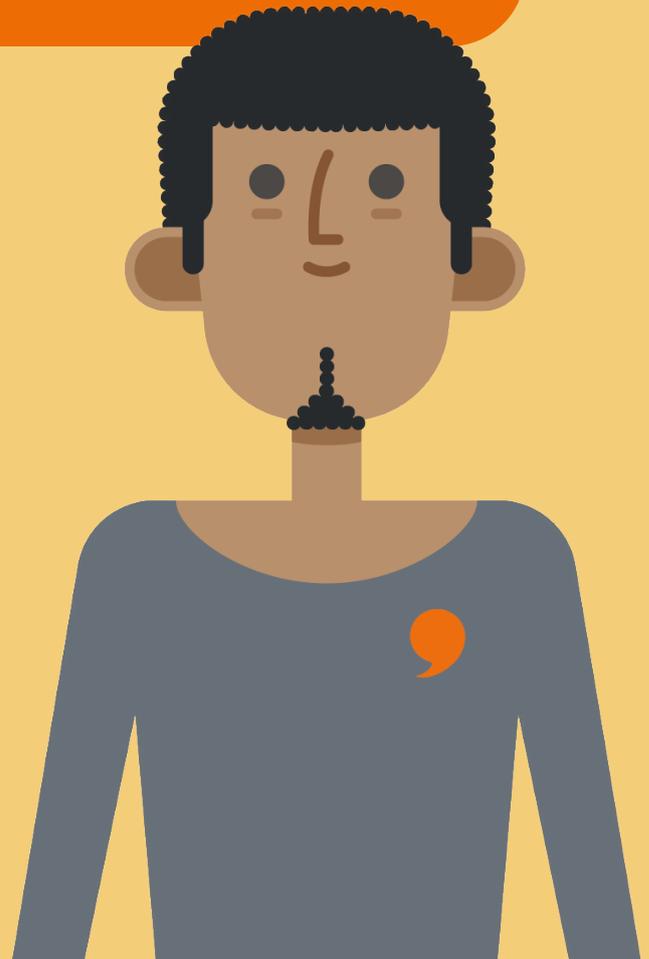


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# Main findings and recommendations



**The initial results of Census 2021 confirmed that we are not seeing the increase we desire in the number or the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales. The detailed analysis of the census results presented in the first part of this report, together with the other data sources examined in the second part, provide an opportunity for us to better understand why this growth is not occurring and to and consider exactly where the losses and gains lie. Yet we must acknowledge that the picture is – at best – static.**

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Although the number of Welsh speakers has remained relatively stable for four decades, the overall population has grown significantly during the same period, leaving the position of the Welsh language undoubtedly more vulnerable. Simply put, population growth has not translated into an increase in the number of speakers. And the fact that population growth is driven largely by inward migration presents further challenges to the vitality of the language, especially in those areas traditionally regarded as the heartlands of the Welsh language. There is a real question as to how long some of these areas will continue to merit that description.

It naturally follows that the demographic shift described by the census has a direct and significant impact on the use of Welsh. The third part of this report focuses closely on this issue which is at the heart **of our mission in the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner**. Unfortunately, the data from the latest Language Use Survey is not available at local authority level, **but we know from research and experience that the use of Welsh as a natural community language is weakening**. This is particularly true in the context of our young people. Our own research, together with that of others, highlights that our young people increasingly live in a context where English is the language of play and entertainment – particularly in the digital world – which creates a real risk that the progress we see through the education system is confined within school walls.

Of course, none of these findings or concerns are new. And over the past five years we have seen the Welsh Government, and other stakeholders, introduce interventions aimed at addressing them. This raises the all-important question: **what more must we do to realise our great ambition for the Welsh language and its speakers?**

## We cannot continue to operate in a similar fashion if we wish to see fundamentally different results.

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Within this report, we have identified specific priorities that set out what needs to be achieved to secure the best outcomes – outcomes that go beyond maintaining and towards strengthening the position of our language. **There are ten priorities in total. They can be found listed together at the end of the report, and individually at the end of each section outlining the priorities and opportunities for strengthening the position of the Welsh language.**

Seeing these recommendations in context is essential: these are not ten arbitrary commandments. Language policy is a complex discipline, and the full picture is required before acting responsibly and planning the necessary multilayered interventions.

