Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Welsh Language Commissioner

Advice note to Welsh Ministers on workplaces and the Welsh language

July 2026

1 **Executive summary:** Advice note to Welsh Ministers: Workplaces and the Welsh Language

1.1 **Purpose:** This statutory advice note outlines the steps required to make real progress towards making Welsh a natural working language in all parts of the workplace – a language that is used confidently, consistently and as a natural part of everyday work. Thus leading to more confident workforces, higher quality services, and a sustained increase in the daily use of the Welsh language.

1.2 **The strategic challenge:** English is often the default operating language of workplaces. A lack of effective internal arrangements, a lack of clear leadership or shortcomings in planning and supporting the workforce, can lead to a situation where employees do not use the Welsh language even when they have the skills to do so. By building on the current engagement with workplaces, there is an opportunity to expand and deepen our influence on the daily use of the Welsh language through more systematic intervention.

1.3 **Risk:** Without deliberate intervention, there is a risk that the Welsh language will continue to be seen primarily as a superficial requirement, rather than as a professional skill that contributes to the quality of services. By setting a clear national vision, that risk can be mitigated and workplaces can be created where the Welsh language is used regularly, respected as a work competence, and recognised as an integral element of quality service delivery.

1.4 **The proposed solution:** A more intensive, targeted and appropriately funded work programme, operating on a national scale which co-ordinates the efforts of key partners – including the Welsh Language Commissioner – to ensure a meaningful and sustainable increase in the use of the Welsh language in workplaces across Wales. The programme would act as a systemic intervention to ensure a consistent impact across sectors and areas. This could be done by:

- embedding the Welsh language within leadership and organisational structures to ensure due consideration and support at all levels of action;
- establishing a consistent national approach to measuring and monitoring the use of Welsh in workplaces;
- developing evidence to inform effective interventions across sectors;
- identifying and co-ordinating opportunities and pathways into work, and encouraging organisations to support staff in their use of Welsh;
- increasing the linguistic capacity of workforces, enabling the delivery of services in accordance with the requirements of Welsh language standards.

The three steps outlined below offer a clear framework to achieve this goal by combining national leadership, operational capacity, and a stronger regulatory framework.

1.5 Proposed action by Welsh Ministers

Step 1: Set a clear national vision for the workplace

- Build on the current vision of developing the Welsh Government into a truly bilingual institution, where Welsh and English are used naturally and interchangeably. This vision should be adopted as a national expectation for all public organisations in Wales, rooted within the values and behaviours of One Public Service Wales, thereby setting a coherent strategic direction across the sector.
- When reviewing Cymraeg 2050, take the opportunity to establish the workplace as a key cross-governmental priority for the period 2026-30, with deliberate action to increase the daily use of the Welsh language in workplaces, and ensure that the work of relevant partners – including the Welsh Language Commissioner – is focused on that vision.

Step 2: Enable the capacity and leadership to act

- Provide additional multi-year resource for the Welsh Language Commissioner to guide on core elements of the national Cymraeg 2050 strategy in the workplace. This would enable the Commissioner to develop specialist capacity to provide clear focus on interventions across sectors; to develop a national approach to measuring and monitoring the use of Welsh; supporting organisations to develop robust internal use policies; and strengthening workforce planning and organisational understanding of Welsh language skills needs in the context of Welsh language standards.

  This activity, together with the activities of other partners, would enable meaningful progress and change in this area.

Step 3: Use the statutory review to strengthen the regulatory framework

- Use the statutory review of Welsh language standards (under section 4 of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025) to strengthen the duties relating to internal use, workforce planning, and data collection and use, ensuring that the standards underpin the national vision and drive practical, measurable and proportionate change.
- There is clear potential to increase the use of Welsh in workplaces as a natural part of working life. By acting deliberately and collaboratively, we can ensure that the Welsh language is valued as a professional skill and used confidently on a daily basis.

