
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 and Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by those receiving education and training in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary, secondary, special and all age schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, learning in the justice sector and initial teacher training.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

- Estyn welcomes Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Strategic Plan and supports its overall direction, particularly the emphasis on developing Welsh and bilingual pathways, workforce planning and strategic co-operation. To ensure long-term effect, the plan should include clearer arrangements for measuring success, monitoring progress and evaluating the effect on learners' outcomes.

Summary of response

- The plan provides a sound foundation for achieving the vision, but the monitoring arrangements should be strengthened by including performance indicators, milestones and a clearer focus on learners' outcomes.
- The values are appropriate and support the vision, but more emphasis should be placed on using evidence, evaluating effect and ensuring that the values inform strategic decisions consistently.
- Co-operation with partners is vital to the success of the plan, but it should be explained how partnerships will be governed and evaluated and how learners and employers will contribute to their development.
- The strategic objectives are clear and ambitious, but more emphasis should be placed on the quality of provision as well as its expansion, with clear measures of progress and effect.
- The priorities for workforce planning are appropriate, but the focus on existing workforce development, leadership and long-term planning should be strengthened to ensure a sustainable bilingual workforce.

The plan provides a sound strategic direction, but the link between the vision and action should be strengthened by including clear success measures and greater emphasis on the quality of learning experiences and practical use of the Welsh language.

Consultation questions

Q1. Given the Coleg's long-term vision, does the strategic plan offer a suitable way of working towards achieving the vision over the period 2026–31?

Estyn supports the Coleg's long-term vision and welcomes the strategic direction outlined in the plan. The focus on developing seamless Welsh and bilingual pathways, workforce planning and improving learner experiences aligns well with national priorities, including Cymraeg 2050 and the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025.

The plan recognises appropriately that achieving the vision requires effective co-operation between the Coleg, Medr, providers and other stakeholders. It would be beneficial to explain further how the vision will be implemented across sectors that have different contexts. This should include ensuring that the provision responds to the needs of the learners, the needs of the workforce, the availability of cohorts and staff, etc. To achieve this, there is a need to better detail how the Coleg would identify the specific challenge of engaging with partnerships, which could include local authorities, colleges or third sector leaders and staff. This would strengthen the long-term ambition to expand the Welsh-medium and bilingual opportunities for learners.

The plan would benefit from greater clarity about how success will be measured. Performance indicators, milestones and clear monitoring arrangements would strengthen accountability and enable the effect of the work to be evaluated. As well as measuring growth in provision, more emphasis should be given to outcomes for learners, including the development of their Welsh skills and confidence in using the language within their courses and beyond so that they can gain confidence to communicate in Welsh in the world of work. However, overall, the document makes little reference to the Adult Community Learning sector or its role in promoting the use of Welsh as a community language, or to ensuring fairness for Welsh speakers in community provision.

Overall, the plan provides a sound foundation for achieving the vision.

Q2. The Coleg has identified a number of values that will support our vision and are at the core of our way of working. Do you have any comments on the values that the Coleg has identified?

Estyn supports the values outlined in the plan. The emphasis on ambition, co-operation, inclusion and innovation provides a sound foundation for achieving the vision and reflects the principles of effective leadership. It is positive that the plan places learners at the heart of its work and recognises the importance of creating meaningful opportunities to develop and use the Welsh language.

However, it would be beneficial to place more emphasis on evaluating effect and continuous improvement. Our inspection experience emphasises the importance of

honest and thorough evaluation in informing strategic decisions and ensuring sustainable improvement. It would also be useful to explain how the values will be reflected in planning, decision-making and implementation across the sector.

Q3. Do you agree with the emphasis the Coleg places on working with partners and stakeholders?

Yes – this is crucial. Estyn supports the emphasis on co-operation as realising the vision depends on co-ordinated action across the education system. The plan identifies appropriately the role of strategic partners such as Medr, providers and employers in developing provision and planning the workforce. However, it is not clear how this will be achieved with employees and representative bodies for the employer, as well as training providers.

