Collaboration Working Group is specifically developing a national consensus on section 20 referrals which will look at aligning timelines across services.

The Welsh Government will work actively with Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLOs) to establish and review data presented from key performance indicators, and any recommendation from the review of the ALN Act and Code, to consider how Health Boards are fulfilling their ALNET Act statutory duties.

Our Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales Plan was published on 15 March 2024 and is a cross-sectoral plan which brings together, for the first time, all our policies and programmes relating to early childhood play, learning and care from across Welsh Government.

Our plan places the child and child development at the heart of everything we do. Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care is about developing and delivering a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality play-based childcare and education opportunities, for all babies and young children aged 0-5 years old.

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care supports our wider early years policies and ambitions in Wales and is primarily concerned with promoting partnerships, consistency and join up between schools and settings as well as parents/carers, for the benefit of the child and their families.

Our Early Years Integration Transformation Programme (EYITP) is a time-limited, piloting programme, focussed on developing a more joined-up, responsive early years system that puts the unique needs of each child at its heart, which covers the period of life from pre-birth to seven.

Since 2017, the majority of Public Service Boards (PSBs) across Wales have joined the programme on a phased basis as pathfinders and the support we have provided has enabled them to explore different ways of delivering early years services in a more systematic way, applying the lessons from our existing programmes such as Flying Start and Families First.

Funding for the programme came to an end in March 2024 and the programme will formally close at the end of March 2025. We are working with PSBs, during 2024-25,

to embed the learning and good practice, as they consider how to mainstream piloting activity into business-as-usual practices, as they formally exit from the programme.

The learning and good practice from the programme will help shape our strategic thinking on how we can best support the integration and transformation of maternity and early years services in the medium and longer term and will provide a solid foundation for the future delivery of all our early years programmes and policies.

Financial Implications - None

Recommendation 26

The Welsh Government reviews the current numbers of key allied health professionals, identifies where there are current gaps, how these gaps will be addressed and the numbers needed to support future likely level of need, including the number of training places needed. This should then be supported by a clear delivery plan.

Response: Accept

[The National workforce implementation plan: addressing NHS workforce challenges](#) sets out an action to review the Allied Health Professional (AHP) workforce. Health Education and Improvement Wales will be required to review allied health professions to understand the current position and future needs to deliver our services, resulting in an AHP retention plan. Data scoping for the review is underway of which will inform the wider review and understanding of the gaps.

Financial Implications – None

Recommendation 27

The Welsh Government explores in more detail the good practice from Neath Port Talbot with schools able to access support from Occupational Therapists which is funded by the local authority and considers whether it would benefit from piloting such approaches in other parts of Wales. Such a pilot should then be fully evaluated, and if successful, consideration should be given to rolling out this model across Wales.

Response: Accept in principle

Arrangements are underway to hold a national sharing effective practice event across the education and health sector. There are a number of good practice models for children's occupational therapy which could be shared in the event. The Neath Port Talbot pilot will be considered as one showcase for the event. The models will also be presented at the ALN Multiagency Group, with early discussions on the models being used as a case study to share with delivery partners. Once a review is undertaken to evaluate the model and consider other models currently in place we will then consider the most effective model for rolling out.

Financial Implications - None

Recommendation 28

The Welsh Government encourages all local authorities to enter into partnership agreements to support the buying and recycling of specialist equipment and adaptations which can support children and young people accessing childcare and education.

Response: Accept

Officials will work with local authorities to identify and share good practice in this area.

The Children and Young People's Continuing Care Guidance for Wales describes the interagency process, led by health boards, that all organisations should implement in assessing needs and putting in place bespoke packages of continuing care that may include the provision of equipment. The concept of sharing and recycling equipment is an important aspect of managing resources efficiently and sustainably. This approach can help reduce costs and ensure that essential equipment is available to those who need it.

If a child or young person is found to be eligible for continuing care, Welsh Government expect agencies to work together to ensure that there are no gaps in meeting those assessed individual's needs. Any service provided and arranged by the Local Health Board, local authorities and their partners should enable the child or young person to function optimally within their family, community, education or care setting.

Financial Implications - Any work in this area will be managed from within existing resources.

Recommendation 29

The Welsh Government ensures that all local authorities develop clear and widely available pathways setting out what support is available, and who is responsible for providing this support. Such pathways should be kept regularly updated so the information remains timely and relevant. These should be easily available on local authority websites and should also be pro-actively made available to families when making initial contact with the local authority seeking support.

