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Evaluation of Workplace Welsh: the Welsh Language Skills Management Diagnostic Tool

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Evaluation of Workplace Welsh: the Welsh Language Skills Management Diagnostic

Final Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Explanation
ALTE	Association of Language Testers in Europe
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
ELMS	Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills
ELWa	Education and Learning Wales
ESF	European Social Fund
FSW	Future Skills Wales
LMW	Leadership and Management Wales
NQF	National Qualification Framework
RCE	Regional Competitiveness and Employment
SLF	Sector Leadership Fund
SSC	Sector Skills Council
WDP	Workforce Development Programme
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office
WESB	Wales Employment and Skills Board
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

Executive Summary

Introduction

Workplace Welsh is a part of the Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills (ELMS) Programme which was funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund (ESF). Workplace Welsh contains two elements, the first of which is aimed at allowing employers to analyse which Welsh language skills are required by their workforce (a Management Diagnostic Tool). The second element of Workplace Welsh is intended to analyse the present Welsh language skills of employees and to focus on aspects that need improvement (the Skills Diagnostic Tool). Overall, Workplace Welsh aimed to work with a target of 100 employers.

Workplace Welsh was managed internally within the Welsh Government with aspects of the work being out-sourced to the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and Fusion Workshop Ltd.

While the ELMS programme was withdrawn in 2014, Workplace Welsh continues to be available as a resource for employers in the public, private and voluntary third sectors in Wales to use free of charge.

The evaluation of Workplace Welsh

The objective is to provide a final, summative evaluation of Workplace Welsh building on earlier evidence gathered as part of the interim and update evaluations of the wider ELMS programme.

Old Bell 3 Ltd., in association with York Consulting LLP and IFF Research Ltd., were commissioned by the Welsh Government in May 2012 to undertake a long-term evaluation of the Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills in Wales (ELMS) Programme.

The methodology for this summative evaluation of Workplace Welsh has involved:

- reviewing relevant policy, strategy and research documents to assess the strategic context within which Workplace Welsh was initially funded and subsequently operates
- reviewing monitoring information and evaluative evidence supplied by the WJEC including the findings from two web surveys¹
- preparing semi-structured discussion guides for use in qualitative fieldwork with key stakeholders in the Workplace Welsh project, participating employers and employees
- undertaking qualitative interviews with nine stakeholders including Welsh Government, WJEC and WEFO officials
- undertaking qualitative fieldwork with five employers and 12 employees that utilised or participated in the Skills Diagnostic Tool.

Key Findings – Research evidence, Policy and Legislative Context

The evaluation found that evidence from a number of research studies previously undertaken in Wales² shows that most employers do not have formal methods in place for assessing the Welsh language skills of their workforce.

The Welsh Government's Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES) contains a clear policy commitment to develop an online method for assessing Welsh language skills within the workplace.

¹ The WJEC conducted separate web surveys of employers and employees registered on the Workplace Welsh website during 2014. There were 19 responses to the employer survey and 87 responses to the employee survey.

² Welsh Language Skills in Seven Sectors. A report to the Future Skills Wales Partnership by Beaufort Research and Menter a Busnes. March 2005. The seven sectors were tourism and leisure, agri-food, financial and business services, care services, media, retail, wholesale and other service activities and construction. Also Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors. 2014. IFF Research Ltd. and Old Bell 3 Ltd. The eight sectors were: childcare, social care, creative, hospitality, leisure and tourism, professional/business services, retail, agriculture and food production and construction.

A number of the new Welsh Language Standards³ being introduced by the Welsh Language Commissioner require employers to undertake measures linked to workforce planning and training relating to the Welsh language. Workplace Welsh and specifically the Skills Diagnostic Tool provides employers, that are subject to Welsh Language Standards, with an appropriate solution as part of wider workplace planning activities to help them attain and comply with these standards.

The policy linkages between promoting use of the Welsh language in the workplace and improving leadership and management skills (the main focus of the ELMS programme under which Workplace Welsh was funded) are somewhat vague.

Key Findings – Design and Implementation

The evaluation found that the WJEC and Fusion Workshop Ltd. worked well together and the end product, an on-line diagnostic with assessments for reading, writing, speaking and listening linked to Welsh for Adults level descriptors, matched closely the original aims for the Tool.

However, the Skills Management Tool did not turn out as planned. Rather than an interactive diagnostic tool, what was actually produced is a more passive and generic Workplace Planning Guide which takes the form of a PDF document published on the Workplace Welsh website. The Workplace Planning Guide also took a long time to develop and was only launched in January 2015 some four years after the original Skills Management Tool was conceived.

The evaluation also found that there was a lack of focus and strategy in terms of promoting Workplace Welsh and the Skills Diagnostic Tool to employers that might potentially want to use it.

³ Specifically standards 105, 106, 107, 108, 109 and 110.

Key Findings – Performance Targets and Expenditure

Workplace Welsh had a target of supporting 100 employers in Wales. There were 106 employers registered on the WJEC's database in January 2015. Employees at 75 of these employers had actually used the Skills Diagnostic Tool.

An internal evaluation by the WJEC shows that the majority of registered employers are located in the East Wales area, with most of those in Cardiff.

Most of the employers that registered to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool are public sector organisations. Most employers are from the Education sector, followed by Government or Local Government.

WJEC data showed a total of 943 registered employee users. However, not all of these will be individual employees as some employers created multiple accounts which distorts the data somewhat relating to the total number of employees that actually undertook assessments.

The majority (around 70 per cent) of employees registered on the Skills Diagnostic Tool database are women.

The original budget for Workplace Welsh was £688k. This represented one per cent of the total, original ELMS budget. As of March 2014, a total of £331k had been spent on Workplace Welsh representing 48 per cent of the original budget. The actual unit cost per employer supported by the Skills Diagnostic Tool was 36 per cent lower than implied on the basis of the original budget and targets which represents good value for money.

Key Findings – The User Perspective

Most employers were motivated to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool as part of wider workforce planning activities including skills audits. A lack of time or capacity has been the main barrier cited by registered employers that have not gone on to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool and its assessments.

The self-assessment element of the Skills Diagnostic Tool was appropriate and added value in terms of pitching the assessments at the correct level for participating employees. Some employees 'played it safe' so as not to over-play their Welsh language skills. However, the software was capable of adjusting the difficulty of assessments as employees undertook them.

The WJEC worked in a proactive way to promote Workplace Welsh and the Skills Diagnostic Tool and this work was instrumental in employers becoming aware of it.

Overall user feedback on the Skills Diagnostic Tool was positive though there were a small number of issues including the potential to highlight areas for improvement (for individual employees) when presenting their test results. Employees undertaking listening and speaking assessments were more likely to report technical issues and overall feedback was slightly less positive in relation to these two tests (as compared to reading and writing).

Employers and employees have been very impressed with the efficiency and consistency of the WJEC in marking and returning results. Overall, employers and staff have also been pleased with the way results have been presented. The fact that these have been linked to the Welsh for Adults levels has been particularly helpful.

Key Findings – Effects and Impacts

The Skills Diagnostic has proved to be a useful complementary tool for employers in their workforce planning activities, though not all have used it in this way. Some employers have used the results of the Skills Diagnostic Tool to make informed decisions about investing in Welsh language training and to consider/decide how the Welsh language is designated in vacant posts being advertised.

A key factor in the extent to which employers have used the results in terms of workforce planning is whether a sufficient proportion of staff participated. Most

employers who used the Skills Diagnostic Tool felt that the results had provided them with a clearer picture of the Welsh language skills and capabilities of their workforce.

The Welsh Government did not monitor progression between employees completing the Skills Diagnostic Tool and going on to enrol on Welsh for Adults courses. This would have been a useful addition to the project and the qualitative research revealed a number of examples where progression to Welsh training had taken place with positive levels of attribution.

There is some evidence that the Skills Diagnostic Tool has led to positive effects on organisation culture including Welsh having a higher profile in the workplace and staff being proactively encouraged and supported in various informal ways by colleagues to use the language at work.

There is also evidence that the Skills Diagnostic Tool has led to some positive effects on individual participants. Participants reported a sense of confirmation or validation of their Welsh language skills level. It has also helped some employees justify their involvement in Welsh language training and helped them ensure they selected training at the most appropriate level for them.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered and analysed, the evaluation makes a series of four recommendations.

Recommendation 1. Having invested in the development of Workplace Welsh, the Welsh Government now needs to consider and decide how its value to employers and their employees in Wales can be maximised in the future.

Recommendation 2. In order to maximise the future value and use of Workplace Welsh, the Welsh Government will need to identify and allocate adequate resources to continue to promote, service and in due course, to potentially develop and upgrade the website and the Skills Diagnostic Tool.

This investment would need to take into account likely future up-take to ensure that delivery resources are commensurate with demand and also to ensure that the quality and efficiency of assessments remains high. Without this on-going investment, the use of Workplace Welsh is likely to diminish rapidly and the various resources will effectively become redundant. This would risk a key policy commitment in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy becoming neglected.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should develop a clear communications strategy with a view to engaging and committing key partners such as Welsh for Adults Centres, the Welsh Language Commissioner and other appropriate HR and language related professional networks to help promote awareness of Workplace Welsh. The communications strategy should also set out a more sophisticated approach to identifying and strategically targeting potential employers in the private and third sectors as well as those who will become subject to Welsh Language Standards in the near future.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should investigate whether a simple, low-cost mechanism can be put in place to monitor progression of registered users of the Skills Diagnostic Tool to Welsh for Adults courses so that this information can be analysed and used to help target resources effectively in the future.

1 Introduction

1.1 Old Bell 3 Ltd., in association with York Consulting LLP and IFF Research Ltd., were commissioned by the Welsh Government in May 2012 to undertake a long-term evaluation of the Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills in Wales (ELMS) Programme.

1.2 ELMS was a flagship programme funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund (ESF), through the Convergence⁴ and Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) Programmes⁵, which involved:

‘An agenda of related projects, programmes and schemes in the general field of leadership and management, each contributing towards strategic improvement and support for development skills and capacity in the Welsh economy and within Welsh businesses and organisations’⁶.

1.3 The ELMS programme consisted of a number of discreet, but inter-related intervention types, those being:

- a series of ‘open access’ Leadership and Management Workshops
- discretionary funded leadership and management training courses available to employers via the Welsh Government’s Workforce Development Programme (WDP)
- a coaching and mentoring strand
- a Sector Leadership Fund (SLF) which was ring-fenced to Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to develop sector specific leadership and management training provision.

⁴ In the West Wales and Valleys area – Isle of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen.

⁵ In the East Wales area – Flintshire, Wrexham. Powys, Monmouthshire, Newport, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan.

⁶ Convergence Business Plan. Page 5.