2 **Full guidance:** Proposed action framework for workplaces and the Welsh language

2.1 Section 4 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on me to provide advice and assistance to Welsh Ministers on any matter relevant to the Commissioner's functions, or to promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language.

2.2 Under this provision, I am sharing this statutory advice note to outline the steps I consider necessary to ensure a meaningful increase in the use of the Welsh language in workplaces in Wales. This will enable the Welsh Government to realise the vision outlined in Cymraeg 2050, and to report robustly on the statutory targets set out in the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025.

3 Why now?

3.1 The workplace is one of the areas that most influences the daily use of Welsh. This is where people spend a significant portion of their time, forming professional norms, and building or losing confidence to use the language in formal and informal contexts. It is also an important bridge between education and community life, maintaining and developing Welsh language skills as young people move into the world of work.

3.2 In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government[1], the Commissioner is responsible for developing resources and providing advice to increase the use of the Welsh language within workplaces, and to assist organisations in planning their workforces.

3.3 Over the recent period, the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner has made significant progress in developing the foundation for this area of work. This includes analytical work, the development of policy models to give organisations a clear direction, and the creation of a related change theory to inform workplace interventions.

3.4 This work has already been developed in partnership with key organisations, including the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, among others.

3.5 To create the fundamental shift in norms, behaviour and working practices that we all want to see, we will need an approach at a national level that is much more intensive and coherent in its nature – one that combines clear leadership, significant and purposeful investment in resources, and systemic mechanisms to support and drive change across workplaces. Without this, there is a risk that progress will continue

[1] https://www.comisiynyddygymraeg.cymru/media/5jflmtnl/memorandwm-terfynol-rhwng-llywodraeth-cymru-a-chomisiynydd-y-gymraeg-hydref-2024-cymraeg.pdf

gradually and partially, rather than achieving the meaningful and sustainable change needed to realise the Cymraeg 2050 objectives.

> "There's so much potential for workplace work but I really think it takes investment and resource and intensive work to move us as organisations to the next phase of more strategic, workforce planning."
>
> *An organisation subject to Welsh language standards*

3.6 As the Commission for Welsh Speaking Communities ("the Commission") has pointed out, there is a need to create "spaces" where the Welsh language can be used easily and naturally[2]. In this context, the workplace is a key linguistic socialisation site – where the use of Welsh can be practical, supportive and normal.

3.7 English is often the default operating language of workplaces. A lack of effective internal arrangements, a lack of clear leadership or shortcomings in planning and supporting the workforce, can lead to a situation where employees do not use the Welsh language even when they have the skills to do so.

3.8 In this context, and as also emphasised by the Commission, relying on individuals to change their behaviour on their own is unlikely to achieve sustainable change. Without deliberate intervention, there is a risk that the Welsh language will continue to be seen primarily as a policy requirement, rather than as a professional skill that contributes to the quality of services.

3.9 Together, these factors underline the need for a more systematic approach to normalising the use of Welsh in the workplace, which moves beyond formal compliance towards changing culture, leadership and organisational arrangements. This is in line with the Commissioner's approach to working with organisations under Welsh language standards, which places increasing emphasis on co-regulation and clear outcomes for Welsh language users rather than strict compliance.

3.10 Building on current developments, we believe there is an opportunity to strengthen the strategic alignment between partners, including the Welsh Language Commissioner, in order to inform joint priorities and increase the combined impact of the work across Wales.

3.11 With a new Government in power, and an intention to revise the Cymraeg 2050 strategy over the next period, there is a timely opportunity to reinforce the current strategic direction by putting a stronger focus on the workplace as one of the main drivers to increase the daily use of Welsh.

3.12 We believe this presents a clear policy opportunity for the Welsh Government to:

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[2] Arriving all communities, strengthening the Welsh language, p.88

- ensure that investment in Welsh education translates into continued use in the workplace
- develop workplaces that promote and support the use of the Welsh language
- strengthen the capacity of bilingual workforces in key sectors, and
- develop a robust evidence base to measure an increase in use over time.

