



Process Evaluation of Cymraeg for Kids: Emerging Findings

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Arad Research and Bangor University have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake a process evaluation of the Cymraeg for Kids programme (the programme). The aim of the evaluation is to explore whether the programme has been designed in a way that enables its objectives to be met, and assess how the programme is being implemented in its current form.
- 1.2 The objectives of the evaluation are to develop and test the programme's theory of change, to identify what aspects of the programme are working well, as well as what aspects need to be improved, and how this could be done. The evaluation also seeks to develop proposals for a potential research design for a future outcome evaluation of the programme.
- 1.3 This report provides an overview of the emerging findings on the implementation of the programme. The final report will be produced in October 2018 and will detail each phase of the research and corresponding findings.

About Cymraeg for Kids

- 1.4 The Cymraeg for Kids programme began in April 2016, within the context of the Welsh Government's (then) Welsh language strategy, [A living language: a language for living](#) (Welsh Government, 2012). In 2017, Welsh Government published their current Welsh language strategy *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* and its work programme for 2017-21 has committed to review and refine the Cymraeg for Kids programme.¹ The aim of the programme is to increase the number of children in Welsh-medium education. Its objectives are to support parents, prospective parents and other family members in introducing and using Welsh at home, transmit Welsh to their children, and to support children's linguistic development, in a social and educational context.

¹ Welsh Government, 2017a. [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) [Accessed 5 July 2018]

Welsh Government, 2017b. [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers - Work programme 2017-21](#) [Accessed 23rd July 2018]

- 1.5 The programme is delivered jointly by Welsh Government and an external provider. In January 2016, Mudiad Meithrin was awarded a contract to co-deliver the programme for a period of up to three years. The value of the contract in 2016-2017 was £500,000, to deliver services in 14 local authorities. In April 2017, Welsh Government increased the value of the contract to £725,000 per year in order for these services to be offered in all local authorities across Wales.
- 1.6 In order to deliver the services, Mudiad Meithrin employs 26 officers (most work part-time) across Wales, who are each responsible for delivering services in their area.² Mudiad Meithrin also employs a national Cymraeg for Kids manager and three senior officers to manage the programme.
- 1.7 All Cymraeg for Kids activities are free of charge and are held at a variety of community venues. Currently, these activities include story and song groups, baby yoga and baby massage. One of the programme's specific objectives is to establish arrangements for working in partnership with other relevant agencies and organisations such as health professionals, Flying Start and *Mentrau Iaith*, both to offer joint activities and to reach wider audiences.³ Responsibility for collaborating with stakeholders and other agencies is shared between Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin. By the end of February 2018, 2,947 Cymraeg for Kids activity groups had been run, with 20,933 parent and 21,960 child attendances (including an estimated 3,488 unique parents attending).⁴

Evaluation Methodology

- 1.8 This emerging findings report is based on evidence gathered during the period April-June 2018, through the following methods:
- a review of programme documentation, including monitoring reports presented by Mudiad Meithrin
 - interviews with two Welsh Government representatives
 - interviews with the Cymraeg for Kids manager and the three senior programme officers in Mudiad Meithrin
 - interviews with 24 regional Cymraeg for Kids officers
 - fieldwork with 109 parents and guardians, across 26 activity sessions in 21 regions.
- 1.9 Other evaluation tasks have also been undertaken to date. The first of these was a small number of stakeholder interviews (12 in total), which have not informed this report as the process of interviewing the majority of stakeholders is ongoing. The second of these tasks is ongoing work on developing the programme's theory of change, which has informed the development of research tools and underpins the evaluation. The theory of change will be further developed for the final evaluation report.

² The geographic scope of each regional officer's region varies. Some officers operate across one local authority (or part of a local authority) while others work across more than one local authority. A full list of the regions will be included in the final evaluation report.

³ Flying Start is part of Welsh Government's early years programme for families with children under 4 years of age living in disadvantaged areas of Wales. *Mentrau Iaith* are community-based organisations which work with individuals, organisations and businesses to raise the profile of the Welsh language in a specific area. There are 22 *Mentrau Iaith* in Wales. See [Mentrau Iaith](#) [Accessed 6 July 2018]

⁴ Figures for child and parent 'attendances' refer to the total number of sessions attended by parents (and therefore count individual parents and children more than once if they have attended multiple sessions). Figures for 'unique parents' only count each parent once, regardless of how many sessions they attended.

- 1.10 Further evidence will therefore be collected in July, August and September 2018. This will be undertaken through: interviews with partner agencies, including some who have collaborated with Welsh Government or Mudiad Meithrin as the external contractor at a national level, some who have collaborated with the programme's regional officers, and some who have not collaborated with the programme. In addition, a review of the most recent programme monitoring data and documentation will be undertaken.

2. Emerging Findings

- 2.1 The emerging findings from fieldwork undertaken to date (to the end of June 2018) are presented below under the following themes: programme aims and objectives; target audience; programme activities; geographic areas; structures and processes; and strategic planning.

