



Eluned Morgan AM  
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language

05 June 2018

Dear Eluned,

## **The position of the Welsh language in apprenticeship programmes in Wales**

I write to you following the debate on the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's report, 'Apprenticeships in Wales'<sup>1</sup> at the Assembly on 9 May and the discussion on the Welsh language in apprenticeship programmes.

It was noted in the report and during the debate that the use of Welsh in apprenticeships is low, and that factors such as a shortage of teaching staff prevent progress. Reference was also made to the fact that the Government chooses to combine data on Welsh medium learning, bilingual learning and with an element of Welsh when reporting on the use of Welsh in the sector. You said that it is possible to study any apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh if there is a demand, but that only a small number of learners access this opportunity. You also said that many learners choose to undertake apprenticeships bilingually.

In my briefing note<sup>2</sup>, published in November last year, I highlighted the fact that many factors are likely to impact the use made of the Welsh language in apprenticeships. These include a lack of interest from learners as you noted but

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<sup>1</sup> <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s72280/Report%20PDF%201.4MB.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.comisiynyddygybraeg.cymru/English/Publications%20List/20171114%20S%20Nodyn%20briffio%20Prentisiaethau%20FERSIWN%20TERFYNOL.pdf>

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there are also other important factors. These include a lack of availability of Welsh medium and bilingual qualifications and assessments and a lack of education workforce who are able to teach and assess through the medium of Welsh. The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's report supported some of these points, noting that 'there remains a gap between the likely demand and ability to meet it'.<sup>3</sup> In the context of all these conclusions, I therefore do not agree that it is possible to study any apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh if students wish to do so. Additionally, I would like to know the Government's view on the impact of the action taken to increase the use of Welsh in apprenticeships presented under the 'Aligning the Apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy' (February 2017) scheme; and also, whether you intend to develop further strategies to address the range of other factors which hinder progress.

I would also ask you to consider the practice of combining data for Welsh medium learning with data for learning bilingually and with an element of Welsh, a matter which was of course noted in the debate on 9 May. This was done, for example, when reporting on the position of the Welsh language in the work-based learning (and further education) sector in the Welsh Language Strategy Annual Report 2016/17. Combining these categories could undermine the reliability of the data; weaken the meaning of 'bilingual'; and lead to confusion regarding real progress in the sector. I raised similar concerns in correspondence to the Welsh Government's Chief Statistician on 21 February this year. Again, the Committee's report stated that a lack of accurate, publicly available data makes it difficult to address the issue of the gap between the likely demand for Welsh language apprenticeships and the ability to meet the demand<sup>4</sup>.

I trust that you will find my comments above useful. I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss the points in our next meeting.

Yours sincerely

**Meri Huws**  
Welsh Language Commissioner

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 16

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.16



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Copy to:

Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary for Education

Bethan Sayed AM, Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications  
Committee

Russell George AM, Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Lynne Neagle AM, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee