



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Mr Russell George AM
Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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11/04/2017

Dear Chair

I write to you regarding the Committee's 'Apprenticeships in Wales 2017' inquiry.

In correspondence with me in June 2016, the Assembly's Llywydd indicated her wish to ensure that consideration of the Welsh language in committee work is not confined only to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee. Indeed, the Llywydd indicated the intention that all committees consider Welsh language matters in the context of their remits. She also suggested that I raise any concerns in terms of achieving this aim with the relevant committee chairs.

Accordingly, I am writing to you to draw your attention to the lack of consideration given to the Welsh language in the terms of reference of your committee's current inquiry into Apprenticeships in Wales.

You invite comments on a wide range of subjects, including the accessibility of advice on vocational options, and the accessibility of the courses for specific age groups, people from the lowest income families, and people with disabilities; barriers to the take up of apprenticeships; and employer engagement with apprenticeships. The inquiry's terms of reference do not invite comments specifically related to the accessibility of apprenticeships for those who might wish to learn through the medium of Welsh.

There is very little scrutiny given to the Welsh language in previous reviews of Apprenticeship programmes in Wales. For instance, the 2012 report by the Enterprise and Business Committee [Apprenticeships in Wales](#) contained no reference to the Welsh language. Welsh-medium provision was not referred to in the National Training Federation for Wales report [The Value of Apprenticeships to Wales](#) published in September 2015. Including the Welsh language as a central part of this inquiry's terms of reference would be an opportunity to address the gaps in available evidence regarding the Welsh language within apprenticeships.

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Both education and the workplace are central to the growth of the Welsh language. Our education system is the main source of new Welsh speakers. The use of the Welsh language in the workplace is a means of improving Welsh speakers' confidence in using it, of increasing the status of the language, and of normalising Welsh as an everyday language. Despite this, it is acknowledged that a significant cohort of Welsh speakers lose their Welsh language skills following the end of their statutory education. In light of this, work-based learning programmes such as apprenticeships are vital in order to ensure continuity from education into the workplace as opportunities to use the language.

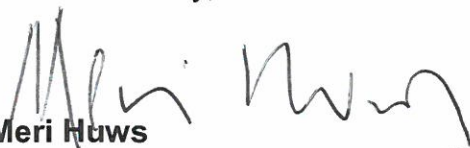
This is especially important in the context of the Welsh Government's vision of ensuring a million Welsh speakers by 2050. The Welsh Government's new Welsh language Strategy (August 2016)¹ that was consulted upon recently states the need to '*improve rates of progression between the different phases of education and the workplace*' including in apprenticeship programmes.

There is a commitment to ensuring 100,000 additional apprenticeships in the future. This presents an opportunity in terms of achieving the aims of the Welsh Government's new strategy for the language through increasing opportunities for the future workforce to use the Welsh language. I am concerned that in reviewing apprenticeship programmes in Wales there has been lack of consideration to the Welsh language, and that this has been a barrier to identifying strengths and weaknesses in the current provision and ensuring progress over the years to come.

I ask that you consider extending the inquiry's terms of reference in order to include the consideration of the use of Welsh in apprenticeships. The Welsh language is not implicit in other aspects of the current terms of reference. Including Welsh as a specific aspect of the terms of reference would enable to gather evidence regarding the current Welsh-medium provision, thus filling the existing gap.

I intend to share evidence I have regarding the Welsh language in apprenticeships. I'm sure others would also do so if the inquiry's terms of reference included the relevant call for evidence.

Yours sincerely,



Meri Huws
Welsh Language Commissioner

¹ <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/consultation/160729-consultation-doc-en.pdf>