

Increasing the use of the Welsh language in the Post 16 sectors

Executive summary

This report evaluates the effectiveness of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's training schemes to develop the Welsh language skills and bilingual pedagogy of practitioners in the further education and apprenticeships sector. These schemes are part of Coleg's [Gwreiddio Scheme](#) and align with its vision of enabling all members of staff to develop their Welsh language skills and bilingual pedagogy, with the aim of increasing the number of students and apprentices who choose to study either partially or entirely through the medium of Welsh.

The Gwreiddio Scheme supports the objectives of the Welsh Government's [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) Welsh language strategy in the post-compulsory education sector.

In the report, we have focused on three types of provision:

- E-learning sessions
- Sgiliaith provision
- The Work Welsh in Further Education scheme

On the whole, the schemes have a positive effect on the practitioners who take advantage of them. The number of practitioners who speak Welsh and are registered according to their ability to work through the medium of Welsh has increased in the further education and work-based learning sectors since 2020. However, there is no specific data that directly links this to the training.¹[Annual Education Workforce Statistics](#) See p29 of this report

The number of learning activities that include '*a small amount of Welsh-medium learning*' has increased substantially during the past five years. However, learning activities in categories such as '*a large proportion of Welsh-medium, bilingual and Welsh-only learning*' have not increased during the same period. This reflects the pattern of the training schemes that are more effective in terms of targeting staff with low level language skills and who are at the start of their journey along the language continuum. In general, the figures align with the findings of this report, namely that there is very little effect on developing practitioners' language skills beyond the initial levels. This limits opportunities for students and apprentices to use the Welsh language consistently in their learning.

We saw examples of good practice across the three types of provision. The impact of the work was at its best when:

- Leaders at all levels are clear about the strategic importance of increasing the use of the Welsh language.
- Training is targeted at staff who already have strong language skills.

- Colleges provide appropriate time for staff to complete training as part of their 24 learning hours.
- Leaders recognise the Welsh language as a skill and, as a result, provide financial remuneration for practitioners who have advanced bilingual pedagogy skills.
- Staff's efforts to develop their teaching practices as they move up the language pyramid or curriculum are recognised professionally.
- There are clear guidelines for staff on how to increase their use of the Welsh language.
- The provider's own observation and quality assurance procedures are robust and focus on the Welsh language and bilingual pedagogy.
- Provision and training are adapted in line with staff's needs.

There are strong and supportive relationships between Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and individual colleges and providers. However, the Coleg does not have sufficiently robust procedures in place to ensure that arrangements for forward planning, quality assurance and monitoring the effect of training are consistent across individual providers and nationally.

As a result, we have included four recommendations for Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol:

- *Provide more challenge and guidance to colleges and apprenticeship providers when evaluating the effect of training on the workforce with purposeful forward planning to move teaching practices and the offer for students and apprentices up the language pyramid (from B3 to B2 and up).* In general, although many institutions feel that they work well with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, only a majority feel that they are accountable to the Coleg in terms of outputs. Many would welcome further scrutiny of their work as they plan and measure the effect of training on the linguistic ability and bilingual pedagogy of their staff. Overall, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol does not scrutinise targets and evidence in sufficient detail and there is not an appropriate culture of challenging and questioning the decisions of colleges and providers.
- *Work with relevant partners to extend the Sgiliaith offer to Welsh speakers by creating intensive bilingual pedagogy training which leads to a recognised professional qualification.* Sgiliaith provision is effective in upskilling staff to teach increasingly bilingually. The type of provision available to Welsh-speaking practitioners, such as the current bilingual pedagogy course, needs to be extended to create an intensive course that leads to a recognised professional qualification. By doing this, there would be more confident linguistic practitioners available who would be able to offer increasingly bilingual or Welsh-medium provision.
- *Work strategically with colleges, apprenticeship providers and other relevant partners to mainstream innovative initiatives to recognise the value of the Welsh language as an additional skill that is recognised both practically and financially.* In the report, we draw attention to innovative initiatives, such as the 'Bilingual Educators' Methodology' scheme at Coleg Cambria. Coleg Cambria emphasises the strategic importance of the Welsh language strongly by offering financial incentives to practitioners, in addition to non-contact time from their teaching timetables during the training, for increasing the use of the Welsh language in their sessions. This is a notable example of linguistic planning through workforce planning.
- *Work with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to ensure that the offer for learners, standards of teaching and learning, quality assurance procedures and professional development for tutors are consistent with the Learn Welsh sector.* The number of staff following Work Welsh courses has increased over the years and, in many lessons, they make sound progress. However, pedagogy in a few cases does not apply the successful approaches of the Learn Welsh sector which, in turn, has an effect on learners' standards. There are also inconsistencies across colleges in terms of contact

hours for learners on courses, quality assurance procedures and professional learning opportunities for tutors.

We have included two recommendations for further education colleges and apprenticeship providers:

- *Work with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure consistency in the way in which practitioners are allowed to attend training and language lessons with the aim of ensuring that they have non-contact time in their teaching timetables to undertake them without adding to their workload.* The main barrier for staff who wish to attend training is the lack of time or time pressures. This is particularly true for courses on the Work Welsh programme. Line managers are not always willing to release staff. In most cases, staff also have to attend courses on top of their teaching hours or other normal duties, which affects their ability to join and complete courses.
- *Continue to refine their professional development offer for practitioners to increase their Welsh language skills and bilingual pedagogy with the strategic aim of moving staff and students/apprentices along the language continuum purposefully.* With the exception of a very few institutions, colleges and apprenticeship providers need to extend the good work they have undertaken in terms of increasing the use of ‘a small amount of Welsh-medium learning’ in learning activities to aim for higher levels of the language pyramid or continuum to realise the aims of policies such as Cymraeg 2050.

We have included one recommendation for the Welsh Government and Medr, namely:

- *Work with the further education and apprenticeships sectors to ensure consistency in the use of language provision categories and to consider the need to make changes to the categories to facilitate this.* There is still a lack of consistency in the way in which colleges and providers record the linguistic categories of their provision. Many practitioners are also of the professional opinion that the definitions of these categories need to be revisited to facilitate the journey of practitioners, in addition to students and apprentices, up the pyramid or along the language continuum.

Our recommendations

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol should:

- Sharpen its guidance and challenge to colleges and apprenticeship providers to increase the language levels of practitioners and the offer for students and apprentices in line with the pyramid, particularly at the higher levels
- Work with relevant partners to extend the Sgiliaith offer to Welsh speakers by creating intensive bilingual pedagogy training that leads to a recognised professional qualification
- Work strategically with colleges, apprenticeship providers and other relevant partners to mainstream innovative initiatives to recognise the value of the Welsh language as an additional skill that is recognised both practically and financially
- Work with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to ensure that Work Welsh provision for practitioners is consistent with the standards of the Learn Welsh sector

Colleges and apprenticeship providers should:

- Work with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure consistency in support and overcome the barriers to practitioners attending training regularly

- Refine their professional development offer to increase practitioners' Welsh language skills and bilingual pedagogy at the highest levels of the pyramid

Welsh Government and Medr should:

- Work with the further education and apprenticeships sectors to review and ensure consistency in reporting on language provision categories.