- 1.4 Three evaluation reports (Interim, Update and Final) have been published in relation to these four strands of ELMS. A further two evaluation reports relating to the Leadership and Management Wales (LMW) Centre for Excellence, a related service also part-financed via ELMS have also been published⁷ as part of the contract.
- 1.5 The Welsh Government took a policy decision to withdraw ELMS (including all four intervention types listed above) during 2014 as part of a phased transition into the priorities for the 2014-2020 EU Structural Funds Programmes.
- 1.6 The fifth element of ELMS is a Welsh Language Skills Management Diagnostic known as 'Cymraeg y Gweithle' or 'Workplace Welsh'⁸. Workplace Welsh contains two elements, the first of which is aimed at allowing employers to analyse which Welsh language skills are required by their workforce (a Management Diagnostic Tool). The second element of Workplace Welsh is intended to analyse the present Welsh language skills of employees and to focus on aspects that need improvement (the Skills Diagnostic Tool).
- 1.7 Workplace Welsh was managed internally within the Welsh Government with aspects of the work being out-sourced to the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and Fusion Workshop Ltd.
- 1.8 While the ELMS programme was withdrawn in 2014, Workplace Welsh continues to be available as a resource for employers in the public, private and third sectors in Wales to use free of charge.

⁷ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-enhancing-leadership-management-skills-programme/?lang=en>

⁸ See: www.workplacewelsh.org.uk

Evaluation aim and objective

- 1.9 The overall aim of the evaluation of ELMS is to evaluate the delivery and effectiveness of the ELMS Convergence and Competitiveness Fund projects.
- 1.10 The objective of this report is to provide a final, summative evaluation of Workplace Welsh building on earlier evidence gathered as part of the interim and update evaluations of the wider ELMS programme.

Work programme

- 1.11 The work underpinning this final evaluation of Workplace Welsh has involved the following elements:
- attending a meeting of the ELMS evaluation steering group on 30th July 2014 to discuss and agree the final stage work programme
 - preparing a methodological briefing note for the evaluation steering group on 22nd December 2014 setting out monitoring information and evaluative evidence available via the WJEC and revisions to the proposed work programme
 - reviewing relevant policy, strategy and research documents to assess the strategic context within which Workplace Welsh was initially funded and subsequently operates
 - reviewing monitoring information and evaluative evidence supplied by the WJEC including the findings from two web surveys⁹
 - preparing semi-structured discussion guides for use in qualitative fieldwork with key stakeholders in the Workplace Welsh project, participating employers and employees
 - undertaking qualitative interviews with nine stakeholders including Welsh Government, WJEC and WEFO officials

⁹ The WJEC conducted separate web surveys of employers and employees registered on the Workplace Welsh website during 2014. There were 19 responses to the employer survey and 87 responses to the employee survey.

- undertaking qualitative fieldwork with five employers and 12 employees that utilised or participated in the Skills Diagnostic Tool.

Report structure

1.12 In the remainder of this report, we:

- Consider relevant research evidence underpinning the policy and legislative context for Workplace Welsh (Chapter 2)
- consider the design and implementation of Workplace Welsh (Chapter 3)
- consider performance relating to targets and expenditure (Chapter 4)
- consider the user perspective (Chapter 5)
- consider the effects and impacts of Workplace Welsh (Chapter 6)
- set out our conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 7)

2 Research Evidence, Policy and Legislative Context

2.1 In this chapter we examine the research evidence and the policy and legislative context that gave rise to the Workplace Welsh project. We also consider how the policy and legislative context has evolved since Workplace Welsh was conceived and launched. The chapter draws on analysis of various, relevant research and policy documents and evidence gathered as part of qualitative interviews with stakeholders.

Key findings outlined in this chapter:

- Research evidence shows that most employers in Wales do not have formal methods in place for assessing the Welsh language skills of their workforce.
- The Welsh Medium Education Strategy contains a clear policy commitment to develop an online method for assessing Welsh language skills within the workplace. The need for such a tool has been endorsed in recommendations made by the Wales Employment and Skills Board.
- A number of the new Welsh Language Standards require employers to undertake measures linked to workforce planning and training relating to the Welsh language. Workplace Welsh and specifically the Skills Diagnostic Tool provides employers, that are subject to Welsh Language Standards, with an appropriate solution as part of wider workplace planning activities to help them attain and comply with these standards.
- The Welsh Language Commissioner has responsibilities to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and offers free advice and support to businesses and third sector organisations which includes advice on how to measure, develop and promote Welsh language use in the workplace.
- The policy linkages between promoting use of the Welsh language in the workplace and improving leadership and management skills (the main focus of ELMS) are somewhat vague.

Research Evidence

- 2.2 In 2005, Future Skills Wales (FSW) conducted research which surveyed over 2,000 employers in seven sectors in relation to Welsh language skills needs¹⁰.
- 2.3 The research noted a number of key findings that support the evidence base for the Workplace Welsh project which were referenced in the ELMS Business Plans. For instance, the FSW research noted that ‘businesses with a requirement for Welsh language skills were asked whether they had a formal method of identifying the Welsh language skills and training needs of their existing staff’. It was found that ‘the overwhelming majority of the businesses in question did not have any formal method; in fact only 2 per cent of these businesses said that they did’¹¹.
- 2.4 The FSW report explained that a key finding in an earlier report commissioned by ELWa¹² into Welsh language skills needs in the public sector supports this finding – even those in the public sector with a Welsh language scheme tended not to have a formal method of identifying Welsh language skills and training needs of their employees’¹³.
- 2.5 In addition (and of particular relevance to the Management Diagnostic Tool), the FSW research found that ‘when considering the recruitment of new staff, respondents were asked if they had a method of identifying whether different posts or jobs at the location in question had a need for Welsh language skills. The majority (77 per cent) replied that they did

¹⁰ Welsh Language Skills in Seven Sectors. A report to the Future Skills Wales Partnership by Beaufort Research and Menter a Busnes. March 2005. The seven sectors were tourism and leisure, agri-food, financial and business services, care services, media, retail, wholesale and other service activities and construction.

¹¹ Ibid. Page 27.

¹² The former Education and Learning Wales.

¹³ Ibid. Page 27.

not have such a method whilst only 15 per cent reported that they did and the other 8 per cent did not know¹⁴.

- 2.6 More recently (2014), research commissioned by the Welsh Government surveyed some 4,000 employers on their Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors¹⁵. This work found that ‘only three per cent of employers (across the eight sectors) record, measure or assess the level of Welsh language skills amongst their staff. This was found to be ‘much more common in the childcare and social care sectors’¹⁶.
- 2.7 The 2014 research report went on to note that ‘a variety of methods were used to record, measure or assess the level of Welsh language skills amongst staff, most commonly internal informal assessment (59 per cent) and employees’ own assessment of their level (55 per cent)’¹⁷.
- 2.8 In terms of assessing the Welsh language skills of applicants as part of recruitment processes, the 2014 research found that ‘around one in eight (12 per cent)’ did so, again with employers in the childcare sector most likely to have done so. Employers in north Wales were most likely to have assessed the Welsh language skills of applicants during recruitment (21 per cent) compared to six per cent in south east Wales.
- 2.9 Employers who assessed the Welsh language skills of applicants were most likely to have done so ‘verbally, through an informal conversation with the applicant, or all or part of the interview being conducted in Welsh’¹⁸.

¹⁴ Ibid. Page 27.

¹⁵ Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors. 2014. IFF Research Ltd. and Old Bell 3 Ltd. The eight sectors were: childcare, social care, creative, hospitality, leisure and tourism, professional/business services, retail, agriculture and food production and construction.

¹⁶ Ibid. Page 110.

¹⁷ Ibid. Page 111.

¹⁸ Ibid. Page 100.

Former Welsh Language Board Guidance

- 2.10 The ELMS business plan made reference to the fact that in 2008, the [then] Welsh Language Board¹⁹ published a ‘practical guide for employers wishing to develop a Welsh Language Policy’. This document contained a section on ‘Staff in the Workplace’ which advised employers to ‘assess the existing language skills of employees’ and to ‘develop those skills to meet the requirements of their posts’²⁰.
- 2.11 The business plan went on to say that ‘at present, there is no practical means to enable employers to achieve these policy aims’²¹.

The Welsh Medium Education Strategy

- 2.12 In April 2010, the Welsh Government published its Welsh Medium Education Strategy²². This strategy states that ‘Welsh needs to be recognised as a skill in the workplace, and improved methods of recognising and achieving skill levels developed’²³.
- 2.13 Strategic Objective SO3.7 of the Welsh Medium Education Strategy sets out a commitment to ‘promote recognition of Welsh as a skill in the workplace, and to develop opportunities for learning Welsh in the workplace’²⁴. In order to meet this objective, the strategy specifically commits the Welsh Government to developing an ‘online method for assessing Welsh-language skills within the workplace’ and that following on from this, the Welsh Government will ‘work with partners to develop Welsh-language courses for specific workplaces having language training requirements’.

¹⁹ The Welsh Language Board was abolished on 31st March 2012.

²⁰ ELMS Convergence Business Plan. Page 11.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Welsh Medium Education Strategy. Welsh Government, Cardiff. April 2010.

²³ Ibid. Page 18.

²⁴ Ibid. Page 18.

2.14 In addition, Strategic Objective SO3.7 sets out that education and training providers should encourage ‘employers to consider and recognise the benefits of improving customer service and other functions through having Welsh-language skills in the workforce’ and that Welsh Government funded Welsh for Adults Centres will ‘deliver an increase in tailored Welsh-language courses for the workplace’²⁵ .

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure

2.15 The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure received royal assent on 9th February 2011. Amongst other things, the Measure, introduced by the National Assembly for Wales:

- Gives the Welsh language official status in Wales
- Provides for a Welsh Language Partnership Council
- Establishes the role of the Welsh Language Commissioner
- Makes provision for promoting and facilitating the Welsh language
- Makes provision about standards relating to the Welsh language

2.16 We deal with the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Language Standards in more detail later on in this chapter.

The Wales Employment and Skills Board

2.17 In February 2011, the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) published a report on Skills Policies and the Welsh Language²⁶. This report made a number of relevant points, including that ‘there is no overall system in place for identifying employers’ and organisations’ Welsh language skills needs’²⁷.

2.18 The WESB report found that ‘one difficulty for employers is the absence of appropriate and recognised methods of defining Welsh language skills

²⁵ Ibid. Page 37.

²⁶ Skills Policies and the Welsh Language. February 2011. Wales Employment and Skills Board.

²⁷ Ibid. Page 4.

in accordance with an employer's demand for them. Many employers might say that it would be desirable to have someone who speaks Welsh fill some specific post, but that employer might well not identify clearly the difference between the skill to understand, to speak or to write the language²⁸.

2.19 The WESB report also found that 'appropriate assessment tools and advice as to their use would make it easier for employers and organisations to assess accurately the variety of language skills that they seek'²⁹.

2.20 WESB noted that 'some organisations have adopted their own methods of measuring language competency, sometimes drawing on models used for measuring skills in foreign languages, which may or may not always be appropriate' and that 'usefully, a new Diagnostic Tool to help employers assess Welsh language skills needs and existing competencies is currently being developed as part of the Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills Programme'³⁰.

