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Proposed Evaluation Framework for the Welsh-medium Education Strategy

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Proposed Evaluation Framework for the Welsh-medium Education Strategy

Old Bell 3 Ltd, Dateb and Sbectrwm

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1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Old Bell 3 Ltd, in association with Dateb and Sbectrwm, has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to develop a framework for evaluating the implementation of its Welsh-medium Education Strategy[1].

1.2   The evaluation framework is intended as a tool to ensure that a consistent and comparable approach is taken to reviewing the efficacy of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and the effects, effectiveness and efficiency of policies implemented in its name. More specifically, the evaluation framework signals the Welsh Government's intentions in terms of assessing:

- o whether the assumptions/hypotheses underlying the Welsh-medium Education Strategy are well founded;
- o whether, in the light of experience, the strategic aims and objectives are appropriate and achievable;
- o how effectively different elements of the Strategy knit together and how well they fit with other Welsh Government policies;
- o the degree to which the Strategy has provided the Welsh in Education Unit a platform for promoting a growth in Welsh-medium education;
- o the extent to which the Strategy is bringing about the changes sought within the education and training system;
- o the effectiveness of the support mechanisms (including funding arrangements) needed to initiate change;
- o factors which are hindering or helping the realisation of the Strategy's aims and objectives;
- o whether initiatives undertaken represent value for money;
- o the effectiveness of particular initiatives undertaken in the name of the Strategy;
- o how the Strategy, or its component elements, need to change in order to meet the Welsh Assembly Government's aspirations i.e. the framework should help to inform the Welsh Government's decision making.

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[1] Welsh Assembly Government (2010) Welsh-medium Education Strategy

1.3 The development of an evaluation framework so shortly after the Strategy's publication also indicates the Welsh Government's commitment to gathering and reflecting upon evidence of how effectively policies are working, and to make changes in the wake of lessons learnt. In this context, it is important that the evaluation framework itself provides sufficient flexibility to allow evaluation approaches to evolve as time goes on and the Welsh-medium Education Strategy is rolled out.

1.4 The work undertaken in developing the evaluation framework has involved:
   o reviewing a range of background documents, with a particular emphasis upon the Welsh Government's Welsh language and education/learning related policies;
   o developing some early ideas surrounding a possible evaluation framework;
   o sharing our initial thoughts with key stakeholders and inviting them to comment and suggest improvements;
   o revising our initial draft evaluation framework in the wake of stakeholders' advice;
   o sharing a revised draft framework with some of the same stakeholders and inviting further comment;
   o further revising the framework to come up with this paper.

1.5 A list of those who commented on our draft evaluation framework is given at Appendix 2. We were encouraged by their positive response to our proposals and wish to thank them for their constructive feedback. In particular, we were heartened by the general view expressed by contributors that the evaluation framework proposed provided a logical, comprehensible and comprehensive tool which would help to reinforce the vision and ambitions of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

1.6 In the remaining sections of this paper we:
   o briefly discuss the policy background against which the Welsh-medium Education Strategy is being implemented (section 2);

- o discuss the focus of the evaluation framework (section 3);
- o discuss the structure of the evaluation framework (section 4);
- o explore possible evaluation methods   (section 5);
- o recommend approaches to be taken to key elements of evaluation to be undertaken (section 6).

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   Since its formation, the Welsh Government has made clear its commitment to revitalising the Welsh language. Iaith Pawb: An Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales, (2003), gave voice to the (then) Welsh Assembly Government's ambition to create 'a truly bilingual nation' and to 'see a sustained increase in both the number and percentage of people able to speak Welsh' (p11). The document acknowledged the 'crucial role' to be played by the education sector in 'turning our aspirations for a bilingual Wales into a reality' (p38). One Wales (2007)[2] built upon the commitments made in Iaith Pawb and set out the Welsh Government's intention to 'create a national Welsh-medium Education Strategy to develop effective provision from nursery through to further and higher education backed up by an implementation programme' (p22). The Welsh-medium Education Strategy was published in April 2010.

2.2   The Welsh-medium Education Strategy opens by expressing the Welsh Government's vision of 'an education and training system that responds in a planned way to the growing demand for Welsh-medium education, reaches out to and reflects our diverse communities and enables an increase in the number of people of all ages and backgrounds who are fluent in Welsh and able to use the language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace' (p4). The document goes on to set out six 'strategic aims' which revolve around:

1. Planning the provision of Welsh-medium pre-statutory and statutory education which is responsive to demand;
2. Planning the provision of Welsh-medium post-14 education and

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training which is responsive to demand;

3. Ensuring the development of Welsh language skills and encouraging linguistic progression;

4. Developing the Welsh language and Welsh-medium education and training workforce;

5. Improving the central support mechanisms for Welsh-medium education and training;

6. Reinforcing language acquisition.

2.3 These 'strategic aims' are underpinned by 43 'strategic objectives' which give rise to almost 200 'actions' to be undertaken variously by the Welsh Government, local authorities, learning providers and 'other lead bodies'. The Strategy identifies nine quantitative 'outcome' targets.

2.4 Of course, the Welsh-medium Education Strategy is only one element of a wider policy and legislative framework which the Welsh Government has recently put in place in support of the Welsh language. The *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure* (2011) gives the Welsh language official status in Wales and establishes the office of Welsh Language Commissioner, who will have powers to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. More recently, the Welsh Government has published a consultation document, *A living language: A language for living: A strategy for the Welsh Language* (2010), which underscores the intentions set out in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy whilst also pointing to the mainstreaming of Welsh language considerations in other policy areas such as health, housing and business support.

2.5 The Welsh-medium Education Strategy also sits alongside wider developments in Welsh education and skills policies, some of which make express provision in relation to Welsh language and Welsh-medium education. These are discussed further at Appendix 1.

3.   BASIS OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

3.1   In developing the evaluation framework, we have adopted a logic model along the lines of that shown at Figure 1. The logic model is intended to create an explicit understanding of the expected linkages between investments made in the education and training system, the activities undertaken by various stakeholders in implementing the Strategy and their expected effects, both short and long term. The model allows some of the assumptions/hypotheses underpinning the Strategy to be articulated and the effects of external factors, which are likely either to help or to hinder the achievement of the Strategy's ambitions, to be considered.

