

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE:	29 April 2021
TITLE:	National policy on Welsh language transmission and use in families, Welsh Government
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To share information with the Members regarding the new policy by Welsh Government Appendix: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-01/national-policy-on-welsh-language-transmission-and-use-in-families.pdf

1. Background

- 1.1 In February 2020, the Welsh Government launched a consultation period for its draft policy document on the Transmission of the Welsh Language within the Family.
- 1.2 The consultation period was extended due to the circumstances until the end of September 2020, and the final version of the Policy was issued on 26 January 2021.
- 1.3 This Policy is part of the Government's plans to implement the objectives of the national Welsh language strategy Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (2017). It offers ideas to be implemented specifically in the area of Welsh language transmission between the generations. The strategy's initial Work Programme (2017-21) comprised three specific action points to support the transmission of the Welsh language in families, namely:
- . ♣ Continue to work with NHS Wales to ensure that midwives, health visitors and other partners share information about the benefits of language transmission as early as possible, and that new and prospective parents understand what support is available to them.
 - Work with key stakeholders to develop a national policy informed by recent research outlining how we intend to ensure that parents/carers are provided with the best possible support to introduce the Welsh language to their children.
 - Review and refine the Cymraeg for Kids Programme to ensure that it continues to provide parents/carers with the information and support they need to make an informed choice about introducing the Welsh language to their child in the home.

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1.4 This policy gets to grips with the first of these objectives.

1.5 The Language and Scrutiny Unit submitted a joint response with the Education Department to the consultation in May 2020. It was not possible to share this consultation with the Language Committee at the time due to the circumstances of the pandemic, and we give a summary in this report of the main matters we raised.

1.6 A copy of the consultation document and a summary of the responses the Government received to the consultation can be seen by following this link: <https://gov.wales/national-policy-welsh-language-transmission-and-use-families>

1.7 The final policy document has been included as an appendix to this report

2. Summary of our response to the draft policy

2.1 Our main observation on the draft document was that we welcomed a document detailing the Government's proposals in this key field, and that we agree that there is a need to act and develop a better understanding about people's habits when deciding to transmit Welsh to their children. However, we were also concerned about certain aspects of the draft policy, and about the lack of detail proposed in places.

2.2 Our main concerns included:

- **The timing of issuing the document:**
We questioned why a document setting the vision for action for the next 10 years was issued now, before the results of the next census are published. While we accept that the Government wants to work in periods of 10 years until the target in 2050, we did not feel that the timing of this document was effective, and did not take advantage of the latest information regarding the population's language skills. We also felt strongly that the final document should reflect the current position in terms of the new challenges that have arisen as a result of the pandemic.
- **Evidence base:**
It was felt that the policy was overly dependent on research undertaken by the Government itself, and with a very small sample of people. It was felt that some of the research referred to in the document as actions to be taken should have been already undertaken in order to get a better understanding of the problems and barriers in language transmission - prior to drafting policy and actions.
- **Number of actions:**
It was felt that too many actions were listed, and there was some duplication in what was being suggested. The officers' view was that so many measures would make it difficult to monitor and prioritise within the period of 10 years. Some did not contain sufficient details for us to be able to understand what exactly the Government had in

mind. It was proposed that they should simplify and focus on some key areas, and to also show clearly how the steps linked back to the priorities of the Cymraeg 2050 language strategy.

- **The role of technology:**

We were also keen to see specific attention being given to the role of technology and the influence this can have on language use. We wanted to see the Government recognising the major developments that have been made in this field over the last year, with a growth in on-line activities, and committing to maintaining and supporting this enthusiasm and energy in the future.

3. The contents of the final Policy

3.1 As noted, this policy document outlines the Government's actions to deliver the objectives set in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy.

3.2 The attention, and the target audience of the policy is very specific. In essence, it targets people who have gained the Welsh language via the educational system and seeks ways to influence their options when they become parents themselves.

"This Policy specifically aims to enable those families in which there is already capacity for use of Welsh - latent or otherwise - to use what Welsh they have with their children."

3.3 What it does do is set out a scheme of work to assist those who have facility in Welsh to speak Welsh to their children, and help those who lack confidence or practice to understand that they too can speak Welsh to their children.

3.4 There are some changes to be seen in the final document, that respond to the comments of the consultation, these include:

- Noting that the child's voice will be considered when planning and operating.
- Noting that they will consider the role of wider family networks, including the community and also consider the external social influences on language use.
- Giving a central place for data and research base and that interventions are based on behavioural science.
- Changes to the work programme in order to reconcile and merge some steps.

3.5 The policy has four general aims:

- i. Inspire today's generation of children and young people to speak Welsh to their children in the future.
- ii. Reignite the Welsh language skills of those who may not have used Welsh since their school days, or who aren't confident in their language skills, to speak Welsh with their own children.
- iii. Support and encourage the use of Welsh within families where not everybody speaks Welsh.
- iv. Support Welsh-speaking families to speak Welsh with their children.

3.6 The work programme can be seen on pages 18 onwards of the attached policy, and include measures that include:

- how the Government will monitor the work,
- trialling a Language use pledge programme, similar to a successful project in the Basque Country.
- giving the skills and learning resources to professionals to help them to encourage children in a positive way to speak Welsh with each other.
- research the opportunities that games, other technology and physical play offer to assist children to use more Welsh and how this could in turn offer opportunities to help more use of Welsh in the home

4. What is sought by the Committee?

Members are requested to read the final policy, accept the information in this report and offer any relevant observations.