2.21 A number of recommendations were put forward by WESB in their report, which included:

- the need to develop a common framework for measuring and accrediting linguistic skills according to a continuum of achievement, allowing ability at different levels under the separate headings of 'listening, speaking, reading and writing' to be assessed³¹
- that...the new diagnostic tool [Workplace Welsh] is promoted so that employers will find it easier to assess existing levels of Welsh-medium skills within their workforces and facilitate an accurate analysis of their requirements³²

²⁸ Ibid. Page 4.

²⁹ Ibid. Page 6.

³⁰ Ibid. Page 7.

³¹ Ibid. Recommendation 2, Page 7.

³² Ibid. Recommendation 3. Page 8.

- that the Welsh Language Board or successor body, should identify sectoral bodies and individual employers who are willing to act as language Champions in promoting the use of language in the workplace through effective language skills needs analysis and recruitment and training procedures and continue to promote good practice models with employers who identify a need to facilitate the use of Welsh in their workplaces³³.

The Welsh Language Strategy

2.22 In March 2012, the Welsh Government published ‘A living language: a language for living’, its Welsh Language Strategy for 2012-2017³⁴. Strategic area four of the strategy deals specifically with the Welsh language in the workplace. It sets out an aim to ‘increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace’ and a desired outcome of achieving ‘more Welsh speakers using Welsh at work’³⁵.

2.23 Relevant points made in the Welsh Language Strategy include that:

- ‘the workplace has a role in building the confidence of Welsh speakers to use the language in other areas of their lives
- despite the increase in Welsh-medium education, the opportunities for people to work through the medium of Welsh remain comparatively limited with this having the effect of depriving Welsh speakers of the opportunity to normalise their use of the language
- there is some evidence that language-awareness training is a successful means by which to increase positive attitudes towards the Welsh language among employees and employers
- this area of work [i.e. Welsh in the workplace] is comparatively new and that there is little quantitative evidence available with which to assess the impact of activities undertaken to date

³³ Ibid. Recommendation 20. Page 20.

³⁴ A living language: a language for living. Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17. Welsh Government, Cardiff.

³⁵ Ibid. Page 37.

- qualitative evidence shows that a range of factors influence the use of Welsh in the workplace including long-established practices that favour the use of English, matters relating to proficiency in Welsh language skills and organisational reasons such as insufficient institutional support for the use of the language and the extent to which an organisation's culture facilitates or promotes the use of Welsh
- the Welsh for Adults Programme has an important role in helping employees to develop and refine their language skills within the context of the workplace – and across all sectors
- the new Welsh Language operational standards developed by the Welsh Language Commissioner under the Welsh Language Measure will provide a means of ensuring more opportunities for the language to be used in the workplace. The commissioner will also be responsible for providing advice to organisations in all sectors regarding good practice – as well as preparing relevant codes of practice³⁶.

The Welsh Language Commissioner and Statutory Welsh Language Standards

2.24 The Welsh Language Commissioner is an independent body, established by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. Two principles underpin the Commissioner's work:

- In Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language
- Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they chose to do so³⁷.

2.25 The Commissioner's principal aim is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language through raising awareness of the official status of the Welsh language in Wales and by imposing statutory standards on

³⁶ Ibid. Page 38.

³⁷ Source: Welsh Language Commissioner's website.

named organisations. These new Welsh language standards allow the Commissioner to impose duties on organisations and they take the place of Welsh Language Schemes that were developed under the 1993 Welsh Language Act³⁸.

2.26 The process of introducing Welsh language standards is taking place over a series of rounds. Organisations participating in round one included the Welsh Ministers, county councils and county borough councils in Wales and National Park Authorities. During the period April to June 2015, the Commissioner will be preparing individual draft 'compliance notes' for each of the round one organisations.

2.27 There are a number of Welsh language standards of direct and specific relevance to Workplace Welsh including standards 105-110 which relate to workforce planning and training. **Figure 1** provides a summary of these standards.

Figure 1: Welsh Language Standards 105-110: Workforce Planning and Training

<p>Standard 105: The organisation must prepare a strategy outlining how it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assess the Welsh language skills of employees and workers for the purpose of complying with standards• assess the need for Welsh language skills before advertising vacant or new posts• deploy employees and workers to comply with standards made applicable to the organisation• enable employees and workers to acquire Welsh language skills for the purpose of the organisation complying with standards• Provide training through the medium of Welsh in a number of specific fields and relating to a number of specific issues. <p>Standard 106: The organisation must provide opportunities for employees and workers to attend Welsh language training during work hours.</p> <p>Standard 107: The organisation must provide opportunities for employees and workers who have attended Welsh language training during work hours to attend additional training to develop their Welsh language skills.</p> <p>Standard 108: The organisation must provide training courses to allow employees and/or</p>
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³⁸ Source: Welsh Minister's Response to the Welsh Language Commissioner's standards reports and advice note. July 2014. Welsh Government, Cardiff.

workers to gain:

- an understanding of awareness of the Welsh language
- an understanding of the requirements on the organisation to operate in accordance with Welsh language standards
- an understanding of using Welsh in the workplace.

Standard 109: The organisation must provide information to raise awareness of the Welsh language to employees and/or workers in all induction courses for new employees and/or workers.

Standard 110: The organisation must provide Welsh-speaking employees and/or workers, with a wording to be included in e-mail signatures which will enable others to identify them as Welsh speakers or Welsh learners.

Source: Proposed Standards Relating to the Welsh Language. Consultation Document. 6th January 2014. Page 22.

2.28 A further group of standards (111-115) relate to recruitment are also partially relevant, though these are focused more on the availability of information and processes in Welsh than on assessing Welsh language skills per se.

2.29 As part of her responsibilities for promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language, the Commissioner's team offer free advice and support to businesses and third sector organisations including research and guidelines on the benefits of using the Welsh language. Part of this service includes the 'Hybu' microsite which includes a 'resources and assistance' section and a section on external contacts³⁹. It is notable however that our review of this microsite as part of the evaluation did not reveal any obvious reference or link to the Workplace Welsh website.

Stakeholder Evidence – The Policy Context

2.30 The stakeholders we spoke to as part of this final evaluation felt that while there was a clear linguistic policy and legislative basis for the Workplace Welsh project, its links to the broader leadership and management policy agenda and in particular the ELMS programme (as a

³⁹ See: <http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.org/hybu/en/home/Pages/home.aspx>

key mechanism for helping to deliver these policy objectives) were somewhat vague.

2.31 While it was clear that the two diagnostic tools which formed part of Workplace Welsh were intended to be used by ‘managers’ across public, private and third sector organisations, in practice, this was seen by stakeholders as being quite different and separate to the policy objective of investing in and improving leadership and management skills which was the key focus for ELMS. Thus, the general view reported to us was that ELMS had, on balance been the most ‘convenient’ home available for Workplace Welsh and this had been a pragmatic solution in terms of securing the necessary funding to develop and deliver it. In this context, one stakeholder commented that:

‘It wasn’t the most perfect fit by any means’.

2.32 The finding reported at the interim stage of the ELMS evaluation relating to the (lack of clear) policy linkages between leadership and management and Welsh language skills therefore remains relevant at this summative stage of our work:

‘While there is a clear, strategic policy objective underpinning the development and implementation of the Welsh Medium diagnostic tool, in practice, there is no explicit link between the commitment set out in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy and leadership and management skills’⁴⁰.

2.33 Beyond the issues around the extent to which Workplace Welsh ‘fitted’ with the leadership and management policy agenda, stakeholders felt that it offered employers who were already or would very shortly become subject to the new Welsh Language standards an excellent resource to assist and enable them to comply with standards 105-110. Thus, one

⁴⁰ Interim Evaluation of ELMS. Page 26.

stakeholder commented that in terms of these employers meeting their statutory obligations:

‘It provides a solution on a plate’.

3 Workplace Welsh – Design and Implementation

3.1 In this chapter, we consider the Workplace Welsh concept, its design and implementation. The chapter draws on information presented in the original ELMS business plans, an internal evaluation report prepared by the WJEC and evidence gathered as part of qualitative interviews with stakeholders.

Key findings in this chapter:

- The Skills Diagnostic Tool element of Workplace Welsh was jointly delivered by the WJEC and Fusion Workshop Ltd. These two organisations worked well together and the end product, an on-line diagnostic with assessments for reading, writing, speaking and listening linked to Welsh for Adults level descriptors, matched closely the original aims for the Tool.
- The Skills Management Tool did not turn out as planned. Rather than an interactive diagnostic tool, what was actually produced is a more passive and generic Workplace Planning Guide which takes the form of a PDF document published on the Workplace Welsh website. The Workplace Planning Guide also took a long time to develop and was only launched in January 2015 some four years after the original Skills Management Tool was conceived.
- There was a lack of focus and strategy in terms of promoting Workplace Welsh and the Skills Diagnostic Tool to employers that might potentially want to use it.

Original Aims

3.2 The original aim of Workplace Welsh was to construct an on-line portal which would host two diagnostic tools that would:

- ‘allow employers to analyse which Welsh language skills are required by their workforce and to recognise posts within their organisations

which should be targeted'. This element was referred to as the Management Tool

- give employers the means to analyse the present Welsh language skills of employees and to focus on aspects which need improvement, in order to allow them to function through the medium of Welsh in the workplace. This element was referred to as the Skills Diagnostic Tool⁴¹.

3.3 The ELMS business plan explained that the Management Diagnostic Tool 'will be an on-line analysis tool which will enable employers to assess which posts require post-holders with a degree of Welsh language skills'. For example:

- 'a receptionist post, may require the post-holder to be able to greet customers bilingually and hold basic conversations, therefore oral Welsh language skills will be required by the post-holder
- an account manager post may require the post-holder to be able to discuss detailed sector specific information and prepare reports, therefore the post-holder will require a higher level of Welsh language skills to include the ability to write in Welsh'⁴².

3.4 In terms of the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the ELMS business plan explained that 'this will also be an on-line analysis tool, which will enable management to assess the individual language skills of their employees, and identify areas of language which need training. The tool will allow an individual language profile to be created for each employee. It will also highlight areas where the individual requires further training'⁴³.

3.5 The ELMS business plan went on to say that the 'results of the analyses will allow management to focus on gaps highlighted and set realistic goals. Once management know which posts require Welsh language skills and which employees already have Welsh language skills, they will

⁴¹ Source: ELMS Convergence Business Plan.

⁴² Ibid. Page 11.

⁴³ Ibid. Page 12.

be able to either reorganise current staffing to ensure that those members of staff who have Welsh language skills are allocated to posts which have been identified as requiring Welsh language skills, or plan and deliver a Welsh language training programme to allow post-holders to develop their Welsh language skills. If management decide that new employees will need to be recruited, they will be able to outline specific language requirements in the person specification⁴⁴.