**Our clear message to the new Welsh Government – and to all who want to see the Welsh language thrive – is that there are opportunities over the next five years to introduce bold and transformative interventions. The ten priorities belong to three strategic fields where there are real opportunities to create change.**

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# Three main opportunities

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1. Creating confident Welsh speakers through the education system
2. Strengthening the community use of Welsh
3. Creating workplaces that support the Welsh language



# Creating confident Welsh speakers through the education system



**Our schools will create the Welsh speakers of the future. It is clear, therefore, that we need more Welsh medium schools. And to move schools along the language continuum and realise the bold ambition of *Cymraeg 2050* and the Welsh Language and Education Act (Wales) 2025, a revolution is required in how the Welsh language is taught in every school in Wales. Teachers – and the wider education workforce – are crucial to delivering this change.**

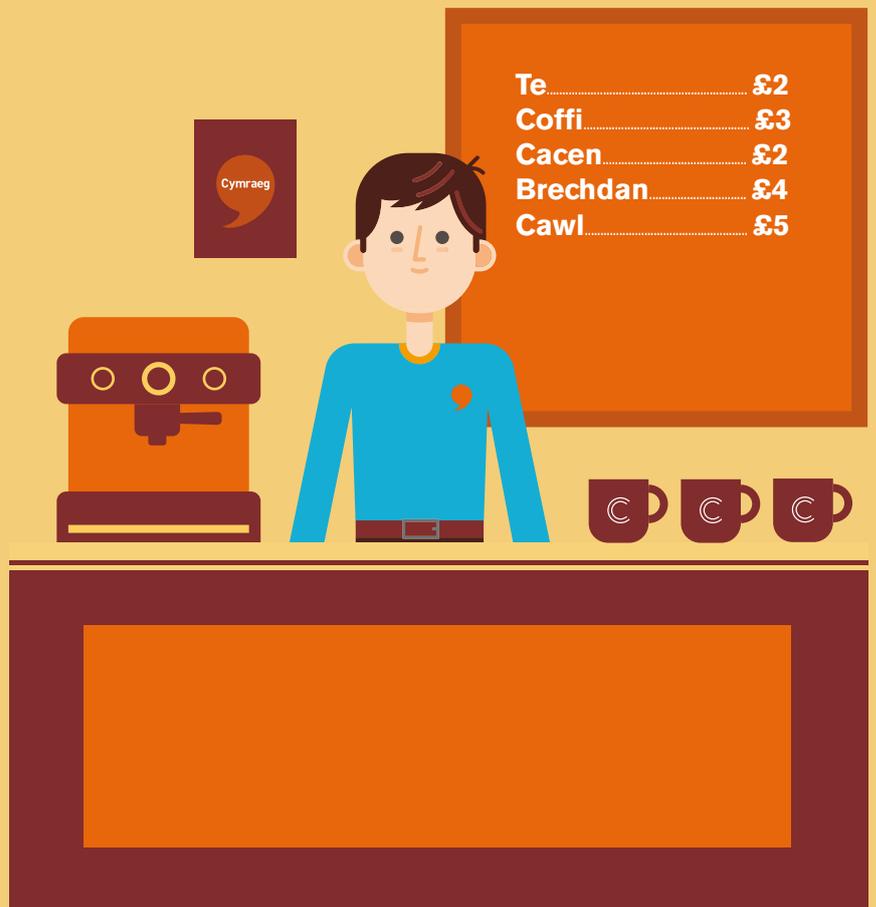
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Only by intervening directly in this area, and by ensuring an increasingly bilingual education workforce – including the early years and post-16 workforce – can the new Government have any hope of stimulating real change in the numbers leaving school as confident Welsh speakers. It is painfully obvious that current efforts are neither ambitious nor far-reaching enough to meet this challenge.

**We therefore call on the next Welsh Government to establish a Welsh-language training framework as a compulsory element of the training, induction, and professional development of every teacher.** This would provide an excellent opportunity for the teachers of the future to develop their skills and to contribute directly to transforming Wales's education system.