In addition, the document does not identify the Learning and Work Institute as the representative body for Adult Community Learning partnerships. It would be useful to note this specifically on page 6 where other lead and representative bodies are named. Estyn's evidence shows that strong partnerships contribute to better planning, sharing effective practice and creating more opportunities for learners to use the Welsh language in academic and vocational contexts. However, it would be beneficial to explain how partnerships are governed and evaluated, by focusing on their effect on the quality of provision and learners' progress. It would also be worth placing more emphasis on the role of learners and employers in informing the development of provision. Overall, the emphasis on co-operation is one of the plan's strengths.

Q4. Do you have any comments about the strategic objectives and approaches?

Estyn welcomes the strategic objectives as they provide a clear framework for the development of the Welsh language across the tertiary education sector. The focus on developing provision, workforce planning and improving learners' experiences reflects the current challenges and is in line with Estyn's inspection evidence. Strengthening the focus on the effect of effective pedagogy and its effect on learners' skills and confidence to use Welsh proactively in holistic vocational contexts would be beneficial.

However, the plan would benefit from greater detail about how progress will be measured. Performance indicators, milestones and clear monitoring arrangements would strengthen accountability and support evaluation of the effect. For example, in the apprenticeship sector, measures of success should distinguish between the availability of provision, the number of apprentices enrolled on Welsh-medium or bilingual programmes, and the extent to which the Welsh language is used meaningfully in teaching, assessment and the workplace. This would help to ensure that the provision

recorded as bilingual provides significant opportunities for apprentices to develop and use their vocational skills through the medium of Welsh.

In this regard, it would be useful for the Coleg to distinguish clearly between three types of measures:

- the availability of Welsh and bilingual provision; learners' participation in that provision;
- and effect, namely the extent to which provision improves learners' actual skills, confidence and use of Welsh.

This would provide a more complete picture of progress than just measuring growth in provision.

In considering the Adult Community Learning sector in particular, overall, the strategic objectives would benefit from having specific reference to the role that the sector has in supporting the use of the Welsh language in the communities. This could include a reference to developing provision that is tailored and attractive to Welsh speaking adults and Welsh speaking communities. For example, section 1.i (Strategic Planning) on p.11 refers to development, 'a plan to increase Welsh-medium apprenticeships, paying particular attention to areas with a high density of Welsh speakers.' This could be extended usefully to refer to community provision.

More emphasis should be placed on the quality of provision as well as its quantity. Estyn's evidence shows that increasing Welsh-medium opportunities alone does not ensure that learners develop the confidence or ability to use Welsh independently.

More generally, we would encourage the Coleg to develop a clear evaluation framework for each strategic objective. This should include qualitative measures as well as quantitative measures, to assess not only the amount of provision available but the quality of learners' experiences, their confidence in using the Welsh language and the extent to which they use it naturally in educational, vocational and community contexts. It would also be useful to set clear interim milestones for 2026–31 so that progress can be evaluated and identify at an early stage where additional support or a change in approach is needed.

Q5. Do you have comments about the priority areas for workforce planning?

Estyn supports the priority areas identified for workforce planning. The focus on health, social care, childcare and education is appropriate and reflects the growing demand for bilingual workforces. It also identifies the important link between workforce planning and expanding opportunities for learners to study and work through the medium of Welsh. Considering workforce development to focus not only on proficiency in Welsh but also on developing staff's confidence in bilingual pedagogy with the aim of creating natural

opportunities for learners to use Welsh throughout their programmes as an integral part of their learning experiences.

Estyn's evidence shows that a shortage of staff with the appropriate language ability and vocational expertise continues to limit the development of provision in some sectors – this is a concern. As a result, as well as recruiting new staff, the plan should place more emphasis on developing the capacity of the existing workforce through purposeful professional learning, sustained mentoring and consistent opportunities to use the Welsh language in the workplace. It would also be beneficial to strengthen the focus on long-term leadership development and workforce planning.

