

Free Welsh Lessons for the People of Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 07 Mai 2019

Petitions Committee | 07 May 2019

Research Briefing:

Petition number: **Petition P-05-873**

Petition title: **Free Welsh Lessons for the People of Wales**

Text of petition: When I was younger I was deprived of the right to study my native language in school, and because of that I am not speaking my native tongue today. I, and so many others of my generation, and even the younger generation are deprived of the means to speak Welsh because the teaching of Welsh in schools wasn't successful with them in the past. This is why I am asking the Welsh Government to right the wrongs of the past, and to show true leadership to fight for my right to learn my own language by **providing Welsh classes and resources for free**. We are asking for the Minister for Welsh to support this motion and fund the classes so I, and many others who were deprived of the Language get the chance to speak once more. This would work perfectly with the Welsh Government's plan to reach a Million Welsh Speakers by 2050, and would provide a spark for people to re-grasp their culture and their mother tongue once again. We ask the government to **work with different agencies** to provide these lessons to people in different areas, and by making learning services **available on the web for people**. Also to provide booklets and paper to different people from different background in Wales to have a chance in learning the Language.

Please secure this for the people of Wales who are passionate to regain their culture and native tongue.

1. Background

The Welsh Government's vision is to see the number of Welsh speakers in Wales increase to 1 million by 2050, which would almost double the current number of Welsh speakers in Wales. The 2011 Census showed that 562,000 people in Wales can speak Welsh, around 1 in 5 of the population.

The [Welsh Language Use Survey 2013–2015](#) shows that the majority of Welsh speakers now learn the language at school (51 per cent) compared to 43 per cent who said they'd learnt Welsh in the home as a child. Much of this is down to the increase in Welsh-medium education over the last half a century, although Welsh-medium schools only account for around a quarter of all schools in Wales.

Increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the future will depend, to a great extent, on the growth of Welsh medium education. The Welsh Government notes in its [Welsh Language Strategy: Cymraeg 2050](#), that 'Welsh-medium immersion education is our principal method for ensuring that children can develop their Welsh language skills, and for creating new speakers'.

Cymraeg 2050 maps out the route to a million Welsh speakers, which also includes increasing the number of adults who learn and speak Welsh. The Welsh Government states that:

The Welsh for Adults sector has an important contribution to make to our aim of achieving a million Welsh speakers. It will do so by enabling adults of all ages and abilities to improve their skills, resume their study of Welsh or learn afresh to give them the confidence to be able to use Welsh in the workplace, socially or within the family.

During recent years there have been structural changes in the sector. There is now an opportunity to develop provision at a national level to support courses for the workplace, the family, and opportunities to use technology more effectively in support of learning.

Following an inquiry on the Welsh Government's Draft Welsh Language Strategy in 2016, the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee published its report, [Achieving the Ambition](#) stating that:

Good quality, readily available provision for Welsh for Adults is an important part of the overall 'eco system' for increasing the number of Welsh speakers. It is particularly important in helping to promote the language and in helping parents who want to become more involved in their children's education. However, the rate of success may not be significant enough for it to be considered a central way forward in the context of the strategy's aims and objectives.

The Committee recommended that the Welsh Government continue to support Welsh for Adults provision, but that it 'considers carefully its relative priority within the strategy compared to other priority areas'.

2. Welsh for Adults/Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol

The National Centre for Learning Welsh was established in 2016 by the Welsh Government, and is responsible for all aspects of the Welsh for Adults education programme. This includes among other things, course development, the [curriculum](#) and marketing.

The Centre was established in response to a Welsh Government review into the sector – [Raising our sights: review of Welsh for Adults](#), which stated that the new body should be responsible for co-ordinating and planning adult Welsh language learning provision on a national basis. The National Centre works with a network of **11 Learn Welsh providers** across Wales, which deliver Welsh courses to learners on its behalf. At the time of the review in 2013, it was estimated that **one in 120 non-Welsh speaking adults** in Wales were learning Welsh.

The core objectives for the Centre are to:

- Be a visible institution setting a national strategic direction for the Welsh for Adults sector;
- Provide leadership for the Centre’s providers;
- Raise standards in teaching and learning Welsh;
- Develop a high quality, appropriate, modern, engaging **national curriculum** and **produce resources** suitable for a range of learners at all levels.

Some of the resources developed are provided [online](#) to assist learners and improve access to learning resources.

2.1 Funding

For 2017–18, the National Centre for Learning Welsh received £1.85 million in funding from the Welsh Government towards the work of [setting strategic direction](#) to the sector and to **develop national learning resources**; the centre also distributed £8.81 million in funding to Learn Welsh providers across Wales to deliver language courses.

In addition, a sum of £2.54 million was awarded to the [Cymraeg Gwaith/Work Welsh](#) programme, designed to strengthen Welsh language skills in the workplace. *Work Welsh* offers **fully-funded**, flexible Welsh language training for the workforce.

The additional funding for Work Welsh would be used to develop:

- Information and advice on ‘Work Welsh’ for employers;
- Online courses;
- Intensive courses for ‘Work Welsh’;
- Courses for early years sector;
- Residential courses for ‘Work Welsh’.

Further details on the Centre's budget and distributed funds to Learn Welsh providers can be found in its [Annual Report 2017–18](#).

2.2 Courses and Fees

Despite Welsh Government funding for Learn Welsh providers, this does not cover all the costs for delivering courses. Adults wishing to learn the language can take advantage of a number of different courses available across Wales, with course costs varying from one area to another ([delivered by different providers](#)), with some areas providing taster courses for free or for a nominal fee of £10–£30.

For those wishing to develop their language skills, there are a multitude of courses designed for different stages of learning and proficiency. Courses begin at *Entry* level, and progress through *Foundation*, *Intermediate*, *Advanced* and *Proficiency*. Fees also vary considerably depending on the length and intensity of the course, although the majority of courses cost between £70–£120 pounds, with the most expensive course being in Cardiff (Entry and Intermediate Courses – Part 1 & 2 running for 8 weeks costing £360).

There is also an option to attend intensive residential courses delivered at [Nant Gwrtheyrn](#). The most expensive course runs for a week (full-board) costing £495.

Adults wishing to learn can browse through the various courses available to them [online](#).

While there is no financial support to help pay for course fees, individuals may be able to claim some financial support to help them learn Welsh. Eligible learners could receive support for the cost of childcare (up to 3.5 hours at £5 per child for each lesson), exam fees, resources and travel costs (up to 60 miles at £0.25 per mile for each journey). Further details can be found on the [Dysgu Cymraeg website](#).

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.