Response: Accept in principle

We are supportive of the underlying principle behind this recommendation however, this is a matter for local authorities. We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to ensure information for families is clear and widely available.

The ALN Act and Code currently places a duty on Local Authorities to provide impartial information and advice about ALN and the ALN system. This includes making information available on their websites. Welsh Government will continue to monitor the delivery of local authorities through existing systems.

Parents of children from birth to five years would receive advice and information from their Health Visitor and the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer within their local authority.

Each local authority in Wales has a Family Information Service - the front door of the authority for parents and families looking for advice, information and signposting on a range of services available within their local area. They are experienced in guiding parents to services which can help their family circumstances on a range of issues, including childcare, costs of childcare, training, family programmes, health, financial matters and recreation.

Financial Implications - None

Recommendation 30

The Welsh Government issues guidance to local authorities setting out core principles for publication of information on childcare. This guidance should set out that information is co-produced with families, is easily and readily available, in multiple formats, is kept updated, and provides a basic level of consistency across Wales. The Welsh Government in drawing up this guidance should involve families from across Wales with relevant experiences to ensure the needs of families are at the heart of the guidance.

Response: Accept

Our [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan](#) sets out specific actions that the Welsh Government have done or are planning to do to support parents in developing and accessing relevant information on childcare.

The Childcare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) expands and clarifies in legislation the vital role local authorities play as strategic leaders in the provision of childcare locally. The 2006 Act reinforces the framework within which local authorities already work – in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent, community and maintained sector – to shape and secure children’s services and focuses in particular on the provision of:

Welsh Government has issued statutory guidance to local authorities ([Childcare Statutory Guidance, revised August 2016](#)) setting out how information to parents and prospective parents about childcare should be provided through their Family Information Service.

The guidance sets out broad principles for information provision to ensure that the provision of local information is:

- User friendly, reflecting parents’ perceptions and needs
- Accessible via a range of settings, outlets and channels
- Accessible in a variety of formats to comply with equality legislation and Welsh language standards

Each local authority in Wales has a Family Information Service (FIS) - the front door of the authority for parents and families looking for advice, information and signposting on a range of services available within their local area. They are experienced in guiding parents to services which can help their family circumstances on a range of issues, including childcare, costs of childcare, training, family programmes, health, financial matters and recreation. FIS can also be accessed via Teulu Cymru or “Family of Wales”, which has been set up for parents, carers and families of children aged 0-18, pointing them in the right direction for different Welsh Government sources of practical and financial support. It is aimed to directly support parents to access information and funding. Teulu Cymru will be kept under review and we will continually work with parents to ensure that it gives them the information they need.

Funded by the Welsh Government our key partners (Cwlwm) have also developed and published 'Choosing Childcare' booklet that supports families in their childcare choices.

Financial Implications- All activity planned or underway will be accommodated within existing resources.

Recommendation 31

The Welsh Government reviews the information currently available on rights in education, ensuring that it is widely available, accessible in a range of formats, and supports children, young people and their families to understand what their rights are, and how to seek redress if their rights are being breached.

Response: Accept in principle

Information about children's rights is currently available from a number of organisations, including the overarching right to an education. We recognise this range of sources can make it challenging for children and young people and their families to access definitive information on their rights. We will work with partners including but not limited to local authorities, disability organisations and the EHRC to ensure information provided by the Welsh Government is as definitive as possible and accessible. However, we cannot require other organisations to amend or withdraw the information they provide.

In April 2024, as part of our suite of Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Resources, the Welsh Government published a practitioners Childrens Rights leaflet and four Children's Rights leaflets for parents of 0-5-year-olds to support them in their understanding of babies and young children's rights

Financial Implications - There should be no, or low, implications associated with this work. However, there may be some low-level costs associated with engagement with stakeholders including children, young people and their families and with the development of accessible documentation. This will be met within existing budgets.

Recommendation 32

The Welsh Government sets out a clear delivery plan for addressing gaps in specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired, to ensure that all children and young people can access this support when needed. This delivery plan should have clear targets, deliverables and timeframes so it can be monitored and scrutinised.

Response: Reject

Local authorities are responsible for planning their workforce to ensure the availability of sufficient and appropriately trained staff. Under the ALN Act, local authorities are required to keep their arrangements for children and young people with ALN and those of their maintained schools under review. This review must include consideration of the size and capability of the available workforce. This is consistent with the Welsh Government's view that local authorities are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances. The Welsh Government does not therefore accept the recommendation for a delivery plan specifically around specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired.

To assist local authorities the Welsh Government provided additional funding for training support for teachers of the sensory impaired through 2018-21 as part of the ALN Transformation programme and we continue to highlight to local authorities that LAEG funding for ALN can be used for the professional training of specialist teachers where it addresses additional pressures.

The Welsh Government has published guides on effective interventions for learners with sensory impairments in education settings and in addition to developing a national ALN professional learning pathway to support ALNCos and other practitioners develop their skills to support all learners with ALN we have worked with the third sector to develop e-learning units for teachers on supporting deaf learners and learners with vision impairment.

Financial Implications – None

Agenda Item 5.8

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Jane Hutt MS Cabinet Secretary for Social
Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

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Dear Jane,

2 October 2024

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), the summit, and the youth justice system

Thank you for your letter dated 30 August and for sharing a copy of the summit findings with us. As the only formal record of the summit, the document will be valued by all stakeholders who attended.¹ Although it was always our intention to respond, subsequent correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) provided an added impetus due to the concerns highlighted.² For example, the RCSLT state that they have not received feedback from the summit nor had sight of the findings. We were also disappointed to learn that previous requests for a meeting were declined.

We would therefore urge you to meet with the RCSLT to ensure that they receive proper feedback and share a copy of the findings with them and the other summit attendees as quickly as possible. We would also like to request an update from you on progress with the action specified in the summit findings document.

In its briefing the RCSLT highlights the latest statistics which reaffirm the central finding of our report – that young people with SLCN (the eponymous 60% from the title of our report) are significantly

¹ Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Further information from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip regarding Speech and Language Communication Needs Summit](#), 31 August 2024

² Paper to note 4.1 [Correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to the Chair regarding the Committee's report: "60% giving them a voice"](#), 13 September 2024



overrepresented in the criminal justice system. In fact it suggests that our report understated the true extent. The RCSLT also confirm that speech and language needs are becoming an increasingly important consideration in inspections for youth justice services. We reiterate our calls for speech and language therapists to be embedded within youth justice services across Wales as per our recommendations.

Provision of SLCN therapists

With regards to the provision of SLCN therapists and the extent to which the youth justice system can access such provision we have continuing concerns. We welcome the small increase in the number of training places for speech and language therapists³ in Health Education and Improvement Wales's (HEIW) annual education and training for 2024-25. We hope that this increase could be sustained in future years and would welcome confirmation of this.

We were frustrated by the stance outlined in your predecessor's letter (dated 30 May 2024) that:

It is for Local Health Boards (LHBs) to determine their health needs and how best to meet them with the resources available, including for children in contact with the justice system or those at risk of coming into contact with it.

Your letter of 30 August 2024) restated that the Welsh Government is "encouraging local Youth Justice Services to discuss the options at their disposal with their respective Local Health Boards (LHBs)". However how can we be confident that LHBs will prioritise the investment required in SLCN when you consider the failure to provide adequate resources in some parts of Wales up until now. There is ample evidence of need but current arrangements which allow LHBs to determine how to meet these locally has created an unfair, postcode lottery which we fear will continue without action. As a result lives will continue to be blighted in ways that are ultimately counter productive, and damaging to society and the public purse in the long-term.

Public policy concerns in relation to the provision of speech and language therapy in Wales were first raised by a parliamentary committee in 2010. These issues are not new, and yet in many parts of Wales there has been a failure to respond. We therefore invite you and the Cabinet Secretary for Health to consider whether the current approach is fit-for-purpose and to look carefully at whether LHBs who are outliers need to be directed to take action by the Welsh Government.

Working with the Ministry of Justice

In addition, given that the Ministry of Justice retains responsibility for most of the criminal justice system, what conversations have taken place with the new Prisons Minister, Lord Timpson on

³ Health Education and Improvement Wales, Education and Training Plan (ETP) 2024-25, page 12

improving the availability of SLCT input into identifying the needs of offenders who may inappropriately otherwise get a custodial sentence.