Implementation – The Management Diagnostic Tool

- 3.6 The Management Diagnostic Tool has not been delivered as envisaged. While the original specification set out clearly that this part of the project would be an ‘on-line analysis tool’ what was actually produced is a ‘Workplace Planning Guide’ which takes the form of a six page downloadable PDF document available on the Workplace Welsh website. The guide itself was up-loaded onto the Workplace Welsh website in January 2015; some four years after the project had been approved as part of the overall ELMS package.
- 3.7 The Workplace Planning Guide is intended to help employers decide two things:
- does the post-holder need Welsh language skills?
 - if they do, what level of skills is required?⁴⁵
- 3.8 The Workplace Welsh website stresses to potential users of the guide that it should ‘not be used as a simplistic way of determining skills needs’ and that ‘in each case you [employers] will need to give due consideration to all the relevant background, circumstances and requirements of the post’⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Page 12.

⁴⁵ The Workplace Planning Guide. Page 1. Source: Workplace Welsh Website.

⁴⁶ Source; Workplace Welsh Website. Workplace Planning Guide Page.

- 3.9 The guide sets out a series of 11 questions to help employers determine whether a particular post-holder (or post-holders) require Welsh language skills. If, after responding to these questions, employers decide that there is no need for Welsh language skills for the post under consideration, it still recommends that the employer ‘should consider giving the post-holder the opportunity to learn Welsh and receive Welsh awareness training’. The guide goes on to say that ‘this will encourage them [employees] to respect the rights of those who speak Welsh and to understand the legislative requirements in relation to Welsh language and equality’⁴⁷.
- 3.10 If employers come to the conclusion that Welsh language skills are either essential or desirable for a particular post-holder, the guide sets out information intended to help decide ‘the type of skill needed and the level’ and links this to Welsh for Adults, National Qualification Framework (NQF) and ALTE/CEFR⁴⁸ framework levels. Guidance is provided in relation to speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- 3.11 The guide also provides an extract from the Welsh Language Commissioner’s publication ‘Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations’ relating to placing job advertisements, designing person specifications and defining language skills within a job description.

Implementation – The Skills Diagnostic Tool

- 3.12 The Welsh Government (via the Department for Education and Skills) appointed the WJEC to develop and service the Skills Diagnostic Tool available on the Workplace Welsh website. The WJEC also provides a suite of qualifications for adults who are learning Welsh. The WJEC’s contract commenced in January 2011 and was initially due to have run for two years, though a subsequent contract effectively extended the service to March 2015.

⁴⁷ The Workplace Planning Guide. Page 2. Source; Workplace Welsh Website.

⁴⁸ Common European Framework for Reference for Languages.

- 3.13 As part of the contract, the WJEC employs an Assessment Development Officer who spends an estimated 80 per cent of their time working on the Workplace Welsh project. The rest of this person's time is spent working on the Welsh language Sabbaticals Scheme⁴⁹.
- 3.14 A private company, Fusion Workshop Ltd was contracted by the Welsh Government to deliver the information technology aspects relating to the Workplace Welsh website and to maintain it.
- 3.15 An internal evaluation report, prepared by the WJEC in April 2014 provides an overview of the Skills Diagnostic Tool⁵⁰.
- 3.16 The Skills Diagnostic Tool developed by the WJEC assesses, via on-line tests the four key communication skills 'needed in real business situations' i.e: listening, speaking, reading and writing⁵¹. As part of designing the tool, the WJEC had considered and reviewed a number of other language assessment and self-assessment tools (assessing mainly English language skills in England) and had drawn on a number of practical lessons and good practice relating to technical design aspects.
- 3.17 The WJEC's evaluation report explained that 'tests are designed to be suitable for all Welsh speakers, regardless of their level, who need an accurate assessment to establish their language ability within a business or workplace context'.
- 3.18 Before completing the on-line tests, each participant is first required to self-assess their Welsh language ability for each of the four key skills.

⁴⁹ The Sabbaticals Scheme offers Welsh-language and methodology training to practitioners who need the confidence and specialist terminology to teach, lecture or train through the medium of Welsh or bilingually or who are required to teach Welsh second language as part of the national curriculum. Source: WJEC website.

⁵⁰ An evaluation of the Welsh in the Workplace Skills Indicator. Research Section, WJEC. April 2014.

⁵¹ Ibid. Page 1.

Each skill is then assessed separately. Both the self-assessment and the test results are based on level descriptions from the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) framework, on a five level scale, namely:

- entry
- foundation
- intermediate
- advanced
- proficient.

3.19 This five level scale is also used by the Welsh Government's Welsh for Adults programme.

3.20 A form of adaptive testing is used for the listening and reading tests. An initial set of questions is pitched at the self-assessed level provided by the employee. If they achieve a higher score for those questions, they are given a further set of questions at a higher level. If they achieve a low score, they are asked a set of less demanding questions. Once a mid-range score is achieved for a set of questions, the candidate's level is set accordingly⁵².

3.21 For the speaking and writing tests, all employees are asked to undertake the same tasks. Answers are then sent to WJEC assessors, who provide marks within 48 hours of submission. Results are automatically reported back to employees via the website and the overall report shows:

- the level achieved for each skill assessed
- the overall level, if all skills have been assessed
- a description of ability for each skill assessed
- suggestions for future training
- a table showing where a participant's level is in relation to recognised frameworks.

⁵² Ibid. Page 1.

3.22 The WJEC designed the assessments with the aim of them being user-friendly and able to be taken ‘where and when it suits employers, in particular at their offices’⁵³. The Skills Diagnostic Tool was also designed so that employers could download the results for each employee, enabling them to make informed decisions about recruitment or plan for Welsh language training.

Stakeholder Evidence – Implementation

3.23 Welsh Government officials felt that in relation to the Skills Diagnostic Tool, what had been delivered by the WJEC and Fusion Workshop was very much as intended and in-line with the original aims and objectives for it.

3.24 There was a consensus amongst the Welsh Government officials we interviewed that the WJEC and Fusion Workshop had worked well together and had overcome some ‘significant technical challenges’ along the way, but had ultimately succeeded in creating a diagnostic tool that ‘filled a genuine gap’.

3.25 There was however some criticism relating to how the Skills Diagnostic Tool and indeed the wider Workplace Welsh website (including what turned into the Workplace Planning Guide) had been promoted to employers. Some stakeholders commented for instance that beyond identifying ‘public private and third sector organisations’ and in particular those that were required to have statutory Welsh Language Schemes (and latterly to comply with the new Welsh Language Standards) as potential users, there had been a lack of further detail in terms of the strategy to promote awareness. One stakeholder commented for example that there had been:

‘A lack of focus and strategy in terms of promoting it’.

⁵³ Ibid. Page 2.

3.26 These same stakeholders questioned why, having invested in the product (i.e. the Skills Diagnostic Tool), the Welsh Government was apparently 'so shy' about promoting it more proactively. Stakeholders also felt that there was scope for the Welsh Language Commissioner's office to do more in terms of promoting awareness, for instance via its websites and as part of the Commissioner's role to offer advice and support to businesses. This seemed particularly pertinent as the Welsh Language Standards are rolled out to more employers.

3.27 Stakeholder evidence relating to the Management Diagnostic Tool suggested that there had been a number of reasons for its delayed development. According to several stakeholders, one of the main reasons had been the desire by Welsh Government to wait until the content of the new Welsh Language Standards had become clear in order to ensure that the Tool took account of and did not risk giving advice in contradiction to these new standards.

3.28 Stakeholders argued that the delay in waiting for clarification around the Welsh Language Standards meant that this strand of the project lost momentum and that employers could, in effect put work to assess the Welsh Language requirements of posts on the back-burner.

'The uncertainty around the standards gave some organisations the perfect excuse to delay'.

3.29 Several stakeholders were also disappointed that, in their view the end product (a PDF guidance note) had been 'watered down' and was now 'more passive' than the original concept of an interactive on-line diagnostic tool. Welsh Government officials, whilst acknowledging that the original intention had been for this element of the project to be more interactive, said that there were concerns about whether it was appropriate to give definitive guidance as to whether a particular post

might require Welsh language skills. One (non- Welsh Government) stakeholder commented that:

‘The Welsh Government was nervous about being overly prescriptive or being seen to be telling employers how they should go about planning their own workforce in relation to the Welsh language’.

3.30 It was also felt that the delay (the PDF guidance note was only published on the Workplace Welsh website in late January 2015) meant that very few employers were actually aware of it, which in turn has also restricted our ability to gather feedback on it.

4 Performance - Targets and Expenditure

4.1 In this chapter, we consider the targets that were set for Workplace Welsh and how actual performance compares against these. We also take account of the original budget and consider actual financial outturns. The Chapter draws on information contained in the original ELMS Business Plans as well as data provided by the Welsh Government and the WJEC.

Key findings outlined in this chapter.

- Workplace Welsh had a target of supporting 60 employers in the Convergence area and 40 employers in the RCE area. There were 106 employers registered on the WJEC's database in January 2015. Employees at 75 of these employers had actually used the Skills Diagnostic Tool.
- An internal evaluation by the WJEC shows that the majority of registered employers are located in the RCE area, with most of those in Cardiff.
- Most of the employers that registered to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool are public sector organisations. Most employers are from the Education sector, followed by Government or Local Government.
- WJEC data showed a total of 943 registered employee users. However, not all of these will be individual employees as some employers created multiple accounts which distorts the data somewhat relating to the total number of employees that actually undertook assessments.
- The majority (around 70 per cent) of employees registered on the Skills Diagnostic Tool database are women.
- The original budget for Workplace Welsh was £688k. This represented one per cent of the total, original ELMS budget. As of March 2014, a total of £331k had been spent on Workplace Welsh representing 48 per cent of the original budget.
- The actual unit cost per employer supported by the Skills Diagnostic Tool was 36 per cent lower than implied on the basis of the original budget and targets.

Targets

- 4.2 In terms of targets relating to Workplace Welsh, the two ELMS Business Plans (one for the Convergence area and one for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment area) set out the following.

Figure 2: SMART Targets for Workplace Welsh contained in ELMS Business Plans

To develop two diagnostic tools to identify Welsh language skills requirements of posts and to assess Welsh language skills of employees.

The Convergence Business Plan set the target of piloting the tools with 60 employers and make changes to the diagnostic tools for roll-out of the tools by 2013.

The RCE Business Plan set the target of piloting the tools with 40 employers and make changes to the diagnostic tools for roll-out of the tools by 2013.

Source: ELMS Convergence (Page 21) and RCE (Page 22) Business Plans.

- 4.3 In all therefore, the combined target was that the Workplace Welsh project would pilot the diagnostic tools with 100 employers in Wales.
- 4.4 Beneath this, there was no break-down in terms of the nature or sector of the employers to be engaged. Also, it is notable that no target was set in relation to the number of participating employees.
- 4.5 In terms of assessing actual performance against this target, a database of employers that had registered on the Workplace Welsh website supplied to us by the WJEC in January 2015 contained 106 registered employers.
- 4.6 Of these 106 employers, the data supplied by the WJEC showed that 75 of these had at least one employee that had completed at least one of the four skills assessments meaning that 31 of the registered employers (29 per cent) had not used the assessments with any staff as yet.

