



# Guidance for Assessing the Impact of Education Policy Decisions on the Welsh Language

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## Background

This guidance provides practical advice for officers involved in drafting and making policy decisions within local authorities, to ensure that the processes adopted for developing new or revised policy in the field of education and training support compliance with the Welsh language standards.

The template is a practical tool to guide policymakers through the steps that need to be considered when assessing the impact of policy decisions on the Welsh language. Alternative templates may already be in place within many local authorities, so there is no requirement to use this template exclusively. Instead, it can be used to complement existing processes or templates. Likewise, local authorities may adapt their current templates to better reflect the steps set out here.

Although the primary target audience is local authority officers, the advice is also relevant to any public body making policy decisions relating to the field of education. Colleges, universities, training providers, and other public bodies operating in the education sector may therefore find this guidance useful.

This practical guidance includes:

- A template to support the process of planning integrated linguistic policies in education and training
- An example assessment demonstrating good practice

Please note that following this guidance and template does not, in itself, guarantee compliance with the requirements of the standards. Rather, it is intended to serve as a practical resource to support officers in assessing the impact of education policy decisions on the Welsh language, guiding them through the process and highlighting key principles and good practice. This guidance should also be considered alongside the existing general advice document on carrying out Welsh language policy impact assessments, as this document complements and builds upon that advice within an education context.

## Legislative Context

[The Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) is the legislation underpinning the Welsh language standards.

The aim of the standards is to promote and facilitate the Welsh language and ensure that it is not treated less favourably than English in Wales.

Organisations are expected to comply with standards in the following areas:

- Service delivery
- Policy making
- Operational matters
- Promotion
- Record keeping

## Main Principles of the Policy-Making Standards

The standards relate to how an organisation considers the effects of its policy decisions on the Welsh language, specifically how opportunities to promote its use are considered when developing new policy or amending existing policy.

They also highlight the need to ensure that, in doing so, the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English.

- It must not be treated less favourably whether impacts are positive or negative.
- There must be a 'conscientious effort' in the process of considering the impact of a policy decision on the Welsh language, and evidence must be provided to show that this has taken place.

## Changing the approach to planning in the field of language policy in education

Wales needs an education and training system that fully supports the promotion and use of the Welsh language. It must also ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English within the system.

Every policy decision relating to education, and related fields, must clearly demonstrate that Welsh language needs have been considered. Some authorities are already doing this, but others face challenges that require more intentional

planning due to the bilingual nature of the system. At times this will require a fundamental change in attitude towards the process of planning for the development of a fully bilingual education system.

To ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English, local authorities must consider the Welsh and English languages side by side from the very beginning. The provision of Welsh-medium education should not be an additional or secondary consideration.

To comply with the standards, local authorities must make a conscientious effort to:

- consider the impact on the Welsh language when making policy decisions
- measure the impact on Welsh as a subject, as a medium of instruction, and its wider community use.

This is no longer a matter of an individual organisation's "reasonable discretion".

When developing new policies, the process of giving conscientious consideration to the impact on the Welsh language will vary from area to area and from policy to policy. The considerations will also differ according to the linguistic context and the nature and purpose of the policy. Some developments will require greater attention to linguistic matters, while others will require different types of consideration.

The needs of the Welsh language must be considered as the basis for every policy decision in the field of education, and in related areas, clearly identifying the policy outcomes of those considerations. This will lead to clear policy decisions that develop an integrated linguistic education system in line with each local authority's plans and objectives.

## **Making a Conscientious Effort to consider the Welsh language When conducting an impact assessment of a policy decision related to education.**

Since developing a new or revised policy is a process over a period of time with a series of specific steps, an impact assessment should not be thought of as a document to be used only after the new policy has been introduced and at the end of the process. Instead, the assessment should be a living document that can be referred to throughout the policy-planning and implementation journey. This document can therefore be used when:

- **Collaborating to ensure change**

Creating a sense of collaboration among a range of stakeholders means that everyone understands the process, rationale, purpose, and benefits of the new or revised policy. This is essential to the success of the policy. Being clear about the general requirement that any change must support an increase in opportunities to use and access services in Welsh is also a vital requirement.

- **Evaluating the steps before starting the planning**

This will include an assessment of the viability of the new policy. This assessment will be central to its success. Aspects of Welsh-medium education should be included in this initial planning, and it should be checked whether the new policy will have a direct or indirect impact on the Welsh language.

A good example of this would be carrying out an assessment of transport arrangements, which may be indirectly affected when making a decision to reorganise schools.

- **Ongoing evaluation as the process progresses**

During the process of developing and implementing a new (or revised) policy, you will use methods to ensure that key steps are being achieved. This will include specific tasks associated with the policy, such as funding, quality, targets, timelines etc. As part of these core tasks, the Welsh language and the impact on Welsh-medium education should be considered to ensure that 'conscientious consideration' has been given to the Welsh language throughout the process, and that you are able to demonstrate this clearly.

- **Evaluation following completion of the process**

When the process is nearing completion, and once it has been completed, it will be necessary to analyse the extent to which the core tasks have been achieved. The targets agreed at the outset will be essential for this assessment. This is why including the Welsh language as a central consideration from the beginning is important, in order to demonstrate that 'conscientious consideration' has been given to this aspect of your responsibility as a local authority.

When using the template provided, you should decide at the outset when you will use the different sections of the template. Guidance is offered within the template itself, but you may wish to address the various aspects according to your own planning and assessment process.

## Factors to keep in mind when developing policies that ensure compliance with the Policy-making Standards

- Have the key linguistic, educational, and community factors been fully identified and considered?
- Was there sufficient analysis and interpretation of those factors? Was the relevant data used when interpreting the likely effects?
- Is there a specific process to follow when concluding whether the development has a positive, neutral, or negative impact on the Welsh language?
- What steps were taken to ensure that the effects of the policy are positive?
- What steps or options were considered/adopted to mitigate any negative effects?
- Was there adequate and appropriate consultation with a suitable range of stakeholders, and how were the outcomes of the consultation addressed?

## Further advice and guidance

The Commissioner has published a guidance document on implementing and complying with the policy-making standards:

### [Policy decisions](#)

The Commissioner's Code of Practice for the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 also provides guidance on what is expected of bodies when they consider the impact of policy decisions on the Welsh language.

### [Code of Practice for the Welsh Language Standards \(No. 1\) Regulations 2015](#)