

# Children, Young People and Education Committee

## Sixth Senedd Priorities Consultation

July 2021

In order to help inform our strategic planning and forward work programme, we are asking for your views on what you think, at this stage, our **main priorities should be during the Sixth Senedd (2021-2026)**. Where overlaps between committee remits exist, we will ensure that relevant issues are shared with other committees.

We are keen to start this work as soon as possible, to make sure our plans take account of your views. We know people take a well-earned break over the summer, and many education institutions also pause for a holiday, so we will run this consultation until **Friday 17 September 2021** to make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute when they return to work. Please be aware that it may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.

A key priority for us is to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard in our work. To do this in a meaningful way, we know that we need tailored and appropriate ways of engaging. In light of that, **this consultation is not aimed at children and young people. Instead, we will run activities with children and young people in the autumn to help us understand their priorities for the Sixth Senedd.** We will share the findings of this work with all Senedd committees. If you are – or your child is – under 16 and interested in being involved in this activity, please email us on [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales) to let us know. You can also use this mail address to send us your ideas on how you would like to see us engaging with children and young people – we have lots of ideas ourselves, but we're also interested in yours!

Information about consultations, which you should consider carefully before submitting a response, is available in our [privacy notice](#). Please answer questions 6-8 at the end of this proforma to enable us to process your response appropriately.

The Senedd has two official languages, Welsh and English. In line with the [Senedd's Official Languages Scheme](#), we request that you submit your response in both languages if you are able to do so. If your response is not submitted bilingually, we will publish in the language submitted, stating that it has been received in that language only. We expect other organisations to implement their own standards or schemes and to comply with their statutory obligation.

If you have any queries about this consultation, please contact the Committee team on [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales).



**1. Name:**

Hywel Iorwerth

**2. Email address:**

Hywel.iorwerth@cyg-wlc.cymru

**3. Please tell us in what capacity you are responding to this consultation** (Please select one answer only.):

Individual responding in a personal capacity (go straight to question 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual responding in a professional capacity (go straight to question 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual responding on behalf of an organisation (please answer question 3.1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**3.1.** If you are an individual responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation you are representing and your job title:

Welsh Language Commissioner

**4. Would you like to be added to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's contacts list in order to receive updates about our work?** (Please select one answer only.)

*Please note that you can unsubscribe by emailing [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales)*

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>



**5. What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.**

Please answer in relation to as many of the themes below as you are able.

Please keep your response to no more than 2000 words in total.

**Theme 1: School-age education**

One theme that is relevant to all the suggestions below is the need to scrutinize education specifically in the context of the Government's 2050 Welsh language strategy. The committee often scrutinizes different aspects of Welsh-medium and bilingual education, and similarly the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee often considers issues relating to Welsh-medium education. However, education and the Welsh language are not usually the main focus of scrutiny, and there are limited opportunities to discuss in detail and depth the contribution of the education sector to the Government's Welsh language strategy.

Given the importance of education to the achievement of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy, we believe there is clear value in devoting specific time to evaluate whether the Government is on track in terms of the education sector's contribution to the target of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050. It is possible that a general inquiry into the Government's Welsh-medium education strategy could be undertaken, or alternatively focus could be given to more specific issues in isolation (for example, some of the priorities we outline below). Such work may require collaboration between the various committees of the Senedd.

The Welsh Government has recently published their 2021-26 work program for the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. The work program contains numerous commitments relating to education, and it is therefore natural that some of these important commitments may be priorities for the committee's work. It should also be noted that our views on the committee's priorities largely reflect the Commissioner's recommendations for the 2021 election manifestos. We have already written to the Committee about our manifesto recommendations and the priorities of the next Senedd in relation to the Welsh language in July.

In terms of school age education, we believe that there are 3 main priorities:

- **Introduce a Welsh Medium Education Bill:** It is not yet clear what the scope of this Bill will be, and we believe that there is an opportunity for the committee to look at the position of Welsh medium education in preparation for what could be included in such a Bill. It is possible that the Bill would cover a wide range of issues, and it is therefore a good



opportunity to scrutinize and gather evidence on the position of the Welsh language in education. Such an investigation would contribute significantly to the content of any proposed bill, and would also be relevant to a large number of the Cymraeg 2050 work program commitments.