- 4.7 This means that overall, 75 per cent of the original target to pilot the project with 100 employers had been achieved (as of January 2015), though it must be noted of course that these 75 employers were only supported via the Skills Diagnostic Tool and not the Workplace Planning Guide.
- 4.8 The data provided did not contain details of the counties in which registered employers were based. However, in its internal evaluation exercise⁵⁴, the WJEC analysed the postcode locations of 69 employers registered on Workplace Welsh. This showed that:
- 40 of the 69 employers were located in the RCE area (East Wales). The majority of these (34 employers) were based in Cardiff.
 - 22 of the 69 employers were located in the Convergence area (West Wales and the Valleys)
 - 7 of the employers had postcodes outside of Wales.
- 4.9 It should be noted that in the context of this latter category, the WJEC's database contained a number of employers headquartered outside of Wales but with service delivery remits within Wales (e.g. Sector Skills Councils and training providers).
- 4.10 Of the 31 employers registered on the WJEC's database that had not used the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the data showed that:
- two had registered during 2012
 - 15 had registered during 2013
 - 14 had registered during 2014, of which three had registered in the final quarter of 2014
- 4.11 This suggests that other than the three who registered late in 2014, the user accounts of the other 28 registered 'older' users (26 percent of the 106 registered employers) were probably dormant.

⁵⁴ An evaluation of the Welsh in the Workplace Skills Indicators. Research Section, WJEC. April 2014. Page 5.

4.12 In terms of sector composition, **Figure 3** provides an overview based on the WJEC's data:

Figure 3: Sector composition of Workplace Welsh registered Users

Sector	Number of registered users
Education	40
Government/Local Government	26
'Other'	17
Other public sector organisation	9
Health/Care	7
Creative Industries	4
Justice	2
Financial services	1
Total	106

Source: WJEC Workplace Welsh Database

4.13 In terms of size, the smallest employer on the database had two employees, while the largest had some 15,000.

4.14 It is worth noting that the largest category 'education' consisted of Further and Higher Education Institutions, private (mainly post-16) training providers and some schools (primary and secondary).

4.15 The WJEC's database did not contain a field to categorise registered organisations as private, public or third sector and while we have not attempted to do this ourselves (on the basis that for a minority of entries it is not clear which of these sectors they might belong to), it is clear that the majority of the registered users (based on each the organisation's name as listed) on the database are from the public sector.

4.16 In the context of ESF Convergence funding, this bias towards the public sector does perhaps raise the question as to whether Workplace Welsh might have been better suited to the 'Improving Public Services – Making the Connections' Priority (Priority 4) than the 'Improving skill levels and adaptability of the workforce' (Priority 3) under which ELMS

was financed. However, ultimately, Workplace Welsh was intended as a pilot initiative and its relatively small scale would have made a stand-alone application for ESF less than desirable given the drive towards a more strategic approach to project design. Beyond that, while its use to date in the private sector has been more limited, the tool clearly offers the potential for private employers to use it in the future as part of their workforce planning activities.

4.17 The WJEC's data showed that there were a total of 943 employees registered to use the Skills Assessment diagnostic. This represents a mean average of 12.6 'users' per participating employer. However, the WJEC pointed out in their evidence that some employers (for various reasons) had created multiple 'user' accounts, some of which had not been used and lay dormant. As such, it is important to note that fewer than 943 people will have actually used the Skills Assessment Diagnostic. To contextualise this analysis, in its internal evaluation (undertaken in April 2014), the WJEC found that an average of eight employees had been registered per employer.

4.18 While there were no specific targets relating to gender or other socio-demographic characteristics of employees participating in the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the WJEC's evaluation reported that '70 per cent of the registered employees were women' and that this is a 'similar proportion to that seen in entries for Welsh for Adults examinations'⁵⁵.

Budget and Expenditure

4.19 The original budget for the Workplace Welsh project was £688,835. This represented one per cent of the original (combined Convergence and RCE) ELMS budget of £65.3m⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ An evaluation of the Welsh in the Workplace Skills Indicators. Research Section, WJEC. April 2014. Page 6.

⁵⁶ Source: Welsh Government and WEFO Claim Forms for ELMS Convergence and RCE projects.

4.20 **Figure 4** shows a breakdown of what the original Workplace Welsh budget consisted of.

Figure 4: Workplace Welsh Budget Breakdown

<i>Item</i>	<i>Budget</i>
ICT development costs	330,000
Staff costs	234,000
Marketing and promotion	70,000
Other costs including legal fees, design, translation and administration	50,835
Travel and subsistence costs	4,000
Total	688,835

Source: Welsh Government

4.21 Following an open procurement process (which resulted in the appointment of the WJEC and Fusion Workshop as delivery providers), the costs for delivering the budget needed to deliver the Workplace Welsh project was lower than anticipated and a re-profiling exercise was undertaken to scale back the budget for the project.

4.22 From April 2013 a new procurement process was completed for hosting and maintenance and management and marketing services. This contract was awarded to the WJEC and Fusion Workshop.

4.23 The actual amount spent on Workplace Welsh to 31st March 2014⁵⁷ was £331,050 some 49 percent of the original allocated budget.

4.24 **Figure 5** shows an analysis of the unit costs per employer on the basis of the original budget and target and the actual performance and financial outturn.

⁵⁷ Source: Welsh Government.

Figure 5: Unit Cost Analysis

Indicator	£ Per Employer
Original unit cost ⁵⁸	6,888
Actual unit cost ⁵⁹	4,414
Variance (percentage)	-36

Source: Welsh Government

4.25 This shows that despite having supported fewer employers than anticipated, the lower costs mean that the actual unit cost per employer supported is 36 per cent lower than implied on the basis of the original budget and targets agreed which is positive when considering value for money and the potential budget requirement to enable the Workplace Welsh service to continue post ELMS and ESF funding.

⁵⁸ Calculated on the basis of a total budget of £688,835 with a target of 100 employers supported

⁵⁹ Calculated on the basis of a total expenditure of £331,050 with 75 employers having actually used the Workplace Welsh Skills Diagnostic Tool.

5 Workplace Welsh - The User Perspective

- 5.1 In this chapter, we consider feedback from users (both employers and employees) of Workplace Welsh. The chapter draws on data from two web surveys and an internal evaluation report conducted by the WJEC. It also draws on the evidence gathered from our qualitative research with participating employers and their staff.
- 5.2 It is important to note that the bulk of the evidence presented in this chapter relates solely to the Skills Diagnostic Tool since, at the time our fieldwork was undertaken, the Workforce Planning Guide had only very recently been launched.
- 5.3 It should also be noted that while we have analysed the findings of the two web surveys undertaken by the WJEC, the base response numbers are low albeit that these were based on small populations. The WJEC conducted separate web surveys of employers and employees registered on the Workplace Welsh website during 2014. There were 19 responses to the employer survey and 87 responses to the employee survey. As proportions of the WJEC's Workplace Welsh database, these response rates represent 18 per cent of employers and 9 per cent of employees. Findings should therefore be treated with a degree of caution. Given the low base numbers, we have avoided using percentages in our analysis of the WJEC's survey data.

Key findings outlined in this chapter.

- Most employers were motivated to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool as part of wider workforce planning activities including skills audits.
- Lack of time or capacity has been the main barrier cited by registered employers that have not gone on to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool and its assessments.
- The self-assessment element of the Skills Diagnostic Tool was appropriate and added value in terms of pitching the assessments at the

correct level for participating employees. Some employees 'played it safe' so as not to over-play their Welsh language skills. However, the software was capable of adjusting the difficulty of assessments as employees undertook them.

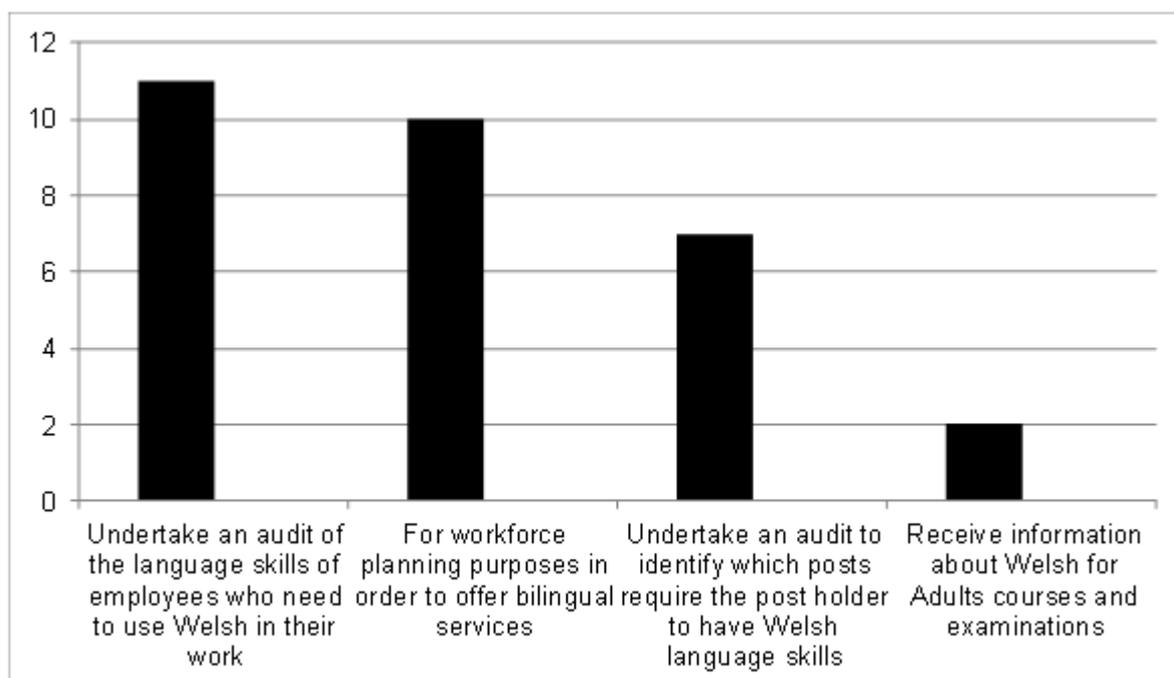
- The WJEC's proactive work to promote Workplace Welsh and the Skills Diagnostic Tool was instrumental in employers becoming aware of it.
- Overall user feedback on the Skills Diagnostic Tool was positive though there were a small number of issues including the potential to highlight areas for improvement when presenting test results.
- Employees undertaking listening and speaking assessments were more likely to report technical issues and overall feedback was slightly less positive in relation to these two tests (as compared to reading and writing).
- Employers and employees have been very impressed with the efficiency and consistency of the WJEC in marking and returning results. Overall, employers and staff have also been pleased with the way results have been presented. The fact that these have been linked to the Welsh for Adults levels has been particularly helpful.