Figure 1: The Logic Model Underpinning the Evaluation Framework
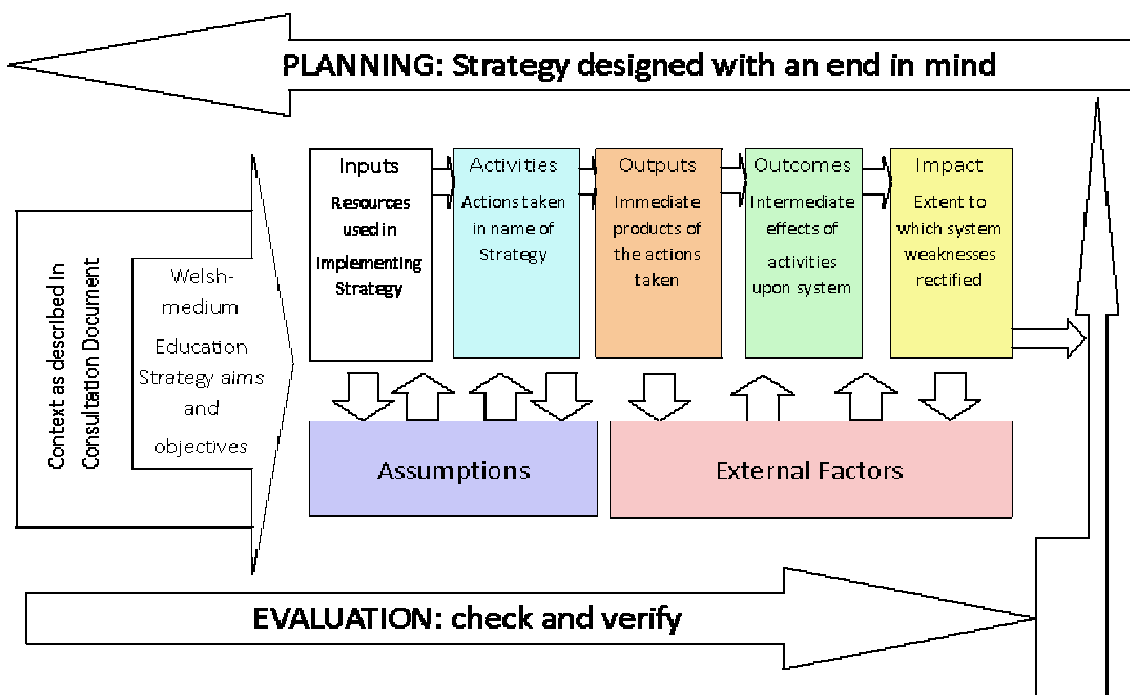
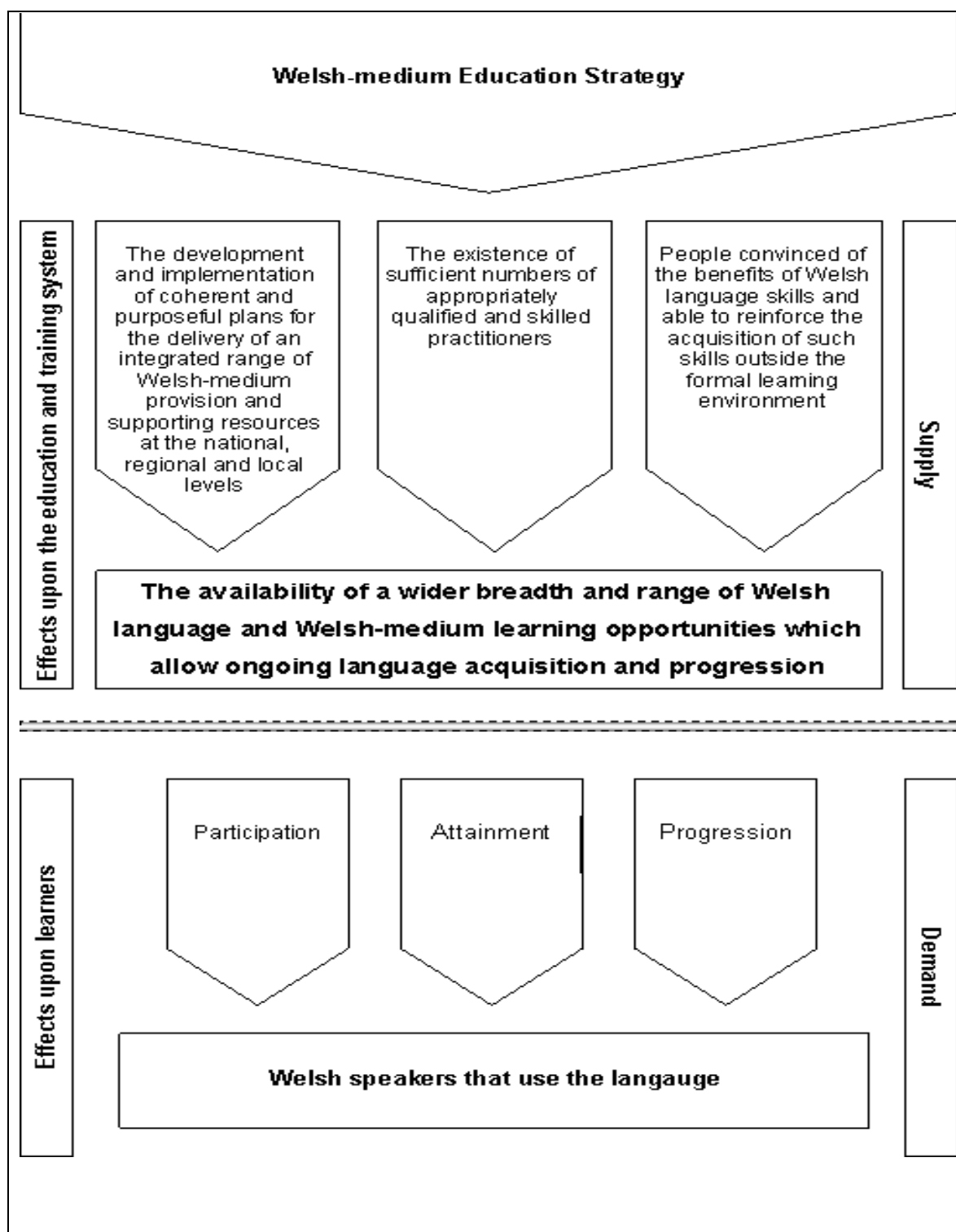3.2   Whilst the logic model presented provides a means of articulating expected causal relationships, it has the weakness of implying that those causal relationships are necessarily linear. This will not always be the case and the model should be regarded as an aid to thinking rather than something which rigidly categorises actions and effects as 'activities', 'outputs', 'outcomes' or 'impacts'.

4.   FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

4.1   As discussed above, the Welsh-medium Education Strategy is intended to contribute to the Welsh Government's agenda for the Welsh language by putting in place an education and training system which enables people of all ages and abilities to develop Welsh language skills incrementally. The Strategy's primary focus is upon developing and extending Welsh language and Welsh-medium learning opportunities – in essence, strengthening the supply of learning – so that people are able to participate in learning, to attain particular skill levels and to progress to the next level, until they become proficient and confident users of Welsh.

4.2   Figure 2 below seeks to apply the logic model discussed above to the Welsh-medium Education Strategy in order to capture the effects which the Strategy is expected to have upon the education and training system (supply side impacts) and how a strengthened education and training system is, in turn, expected to facilitate people's acquisition and use of Welsh language skills (demand side impacts).

Figure 2: Conceptual Model Underpinning the Evaluation Framework

Welsh-medium Education Strategy

Effects upon the education and training system

The development and implementation of coherent and purposeful plans for the delivery of an integrated range of Welsh-medium provision and supporting resources at the national, regional and local levels

The existence of sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified and skilled practitioners

People convinced of the benefits of Welsh language skills and able to reinforce the acquisition of such skills outside the formal learning environment

Supply

The availability of a wider breadth and range of Welsh language and Welsh-medium learning opportunities which allow ongoing language acquisition and progression

Effects upon learners

Participation

Attainment

Progression

Demand

Welsh speakers that use the langauge

4.3   The conceptual model sets out three descriptors of the conditions which stakeholders consulted thought necessary to bring about the growth sought in the Welsh language and Welsh-medium learning opportunities on offer:

   o   the first and most important, relates to the existence of conditions which enable the development and implementation of purposeful plans

for the delivery of Welsh-medium provision across all phases of education and training;

o secondly, the existence of a sufficient and appropriately skilled workforce; and

o third, the existence of an encouraging and enabling environment.

4.4   These 'supply side' descriptors are loosely based on the aims of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and form the basis of 'impact' measures within the evaluation framework.

4.5   Figure 2 above also identifies three headline descriptors of the Strategy's expected impact upon the learning 'demand side': participation, attainment and progression. These descriptors build upon the 'outcome' targets expressed in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy document and essentially capture the key components of the virtuous spiral which is expected to lead learners progressively towards fluency.

5.   STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

5.1   The evaluation framework is presented as a series of colour coded tables which seek to capture how activities undertaken under the auspices of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy are expected to lead to the realisation of the headline supply side (or systemic) impact measures set out in Figure 2. The activity measures seek to capture the thrust of the 200 or so 'actions' which the Strategy identifies.

5.2   A separate table is presented in relation to each supply side impact measure. These tables also rehearse some of the assumptions made in the development of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy as well as some key external factors (including other Welsh Government policies e.g. Welsh Language Strategy) which are likely to impact upon its implementation and effects. Figure 3 provides an illustration of how these tables are structured.

Figure 3: Structure of Evaluation Framework Tables

ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT
Activity 1	Output 1	Outcome 1	Thematic Impacts → Overall Systemic Impact
Activity 2	Output 2	Outcome 2	
Activity 3	Output 3		
Activity 4			

ASSUMPTIONS/HYPOTHESES	EXTERNAL FACTORS
Assumption/Hypothesis 1	External factor 1
Assumption/Hypothesis 2	External Factor 2
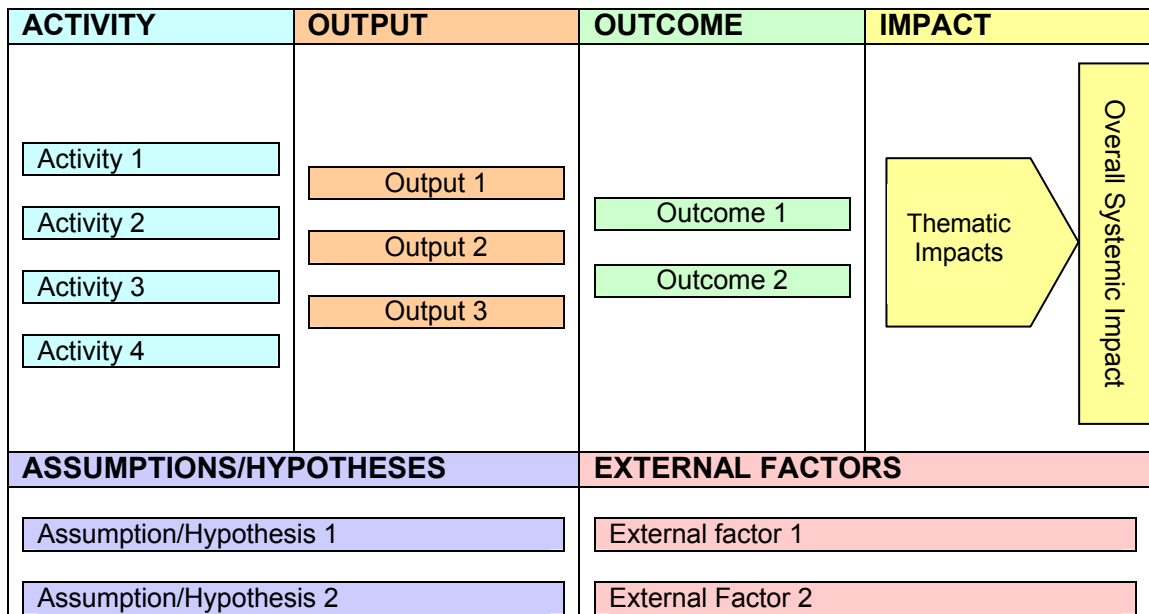
Table 1 – Supply Side Theme 1: Planning Provision and Support Arrangements

ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT
Provide clear strategic direction and guidance to which internal and external stakeholders feel able to respond	Welsh-medium education a core consideration in the development of education policy	A policy and funding framework which promotes the growth of Welsh-medium education	**The implementation of coherent and purposeful plans for the delivery of Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision across all phases of education and training and for the provision of supporting resources and qualifications at national, regional and local levels**
Explore the feasibility of developing a language continuum	Development of a rigorous and easily understood mechanism for assessing the Welsh language skills of people of all ages across all levels	Coherent plans for increasing the opportunities to learn Welsh at all levels (including basic skills support)	
Map out the demand for and existing supply of Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision across all phases of education and training	Stakeholders work together to plan Welsh-medium pre-statutory and statutory provision	A coherent range of resources to support the teaching and learning of Welsh and to enable the recognition of learners' Welsh language skills at various levels?	
Identify vocational routes in which Welsh language skills are needed	Stakeholders work together to plan Welsh language, Welsh-medium and bilingual post-16 provision that facilitates linguistic progression	Coherent plans for extending the availability of Welsh-medium learning opportunities at all levels (including to those with Additional Learning Needs)	
Prioritise Welsh language courses, resources and qualifications to be developed	Development/commissioning of new Welsh language teaching and learning resources	A coherent range of resources to support the teaching and learning of other subjects through the medium of Welsh and to allow learners to be assessed in Welsh?	
Prioritise Welsh-medium courses, resources and qualifications to be developed	Development of bespoke Welsh language courses and qualifications for target groups		
Assess the potential use of technology to promote and deliver Welsh language and Welsh-medium learning	Development/commissioning of new Welsh-medium/bilingual teaching and learning resources		
	Development of Welsh-medium vocational courses, resources and qualifications		
	Technology used to promote Welsh-medium learning and to enable access to resources		

ASSUMPTIONS/HYPOTHESES	EXTERNAL FACTORS
Developing Welsh language skills via Welsh-medium education impacts positively upon individuals' life-chances	Extent to which Welsh language considerations are reflected in education and skills policies e.g. the Schools Effectiveness Framework, the Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning and Estyn's Common Inspection Framework
Pupils need to undertake at least 70% of their learning through the medium of Welsh to reach fluency	
Too many young people switch from Welsh to predominantly English-medium provision at the transition between successive key stages and at the transition into non-statutory provision	Declining numbers of young people resident in homes where Welsh is spoken
	Financial pressures faced by local authorities, combined with declining school rolls, puts pressure on local authorities to reorganise/reconfigure
Welsh-medium/bilingual education involves greater cost than monolingual English-medium provision	
There is scope for greater efficiency and effectiveness if local learning networks work together over wider geographic areas (via regional consortia)	Local authorities are being forced to reorganise their 'education teams' in the face of financial pressures and the Welsh Government's expectation that they will adopt consortia working arrangements
More intensive courses over shorter periods are more effective in developing Welsh language skills than less intensive ones delivered over a longer timescale	
There is latent demand for Welsh language and Welsh-medium education: if more opportunities existed to learn Welsh and to learn through the medium of Welsh, they would be taken up	

Table 2 – Supply Side Theme2: Development of the Practitioner Workforce

ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT
Establish minimum linguistic standard for those wishing to work in Welsh-medium settings	A common understanding of the Welsh language and pedagogical skills needed by practitioners	The delivery of informed and purposeful ITT courses and Induction and EPD programmes which, as appropriate, address the need for Welsh language/ Welsh-medium teaching skills	**The existence of sufficient numbers of appropriately skilled and qualified practitioners**
Establish an instrument for assessing practitioners' Welsh language skills	A clear picture of practitioners' Welsh language skills levels		
Promote importance of Welsh language skills to existing and aspiring practitioners	Perception that Welsh language skills are important to teaching/ training professionals in Wales	The delivery of effective CPD programmes which addresses the need for Welsh language/ Welsh-medium teaching skills	
Model Welsh language/medium workforce	Existence and ongoing development of Welsh language/ Welsh-medium pedagogy modules within ITT courses and Induction and EPD programmes		
Build Welsh language/ pedagogy skills elements into Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses and Induction and Early Professional Development (EPD) programmes	Existence and ongoing development of Welsh language/ Welsh-medium pedagogy modules within CPD training courses		
Develop an all Wales language/ pedagogy Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme			
Further research into language acquisition and Welsh language and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies			

ASSUMPTIONS/HYPOTHESES	EXTERNAL FACTORS
There are currently insufficient practitioners with appropriate Welsh language skills[3].	LAs may not prioritise the development of practitioners' Welsh language/ pedagogy skills to the extent sought by the Welsh Government
The most effective way of significantly improving practitioners' Welsh language skills is through intensive courses such as those undertaken under the Sabbaticals Scheme	Financial pressure upon institutions may lead to a contraction of the teaching workforce
	Financial pressure upon institutions makes less likely that they will release practitioners to participate in training
	Delivery pressures can hinder practitioners' use of newly acquired Welsh language skills
	There is currently an absence of consistent data on the Welsh language skill levels of teachers to inform CPD programmes
	The numbers of young people opting to study A level Welsh has remained static, thus restricting a potential source of Welsh language/Welsh-medium teachers
	In most areas, there is a dearth of Welsh Second Language secondary teachers

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[3] Albeit that there is some statistical evidence to cast doubt over this hypothesis

Table 3: Supply Side Theme 3: Creating a Supportive Environment

ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT
Promotion of the cultural and economic/work related value of Welsh language skills Provision of clear and balanced information about Welsh-medium provision and language options on offer Existence of informal/non-formal learning opportunities within education settings Provision of informal learning opportunities for young people in the community Provision of informal learning opportunities for adults in the community	Parents and young people equipped to make informed choices about pursuing a Welsh-medium education Young people becoming more confident in and accustomed to using Welsh outside the classroom Adult learners becoming more confident and enthusiastic users of Welsh Awareness of the benefits and value of Welsh language skills among various stakeholder groups	Parents and young people feel more confident in opting for Welsh-medium education for their children or themselves The use of Welsh by learners becoming more common Fluent Welsh speakers becoming more accustomed to using Welsh with learners Employers and employees recognise the potential business benefits of Welsh language skills	**People convinced of the benefits of Welsh language skills and able to reinforce the acquisition of such skills outside the formal learning environment**

ASSUMPTIONS/HYPOTHESES	EXTERNAL FACTORS
The 'system' is capable of identifying and articulating employers' Welsh language needs effectively	Over time, the Welsh Language Strategy is likely to change attitudes and expectations in relation to the Welsh language
	The work of Welsh speaking youth workers and Welsh-medium social organisations is important in engendering confidence among young people to use the language

5.3   Boxes 1 to 3 below expand upon the headline 'demand side' indicators to be monitored over time.

Box 1: Demand Side Theme 1: Participation

1. The numbers and proportion of school pupils studying Welsh as a first language at various phases of education;
2. The proportion of Year 2 pupils assessed in Language, Literacy and Communication through the medium of Welsh[4];
3. The proportion of Year 6 pupils assessed in Welsh as a first language;
4. The proportion of Year 9 pupils assessed in Welsh as a first language[5];
5. The numbers and proportion of school pupils studying Welsh as a second language at various phases of education;
6. The proportion of learners who do not speak Welsh at home but who study Welsh as a first language in school;
7. The extent to which Welsh is used as the medium of instruction in various phases of education;
8. The number of children participating in Welsh-medium or bilingual pre-statutory provision i.e. childcare settings, nurseries, play groups etc.;
9. The number and proportion of pupils attending Welsh-medium or bilingual schools[6];
10. The number of post-16 learners studying Welsh as a first language;
11. The number of post-16 learners studying Welsh as a second language;
12. The number and proportion of post-16 learners pursuing Welsh language modules within courses;
13. The number and percentage of learners aged 16-19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools[7];
14. The number and percentage of learners aged 16-19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in further education institutions[8];
15. The number and percentage of learners aged 16-19 undertaking work-