- **Training teachers to teach through the medium of Welsh:** In August 2020 the Welsh Language Commissioner published a briefing note on the Welsh language and the statutory education workforce. The briefing note analyzed the teacher training situation in the context of the 2050 Welsh education targets, and offered a series of specific recommendations. The Government is now committed to introducing a 10 year strategy for increasing the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh. Increasing the number of Welsh-medium teachers is one of the measures of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, and we know that the Government has already missed the first targets for 2021. Given the importance of teachers to the rest of the Government's Welsh-medium education strategy, we believe this is a crucial area for for the committee to consider. There is also potential to extend this theme to the further education and childcare sectors as well.
- **The new curriculum and English-medium schools:** the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy sets extremely ambitious targets for the contribution of the English-medium education sector to the aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers. As you know, during the scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, the Commissioner drew particular attention to the shortcomings of the new curriculum in terms of teaching Welsh in English-medium schools. During the next Parliamentary period, we believe there is a need to gather evidence on the extent to which the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools is improving in line with the Government's vision.

## Theme 2: Further and higher education

- **Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill:** We know that the Government intends to introduce the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill and it is likely that the committee will have a key role in scrutinizing the Bill in due course. This provides an opportunity for the committee to consider the position of the Welsh language in further and higher education.
- **Welsh Medium Further Education and Apprenticeships Action Plan:** In January 2019 the Welsh Medium Further Education and Apprenticeship Planning Group introduced the above action plan. Although the Government has provided some additional funding to the Coleg Cymraeg



Cenedlaethol, the action plan is far reaching and substantial. This additional funding does not amount to implementing the scheme in its entirety. The committee has a role in ensuring that the Government and other relevant stakeholders fully implement the plan.

### **Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)**

- **Welsh-medium mental health services:** In its final report on the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people the Children, Young People and Education Committee noted that it had heard growing concerns about the impact of the ongoing pandemic on young people's mental wellbeing. The Committee's 'Mind over matter' report in 2018 highlighted concerns about the lack of Welsh language mental health services for children and young people and recommended that the Welsh Government ensured that the 'Together for Children and Young People Framework' undertook 'a focused and comprehensive piece of work on the availability of Welsh language emotional and mental health services'. In her response to the Committee's 2020 consultation on the report two years later the Children's Commissioner for Wales gave a red rating against this recommendation from 2018. The Commissioner noted that she saw no indication that significant work had been done on this issue and that there needs to be a comprehensive analysis of current and future availability, and that plans should be put in place to improve Welsh language provision.

We therefore remain concerned about the availability of mental health services for children and young people through the medium of Welsh, particularly if there is an increase in demand due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We ask the Committee to ensure that Welsh language mental health services remains a priority.

### **Theme 4: Children and young people**

- **Welsh-medium and bilingual childcare provision:** expanding Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in the pre-school sector is a key part of the Government's language strategy. Working alongside the Mudiad Meithrin to open new childcare provision is crucial in this context. However, Welsh-medium provision in the childcare sector lags far behind the Welsh-medium



provision available in Welsh primary schools. In 2019, 14% of childcare places in Wales offered Welsh-medium provision, compared with the 23% of primary age pupils receiving education through the medium of Welsh.

It is reasonable to assume that the majority of parents choosing Welsh-medium education for their children would also have wanted childcare through the medium of Welsh if it was practically possible. The data therefore suggests that the childcare sector in Wales is not meeting the demand that exists for Welsh-medium childcare. Nor does it create additional demand for Welsh-medium education or stimulate the growth in Welsh-medium education as envisaged in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. It should be emphasised that transition rates from 'cylchoedd meithin' to Welsh-medium reception classes are extremely high, and therefore increasing Welsh-medium provision in the pre-statutory sector is a natural and effective method of stimulating growth in Welsh-medium education in the statutory sector.

We believe that further scrutiny is needed on the situation of childcare and early-years education in Wales, with the view to making recommendations on the types of policies that will be required to realise the Governments' ambition for the Welsh language.



## USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

In order to enable us to handle your information in accordance with our [privacy notice](#), please complete the questions below. We will be unable to process your response if these questions are not completed.

**6. We have stated our intention to engage meaningfully with children and young people, in tailored and appropriate ways, in the autumn. However, if you are responding using this proforma and are under 13 years old, we will only be able to accept your response if your parent or guardian has confirmed that you can participate.** They can do this by sending us an email to [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales).

### Are you under 13 years old?

I am under 13 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am 13 or over	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 7. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you would prefer that your name is not published alongside your evidence.

We will not publish the names of people under the age of 18.

I am aged 18 or over and I am content for you to publish my name alongside my evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I am aged 18 or over and I would prefer that you did not publish my name alongside my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am under the age of 18	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 8. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you have agreement from any third parties referred to in your evidence that you can share information that may be used to identify them and that they understand that it may be published.

I confirm that any third party I have referred to in my evidence has agreed that I can share information that may be used to identify them, and that they understand that it may be published.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not have the agreement of one or more of the third parties I have referred to in my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have not referred to any third parties in my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>