In considering the Apprenticeship sector specifically, it would be useful for the plan to provide further details on the apprenticeship planning process, the needs of employers and the requirements of professional bodies and registration. The challenge for the workforce in apprenticeships is particularly complex, as practitioners need to combine current vocational competence, appropriate teaching or assessment skills, and the ability and confidence to support learners through the medium of Welsh. In some specialist or low-demand sectors, providers are already finding it difficult to recruit staff with the necessary vocational expertise. The proposed workforce mapping should therefore identify specific areas of vulnerability and shortage by sector, level and region. Therefore, ensuring that the plan takes into account national or regional co-operative models, including sharing specialist staff, workplace mentoring, remote support, and providing bilingual and assessment resources, would be beneficial.

For Adult Community Learning, in particular, the sector has not benefited from the level of support that other areas of the tertiary system have had in relation to capacity building for the Welsh language. It would be useful to have specific reference to include the Adult Community Learning sector within the scope of this section.

Adult Community Learning teachers are required to register with the Education Workforce Council. However, they often work part-time or are paid hourly and this presents specific challenges. It would be useful to refer to this specifically in the document.

Q6. How can you or your organisation work with the Coleg to realise the strategic vision and objectives?

Estyn looks forward to continuing a constructive dialogue with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Medr and other partners to support the development of the Welsh language across the education and training sector. Through our inspection, thematic and advisory work, we can provide independent evidence about the quality of provision, learners' experiences and the effectiveness of leadership.

Estyn can also contribute by sharing effective practice identified in inspections, including examples of successful strategic planning, developing Welsh language and bilingual pathways, and creating cultures where the Welsh language is a natural part of teaching and learning. Ongoing co-operation between the Coleg, Medr and Estyn (and Yr Athrofa, (National Institute for Learning Welsh, in due course) will help to ensure that planning and evaluation is based on sound evidence and focused on improving outcomes for learners. Sharing effective evidence and practice is key to supporting system-wide improvement.

We would also welcome an ongoing dialogue with the Coleg about the emerging evidence from inspections and thematic work, including the way providers develop workforce capacity, bilingual pedagogy and meaningful opportunities to use the Welsh language.

Q7. Do you have any further comments about the Strategic Plan?

Estyn welcomes the strategic plan and supports its overall direction. The plan offers a clear and ambitious vision that reflects national priorities and identifies the importance of developing the Welsh language across the tertiary education sector.

However, it would be beneficial to strengthen the link between the vision and the implementation arrangements. In particular, the plan should include clear success indicators, milestones and monitoring arrangements that measure effect on learners' outcomes as well as on the level of provision. Greater emphasis should also be placed on the quality of learning experiences and the practical use of the Welsh language in education and the workplace. Estyn's evidence shows that the most effective provision is the provision where the Welsh language is used naturally and consistently in teaching, learning and the organisation's daily life. Overall, the plan provides a sound foundation for achieving its ambition.

General comments from different sectors:

Apprenticeships

- Implementing the plan should reflect the significant differences between the sectors within the tertiary education system.
- Apprenticeship provision depends on the ability of lead providers, subcontractors and employers, as well as the availability of staff with the appropriate vocational, teaching, assessment and Welsh language skills.
- Milestones should therefore be ambitious but realistic, differentiated according to sector, and focus on meaningful improvements in apprentices' experiences and outcomes.

Further Education

- Overall, the Strategic Plan provides a strong framework for moving forward to develop the Welsh language in the further education sector.

- Consider recognising the importance of measuring the effect of the strategy through learners' experiences and their opportunities to use Welsh in meaningful educational and vocational contexts, alongside participation and provision measures.
- Successful implementation will depend on identifying the contexts of different FE providers and supporting colleges to incorporate the Welsh language naturally into teaching, learning and learners' experiences, alongside expanding Welsh-medium and bilingual provision.

Adult Community Learning

Referring to our thematic report, [Increasing the use of the Welsh language in the post-16 sectors \(2025\)](#), which also makes fairly detailed recommendations about how the Coleg monitors the effect of its work, would be beneficial to the plan.