



Comisiynydd y  
Gymraeg  
Welsh Language  
Commissioner

# The Welsh Government's strategy on increasing the internal use of the Welsh language

## *Cymraeg. It belongs to us all*

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In July 2020, the Welsh Government (the Government) published a strategy on the internal use of the Welsh language, [Cymraeg. It belongs to us all](#). The Government's vision for the Welsh language is outlined in its strategy Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers which includes a commitment to “[...] lead by example by promoting and facilitating the use of Welsh within its own workforce”.

The Government's aim for the Welsh language within the organisation is that all its staff will understand Welsh by 2050. This will enable staff to work in Welsh from day to day, with a view to seeing a significant increase in the use of the language as a result. For a full copy, see [Welsh. It belongs to us all \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

### Background

Previously, the Government did not have a sufficient strategy on the internal use of the Welsh language to set a challenging and far reaching vision for becoming a truly bilingual organisation. They had a duty to develop a policy for promoting and facilitating the internal use of the Welsh language under standard 98 of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No 1\) Regulations 2015](#).

The **Cymraeg 2050** strategy included a clear reference to the fact that using the Welsh language in the workplace would give more purpose and relevance to the language, especially amongst Welsh learners. By adopting an internal strategy that highlighted the value of the Welsh language in the workplace, the aim was to ensure that more children and young people would appreciate the fact that the ability to speak Welsh is a useful skill, now and in the future. Furthermore, the First Minister's manifesto to become leader of the Labour party in Wales included a commitment to: “Mainstream the promotion and development of Welsh through all government activity, at a Welsh Government and local government level.”

## The work undertaken

The development of the strategy involved long-term work by a range of colleagues from all parts of the organisation. Discussion groups of Senior Civil Servants were established to discuss the vision, and the Permanent Secretary and groups of colleagues were brought together in challenge sessions to take the work forward. It was agreed that 5 working groups would be formed for the following work streams:

- Workforce planning and recruitment;
- Training;
- Technology and effectiveness;
- Communication, internal practices and behavioural science; and
- External factors and statistics.

Consultation was undertaken with trade unions from the outset, and representatives were invited to sit on working groups to develop the strategy. A variety of staff networks were engaged including the Disability Awareness and Support Network and the Minority Ethnic Staff Network. Ensuring ownership amongst key members of staff and holding honest discussions secured the support of the organisation. To learn from the experiences of other organisations, discussions were held with South Wales Police, Isle of Anglesey County Council, the Senedd Commission and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

This meant changes to policies and human resource systems, and recruitment policies will also need to be revised in due course to achieve the vision. They will start with the Senior Civil Service so that they can demonstrate leadership to the rest of the organisation. The aim is to recruit more people who already possess Welsh language skills over time. The requirement to present a business case for learning Welsh is no longer an acceptance criteria for the policy relating to learning Welsh.

A communication campaign was undertaken when the strategy was launched, and the Permanent Secretary shared a detailed brief with the Senior Civil Service on the delivery of the strategy and what was expected of them as leaders in the organisation.

The main aim of the strategy is to enable Welsh Government to become a bilingual organisation, and they have set an initial objective for the first five years, to become an exemplary organisation in terms of increasing the use of the Welsh language amongst bodies with similar characteristics. To achieve the objective, they have set ten actions. The sixth relates to workforce planning and giving due regard to Welsh language skills requirements for vacancies and new posts following a review of current assessment processes.

They say, *'The reference to "no Welsh language skills required" when advertising posts no longer reflects the requirements or ethos of the organisation'.*

## Results to date

Whilst the long-term aim of the strategy will mean gradual change, the organisation will be operating in accordance with the following principles:

- Making a long-term commitment and leading the way; incremental change over time, leading by example in the workplace;
- Investing in their staff and providing opportunities for them to learn Welsh and develop language skills: it is crucial that effective and convenient training is provided, with people given both time and motivation to continuously improve their Welsh language skills;
- Remaining an open, inclusive, and diverse organisation: everyone has the potential to be a Welsh speaker. Although Welsh language skills will increasingly be required for more posts, developing a bilingual workforce does not imply that those skills are a pre-requisite for joining Welsh Government; and
- Continuously reviewing ways of working to facilitate the increased use of Welsh: in terms of the introduction of new internal policies and initiatives, the strategy sets out ten actions that will help to meet the objective of becoming an exemplary organisation during the next five years.

Their learning and development statistics show a considerable increase in the number of learners since the strategy was launched and wider ranging and more flexible lessons were offered in April 2020. Between April 2019 and March 2020, 213 applications were received to learn Welsh. A total of 890 applications to learn Welsh were registered between April 2020 and December 2021. It was reported that the response was positive overall, with the vast majority seeing the value of the strategy and in accordance with Welsh Ministers' direction and vision.

The strategy envisages reaching its goal within 30 years and more. Therefore, for obvious reasons it will need to be periodically reviewed and amended. They envisage a process under which the strategy, as well as changes in policy adopted under it are reviewed every five years. As well as setting a long-term goal for 2050, shorter term objectives have also been set for the period up to 2025, along with 10 actions designed to help meet that objective.

## How can this work for other organisations?

The [Code of Practice for the \(No 1\) Regulations](#) lists relevant considerations when formulating policies to promote and facilitate the internal use of the Welsh language, and states that such policies should reflect the size of the organisation. Welsh Government states that it was essential to discuss this with other organisations who had

agreed on challenging strategies and learn from their experiences. They are now eager to share their own experiences, and welcome opportunities to discuss the work with other organisations.

### Contact details

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### The Welsh Language Commissioner's View

Organisations need to create more purposeful opportunities to enable members of the workforce to use the Welsh language and consider the barriers to using the language if it is the minority language amongst the organisation's staff.

The standard for developing and publishing such a policy can be seen in the compliance notices of organisations in all sectors to date and Welsh Government has succeeded in formulating an ambitious and far-reaching policy. Although these policies are not approved by the Welsh Language Commissioner, they represent a significant way in which organisations can offer more services to the public through the medium of Welsh.

Organisations should aim to be as ambitious as possible and take advantage of the Welsh Government's invitation to contact them to share their experiences of developing the strategy and the outcomes expected.