

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales  
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and  
Communications Committee  
Cefnogi a hybu'r Gymraeg / Supporting and Promoting the Welsh Language  
CWLC(5) SWL03  
Ymateb gan Coleg y Cymoedd / Evidence from Coleg y Cymoedd

The legislation has without a doubt raised the profile of the language. The front facing images of public bodies in Wales are now, by and large, bilingual. Websites; documentation; forms; signage and telephone greetings are increasingly bilingual. Public bodies appear to be embracing the concept of bilingualism.

However, in reality the bilingualism provided is often tokenistic. The legislation is yet to have a true positive effect in the creation of a bilingual workforce able to deliver effective Welsh language services. Welsh greetings are given on the telephone, yet their query cannot be answered in Welsh; vacant posts are linguistically assessed but the number of posts advertised as 'Welsh essential' are few and far between. The legislation does not go far enough to truly have a positive effect on Welsh speakers' experiences using public services in Wales. Furthermore, the tokenistic nature of many of the regulations does little to convince non-Welsh speakers that investment in the language is worthwhile and encourage goodwill towards the Welsh language.

Furthermore, while a dilution of the current Standards Regulations would not be welcomed, the current system is unnecessarily bureaucratic and complex. If there were fewer Standards and if they were not so complicated, it would be easier for both staff to ensure compliance and members of the public to understand their exact rights under the Welsh Language Measure. In this regard, codes of practice should be published to accompany the legislation.

A significant problem with the Welsh Language Standards Regulations is that they appear to have been drawn up following little consultation with the relevant sectors which they are imposed upon. Subsequently, problems have arisen as bodies aim to comply with the Standards. In many cases the Standards are not appropriate i.e. the Standard requiring FE Colleges to allow students to sit exams through the medium of Welsh is not appropriate, as this is wholly dependent upon approval of the awarding body.

The focus of the legislation is on enforcement, which is obviously vital in ensuring the protection of a minority language and the rights of its speakers. However, it appears that this focus on enforcement has been at the expense of promoting and

facilitating the use of the language. Measures need to be put in place to provide resources and support to public bodies to achieve compliance and to encourage Welsh speakers to use the language in their day to day lives. Current legislation has no real impact on encouraging and supporting people to use their Welsh language skills. The demand for Welsh language services should be higher than it currently is considering the number of Welsh speakers. The more the demand, the more bodies will feel the need to deliver its Welsh language services as a part of basic customer care. Both bodies and individuals needs to be incentivised to use their Welsh language skills in order to stimulate use and counteract the historical default use of English.