Awareness and Motivation for Use

- 5.4 From an employer perspective, 18 of the 19 respondents to the WJEC's employer survey answered a question about their reasons for using the Skills Diagnostic Tool. Figure 6 provides an overview of the responses.

Figure 6: Employer motivations for using the Skills Diagnostic Tool⁶⁰

(Numbers)



Source: WJEC (Base: 18)

5.5 This shows that the highest number of employers responding to the WJEC's survey (11) used the tool to undertake an audit of the language skills of employees who need to use Welsh in their work.

5.6 Of the 19 responding employers to the WJEC's survey, 18 answered a question on whether they had yet started using the assessment indicators⁶¹. Only six said that they had started using the assessments and indicators with the remaining 12 saying that they had yet to do so.

5.7 Of the 12 employers that said that they had not yet used the assessments and indicators, 11 provided open-ended answers to

⁶⁰ The question asked was "what was/is your reason for using the website"? Respondents were able to tick all responses that applied. Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 18.

⁶¹ The question asked was 'Have you started using the indicators?' Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 18.

explain what had prevented them from doing so⁶². Four respondents (the largest grouping) gave open text answers that indicated a lack of time or capacity had been the main barrier to implementation. Other responses included one who cited a lack of support from staff and another who said that they were awaiting further information and a presentation on Workplace Welsh from the WJEC before proceeding.

- 5.8 The WJEC also asked employee respondents whether they had started the assessments⁶³. Of the 84 registered employees that responded to this question, the majority (63 respondents) said that they had started the assessments.
- 5.9 The WJEC asked respondents to its survey of registered employees to answer a question on whether they had understood the purpose of the self-assessment (i.e. prior to undertaking the full assessment)⁶⁴. A total of 62 of the 87 respondents answered this question with the majority (56 employee respondents) saying that they had understood the purpose of the self-assessment.
- 5.10 A total of 61 respondents to the WJEC's employee survey answered a question on whether the level descriptors used had been helpful to them in making a meaningful self-assessment⁶⁵. The majority (52 respondents) said that they had been helpful.
- 5.11 In terms of the five employers visited as part of this summative evaluation, their needs and motives for involvement are summarised in the following boxes.

⁶² The question asked was 'What is preventing you from doing this? i.e. lack of staff or manager's support, lack of resources...' Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 11.

⁶³ The question asked was 'have you started the assessments'? Source: WJEC Employee survey questionnaire. Base = 84.

⁶⁴ The question asked was 'Did you understand the purpose of the self-assessment?' Source: WJEC Employee survey questionnaire. Base 62.

⁶⁵ The question asked was 'Were the level descriptors helpful for you to make a meaningful self-assessment?' Source: WJEC Employee survey questionnaire. Base 61.

Employer A is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body and had already been undertaking some workforce planning (prior to their use of the Skills Diagnostic Tool) in relation to Welsh language service availability linked to their statutory Welsh language scheme.

Employer A had initially become aware of the Skills Diagnostic Tool after the WJEC contacted them to tell them about it. They subsequently took part in an initial pilot phase of the Skills Diagnostic Tool prior to rolling it out with staff. Employer A was also aware of and had seen the recently launched Workplace Planning Guide.

Employer A saw the Skills Diagnostic Tool as an ideal way of providing more comprehensive information on the current abilities of their workforce and to help inform how any additional training might be offered. 84 of employer A's staff had undertaken assessments.

Employer B is a private sector company and had secured a Welsh Government contract as part of a wider consortium which required them to make their services available in Welsh despite the market for this being very small in their area.

Employer B had become aware of the Skills Diagnostic Tool via a member of the consortia that they were a part of. This colleague had approached the WJEC and asked for a demonstration of the tool.

Employer B saw the Skills Diagnostic Tool as a means of assessing the baseline position of the wider team (across a number of organisations in the consortium) to be able to provide Welsh language and bi-lingual services. Six members of staff directly employed by employer B had completed assessments, and a further 17 from the wider consortium had also done so.

Employer C is a public sector employer and was motivated to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool to gain more detailed information about their Welsh speaking staff, what levels they were capable of and where they were based.

Employer C had become aware of the Skills Diagnostic Tool via a presentation the WJEC had made at a regional networking meeting attended by them.

The aim was to feed the information gathered via the Skills Diagnostic Tool through to the organisation's workforce planning committee. 70 staff members in employer C had completed assessments.

Employer C had also, on one occasion used the tool as part of a recruitment exercise (in an assessment centre setting) to assess the Welsh language skills of candidates for positions that they had already identified as requiring Welsh language skills.

Employer C was aware of but had not used the Workplace Planning Guide.

Employer D is part of the higher education sector. They became aware of the Skills Diagnostic Tool via on-going contact with the WJEC and in particular the Workplace Welsh Assessment Development Officer.

Employer D was aware that they had a lot of staff who could speak Welsh but did not know at what level. They saw the Tool as a means of being able to plan more strategically and believed that it would also help fulfil up-coming obligations in relation to Welsh Language Standards. 14 members of staff within employer D had completed assessments.

Employer E is a local authority and had first become aware of the Skills Diagnostic Tool via a presentation made by the WJEC at a Welsh for Adults conference.

Employer E decided that the Skills Diagnostic Tool would be potentially helpful in ascertaining the appropriate level of Welsh for Adults training for individual employees.

Employer E saw potential to use the tool as part of recruitment processes, though had not used it in this way as yet. They also saw the tool as being potentially useful in giving staff 'reassurance' about their Welsh language capabilities. Around 50 members of staff from employer E had completed assessments.

This employer was aware of the Workplace Planning Guide but had not actively used it.

5.12 This shows that the proactive work of the WJEC in raising awareness of Workplace Welsh, and the Skills Diagnostic Tool in particular, was important in these five employers becoming aware of it and ultimately using it. All five of the employers we spoke to however, thought that more could be done to promote the tool and encourage wider use of it, particularly amongst employers that will be required to meet the new Welsh Language Standards as they are rolled out.

5.13 It also shows that overall, the motivations for using the tool were similar and were driven in the main by a desire to gather more detailed and robust information about the Welsh language skills of staff as part of broader workforce planning activities.

Feedback on Nature of Use, Quality and User-Friendliness

5.14 Six of the 19 employers responding to the WJEC's survey said that they had used the assessments and indicators. These were asked for

feedback on how easy or difficult it had been⁶⁶. Of the six, four said that it had been easy, and two said that it had been difficult. Of the two employers that said it had been difficult, one said that it had been 'difficult to set up and send out links to staff' while the second said that it had been 'difficult to encourage staff to complete' and also that it had been 'difficult to persuade HR that it was necessary to use a scientific approach of this kind'.

5.15 In terms of employee feedback on the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the WJEC (via its survey of employees) asked whether the process of registering with Workplace Welsh had been clear⁶⁷. The majority (79 employee respondents) said that the process had been clear. Of the minority (eight employee respondents) who said that the registration process had not been clear, two could not recall having registered themselves, while three cited difficulties in logging into the website and functionality issues once logged in.

5.16 Feedback from employers and employees interviewed as part of the qualitative fieldwork supported the majority finding with most saying that the registration process had been straightforward. One employer and a handful of employees however felt that the registration process involved 'a lot of work' and could be 'streamlined a bit'.

5.17 The WJEC's internal evaluation, which was based on analysis of 403 employees having completed assessment tests as of April 2014 found that:

- 74 per cent (300 employees) had completed the reading test
- 69 per cent (277 employees) had completed the writing test
- 50 per cent (201 employees) had completed the listening test

⁶⁶ The question asked was 'Was this easy/difficult to do? You may wish to refer to managers' /employers' support, technical issues...' Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 6.

⁶⁷ The question asked was 'Was the process of registering as an employee clear?' Source: WJEC Employee survey questionnaire. Base = 87

- 32 per cent (129 employees) had completed the speaking test⁶⁸

5.18 The WJEC's evaluation noted that 'the two tests which require additional equipment (i.e. listening and speaking requiring headphone and microphone equipment) were completed less often' suggesting that mobilising this equipment may have been a barrier to completion.

5.19 The evidence from our qualitative fieldwork with employers and participating employees confirmed the finding that the listening and speaking assessments had been more problematic and prone to hardware and software glitches.

'We had some technical issues with the speaking test and the guidance wasn't as clear. The listening test froze a lot and we had to do it several times which was a bit frustrating'. (Evidence from focus group with participating employees at employer A)

5.20 In its survey of employees, the WJEC asked respondents an open ended question asking for comments on the various assessments they had completed⁶⁹. Only 51 of the 87 respondents replied to this question and those responding were able to select and provide feedback on multiple assessments. The response data to this question showed that the majority of those responding to the question had completed all four of the assessments:

- 50 said that they had completed the reading assessment
- 49 said that they had completed the listening assessment
- 49 said that they had completed the speaking assessment
- 49 said that they had completed the writing assessment.

5.21 Our analysis of the open ended responses shows that:

⁶⁸ An evaluation of the Welsh in the Workplace Skills Indicators. Research Section, WJEC. April 2014. Page 6.

⁶⁹ The question asked was 'What was your experience in completing the individual assessments?' Source: WJEC Employee survey questionnaire. Base 51.

- 37 of the 50 respondents commenting on the reading assessment gave positive feedback. The negative feedback provided by 13 respondents related mainly to their perception that the assessment had been 'very hard' or 'too difficult' suggesting possibly that the self-assessment procedure had not 'pitched' the assessment questions at the most appropriate level for these individuals
- 27 of the 49 respondents commenting on the listening assessment gave positive feedback. There were a higher number of negative comments (compared to reading) in relation to the listening assessment. Some of these related to the level of difficulty, some related to the pace of the assessment (being too fast) and some related to technical issues encountered
- 18 of the 49 respondents commenting on the speaking assessment gave positive feedback. The 31 others drew attention to a range of issues including technical (mainly to do with microphones), software glitches and difficulties relating to the lack of a suitable (quiet/private) setting in which to take the assessment
- 30 of the 49 respondents commenting on the writing assessment gave positive feedback. Of the 19 that gave negative feedback (as with the feedback on the reading assessment) most of these seemed to relate to the test being 'difficult' or 'too hard' suggesting again that the self-assessment procedure may not have resulted in questions being 'pitched' at the most appropriate level.