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[4] This indicator corresponds as closely as possible to 'Outcome 1' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 21)
[5] This indicator corresponds to 'Outcome 2' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 23)
[6] The definitions of Welsh-medium and bilinaul schools given in Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision (2007) should be used for this purpose
[7] This indicator relates to 'Outcome 4' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 25)
[8] This indicator relates to 'Outcome 4' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 25)

based learning through the medium of Welsh[9];

16. Total A level Welsh (first language) entries as a percentage of GCSE Welsh (first language) entries two years previously[10];

17. Total A level Welsh (second language) entries as a percentage of full and short course GCSE Welsh (second language) entries two years previously[11];

18. The number of learners studying Welsh in Higher Education;

19. The number of learners studying Welsh language modules as part of Higher Education courses;

20. The number of enrolments on WfA courses at the various levels;

21. The numbers of people pursuing Adult and Community Learning through the medium of Welsh.

Box 2: Demand Side Theme 2: Attainment:

1. The proportion of Year 2 pupils assessed in Language, Literacy and Communication through the medium of Welsh achieving at least Level 2;

2. The proportion of Year 2 pupils assessed in Welsh Language Development achieving at least Level 2;

3. The proportion of Year 6 pupils assessed in Welsh as a first language achieving at least Level 4;

4. The proportion of Year 6 pupils assessed in Welsh as a second language achieving at least Level 4;

5. The proportion of Year 9 pupils assessed in Welsh as a first language achieving at least Level 5;

6. The proportion of Year 9 pupils assessed in Welsh as a second language achieving at least Level 5;

7. The proportion of learners entered for GCSE Welsh (first language) achieving grades A*-C;

8. The proportion of learners entered for GCSE Welsh (second language) achieving grades A*-C;

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[9] This indicator relates to 'Outcome 4' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 25)

[10] This indicator corresponds to 'Outcome 5a' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 26)

[11] This indicator corresponds to 'Outcome 5b' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 26)

9.   The proportion of learners entered for GCSE Welsh (first language) who are also entered for two further Level 1/2 qualifications through the medium of Welsh[12];

10.   The proportion of learners entered for GCSE Welsh (first language) who are also entered for five further Level 1/2 qualifications through the medium of Welsh[13];

11.   The proportion of post-16 learners who complete Welsh language qualifications successfully;

12.   The proportion of participants in further education institutions who are assessed through the medium of Welsh;

13.   The proportion of participants in work based learning programmes who are assessed through the medium of Welsh

14.   The credits attained by WfA participants as a proportion of the credits required to attain full learning aims[14];

Box 3: Demand Side Theme 3: Progression:

1.   The proportion of pupils who continue to study Welsh as a first language in successive Key Stages;

2.   The proportion of pupils who progress with Welsh-medium or bilingual education at successive Key Stages;

3.   The proportion of learners progressing from Welsh-medium or bilingual education pre-16 to Welsh-medium post-16 provision;

4.   The proportion of WfA participants who progress onto courses at successive levels.

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[12] This indicator corresponds to 'Outcome 3a' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 24)
[13] This indicator corresponds to 'Outcome 3b' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (p. 24)
[14] This accords with one of five 'learner outcome measures' set out in Guidance on Welsh for Adults data 2010/11

6. EVALUATION METHODS

6.1 The Welsh-medium Education Strategy is wide ranging and complex. Its effects upon the education and training system will be gradual, with changes becoming apparent as time goes on. Some effects (most particularly demand side effects) will not become wholly apparent for a number of years and this means that the evaluation framework needs to provide for formative assessments of particular aspects of the Strategy. The logic model which forms the basis of the framework is helpful in this respect in that it identifies intermediate steps along the way to realising the impacts which the Strategy seeks to bring about. Formative evaluation will also be crucial in enabling the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to adjust activities being undertaken in order to maximise their effects and to prepare the ground for summative reviews of particular initiatives.

6.2 It is intended that the programme of research guided by the evaluation framework will give rise to a better understanding of the effectiveness of different approaches to developing and promoting education in and through a minority language. Consideration needs to be given to the international literature in undertaking various elements of evaluation, so that Wales learns from and contributes to the wider body of knowledge relating to the development of minority languages.

6.3 The sections that follow present an overview of methodological approaches and streams of work that will allow an evaluative assessment of the Strategy's effects, effectiveness and efficiency. These approaches are intended to supplement any analysis to be undertaken as part of the annual reporting process, albeit that elements of the evaluative work to be undertaken could form the basis of thematic features within Welsh-medium Education Strategy annual progress reports.

6.4   The Welsh-medium Education Strategy has a key role to play in influencing the development and implementation of wider education and training policy in Wales. Indeed, given the cross-cutting nature of Welsh-medium education, it is essential that the vision and principles underpinning the Strategy' are ingrained within all Welsh Government education and training policies.

6.5   It is essential, therefore, that the evaluation framework provides for the assessment of the extent to which emerging Welsh Government education and training policy accords with the ambitions of the Strategy and whether Welsh language and Welsh-medium considerations are mainstreamed within education and training initiatives. This will be done by means of three-yearly reviews of policy developments, incorporating the examination of relevant Welsh Government policy statements and of guidance issued to learning providers. Consideration will also be given to the role played by the Welsh in Education Unit in advising colleagues across the Department for Education and Skills in the development of specific policies.

Area Reviews

6.6   A key strand of the evaluation programme will be a rolling four year programme of 'area reviews', focusing on individual or clusters of local authority areas. Although responsibility for planning Welsh-medium provision in schools and preparing Welsh in Education Strategic Plans rests with local authorities, school support arrangements are evolving at present, and it is likely that cooperation across local authority boundaries will be a more pronounced feature of future arrangements. Furthermore, non-maintained, FE, WBL and WfA providers already function across local authority areas and consideration will need to be given to the spatial levels at which wider 'markets' for Welsh-medium learning clear. A first step in scheduling a programme of area reviews

will be for the Welsh Government to determine the spatial levels at which such reviews should be undertaken.

6.7   Area reviews will build upon the work to be done by the Welsh Government[15] by adding a qualitative dimension to analyses of quantitative data in order to provide a more objective and rounded assessment of the effects of the Strategy at a local, regional and national level. The reviews will lead to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in responding to the Strategy (including those faced by schools in responding to local authorities' agendas and the education and training community more widely in responding to the regionalisation agenda), allow comparisons to be drawn between the approaches taken in different areas and highlight good practice that can be shared. Areas reviews will involve a combination of desk based research and fieldwork.

6.8   The desk based element of reviews will involve the examination of a range of documents, including:
   o Local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) and Children and Young People's Partnership Plans (CYPP Plans);
   o Annual reports on the offer and take up of Welsh-medium courses within local curricula (as required under the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure);
   o Annual reports on language continuation from one key stage to another (within WESPs);
   o FEIs' Welsh Language Schemes (FEI WLS) and self-assessment reports;
   o WBL providers' tenders/operational plans and self-assessment reports;
   o Estyn inspections of Welsh-medium provision and planning at local authority level[16];

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[15] Specifically the Schools Standards Unit, the Further Education Division and the Business and Skills Division within DfES
[16] The Welsh-medium Education Strategy Consultation Document (2009) indicated that in

- Relevant Estyn provider inspection reports;
- Analyses produced by the DfES' School Standards Unit and Further Education Division;
- PLASC and LLWR datasets;
- Other relevant evaluation materials (see below).

6.9   The fieldwork will allow the voice of stakeholders who are directly involved in the implementation of the Strategy to be heard. It will involve discussions with various stakeholders, drawing upon the intelligence gleaned from the documents reviewed. Such stakeholders could include:
- Local authorities' or regional School Improvement Teams;
- Early Years providers, including Mudiad Meithrin, National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), National Child Minders Association (NCMA) and Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association (WPPA) representatives;
- School and further education colleges' governing bodies;
- Parents/carers;
- School staff;
- Further Education Colleges;
- Work Based Learning Providers;
- Youth Service Teams;
- Welsh language/social organisations like Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Mentrau Iaith and Young Farmers' Clubs;
- Careers Welsh;
- Welsh for Adults Centres;
- The Welsh in Education Unit;
- The Schools Standards Unit, the Further Education Division and the Business and Skills Division within DfES;
- Other branches within the DfES, as well as other Departments within the Welsh Government, as appropriate;
- The Welsh Local Government Association;

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order to strengthen 'the focus on the delivery of this Strategy', Estyn would inspect 'Welsh-medium provision and planning at local authority level' (item 9.1, p47)

- o Estyn
- o Learners.

6.10 The Welsh Government will need to discuss the findings of area reviews with members of local learning networks/Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYP Partnerships). This dialogue should then lead to the development of action plans to address weaknesses identified.