4 **Step 1:** Embedding the workplace as a national priority within the revised Cymraeg 2050 strategy (2026-30)

4.1 The Welsh Government's desire and vision to develop into a truly bilingual organisation, where Welsh and English are used naturally and interchangeably, sets a clear example for the rest of the public sector in Wales[3]. We believe that there is an opportunity to extend this ambition as a national expectation for all public institutions in Wales, with Cymraeg 2050 providing the strategic framework for its implementation.

4.2 In this context, the workplace is a key area to make that ambition a reality in practice. This is where individuals make language choices on a day-to-day basis, and therefore where the use of Welsh as a natural part of professional life can be normalised. By strengthening the focus on the workplace within Cymraeg 2050, we can help ensure that investment in Welsh education translates into continued use in the workplace, and ultimately in wider society.

4.3 In updating Cymraeg 2050, there is an opportunity to reflect this more clearly by making the workplace a key cross-governmental priority for the period 2026-30, and by setting clear expectations on public institutions to make deliberate progress towards developing truly bilingual workplaces.

4.4 The Arwain mewn Gwlad Ddwyieithog (Leading in a Bilingual Wales) programme has already made an important contribution to developing leadership that understands the role of the Welsh language in organisational change and service delivery. While strengthening the national focus on the workplace, these foundations should be built upon to ensure that leaders at all levels have the knowledge, confidence and skills to promote the use of Welsh in their organisations. This could help ensure that the current investment in leadership development contributes directly to the Cymraeg 2050 objectives, supporting cultural change and the normalisation of Welsh as a working language.

4.5 Placing this focus within the national strategy would enable more systematic coordination of efforts, including:

- develop clear organisational leadership in relation to the Welsh language
- strengthening the capacity of workforces to use the language

[3] Welsh. It belongs to all of us [HTML] | HELM. WALES

- ensuring clear pathways from education to work in Welsh
- aligning workforce planning, skills development and learning Welsh with the needs of employers
- and supporting cultural change within organisations.

4.6 In essence, this would help ensure that the work of partners – including the Welsh Language Commissioner – converges under the same expectations and priorities, increasing the combined impact of efforts across Wales to create workplaces where the Welsh language is used confidently and naturally in workplaces.

5 **Step 2:** Welsh Language Commissioner to lead on core elements of the implementation of the national Cymraeg 2050 strategy for the workplace

5.1 It is evident that there is clear potential for a bespoke programme to increase the use of Welsh in the workplace, to capture imagination and drive practical change. Within the Cymraeg 2050 strategic framework, which sets out the national vision, a more coherent approach could be developed by building on existing brands or developing a strong brand, linking partner activity under that vision.

5.2 Strengthening this focus within Cymraeg 2050 would help to provide clarity and direction to partner activity and strengthen understanding of the roles of individual organisations. This would:

- create strategic cohesion across activities and partners
- ensure clear and consistent messages to employers and employees
- facilitate measurement, learning and communication at a national level.

5.3 To ensure this is achieved effectively, the revised strategy should clearly define the responsibilities and roles of key organisations in relation to this area of work, including the Commissioner's leadership role where appropriate.

5.4 It would also enable the expansion of the work to the third and private sectors, piloting effective interventions in a wider range of contexts, including social enterprises.

5.5 Acting at the scale described in this document would require continued input from several strategic partners. It should therefore be ensured that any operational arrangements recognise the capabilities, responsibilities and priorities of those partners, including the National Centre for Learning Welsh, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and other organisations that have a key role in Welsh language skills development, pathways to work and workforce planning. Clarity around roles and responsibilities, coupled with effective coordination between partners, would be essential to maximise the impact of public investment in this area.