In particular what is the future of the Turnaround Programme funding beyond its scheduled end in March 2025. Information from the RCSLT shows that several SLCN therapists have been employed across Wales due in part to Turnaround Programme funding, however no announcement has been made for funding arrangements post March 2025. We urge you to highlight the positive impact the funding has had and seek assurances from the Ministry of Justice that suitable arrangements will be made for successor funding, preferably with certainty as regards funding over a multi-annual timeframe.

We are grateful to you for continuing to engage with us on this important matter of social justice and would welcome a response from you by: 30 October 2024.

I will be copying this letter to Buffy Williams MS, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee; and Pippa Cotterill, of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Rathbone'.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Welsh Parliament



Buffy Williams MS
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Cardiff Bay
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3rd October 2024

Thank you for the Committee's work on the 'Children and Young People on the Margins' inquiry.

Dear Buffy Williams MS,

I hope this finds you well.

On behalf of NYAS Cymru, I would like to thank you and the Children, Young People and Education's Committee for the continued work into the 'Children and Young People on the Margins' inquiry.

We were thrilled that the Committee held a scrutiny session with the Minister for Children and Social Care and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip on September 19th. It was welcomed that Committee members raised several issues regarding data collection in Wales, the status of return interviews, progress of the Corporate Parenting Charter and devolution of the youth justice system. We would like to thank you for considering the questions we had submitted to the Committee in support of the scrutiny session.

The offer of a return interview

NYAS Cymru recognise that for return interviews to be truly effective in keeping children safe after missing incidents, they must be child-led. We believe there has been some confusion regarding the process of return interviews and we wanted to clarify that we believe children should have a choice as to whether they participate in a return interview or not, and they should be able to decide who completes this interview. NYAS Cymru believe that it should be a statutory right for every missing child or young person to have an offer of an independent return interview and that right is taken up with the voluntary agreement of the child or young person, rather than it being "mandatory". I really welcomed you clarifying this within the scrutiny session and would like to thank you for doing so.

We know that across Wales access to return interviews remains unequal and not every child can access these services. This is why we believe making the offer of a return interview a statutory right is important, so all care-experienced children across Wales have an equal opportunity to decide whether they wish to participate in a return interview.

Inquiry next steps

Please would you be able to confirm the next steps the Committee will take on this important work. NYAS Cymru would like to offer the Committee our full support with the next steps of this inquiry, including helping to shape any recommendations the Committee may make to the Welsh

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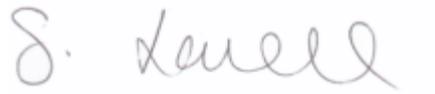
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Government. Please do not hesitate to reach out if there is anything we can do in the coming months to support this. Once again, thank you Buffy for all the work you and the Committee have undertaken as part of this inquiry.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "S. Lovell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Sharon Lovell MBE
Chief Executive
NYAS Cymru

Additional information from the NASUWT Cymru following the evidence session on 2 October 2024

Please find evidence re. additional questions:

•What are your views on the language categories that will be applied to schools under the Bill? Do you see any big difference from the current arrangements set out in non-statutory guidance?

The proposed system is simpler. These will be clearer and easier to understand providing enough information is shared with parents and the public on their meaning. The categories do not stand alone, schools are based in communities, and the demographic nature of those communities will impact on the appropriate categories. In terms of transition, Welsh Government needs to ensure it has provided enough support to the communities, and resources and training for teachers and other education staff, to support an increased use of Welsh language. The Welsh Government must also recognise that schools can only successfully transition whilst also transitioning the workforce of that school. Re-training, redeployment and recruiting will not happen overnight and possibly will not happen in the transition timescales proposed.

•How important and necessary are the provisions in the Bill for Primarily English Language, partly Welsh schools to apply for a maximum of two periods of exemption from the requirement to deliver 10% Welsh language education? Are you content with these arrangements?

Each school is required to prepare a Welsh language delivery plan and under this new Bill/Act would be monitored against their achievements and outcomes. Schools do not exist in isolation, and may reflect that linguistic demographics which surround the school in the local community. Some pupils will hear Welsh spoken in other locations outside of school, and at home. Other pupils will not hear Welsh spoken unless in school. Another factor impacting on the achievement of the objective of 10% Welsh language provision is the availability of Welsh medium teachers – there is crisis in Wales in recruitment of Welsh medium teachers. Welsh Government needs to ensure there has been a mapping of teachers able to speak through the medium of Welsh, work to increase the numbers being recruited, ensure the Welsh medium of ITE is increased, and ensure that proper provision for teachers to improve their Welsh language skills are also protected e.g. through sabbaticals. Without this Primarily English language provision schools are being pressured to deliver on a target that is

outside of their control. The continuum should be implemented at a pace that reflects local circumstances.