6.11 The fieldwork undertaken during area reviews will also provide an opportunity to explore stakeholders' perceptions of overarching issues such as the Strategy's continued relevance, the leadership offered by the Welsh Government and changes within the policy context which affect their ability to respond to the Strategy. Finally, area reviews provide a potentially valuable source of material to inform the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy Annual Reports.

Specific Studies

6.12 Some evaluation questions will require specific studies to illuminate the effects of activities undertaken under the auspices of the Strategy. Specific studies may also be necessary to develop a better understanding of particular issues or to explore the validity of some of the assumptions which underpin the Strategy, whether undertaken as stand-alone pieces of work or as elements of wider lines of enquiry. Discussions with stakeholders highlighted some areas of particular interest/concern and these have informed the development of the evaluation framework.

6.13 The methods to be adopted in undertaking particular studies will need to be determined on a case by case basis, depending on the nature of the research questions. However, it is likely that there will be scope for using quasi-experimental approaches to addressing particular questions. An example might be the use of 'matched pair analyses' to

explore the relative effects of different approaches to developing learners' Welsh language skills.

Facilitated Action Research within 'Practitioner Evaluation/Research Groups'

6.14   The *School Effectiveness Framework* points to the role of teaching professionals in driving up the quality of learning provision. Practitioner Evaluation/Research Groups could play a useful role in undertaking specific studies/strands of action research on behalf of the Welsh Government. Indeed, configurations such as 14-19 Networks provide a means of bringing practitioners together to work across some sectoral divides. Having said this, however, it is acknowledged that on-going changes in local authority and regional consortia school support arrangements may hinder practitioners' ability to engage in Practitioner Evaluation/Research Groups, particularly in the short term.

6.15   In order that action research provides lessons which are widely applicable and models which are replicable, particular Practitioner Evaluation/Research Groups should be supported by external facilitators, possibly Higher Education Institutions, to focus upon specific issues. The issues to be addressed should be agreed by the Welsh in Education Unit and it should also coordinate the sharing of knowledge to emerge from action research of this kind.

Surveys of Learners

6.16   The main 'beneficiaries' of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy will be young people and it will be important to explore the effects of the Strategy upon them. Measures of 'participation', 'attainment' and 'progression' provide obvious long-wave indicators in this respect, but these need to be augmented by more immediate information about the Strategy's effects upon the education and training system as it is perceived by young people.

6.17　In order to capture such information periodic surveys of young people should be undertaken to explore issues such as:

- o Attitudes towards the Welsh language at school;
- o Attitudes towards the Welsh language in life more generally;
- o The extent to which young people use the Welsh language outside the classroom, both in school/FEIs and in the community;
- o Perceptions of the value of Welsh-medium education;
- o Perceptions of the attractiveness of various types of Welsh-medium extra-curricular/out of school activities;
- o Perceptions of Welsh-medium learning materials;
- o The availability of Welsh-medium support structures, including Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), mentors, careers advisors and so forth;
- o Extent to which learners use Welsh-medium support structures of this kind.

6.18　In the past, Learner Voice Surveys explored learners' perceptions of the 'Welsh/Welsh language support' on offer and whether learners preferred to 'learn through the medium of Welsh'. Consideration is currently being given to undertaking further Learner Voice surveys and such studies, were they to be undertaken on a regular basis, would provide invaluable intelligence in assessing the effects, over time, of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy, as evidenced by learner perceptions.

6.19　The 'Millennium Cohort Study'[17] should be used as a vehicle for exploring young people's experiences and perceptions of Welsh language and Welsh-medium education. Indeed the Millennium Cohort

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[17] The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) is a research project following the lives of around 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000/1 (2,799 in Wales). The study has tracked the Millennium children through their early childhood years and is intended to follow them into adulthood. Thus far, the MSC has involved four surveys of parents and 'millennium cohort' children – at age nine months, three, five and seven years. The next sweep of the study is planned for 2012, as the 'millennium cohort' makes the transition from primary to secondary school.

Study offers the advantage of providing a longitudinal dimension with a cohort of young people who will have started their educational journeys before the advent of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

6.20   Given the imminence of the next sweep of the Millennium Cohort Study, urgent action should be taken to review data provided by previous sweeps in order to assess whether it provides material of use in evaluating the Welsh-medium Education Strategy. Steps should also be taken to explore whether new lines of enquiry appertaining to the Welsh-medium Education Strategy might be built into the 2012 and subsequent sweeps.

6.21   The proposed UK wide 'Olympic Cohort Study' provides a particularly exciting opportunity to track the attitudes and behaviours of the parents of and of children born in 2012, just as the Welsh-medium Education Strategy moves into the implementation stage. From a Welsh-medium Education Strategy point of view, there is a very strong argument for boosting sample sizes in Wales, much in line with what was done for the Millennium Cohort Study.

Population Surveys

6.22   *A Living Language: A Language for Living Consultation Document* (2010) recognises 'the need for regular language use surveys, which build upon Census data on language ability'. It also speaks of the need for 'regular attitudinal surveys to monitor attitudes towards Welsh and its usage' (p35). Such surveys clearly present an opportunity to explore the effects of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy, alongside other Welsh Government policies, on attitudes towards the Welsh language, towards Welsh-medium education and towards learning Welsh. Whilst acknowledging the potential utility of such surveys, however, we recognise their limitations in terms of being able to attribute any changes to the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

6.23   Questions which could be included in such surveys might relate to:

- o   Perceptions of the availability of Welsh-medium education;
- o   Perceptions of the availability and quality of opportunities to learn Welsh;
- o   The impact of Welsh-medium education on the general use of the language in the community
- o   Perceptions of the value of Welsh and its contribution to individuals' quality of life.

Assessment of Practitioners' Welsh Language Skills

6.24   Much remains to be done in terms of understanding the Welsh language skills profile and the related training needs of the education and training workforce. The Review of the Welsh Language Support Service for Schools (2011) pointed to the need for 'a suite of simple assessment tools to allow participating practitioners' language levels to be measured … tied into Welsh for Adults levels' and 'tailored to reflect language appropriate to teaching'.

Practitioner Feedback

6.25   Consideration needs to be given to how practitioners' opinions on certain issues might be attained. Examples might include their views about:

- o   The value of Welsh language skills to teaching/training practitioners and in the wider economy;
- o   The utility of Welsh language/methodology training received – what difference does it make to their teaching practice?
- o   The relevance, quality and utility of teaching and learning resources commissioned under the auspices of the Strategy?
- o   Gaps in the availability of Welsh-medium teaching and learning resources – notwithstanding the work done by the Welsh Government and WJEC resource panels;
- o   Practical difficulties faced in making more use of Welsh in the

classroom or the workplace.

Use of Existing Databases

6.26   Existing databases such as PLASC, LLWR and HESA provide
         potentially invaluable sources of data, particularly in relation to the
         Strategy's longer term effects upon the education and training system
         and learners themselves. We are conscious, however, that the data
         available from the LLWR and PLASC systems are limited and will
         inevitably be dated, and for some areas there are concerns about data
         quality. Whilst they will generally be adequate to show trends over time,
         they will not paint an up-to-the-minute picture of provision and may, on
         occasion, need to be supplemented by intelligence from other sources.

6.27   We recognise that some of the demand side measures and indicators
         we suggest are reliant on data where there are concerns about data
         quality. In using the evaluation framework, it will clearly be necessary
         to flag up such areas; nevertheless, the Welsh Government continually
         strives to improve the quality, validity and utility of education statistics
         gathered. This means that existing methods of data collection may well
         evolve[18] and consideration will need to be given to the implications of
         any changes made upon the comparability of data collected at different
         times.

Estyn Inspections

6.28   Estyn inspection reports will provide an important source of intelligence
         to feed into the area reviews discussed above. However, there is also
         scope to accommodate wider aspects of the evaluation framework
         within Estyn's annual remit. An example of this would be the Minister's
         request in his 2011/12 Remit Letter that Estyn report 'on the Welsh

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[18] E.g. proposals are afoot to adopt Awarding Organisations as the sole source of data about
qualifications achieved by learners. At present, information about qualifications achieved by
learners in FE and WBL settings are collected from the providers concerned as opposed to
Awarding Organisations

language element of the Foundation Phase' as part of DfES' 'wider evaluation of the Foundation Phase'. Estyn's 2011/12 Remit Letter further indicates that a review of 'Welsh second language …KS2 standards' will be undertaken from 2012/13 onwards.

Use of other Evaluation and Research Studies

6.29 Table 4 below sets out a schedule of evaluation and research studies of potential relevance to the Welsh-medium Education Strategy which the Welsh Government and other stakeholders plan to undertake in the coming years. Whilst this is by no means a definitive list of studies to be undertaken, it is helpful in identifying scope for potential synergies between work to be undertaken in evaluating the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and other studies.