5.6 Below is a high-level overview of the Commissioner's proposed national work programme for the period 2026-30. This programme would support the Cymraeg 2050 vision by putting an active focus on the workplace, with three main areas:

I. **Measuring use and the impact of interventions to increase language use**

II. **Recruitment and workforce planning**

III. **Fostering culture and behaviour change**

5.7 Along with the above priorities, there would be a programme of activities to support organisations to further develop their policies around the use of Welsh in the workplace and to collect and share effective practices and bring people together to discuss Welsh in the workplace.

> "The Commissioner has a clear role in facilitating and supporting organisations in this new era of co-regulation."
>
> *An organisation subject to Welsh language standards*

5.8 The success of the programme would be measured through practical, measurable and sustainable change in the use of Welsh in the workplace. The aim is not just formal compliance, but to normalise Welsh as a natural professional working language, rooted in work practices and internal administration.

5.9 The programme is expected to lead to clear improvements in working practices and workforce planning, improving the quality of Welsh language services and supporting wider use of the Welsh language in communities. The associated measurement framework will enable the Welsh Government to better understand the impact of interventions and make more informed decisions over time.

I. Measuring use and the impact of interventions to increase language use

- develop a national approach to measure staff's use of Welsh in the workplace, and encourage its adoption by organisations
- establish a clear and measurable baseline of language use as a basis for progress
- evaluate the effectiveness of interventions by piloting and sharing good practice
- develop and share practical resources to increase use
- encourage innovative use of technology

II. Recruitment and workforce planning

- increase focus on developing recruitment practices to support bilingual workplaces
- standardise approaches to setting job language requirements, while preparing organisations to adopt the National Code to describe Welsh language ability
- engage with human resources and organisational development officers to increase understanding and strengthen the presence of the Welsh language within organisational recruitment structures and arrangements,
- work with organisations to strengthen workforce planning processes, ensuring consideration is given to creating spaces for the Welsh language, as well as delivering services in Welsh
- collaborate with the National Centre for Learning Welsh (and yr Athrofa in due course) to identify and target the current learning needs of Welsh workforces
- work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to strengthen the pathways to work in Welsh, and understand what inspires – and prevents – students when it comes to working in Welsh
- work with organisations to identify the Welsh language skills required for jobs, in a way that aligns with the growing national focus on skills and workforce development, and promote opportunities such as Welsh apprenticeships as strategic pathways to working in Welsh

- work with key organisations and partners to understand and address barriers to recruitment, pathways to work and support in work.

III. Fostering culture and behaviour change

- work with organisations to create working environments that socialise the Welsh language so that everyone feels confident to use their Welsh
- strengthen internal communication about the Welsh language
- expand training and awareness programmes
- develop a consistent, national set of training and resources that promote behaviour change and inspire Welsh language awareness
- emphasise the role of leadership in fostering a culture that supports the Welsh language
- convene a Welsh in the Workplace forum as a platform to share good practice and learn from each other.

5.10 Together with the Commissioner's ongoing role in co-regulating and supporting compliance, this programme would contribute to a clear, measurable increase in the use of the Welsh language in workplaces across Wales.

5.11 Overall, this will lead to the following results:

- **A clear and consistent baseline** of the use of Welsh in public sector workplaces, with the potential to extend it to the third and private sectors.
- **A robust source** of information to support the Cymraeg 2050 strategy targets of doubling the use of Welsh.
- Intentional plans by organisations to increase usage, with **ambitious policies** being developed with the support and guidance of the Commissioner.
- Organisations moving along the **language use continuum,** with more operating in Welsh or increasingly bilingually.
- **An increase in the number** of jobs being advertised with clear requirements for ability in Welsh.
- Organisations **adopt the National Code** to identify and record skills, ensuring greater consistency across the sector and a clear progression from education to the workplace.
- **An increase in the number of staff** reporting Welsh language skills at **B2 level or above**.
- **Increase in the capacity** of organisations to deliver quality Welsh language services.
- A better understanding of **participation in training** relating to the Welsh language, including awareness, leadership and socialisation.