5.22 Most of the employees we interviewed as part of our qualitative fieldwork had completed all four of the Skills Diagnostic Tool Assessments. The feedback they gave was very much in-tune with the WJEC's own findings, with key points including that:

- feedback was most positive in relation to the writing and reading assessments with the questions and tasks generally felt to be appropriate and relevant
- the number of questions asked as part of each assessment was appropriate although some employees felt that the wording of some

questions was 'more appropriate for learners as opposed to fluent Welsh speakers'

- apart from some technical issues reported with the speaking and listening assessments, the software was generally viewed as user-friendly with clear instructions although some (a minority) felt that its design was somewhat dated in terms of 'look and feel'
- the timer in the corner of the screen was generally seen as useful, though some noted that this 'added a bit of extra pressure'
- the overall time required/allowed to complete the assessments was appropriate

'I found the overall process useable, informative and can see the benefits of it'. (Employee from employer E)

'It does the job...but [the look and feel of the website] it's a bit old fashioned'. (Employee from employer C)

Feedback on Self-Assessments

5.23 In its internal evaluation report, the WJEC noted that employees 'tended to self-assess their listening and reading skills slightly higher than their speaking and writing skills'. The evaluation also found that 'over a quarter of all employees underestimated their writing skills, with many Intermediate and Advanced level scores being achieved by those who self-assessed their skills at Foundation level'. The WJEC concluded from this analysis that 'while most people were able to assess their reading and listening skills fairly accurately, when compared with the final test results, there is a lack of confidence in speaking and writing skills amongst those of relatively high ability'⁷⁰.

5.24 Evidence gathered via the qualitative visits showed that most participants in the organisations we visited had 'played it safe' in relation

⁷⁰ An evaluation of the Welsh in the Workplace Skills Indicators. Research Section, WJEC. April 2014. Page 6.

to their self-assessments, so as not to overstate their Welsh language skills. The HR Manager in employer B felt that this was partly down to a 'lack of confidence' and had resulted in most of the participating staff (including the HR Manager herself) 'having a nice surprise when the test results came back'.

5.25 All of the employees interviewed saw the value in and the purpose of the self-assessment part of the process and most (though not all) felt that this had worked well in terms of how the subsequent assessments had been pitched. One employee commented that:

'The software was really clever. It started on the basis of your self-assessment but was clearly adjusting the level as you went along'.
(Employee from employer A)

Feedback on Assessments and Presentation of Results

5.26 As part of its employee survey, the WJEC asked respondents to comment on whether the assessment results and the overall results presented to them had been clear and understandable⁷¹. The majority of those responding to this question (46 of the 51 employees) said that the individual assessment results and the overall results report had been presented in a clear and understandable way. Only one of the respondents who said that the results were not clear suggested how this might be improved and their suggestion was that it would have been useful to have been provided with more detailed feedback on 'which questions I got wrong and why'.

5.27 Evidence from the qualitative fieldwork largely supported this finding from an employer and employee perspective. Key points emerging from the qualitative interviews included:

⁷¹ The question asked was 'Were the individual assessment results and the overall results report presented to you in a clear and understandable way?' Source: WJEC Employee survey questionnaire. Base 51.

- that both employers and employees were generally very impressed with the efficiency of the WJEC in processing and marking assessments and returning the results
- positive feedback on the way in which results were presented, though one employer noted that a bar chart which formed part of the assessment report was slightly misleading. One employee also noted that while the results were clear, they 'felt a bit generic'
- a view from a handful of employees that it would be useful to have had more qualitative feedback alongside the results to help identify areas for improvement in relation to Welsh language skills (tying in with the feedback given to the WJEC via its web survey - referred to above)
- a handful of employees questioned their results and in two cases the employees felt that the test results had been too generous in terms of their level of Welsh potentially raising the expectations of their employers beyond what they felt comfortable and confident with
- views that there had been good levels of consistency in the marking undertaken by the WJEC.

6 Effects and Impacts

- 6.1 In this chapter, we consider evidence on the effects and impacts of Workplace Welsh. The chapter draws on data from two web surveys⁷² and an internal evaluation report conducted by the WJEC. It also draws on the evidence gathered from our qualitative research with participating employers and their staff.
- 6.2 As with chapter 5, it is important to note that the bulk of the evidence presented in this chapter relates solely to the Skills Assessment Tool. It should also be noted that while we have analysed the findings of the two web surveys undertaken by the WJEC, the base response numbers are low and findings should therefore be treated with a degree of caution.

Key findings outlined in this chapter.

- The Skills Diagnostic has proved to be a useful complementary tool for employers in their workforce planning activities, though not all have used it in this way.
- Some employers have used the results of the Skills Diagnostic Tool to make informed decisions about investing in Welsh language training and to consider/decide how the Welsh language is designated in vacant posts being advertised.
- A key factor in the extent to which employers have used the results in terms of workforce planning is whether a sufficient proportion of staff participated.
- Most employers who used the Skills Diagnostic Tool felt that the results had provided them with a clearer picture of the Welsh language skills and capabilities of their workforce.
- The Welsh Government did not monitor progression between employees completing the Skills Diagnostic Tool and going on to enrol on Welsh for

⁷² The WJEC conducted separate web surveys of employers and employees registered on the Workplace Welsh website during 2014. There were 19 responses to the employer survey and 87 responses to the employee survey.

Adults courses. This would have been a useful addition to the project and the qualitative research revealed a number of examples where progression to Welsh training had taken place with positive levels of attribution.

- There is some evidence that the Skills Diagnostic Tool has led to positive effects on organisation culture including Welsh having a higher profile in the workplace and staff being proactively encouraged and supported in various informal ways by colleagues to use the language at work.
- There is evidence that the Skills Diagnostic Tool has led to some positive effects on individual participants. Participants reported a sense of confirmation or validation of their Welsh language skills level. It had also helped some employees justify their involvement in Welsh language training and helped them ensure they selected training at the most appropriate level for them.

Workforce Planning Effects – Skills Diagnostic Tool

6.3 In its survey of employers, the WJEC asked respondents to answer a question about what their plans were for making use of Workplace Welsh and specifically whether and when they intended to undertake an audit to identify which posts requiring the post-holder to have Welsh language skills⁷³.

6.4 A total of 17 of the 19 survey respondents answered this question and 10 of these said that they planned to undertake an audit of which posts require Welsh language skills. Three said that they planned to do so in the next three months, three planned to do so in the next six months and four planned to do it in the next 12 months. Of the seven respondents

⁷³ The question asked was 'What are your organisation's plans for making use of the website in the future? We intend to undertake an audit to identify which posts require the post-holder to have Welsh language skills. Respondents were given the following response options: In the next three months, in the next six months, in the next 12 months and 'other'. Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 17.

that answered 'other', three said that they were unsure when such an audit might take place.

- 6.5 The WJEC also asked respondents to its employer survey to answer a question about whether they intended to undertake an audit to assess the language skills of employees who need to use Welsh in their work⁷⁴.
- 6.6 A total of 16 of the 19 survey respondents answered this question and nine of those said that they planned to undertake an audit to assess the Welsh language skills of post-holders identified as having a need to use Welsh in their work. Three of these said that they planned to do so over the coming three months, another three over the next six months and the final three over the next 12 months. The seven that chose 'other' as their response gave a mix of open-ended answers including that they had no intention of conducting such an audit (two respondents), that they were already using an in-house system that provided all the information they needed (one respondent) and another that said they would do so 'when the need arises'.
- 6.7 In terms of the workforce planning effects on the five employers visited as part of the qualitative research:
- employer A said that the exercise had been useful in helping managers understand 'what Welsh language skills we have in which departments'. This intelligence had been used to help inform decisions as to whether vacant posts within the organisation should be designated as 'Welsh desirable' or 'Welsh essential' posts. It had also been used to help inform the way in which employer A invested in Welsh language training for its staff
 - employer B explained that they now had 'a much clearer picture' of what Welsh language skills (and at what level) they had within their own organisation but also across a wider team of consortium

⁷⁴ The question asked was 'We intend to undertake an audit to assess the language skills of employees who need to use Welsh in their work. Respondents were given the following response options: in the next three months, in the next six months, in the next 12 months or 'other'. Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 16.

partners. Employer B commented that 'if we have someone [a client] who wants to do something in Welsh, we're now in a far better position to know what capability we have as a consortium and can allocate an appropriate member of the team to respond to this'

- employer C felt that the Skills Diagnostic Tool had given them a clearer picture of the Welsh language skills and capabilities of their workforce. While this employer commented that 'it's not been completely exhaustive' since not all staff had participated, it was seen as a 'starting point in responding to organisational need'. Employer C added that as a next step, they intended to conduct a further workforce planning exercise to map out the difference between the Welsh language skills they currently have and what they need
- employer D did not feel that the Skills Diagnostic Tool had resulted in them having a clearer picture of the Welsh language skills of their workforce as it had not been completed by sufficient numbers of staff. While there were no corporate or workforce planning benefits from using the tool for employer D, the HR manager felt that individuals that had undertaken the assessments would have benefitted in various ways
- employer E did not feel that they had a clearer picture of the Welsh language skills of their workforce as a result of using the tool. This was partly down to the fact that insufficient numbers had used it, but also partly down to the fact that a very high proportion of employer E's workforce are first language Welsh speakers. The benefits in organisation E had therefore been more evident on an individual level.

6.8 This shows that there had been positive effects in terms of helping workforce planning in three out of the five employers we visited.

'Overall, what it's shown us is that as an organisation, our Welsh language skills are better than we thought'. (Employer A)

6.9 However, it also clearly suggests that sufficient numbers of staff need to complete Skills Diagnostic Tool assessments in order for an employer to

feel that it adds value in the context of their wider workforce planning activities.

6.10 There was some evidence from our qualitative fieldwork with employers to suggest that employees in at least two of the organisations we visited had not been completely clear as to why they were being asked or encouraged to undertake the Skills Diagnostic. Managers in both of these organisations told us that they had attempted to allay fears amongst some staff (albeit a minority in both cases) to assure them that there would be no negative implications for them as a result of undertaking the assessments. A small number of employees also said that they were unaware of how managers were subsequently using the information they had gained from the Skills Diagnostic Tool.

‘I’m not quite sure if I’m honest what HR are doing with the information they got from it’. (Employee from employer A)

Workforce Planning Effects – Workplace Planning Guide

6.11 Turning to the workforce planning effects of the Workplace Planning Guide, three of the five employers we visited as part of the qualitative fieldwork were aware of and had seen the Guide but had not used it in any comprehensive way. One of these employers did not feel that it was particularly relevant to their organisation as all of their employees are expected either to be able to speak Welsh or to commit to learning the language. A second employer commented that in practice, it would have been ‘useful for the guide to have been available before we did the Skills Diagnostic’. While this employer thought that the content was reasonably helpful, they commented that:

‘I suppose I’d have liked it to have been a bit more interactive so that it could be more specific to our situation. As it is, it feels a bit generic’. (Employer A)

6.12 The WJEC asked employers a question via its web survey on whether the information available via the Workplace Welsh website was sufficient to help them plan their workforce in order to offer bilingual services⁷⁵. A total of 16 of the 19 employers responding to the survey answered this question. Of those, 13 said that the information on the website was sufficient, while the other three said that it was not. One of the three that said it was not sufficient commented that other considerations are also important, such as knowing staff personally.

6.13 One of the employers we visited (employer C) had used the Skills Diagnostic Tool as part of a recruitment assessment centre. This employer had pre-arranged with the WJEC that an assessor would be on-hand to mark assessments and provide instantaneous marking/feedback. This had worked very well from the employer's perspective. However they had no plans to introduce this as a formal, on-going part of their recruitment/in-take processes as these were already considered to be 'lengthy'.