Table 4: Evaluation and Research Studies in the Pipeline

POLICY AREA	TIMING	TO BE MANAGED BY
Area Inspections	Jan 2011	Estyn
Census for Welsh	Mar 2011	Office for National Statistics
Foundation Phase Evaluation	2011-2014	DfES, Welsh Government
Welsh for Adults – Research into improving the way the Welsh language is transferred to adults.	2010-2012	DfES, Welsh Government
CPD – Evaluation of the Sabbaticals Scheme	2011	DfES, Welsh Government
Research to gather detailed information on arrangements for and delivery of Welsh Second Language at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4	2011	DfES, Welsh Government
Reasons behind decline in numbers studying Welsh A level – influences upon their choice of subjects to study	2011	Knowledge and Analytical Services
How language schemes impact upon bilingualism in FE	2011	Knowledge and Analytical Services
PISA standardised assessments of 15 year olds' reading skills	2012	OECD
Report on the position of the Welsh language	Dec 2015	Welsh Language Commissioner
Language levels and language use surveys	To be determined	DfES, Welsh Government
The 2011 National Strategic Skills Audit for Wales (using Employer Skills Survey data) will include an assessment of the demand for Welsh language skills in different industry sectors and, possibly, different geographical areas. This is expected to inform Sector Skills Councils' policies.	2011	DfES, Welsh Government

Exercise to gather Good Practice in Sector Skills Councils' implementation of their Welsh Language Schemes	Dec 2011	Welsh Language Board
Research into methods used by further education institutions to encourage learners to continue studying through the medium of Welsh (as part of the Dewis Da project)	Dec 2011	Welsh Language Board
Review of evidence underpinning the Welsh Language Strategy, whcih will involve reviewing research, statistics and evaluation studies to identify evidence to inform the development of the final Welsh Language Strategy, the prioritisation of activities and of funding. The review will also make proposals on how to evaluate the implementation of the Welsh Language Strategy. Most of this work will be undertaken in-house by the Welsh Government, but will be independently peer reviewed.	July 2011 – Oct 2011	DfES, Welsh Government
Research into classroom transmission practices for Welsh Language Education to be commissioned as part of the Social Research Department's New Ideas Fund programme.	Oct 2011	Knowledge and Analytical Services, Welsh Government
Welsh Examinations Database to include records of all approved qualifications achieved by pupils in schools in Wales.	Annual	DfES, Welsh Government
Study to evaluate the impact of the changes to education and training related performance management, professional standards, CPD arrangements and professional learning communitieis.	2011-2013	DfES, Welsh Government
Millennium Cohort Study Wave 5: a memorandum of understanding is in place to pay for the Welsh boost to the MCS for Wave 5 of the survey over four years.	2011-2014	Knowledge and Analytical Services, Welsh Government

7. APPROACH TO EVALUATION

7.1 Table 5 below sets out which of the methodological approaches discussed above should be applied to addressing particular elements of the evaluation framework.

Table 5: Approaches to be taken in Addressing Key Supply Side Evaluation Framework Questions

	Policy Reviews	Area Reviews	Specific Studies	Action Research	Learner Surveys	Population Surveys	Practitioners Skills Assessments	Practitioner Surveys	Use of other Studies	Estyn Inspection & Remit Reports	Use of Databases
ACTIVITY AND OUTPUT QUESTIONS											
Planning Provision and Support Arrangements											
To what extent does the WG provide clear strategic direction and guidance to which stakeholders feel able to respond?	✓	✓	✓								
How central a consideration is the Welsh language in the development of education policy at a national, regional and local level?	✓	✓	✓								
How effective are local/regional learning partnerships at assessing the demand for and auditing the provision of Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision?		✓									
How effective are learning partnerships at identifying local/regional priorities for the development of Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision, including vocational routes in which Welsh language skills are most needed?		✓									
How effective are local/regional learning partnerships at working together to plan Welsh language and Welsh-medium education?		✓									
Is it feasible to develop a language continuum to aid the assessment of learners' skills?			✓								
How effective are arrangements for prioritising the development of new Welsh language and Welsh-medium resources and qualifications		✓	✓								
To what extent is the potential use of technology to promote and deliver Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision considered?		✓									

	Policy Reviews	Area Reviews	Specific Studies	Action Research	Learner Surveys	Population Surveys	Practitioners Skills Assessments	Practitioner Surveys	Use of other Studies	Estyn Inspection & Remit Reports	Use of Databases
Development of the Learning Practitioner Workforce											
What should be the minimum linguistic standard attained by those wishing to work in Welsh-medium settings?			✓								
How well understood are the Welsh language skills of the existing workforce?			✓				✓			✓	
How much importance do practitioners and aspirant practitioners attach to Welsh language skills?							✓	✓		✓	
Is there a clear workforce training infrastructure in place at a national, regional and local level?		✓	✓					✓			
To what extent are Welsh language/ pedagogy skills elements a core part of ITT courses and Induction, EPD and CPD programmes		✓	✓					✓			
Creating a Supportive Environment											
How effectively are the benefits of Welsh language skills promoted?		✓			✓	✓				✓	
How accurate, comprehensive and balanced is the information about Welsh-medium education that is given to young people and their parents?		✓			✓	✓				✓	
How accessible are informal/non-formal learning opportunities for young people and adult learners?		✓			✓	✓					
OUTCOME AND IMPACT QUESTIONS											
Overall											
How effectively are Welsh-medium considerations integrated into wider education and training policies	✓	✓	✓								
How has the pattern of Welsh-medium childcare provision changed over time?		✓								✓	
How has the pattern of Welsh-medium primary provision changed over time?		✓								✓	
How has the pattern of Welsh-medium secondary provision changed over time?		✓								✓	
How has the pattern of Welsh-medium non-statutory provision changed over time?		✓								✓	
How has the pattern of WfA provision changed over time?		✓								✓	
To what extent do local/regional learning partnerships' plans truly seek to extend the availability of Welsh-medium and Welsh language learning opportunities		✓									

	Policy Reviews	Area Reviews	Specific Studies	Action Research	Learner Surveys	Population Surveys	Practitioners Skills Assessments	Practitioner Surveys	Use of other Studies	Estyn Inspection & Remit Reports	Use of Databases
How effectively are plans for Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision actually implemented?		✓									
Which models of delivery represent the best value for money?		✓									
Planning Provision and Support Arrangements											
To what extent do local/regional learning partnerships' plans genuinely seek to extend the provision of Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision?		✓									
To what extent are plans for extending the provision of Welsh language and Welsh-medium education implemented in practice?		✓									
Are there sufficient resources of the right quality on offer to support the teaching and learning of Welsh and the teaching and learning of other subjects through the medium of Welsh?					✓		✓				
To what extent are Welsh-medium teaching and learning resources actually used by practitioners and learners			✓	✓				✓			
Development of the Learning Practitioner Workforce											
To what extent do those undertaking ITT courses and Induction and EPD programmes develop their Welsh language/Welsh-medium pedagogical skills?		✓	✓					✓			
To what extent do existing practitioners participate in CPD designed to develop their Welsh language/ Welsh-medium teaching skills?		✓	✓					✓			
Which are the most cost effective approaches to developing practitioners' Welsh language/Welsh-medium teaching skills i.e. which provide the best value for money?											
To what extent does the practitioner workforce possess the Welsh language and pedagogical skills needed?							✓	✓		✓	
Creating a Supportive Environment											
How confident are young people and their parents about opting for a Welsh-medium education?					✓	✓					

	Policy Reviews	Area Reviews	Specific Studies	Action Research	Learner Surveys	Population Surveys	Practitioners Skills Assessments	Practitioner Surveys	Use of other Studies	Estyn Inspection & Remit Reports	Use of Databases
How confident do learners feel in using the Welsh language outside the classroom?					✓	✓					
To what extent does society more widely support people in learning Welsh?					✓	✓					
ASSUMPTIONS/EXTERNAL FACTORS TO BE TESTED											
What evidence is there that developing Welsh language skills impacts positively upon individuals' cognitive skills and life-chances?			✓						✓		✓
Which are the most effective methods of developing learners' Welsh language skills?			✓	✓							
What proportion of their education do young people need to undertake through the medium of Welsh in order to reach fluency?			✓	✓							✓
How do the costs of Welsh-medium/ bilingual education compare to those of monolingual English medium education and how do these relate to the benefits to the learner of each?			✓								
Which approaches to developing practitioners' Welsh language skills are most effective?			✓	✓			✓	✓			
To what extent are practitioners able to make good use of their Welsh language skills?			✓				✓				
Is there scope for greater efficiency and effectiveness if local learning networks work together over wider geographical areas?		✓	✓								

7.2   Databases such as PLASC, LLWR and HESA will be the primary source of 'demand side' information about the take-up and effects upon learners of Welsh language and Welsh-medium learning opportunities.