# Strengthening the community use of Welsh



**The Welsh language belongs to every part of Wales and to every community within it. To ensure that it continues to be transmitted naturally from generation to generation, and that it is used in every aspect of life, it is essential to safeguard those communities with a higher density of Welsh speakers. These communities are the powerhouses of the language – the backbone of Welsh– and nurturing them is vital to the health of the language across the country. For the Welsh language to thrive nationally, it must first thrive locally.**

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This was recognised during the reporting period with the establishment of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities, with the aim of strengthening our Welsh-speaking communities. The new Welsh Government now has an opportunity to build on the firm foundations laid by the Commission's thorough work. **Implementing the Commission's recommendations with conviction and ambition would provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address the decline of the Welsh language in its heartlands.** We call on the next Welsh Government to publish a white paper as early as possible during the next Senedd term, setting out a clear method for fully implementing the Commission's main recommendation to establish areas of higher density linguistic significance.

But there is also a need to ensure use of Welsh among the ‘communities’ of speakers who are geographically dispersed. We must provide and fund cultural, community and sporting experiences through the medium of Welsh, especially in areas where the percentage of Welsh speakers is relatively low, but the absolute numbers are comparatively high. **This is particularly important for children and young people, so that they can enjoy the Welsh language and see its relevance beyond the school gates.**

To meet this challenge, the next Welsh Government should focus on strengthening community language-planning frameworks, in line with another recommendation of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities. There is clear potential here to strengthen the promotional standards, that create duties for local authorities and national parks to promote and facilitate Welsh in their areas, so they become more effective vehicles for community language planning. Investment and resources must also be increased for key partners responsible for providing activities, events, entertainment, and digital content through the medium of Welsh.



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# Creating workplaces that support the Welsh language



**Beyond school and the community, the workplace is one of the most influential environments for using the language in our daily lives. Many of us spend a large proportion of our day in some form of workplace – physical or virtual. The workplace therefore offers the most consistent, natural and influential opportunity to increase the daily use of Welsh. It is also the perfect context for young people to appreciate the value of the Welsh language they have gained through the education system.**

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**When organisations create environments that actively welcomes the Welsh language, they create important new linguistic spaces.** By encouraging and maintaining the use of the language at work, organisations and employers can play a vital role in reinforcing speakers' confidence and skills – as well as creating new speakers. New confidence and skills, together with a fresh appreciation of the value of Welsh, can significantly influence how people use the language beyond the workplace.

**This opportunity is too good to be left to chance.** A deliberate strategy is required if we are to make the contemporary workplace a cornerstone of the Welsh language. We need a new national policy that will lead to the creation of workplaces where the Welsh language is visible, natural, and valued. **We call on the next Welsh Government to provide additional investment to the Commissioner, enabling us to intensify our existing work in increasing the use of Welsh in workplaces.** This would enable

us to build on current efforts and to design and lead a coordinated strategy to target and support organisations of all kinds – including businesses and charities – to plan strategically to increase the use of Welsh in their workplaces.

Such a strategy would be an opportunity to capitalise on the potential of coordinating workplace-planning activities at a national level, building on the strategic cooperation that already occurs between key partners, including the Welsh Government, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

By ensuring a competent and skilled Welsh-speaking workforce across all sectors, Welsh-language services will be enhanced, and opportunities to use Welsh – along with its status – will increase. This is particularly crucial in key sectors such as health, where using Welsh is a matter of clinical need rather than choice.

There is no doubt that the statutory language duties placed on organisations as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 have led to a renewed appreciation of the importance of the workplace to the vitality of the Welsh language – and of the need for a skilled bilingual workforce capable of providing services to the public across a number of sectors. **A decade after introducing the Welsh language standards, it would be timely to review them to ensure that they remain relevant and accurately reflect how services are delivered today and in the future.** There is a clear opportunity for the next Welsh Government to increase opportunities to use Welsh in relation to services and the workplace by considering how additional organisations and sectors might be brought under the Welsh language standards.

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# A chance to break the cycle



These, then, are the major opportunities. The three priorities that must be pursued urgently in order to reverse the position of the Welsh language and ensure that it truly belongs to us all. **Of course, there are thousands of small things that we can – and should – do to drive the Welsh language forward.** But these are the three most critical in our view.

Only by acting strategically, ambitiously and collaboratively can we break the static cycle and ensure that Welsh remains a living, relevant language for future generations.

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