Progression to Welsh Language Training

6.14 The Welsh Government did not undertake any work to monitor the extent to which participants completing assessments via the Skills Diagnostic Tool have subsequently progressed to Welsh for Adults courses. As such our analysis in relation to progression to Welsh language training is based on qualitative fieldwork rather than analysis of monitoring information. While it was never stated as an explicit intention (by Welsh Government) to gather such monitoring information, stakeholders (within Welsh Government and WJEC) agreed that this would have been useful data to collect.

⁷⁵ The question asked was 'Is the information that is available on the website sufficient to help you plan your workforce in order to offer bilingual services?' Source: WJEC Employer survey questionnaire. Base = 16.

6.15 Our qualitative fieldwork with employers and employees revealed a number of examples of progression into Welsh language training. These included:

- one employer arranging a 'Cwrs Cymraeg Clir' (Plain Welsh Course) for some of its staff which focused amongst other things on writing naturally and writing web content in Welsh. This employer had also (as a result of the Skills Diagnostic Tool) arranged for a Welsh language tutor to run weekly sessions for its staff (employer A)
- two employees (from employer A) who said that they had enrolled onto a Welsh language refresher course (cwrs gloywi iaith)
- one employer who was in the process of discussing and agreeing with senior management the possibility of offering all staff that had completed the Skills Diagnostic Tool the opportunity to enrol on Welsh for Adults courses supported by the employer (employer B)
- some employees that completed the Skills Diagnostic Tool having gone on to enrol on Welsh for Adults courses (employers A, C, D and E)
- one employer who plans to create a page on their intranet site with information about the Skills Diagnostic Tool and links to Welsh for Adults training courses (employer E)

6.16 In each of these cases, the employers and employees that provided evidence stated that the level of attribution to the Skills Diagnostic Tool in relation to training outcomes (listed above) was moderate to high. In other words, they argued that these progression outcomes would have been unlikely had the Skills Diagnostic Tool not been used.

Effects on Organisational Culture

6.17 The qualitative fieldwork with our sample of five employers revealed evidence of positive effects on service delivery and organisational culture.

- 6.18 These included two employers (A and B) who said that managers now encouraged staff to be much more proactive in using Welsh in the workplace, including via written correspondence (principally e-mails). Staff members in both of these organisations acknowledged this and said that they had subsequently increased their use of Welsh in verbal and written correspondence in the workplace.
- 6.19 One employer (employer B) had, alongside the Skills Diagnostic Tool, decided to undertake a series of events and activities to give the organisation a more 'Welsh' feel. This included workplace events around St David's day which was also used to promote and encourage use of the Welsh language.
- 6.20 Similarly, a member of staff from employer C felt that as a result of a number of people having used the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the Welsh language had 'more of a profile' – for instance with more people wearing security lanyards with the 'siarad Cymraeg' logo. This employee also felt that a 'Welsh community' was starting to emerge and that fluent Welsh speakers in the organisation had established an intranet page to act as a 'support network' for colleagues who were learning the language.
- 6.21 One employer (employer A) had incorporated a review of Welsh language and use of Welsh language into their structure for staff appraisals.

'I think the culture is probably more supportive now. We picked up on a lot of practical, little things that we could do to help and support staff from the assessments. We've tried to emphasise that they should not be afraid to use their Welsh'. (Employer A)

Effects on Individual Participants

- 6.22 In terms of the effect on individual participants, the evidence from our qualitative visits suggested that this had led to either a sense of

confirmation or validation of their 'level' in terms of Welsh language skills and/or justification that it made sense for them (and their employer) to invest in Welsh language training for them.

6.23 For those who felt that it justified them taking part in training, the assessments had also been very useful in helping to identify the appropriate level of training (on the Welsh for Adults scale).

'I think that this type of assessment is very helpful to individuals who are learning and individuals like me who haven't used Welsh in the workplace for some time and need confirmation of the standard they have reached. I can sleep a little easier now that I know my Welsh isn't completely atrocious!' (Employee from employer E)

'For me, it was very much about confirming my level of Welsh'
(Employee from employer A)

6.24 One employee (from employer D) said that the Skills Diagnostic Tool had convinced them that their Welsh language skills were better than previously thought and had given them the confidence to 'take the next step' which was to enrol on a language improvement class. This employee also felt that they had greater confidence (as a result of the diagnostic) to help their children with school work.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- 7.1 Workplace Welsh was, in financial terms a relatively small component of the broader ELMS programme. The policy linkages between Workplace Welsh and the agenda for improving leadership and management skills were always somewhat vague. However, the policy and legislative context relating to the Welsh language and in particular the Welsh Medium Education Strategy and new Welsh Language Standards provide a clear rationale for the investment made in the project.
- 7.2 Given that most of the employers supported have been in the public sector, it could be argued that in the Convergence area at least, Workplace Welsh might have been more appropriately financed (either as a discrete ESF project or as part of another project) via the 'Making the Connections' public service delivery improvement Priority. In practice however, given its pilot nature and relatively small scale, incorporating Workplace Welsh as part of ELMS was a pragmatic solution that enabled the project to proceed and for the Welsh Government to fulfil its policy commitment set out in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy to deliver an on-line method for assessing Welsh language skills in the workplace.
- 7.3 Overall, the Workplace Welsh project achieved 75 per cent of its target to work with 100 employers, albeit with only one of the two planned diagnostic tools. It did this comfortably within budget, at a unit cost per employer 36 per cent lower than was originally envisaged which is positive when considering value for money and the potential budget requirement to enable the Workplace Welsh service to continue post ELMS and ESF funding. It might reasonably be argued therefore that a higher proportion of the budget should have been spent on marketing and promotion activity to encourage greater up-take.

- 7.4 In terms of the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the WJEC and Fusion Workshop have worked well together and have delivered a product that fulfils the original brief. Feedback from employers and employees that have used the Skills Diagnostic Tool has been positive, though there have been some technical and practical issues with the listening and speaking assessments which detracted somewhat from the user experience. The self-assessment added value and has been a useful mechanism in 'pitching' the initial assessment questions at the appropriate level, though employees appear on the whole to have been cautious not to over-state their Welsh language skills in advance of undertaking the assessments.
- 7.5 Most employers were motivated to use the Skills Diagnostic Tool as part of their workforce planning activities with a view to it generating more detailed information about the Welsh language skills and skill levels of their staff. The WJEC's work in proactively raising awareness of the Tool has also been important and their work in this respect was a feature in each of the five organisations visited as part of the evaluation.
- 7.6 Feedback on the efficiency and consistency in which the various assessments were marked and results presented by the WJEC was positive both from an employer and employee perspective. Linking assessment results to the Welsh for Adults skills levels was also viewed positively by employers and employees though individual participants would have appreciated more qualitative feedback on what they got wrong and how they could improve.
- 7.7 Feedback from employers suggest that while they may use the information and results from the Skills Diagnostic Tool in different ways and with differing degrees of formality, the information provided by it is useful provided that a sufficient proportion of the workforce have participated to make it meaningful. In this context, the evidence shows

that some employers have found the Tool useful in informing decisions about investing in Welsh language training for existing staff and how Welsh language skills needs are defined in the context of job vacancies and recruitment. Employers and employees that provided evidence stated that the level of attribution to the Skills Diagnostic Tool in relation to Welsh language training outcomes was moderate to high. In other words, these progression outcomes would have been unlikely had the Skills Diagnostic Tool not been used.

- 7.8 While the Welsh Government has not monitored or tracked those who completed Skills Diagnostic Tool assessments to understand how many have gone on to enrol on Welsh for Adults courses, our qualitative enquiries with a small sample of employers suggest that there has been a good degree of attributable progression.
- 7.9 There is also evidence that the Skills Diagnostic Tool has generated some positive outcomes in relation to effects on organisational culture, including greater use of written and oral Welsh, the Welsh language having a higher profile in the workplace and Welsh language skills being incorporated more formally as part of on-going staff appraisal and assessment processes.
- 7.10 The main effect of the Skills Diagnostic Tool on individual employee participants has been to provide confirmation and in many instances reassurance of their Welsh language skills. In some instances, there is evidence to suggest that this has led to improved confidence in terms of using Welsh in the workplace. There is also evidence to suggest that some individuals have used the results of the Skills Diagnostic Tool as a means of persuading employers to invest in Welsh language training and in this context the Tool has been useful in ensuring that training is undertaken at the appropriate level.

7.11 In contrast to the Skills Diagnostic Tool, the Management Diagnostic Tool did not turn out as planned. Rather than being an interactive diagnostic tool as originally intended, concerns within Welsh Government about being overly prescriptive with employers and not contradicting the emerging Welsh language standards resulted in a more passive, Workplace Planning Guidance document being published in January 2015, some four years after the concept of a Management Diagnostic was initially conceived.

7.12 As such, it has not been possible within the scope and timescale of this evaluation to gather meaningful evidence on the effects and impacts of the Workplace Planning Guide, though given its current format and the fact that it has not been proactively promoted, we conclude that these are unlikely to be substantial.

7.13 For employers that are already and will in the very near future be required to comply with the new Welsh Language Standards, Workplace Welsh and in particular the Skills Diagnostic Tool provides them with an ideal solution to complement their wider workforce planning activities. In this context, having invested in Workplace Welsh, it is important that the Welsh Government derives maximum value from it. This means that employers will need to be aware of Workplace Welsh and encouraged to use it on an on-going basis. This does however raise the question of whether and how this on-going work should be financed and whether the current product should be passively maintained or whether it should be proactively enhanced, modernised and upgraded in due course.

Recommendations

7.14 **Recommendation 1.** Having invested in the development of Workplace Welsh, the Welsh Government now needs to consider and decide how its value to employers and their employees in Wales can be maximised in the future.

7.15 **Recommendation 2.** In order to maximise the future value and use of Workplace Welsh, the Welsh Government will need to identify and allocate adequate resources to continue to promote, service and in due course, to potentially develop and upgrade the website and the Skills Diagnostic Tool. This investment would need to take into account likely future up-take to ensure that delivery resources are commensurate with demand and also to ensure that the quality and efficiency of assessments remains high. Without this on-going investment, the use of Workplace Welsh is likely to diminish rapidly and the various resources will effectively become redundant. This would risk a key policy commitment in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy becoming neglected.

7.16 **Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should develop a clear communications strategy with a view to engaging and committing key partners such as Welsh for Adults Centres, the Welsh Language Commissioner and other appropriate HR and language related professional networks to help promote awareness of Workplace Welsh. The communications strategy should also set out a more sophisticated approach to identifying and strategically targeting potential employers in the private and third sectors as well as those who will become subject to Welsh Language Standards in the near future.

7.17 **Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should investigate whether a simple, low-cost mechanism can be put in place to monitor progression of registered users of the Skills Diagnostic Tool to Welsh for Adults courses so that this information can be analysed and used to help target resources effectively in the future.