8.   IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

8.1   In implementing the programme of evaluation, consideration will need to be given to the resource needed to manage the evaluation programme and to undertake particular elements of the work. It is difficult at this stage to provide an indication of what the costs of

undertaking individuals strands of the evaluation might be, but Table 6 below sets out some of the resource implications of undertaking different elements of evaluation activity which would need to be taken into account.

Table 6: Resource Implications of Elements of Evaluation Activity

Evaluation Element	Outputs	Resource Required
Policy Reviews	o Reports on extent to which wider education and training policies reflect the ambitions of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy	Approximately 20 researcher days every three years
Area Reviews	o Reports on developments within particular spatial areas; o Stand alone reports focused on specific themes e.g. 'the effectiveness of local/regional learning partnerships in assessing the demand for Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision'.	Approximately 120 researcher days per annum based on a three year review cycle
Specific Studies	o Stand alone reports on particular themes e.g. 'a comparative study of the effectiveness of different approaches to language acquisition amongst particular age groups' and 'how much of a barrier to the delivery of Welsh-medium provision are deficiencies in practitioners' Welsh language skills?'.	Will need to be determined on a case by case basis
Facilitated Action Research	o Stand alone reports on particular themes e.g. 'how can linguistic progression from one Key Stage to the next be assured?' and 'what can be done to encourage and support practitioners to use their Welsh language skills in Foundation Phase settings?'	Will need to be determined on a case by case basis, but provision will need to be made for: o facilitators' time o supply costs o travel costs o subsistence/ accommodation costs
Surveys of Learners	o Datasets appertaining to relevant questions included in learner surveys e.g. Learner Voice Surveys, Millennium Cohort Study and the Olympic Cohort Study	Provision will need to be made for: o additional questions included in surveys o boosting existing surveys o analysing datasets and reporting
Population Surveys	o Datasets appertaining to relevant questions included in population surveys e.g. potential Language Use Survey	Provision will need to be made for: o additional questions included in surveys o analysing datasets and reporting

Practitioner Surveys	o Datasets	Provision will need to be made for: o survey design o undertaking surveys, possibly on-line o analysing datasets and reporting
Analysis of Existing Databases	o Reports on specific 'demand side' issues	Will need to be determined on a case by case basis, depending on the depth of analysis already undertaken by the Schools Standards Unit

8.2 In planning the evaluation programme, consideration will need to be given to the resource implications of undertaking individual elements of research. Indeed, given the innovative nature of some strands of research proposed, the Welsh Government may wish to pilot particular elements before rolling them out more widely, in order to minimise the risk of investing in impractical or ineffective research.

8.3 Consideration also need to be given to the capacity that exists within the Welsh Government and the education and training system more widely to share, learn from and act upon the findings of research studies.

8.4 The Welsh-medium Education Strategy represents a key plank in the policy and legislative framework put in place by the Welsh Government to support and revitalise the Welsh language. In recognition of its prominence, the Welsh Government has undertaken to produce an annual report setting out the progress made in implementing the Welsh-medium Education Strategy. The elements of evaluation described in this document will sit alongside these reporting arrangements and will provide intelligence to feed into annual reports.

8.5 In addition to feeding into Welsh-medium Education Strategy annual reports, consideration should be given to the dissemination of more detailed evaluation study findings, possibly via a dedicated Welsh-

medium Education Strategy web-site. Such a resource could also provide a vehicle for keeping learning providers abreast of developments, for sharing good practice and, indeed, for evaluation activities such as surveys of practitioners.

8.6   Finally, the evaluation framework will need to be reviewed from time to time in light of experience to ensure that it continues to gives rise to constructive challenge.

APPENDIX 1: WIDER EDUCATION AND SKILLS POLICY BACKGROUND

The Welsh Government's *Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales* (2008) places specific requirements upon 'schools and settings where English is the main medium of communication … to develop children's Welsh language skills progressively' (p12) through the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning. The document, which supports the roll out of the Foundation Phase, outlines the statutory areas of learning and sets out the kinds of learning experiences to which 3 to 7 year olds should have access in order to develop their Welsh language oracy, reading and writing skills. From the 2011/12 school year, Welsh-medium schools will be required to assess pupils' attainment in Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (in Welsh) at the end of the Foundation Phase.

The revised National Curriculum for Welsh is being introduced on a staggered basis between August 2008 and August 2011. *Welsh in the National Curriculum for Wales* (2008) outlines progression routes and programmes of study across Key Stages 2 to 4 (including Learning Pathways 14–19) to improve oracy, reading and writing skills in Welsh, both as a first and second language. Pupils are expected to 'build on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired' (p10) during successive Key Stages and, since 2010, all pupils' attainment in Welsh, whether as a first or second language, has been assessed at the end of Key Stage 2, thus adding emphasis to the importance of the language. Indeed, significant investment has been made in ensuring the accurate assessment of pupils' Welsh language skills via external moderation of teachers assessments at Key Stage 3 and moderation of Key Stage 2 assessments on a cluster basis.   .

By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are expected to become 'effective and confident oral communicators' (p11) and students of Welsh as a first language are expected to be able to 'read fluently for pleasure and to extract for meaning' (p11), whilst those studying Welsh Second Language are expected

to be able to read 'more demanding and stimulating texts, including authentic material, which promote interest and enthusiasm' (p35). Welsh in the National Curriculum for Wales describes the learning experiences to which pupils should be exposed in order to develop their knowledge of Welsh, including, for example, the correct use of verbs, prepositions and mutations and various forms of Welsh syntax.

The Welsh Government's Learning Pathways 14-19 policy, including the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure* 2009, presents secondary schools and Further Education Institutions with particular challenges in trying to extend the breadth of subjects on offer whilst also maintaining or extending linguistic choice. Under the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, local authorities are required to produce annual reports which set out the 'courses of study included within local curricula … which were to be taught through the medium of Welsh' as well as 'how many pupils elected to follow such courses' (clause 5.4, p3/4).

Transformation – Y Siwrnai: Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales: Delivering Skills that Work for Wales (2009) includes among the 'criteria to be used by Learning Partnerships in further developing, implementing and evaluating plans to transform [post 16] education and training delivery', the need 'to demonstrate:
- o Improvements in the amount and range of Welsh-medium provision available through network reconfiguration within local authority areas, or across local authority boundaries where appropriate;
- o Clear post-16-18 progression routes and options through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in further education, Work Based Learning and school sixth form provision, as appropriate;
- o Improvements in the number and range of options offered through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, by institution and the Partnership, as appropriate;
- o The positive effect that the proposal will have on the range and quality of Welsh-medium opportunities for learners' (p25).

The Welsh Government's Learning Pathways and Transformation policies need to be considered alongside the requirements which the *Children and Young People's Plan (Wales) Regulations (2007)* place upon local authorities to take account of parental preference for Welsh-medium education in matching the supply of school places to the number of pupils. The Welsh Government's *School Organisation Proposals Circular 021/2009* also emphasises the need to take into account Welsh language related factors in bringing forward proposals to change the pattern of school provision, and in relation to Early Years/Foundation Phase provision, the document states that local authorities should 'seek opportunities to maintain or increase the accessibility, capacity and sustainability of Welsh-medium education' and to 'increase the number of under fives with sufficient exposure to the Welsh language to enable them to make confident choices to learn through the medium of Welsh' (p14).

By December 2011, local authorities will be required to prepare Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP), in place of the Welsh Education Schemes that they have been required to produce in recent years. Draft guidance indicates that 'WESPs will provide the means for the Welsh Government to monitor the way in which local authorities respond and contribute to the implementation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy objectives by:

- o ensuring that Welsh-medium education is at the heart of policy developments;
- o extending provision where a need is identified on the basis of improved planning;
- o reconfiguring the support service by moving away from the traditional roles of *athrawon bro,* and towards a new training and mentoring service;
- o ensuring the delivery of Welsh-medium support services on the basis of consortia in the near future;
- o improving standards and extending the use of Welsh by children and young people; and
- o demonstrating progress against the specific targets in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy' (p1)

The guidance suggests strongly that the Welsh Government expects local authorities to do more than simply respond to the 'demand for Welsh-medium education', but rather to work proactively to help stimulate such demand by increasing the supply of accessible, high quality Welsh-medium/bilingual provision. In essence, the Welsh Government envisages a supply-push rather than demand-pull growth in Welsh-medium/bilingual education.

The Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning in Wales (2009) indicates that the Welsh Government will 'monitor providers' fulfilment of their responsibilities for working in partnership to secure Welsh-medium opportunities under the 14-19 Pathways agenda and to continue to develop their linguistic skills in Welsh' (p27). Indeed, 'Welsh-medium learning' is one of two 'specific areas of focus ' for 2011/12 self-assessment submissions, alongside 'basic skills'.