Reports from UNESCO on promoting of minority indigenous languages focus on the need for promoting and encouraging an increase of the language within the community as well as the school. Welsh Language Commission reported in 2016 that Welsh learning had moved from the home to school, and in 2016 4 out of 5 children aged 5-15 mainly learn Welsh at school.

In relation to all pupils achieving the B2 level, the Welsh Government needs to take account of this particularised location of Welsh language usage in schools, rather than community and home, when assessing the probability of this goal in the Bill being achieved, as well as the needs of ALN students. The definition of CEFR B2 is 'At this level, students can function independently in a variety of academic and professional environments in English, although with a limited range of nuance and precision' (it has been compared to A level). ESTYN 2018/19 report on student take up of A level Welsh first language noted a drop in uptake. Estyn notes that whilst attitudes to Welsh remain positive, desire and confidence of a minority of learners fade, and many choose to study their courses through English at KS 5. There needs to be more research on the achievability of CEFR B2 in a pupils career.

It is clear from the ESTYN report that the previous non-statutory guidance linked to WESPs has failed to achieve an increase in Welsh language use in Primarily English schools. The failure has been linked to a lack of resources in terms of funding and in successfully enabling Welsh medium teachers to be trained either in ITE or through release from their teaching duties.

Without good resources, and proper planning, to support the implementation of the objectives within the Bill – this could well result in another failed Welsh language policy initiative.

•Do you believe is it is clear enough what will happen if a school does not provide at least the minimum amount of Welsh language education in accordance with its category? Should the Bill provide for any mechanisms or sanctions to be taken?

This is not clear. If the Bill is to be taken seriously some indication of support should be made, which would enable any school to achieve the minimum within it's category. The Union is concerned that the Bill should be able to sanction schools for any lag in attainment – not least when a school's ability to meet any category requirements is dependant on its staff resources. Schools that struggle to employ

Welsh-medium teachers or are unable to fund immersive training for staff to meet the demands of its category should not be sanctioned but rather should be adequately supported.

•To what extent do you agree with the creation of a National Institute for Learning Welsh and the role that the Bill sets out for it?

How much of a role do you believe it should have in terms of statutory education and how would you like to see it working with existing organisations such as schools

It is logical for one body to hold an overarching view on the development of Welsh language in Wales. The relationships would be most successful if based on co-operation and co-production, with collegiate working on drawing up of objectives and implementation pathways. Any creation of monitoring roles needs to be carefully scrutinised for impact on workload and extra pressure on teachers. Any scrutiny should be collegial and with the purpose of identifying support needs, and not to feed into any sanction mechanisms.

Children, Young People
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Mark Drakeford MS
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language

10 October 2024

Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

Dear Mark,

We would appreciate clarification on the wording in section 23(3) of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill (the Bill).

Section 23(3) of the Bill states that the National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh must, in particular, set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. In the English language version of the Bill, in section 23(3)(e), the drafting appears to be incorrect, as 'to facilitate' does not flow from the wording that precedes it in subsection (3). To put this into context, the wording read together would state 'The National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh must, in particular, set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh **by to facilitate** progression in teaching Welsh and education through the medium of Welsh...'.

A further issue identified with section 23(3) is that in paragraph (e) the Welsh language version of the Bill reads 'annog dilyniant' and the English language version reads 'to facilitate progression'. Apart from this one instance, each time 'facilitate' or 'facilitating' is used in the English language version of the Bill, the Welsh language version uses 'hwyluso', as opposed to 'annog'. Where 'annog' is used elsewhere in the Welsh language version of the Bill, namely sections 1(1)(d) and 22(2)(a), the English language version uses 'encourage'. It appears to us that the Welsh language version of the Bill does not suffer from the same issue that we identify in the preceding paragraph of this letter as the English language version regarding the flow of the wording.

We ask that you confirm the correct wording of section 23(3)(e) of the Bill, in both languages. If any amendments are required, please confirm whether these will be made at Stage 2. It would be helpful if we could have a response before our next scrutiny session on Thursday 17 October, as it is relevant to evidence we have received from stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English