6 **Step 3:** Use the review of Welsh language standards to strengthen the current regulatory framework to underpin the national vision for truly bilingual workplaces

6.1 The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 creates an important opportunity to strengthen this work. The adoption of the Code to describe ability in Welsh will enable a clear progression from education to the workplace and to lifelong learning, with a role for various partners to support individuals and organisations along that journey.

6.2 Section 26(1) and 26(2) of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 enables the Welsh Ministers – through regulations – to specify one or more standards and to make additional provision in relation to those standards. Section 27(4) of the Measure states that standards specified under section 26(1) or regulations under section 26(2) may cover, among other things, any one or more of the following—

- the preparation of strategies or plans outlining how they intend to comply with the standards
- procedures to be followed by persons
- the collection of information from persons, including information about the use of Welsh and English in relation to a particular behaviour
- information that must be made available to the Commissioner
- monitoring arrangements and publicity requirements
- reporting requirements.

6.3 As you are aware, the Act places a specific duty on the Welsh Government to undertake a review of the standards relating to skills and recruitment. The consultation and subsequent review will be an opportunity to develop a clear and consistent framework for measuring, categorising and reporting staff language skills, using standardised indicators that enable comparisons across sectors.

6.4 The scope of the review should be broadened to consider the operating standards more broadly, as well as the promotion standards where applicable. A decade since the introduction of the first standards, it is timely to reconsider them, and the Act provides a golden opportunity to do so in a strategic and coherent way.

6.5 As set out by the Commission on Welsh Speaking Communities, there is an opportunity for the standards to move organisations along the continuum of language use. This should be capitalised on by strengthening the requirements around

organisational language planning, particularly in areas of higher density[4], and by setting clear expectations for the role of leadership in driving cultural change.

6.6 In carrying out the review, consideration should also be given to strengthening the requirements in terms of workforce planning and increasing internal use of the Welsh language. This could include more explicit expectations on organisations to plan Welsh language skills over time, linking recruitment, training and staff development, to embed the language within corporate processes.

6.7 As part of broadening the scope of the review of the standards under section 4 of the Welsh Language and Education Act, a process of developing detailed policy and legislative options should be initiated, including consideration of the extent to which it would be appropriate to:

- impose specific requirements on institutions in areas of higher density linguistic significance – if and when such areas are designated in future – on the minimum percentage of staff with Welsh language skills, as well as moving along the language use continuum towards internal administration conducted in Welsh or bilingually
- impose clear requirements on institutions in lower and medium density areas to make deliberate progress towards becoming truly bilingual institutions, reflecting the language use continuum in a proportional manner
- strengthen the requirements in terms of reporting and measuring progress on the implementation of these policies.

6.8 The review should also consider how to define and measure the characteristics of a truly bilingual workplace. This could include clear expectations in terms of the use of Welsh in internal communications, meetings, systems and organisational processes, as well as the role of leaders in modelling language use.

7 Conclusions

7.1 There is clear potential to increase engagement in workplaces as spaces to increase daily use of the Welsh language. As the Commissioner's – and other partners' – activities in the field in recent times have shown, there is a clear desire for more involvement and guidance. It is essential to capitalise on this momentum by building further on the Cymraeg 2050 vision, strengthening the focus on the workplace as a strategic priority and aligning efforts across partners.

7.2 Implementing the proposed work programme as outlined in this advice note – which combines establishing a baseline of Welsh language use, workforce planning and organisational culture change – would offer a practical and systematic pathway towards a sustainable increase in the use of Welsh.

[4] Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language, p.77

7.3 Ultimately, the aim is clear: workplaces where Welsh is a natural working language, where individuals are confident to use it, and where organisations value it as a key professional skill. Through deliberate and collaborative action, within the framework of Cymraeg 2050, it is possible to ensure that the Welsh language is an integral part of working life in Wales.