It is notable that 'Welsh language' forms a specific aspect of the 'Standards' indicator within Estyn's Common Inspection Framework which came into force in September 2010 and 'Welsh language provision and the Welsh dimension' forms part of the 'Learning Experiences' indicator. Guidance on the implementation of the Framework points to the use of pupil attainment and progression data to assess schools' performance against the 'Standards' indicator. In the case of Further Education Institutions and Work Based Learning providers, Estyn's guidance indicates that inspectors are expected to 'comment on the proportion of learners who obtain qualifications through the medium of Welsh, where appropriate' (*Guidance for the Inspection of Further Education Institutions* from September 2010, p18). In addition to looking at learner attainment and progression data in assessing the performance of Welsh for Adults Centers, inspectors will also consider learner retention and attendance.

In terms of 'Learning Experiences' indicators, Estyn's guidance highlights the need to assess whether schools allocate sufficient time to teaching Welsh and Welsh Second Language and whether Welsh-medium secondary schools

offer the 'breadth of opportunities for pupils to study [other subjects] through the medium of Welsh' and whether 'there is progression and continuity between key stages' and 'opportunity to continue studying subjects through the medium of Welsh or bilingually' (*Guidance for the Inspection of Secondary Schools* from September 2010, p24). Guidance for the Inspection of Further Education Institutions indicates that Estyn will 'evaluate how well the college meets the needs of learners who have undertaken their education either through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in addition to extending the Welsh language skills of learners who have studied little Welsh' (p23). Inspections of Work Based Learning providers (including providers of Apprenticeships) will consider the extent to which providers collaborate in order to increase bilingual provision and the extent to which employers provide opportunities for learning and using Welsh in the workplace.

For our Future: The 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales (2009) points to the establishment of 'Y Coleg Ffederal' as a key measure to 'grow Welsh-medium higher education' and to provide a 'more systematic linkage to FE and schools' (p4), within the context of the Transformation agenda. The document goes on to say that 'the Coleg Ffederal model will provide an independent oversight, management, and development of Welsh-medium higher education across Wales' which 'will help deliver social justice for those who seek to learn through the medium of Welsh, but also carries potential economic benefit through wider access to workforce development, and business opportunities which exploit the potential offered by a bilingual environment' (p14). The Coleg Ffederal, renamed Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, was established in June 2011 to provide Welsh-medium opportunities through host universities to students of Higher Education in Wales. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol will continue with the work of the former Centre for Welsh Medium in Higher Education but its remit will be wider than this.

Following a review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provision in Wales, the Welsh Government confirmed that reductions in the numbers on ITT courses would be needed over several years in order to better meet the demand from

maintained schools. It also announced a programme of reconfiguration of the mainstream ITT providers in the light of these reduced numbers. The reconfigured provision aimed to have fewer providers delivering the reduced number of ITT places in a more viable way, and with more collaborative working to increase efficiencies and support standards.

Six mainstream HE providers formed three collaborative ITT centres, each with two providers in partnership:-

1. North and Mid Wales (Bangor and Aberystwyth Universities)
2. South-West Wales (Swansea Metropolitan University and University of Wales, Trinity Saint David)
3. South-East Wales (UWIC and University of Wales, Newport).

ITT places are additionally provided outside of the ITT centres through distance learning places at the Open University and employment-based ITT via the Graduate Teacher Programme.

Estyn's *Guidance for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training* (2010) indicates that inspectors will judge trainees' achievements in the Welsh Language by the extent to which trainees (primary and secondary) are able to 'use and promote the Welsh language in their work in school, for example in using incidental Welsh, bilingual displays' and to 'teach bilingually, where appropriate'. In the case of individuals who opt to train through the medium of Welsh, consideration will also be given to their ability to 'teach fluently and meaningfully through the medium of Welsh' (p17). Inspectors will also consider 'the extent to which trainees are able to access provision to improve their linguistic skills so that they can use Welsh confidently in the classroom', as well as 'the availability of good quality provision for trainees who wish to train and teach, through the medium of Welsh' (p23).

A theme woven through several recent policy documents, including the *School Effectiveness Framework: Building Effective Learning Communities Together* (2008) is the need for learning providers to work together to drive up quality and share good practice through initiatives such as benchmarking and peer

review within 'professional learning communities at school, local authority and national levels' (p10). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will be led by 'System Leaders', who will be funded through the Schools Effectiveness Grant to lead on research projects or initiatives designed to improve standards. System Leaders Wales, on the other hand, will be appointed by local authorities to undertake a thorough examination of schools through a series of school visits. Emphasis will be placed on working within ADEW consortium areas in order to maximise resources and plan services in a more effective way.

A central tenet of the Strategy is that 'around 70% of curricular time should be through the medium of Welsh if learners are to acquire a sufficiently sound command of the language to enable them to use it across a broad range of contexts with confidence and fluency' (p8). On this basis, the Strategy very much focuses upon extending access to and participation in Welsh-medium education and training in a range of settings across Wales. Whilst it acknowledges the need to raise standards in the teaching of Welsh Second Language', the Strategy is primarily concerned with teaching Welsh as a first language and using Welsh as a teaching and learning medium across the curriculum.

However, as indicated in the *Welsh-medium Education Strategy Consultation Document* (2009), 'patterns of Welsh-medium and bilingual delivery across Wales are complex. Significant variations exist between [local] authorities in terms of the policies implemented to promote and develop language skills', often reflecting 'patterns of linguistic usage and vitality in the wider community' and sometimes 'inconsistencies in the implementation of policy'. The document goes on to say that 'even within authorities there are significant differences between schools with regard to the extent to which Welsh and English are used as a medium for instruction'. Whilst it is acknowledged that 'the education system needs to be suitably flexible to reflect differing linguistic features of authorities and regions', the document also points to the need for a 'clear understanding of criteria and expectations' in relation to the use of Welsh in education (p38) .

The consultation document talks of the difficulty in defining what precisely is meant by Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, albeit that the Welsh Government provided definitions of Welsh-medium childcare provision in 2006 and of Welsh-medium and bilingual primary and secondary schools in 2007. Allied to this, there is a dearth of reliable data relating to some aspects of Welsh-medium education, which compounds the challenge of evaluating the implementation of the Strategy.

Notwithstanding the complexities of defining Welsh-medium provision, a key challenge which the Welsh-medium Education Strategy seeks to address is the marked tendency for pupils to drift from studying Welsh as a first language to studying it as a second language, particularly at the transition between primary and secondary school, but also as young people move into Key Stage 4. The Strategy also aims to address a tendency for young people studying Welsh as a first language to switch language medium in the study of other subjects as they progress through their educational careers into Further Education, Work Based Learning and Higher Education.

Implementing the Welsh-medium Education Strategy, alongside other Welsh Government policies such as the Foundation Phase and the 14-19 Learning Pathways will require appropriately skilled practitioners across the range of settings. However, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that a lack of cognate practitioners within the existing workforce already acts as a break on Welsh-medium provision and significant growth is needed in the numbers of appropriately skilled practitioners. However, the growth needed will not be achieved solely by recruiting new practitioners with the right skills – it will also require the development of Welsh language skills among the existing workforce, from early years practitioners, teaching and support staff, trainers, examiners and verifiers within vocational disciplines. The Consultation Document argues that the 'recruitment and training of all practitioners needs to be based on … a better picture of the medium to long-term requirements of the Welsh-medium education [and training] sector' (p80). In this context, it is

notable that Welsh-medium qualifications relating to childcare and classroom assistants are seen as a priority by the Welsh Government.

The Consultation Document notes that there are relatively few Welsh-medium qualifications on offer, particularly vocational qualifications. Similarly, the range of Welsh-medium teaching and learning resources on offer is fairly limited. This, the document puts down to market failure to do with comparatively low levels of demand for such qualifications and resources. The Strategy seeks to address this weakness both by subsidising the production of targeted resources and by ensuring that the education and training system capitalises upon new technologies to facilitate Welsh-medium learning.

The Consultation Document recognises that 'education and training alone cannot guarantee that speakers become fluent in Welsh. A complex array of factors beyond the reach of education and training have a significant influence on linguistic attitudes and behaviour, and these also determine the extent to which speakers use Welsh within their families, in their communities and in the workplace' (p101). The document acknowledges that Welsh-medium education opportunities need to be complemented by interventions which provide learners with the opportunity to make use of the Welsh language outside educational settings. It also points to the need to convince people of the economic and cultural benefits of bilingual skills as a means of encouraging the acquisition and use of the Welsh language.

This fairly brief account of development in Welsh language and education/skills policies provides a flavour of the interconnection between the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and the wider policy context. In so doing, it highlights the need for an evaluation framework which is sensitive to these relationships whilst maintaining focus on the underlying ambitions of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy itself. It also points to the potential for using the findings of other policy evaluations to inform the evaluation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy over time and this is clearly something that the evaluation framework will need to allow for.

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