Programme aims and objectives

- 2.2 The [Cymraeg 2050 Strategy](#) sets out the Welsh Government's long-term approach to achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. The Strategy's work programme explains how Cymraeg for Kids 'not only provides information to new and prospective parents about language transmission, it is also aimed at supporting a child's transition to Welsh-medium early years provision and beyond'.
- 2.3 The programme's aims and objectives (see 1.4) were further refined and interpreted by [Mudiad Meithrin](#) in its successful application and subsequently in its business plan. Mudiad Meithrin describes the project as '[making] parents aware of the bilingual journey available for them and their child by choosing Welsh-medium childcare and education'.
- 2.4 Interviews to date with Mudiad Meithrin staff showed that they interpret the national aims and objectives as increasing Welsh language use, transmission and progression to Welsh-medium childcare and education. Those interviewed described these aims and objectives through the concept of a 'bilingual journey' (or *taith iaith*), starting with Cymraeg for Kids and progressing to Welsh-medium early years provision (such as Mudiad Meithrin's Ti a Fi parent and toddler groups and Cylchoedd Meithrin playgroups) and then on to Welsh-medium education.⁵ Cymraeg for Kids officers reported that they understood the national aims and objectives and considered them to be appropriate. Officers also reported that these aims and objectives were mirrored at a regional level. However, officers also felt they had sufficient flexibility to place greater emphasis on certain objectives (e.g. language transmission, acquisition, use, education) depending on the area or parents' linguistic background. Officers reported that they had adopted the concept of a 'bilingual journey' and that they presented this in different ways, depending on a family's circumstances and experience of the Welsh language.

Target audience

- 2.5 The programme's target audiences are parents and prospective parents. The Cymraeg for Kids groups are open to all parents of young children of any linguistic background.

⁵ The concept of a 'bilingual journey' was not mentioned in the programme's specification although Welsh Government has subsequently used this phrase in the context of [Cymraeg for Kids on its website](#). [Accessed 23 July 2018]

- 2.6 The programme focuses on encouraging greater use of the Welsh language and making the first step towards Welsh-medium education. The audience targeted to take part in groups therefore comprises both those families with the potential to transmit the Welsh language and those families with no previous experience of using Welsh. According to the evidence gathered through fieldwork and the review of monitoring data to date, the actual audience reached – in terms of numbers and in terms of linguistic background - varies from area to area, within areas, and can vary from week to week as new families join and leave.
- 2.7 Cymraeg for Kids staff reported that the process of targeting parents and raising awareness of the programme begins in the prenatal stage. Programme staff reported that they had made contact with midwives and health visitors to raise awareness of the programme and ask them to provide parents and prospective parents with information about the programme's activities. Almost all the parents consulted as part of this evaluation, however, had heard about the programme through word of mouth or via social media, with some noting they had heard about it through other sources.
- 2.8 In terms of marketing the programme's sessions, all Cymraeg for Kids officers make use of Facebook as a method of advertising and communicating with parents. Facebook posts and print adverts for programme activities emphasise that all parents are welcome at the sessions. Almost all parents interviewed, regardless of how they had initially become aware of the programme, reported that they had accessed their local Cymraeg for Kids Facebook page.

Programme activities

- 2.9 The Cymraeg for Kids activities are delivered to groups of parents and young children. There are three main types of activities for groups: baby massage groups offered from 8 weeks old, baby yoga for babies 10 weeks and older, and story and song sessions for children aged 0 – 3 years, all free of charge. Baby signing has been introduced to many of the sessions in the past year. These are supplemented with one-off activities, typically an activity in a new area or with a new target audience, or events in association with local partners. Examples mentioned by officers included buggy walks with families or one-off story and song sessions delivered in local festivals.
- 2.10 Cymraeg for Kids staff noted that the activities offered through the programme (baby massage, yoga and story and song sessions) were selected by Mudiad Meithrin to enable them to target parents with sessions that were appropriate for very young children and to offer a series of activities and a progression pathway during the first year of a child's life. Parents interviewed to date have reported that they consider the activities to be appealing and appropriately targeted at them.
- 2.11 The three types of groups are available in most areas, although local officers tailor the menu of activities to avoid duplicating provision already delivered by others locally. Almost all activities are delivered during weekdays, mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Activities often take place in libraries, although cafes, halls and school premises are also used, with locations selected because of their convenient location for parents and their availability at a low cost or free of charge. The feedback received from parents interviewed to date has been very positive with regards to locations, timings and the nature of activities.
- 2.12 These groups are the main way of making and maintaining contact with parents, and the groups are used by Cymraeg for Kids officers to share information about language transmission, acquisition, use and progression to Welsh-medium education or childcare. Alongside contact through the groups, officers share key messages and information through social media, via print leaflets and through collaboration with partners.

- 2.13 Officers explained how they use the first few sessions to build a relationship with the parents and establish a friendly group, and that they then use their judgement in deciding when and how to introduce messages about language transmission, acquisition, use and progression to Welsh-medium education or childcare. Officers described their approach as a gradual one where they ‘drip feed’ information about Welsh-medium education.

Geographic areas

- 2.14 When first established in April 2016, the programme was delivered in 14 local authorities. It received additional funding in early 2017 to be available in all 22 local authorities. There is now a network of officers working in each local authority area, but staff capacity and time mean that they can only deliver groups in some locations.
- 2.15 The locations for the delivery of activities are selected in association with Mudiad Meithrin’s regional officers. Using their local knowledge, regional officers select broadly two types of locations to deliver activities. These are either areas where there is a gap in the Ti a Fi provision (parent and toddler groups facilitated by Mudiad Meithrin) and therefore no Welsh-medium activities in an area, or locations where there are plans for a new or expanded Welsh-medium school and the opportunity to start Cymraeg for Kids activities as the first step on the journey towards that new education provision.

Structures and processes

- 2.16 Mudiad Meithrin and Welsh Government have strategic review meetings on a termly basis to discuss progress in delivering the Cymraeg for Kids contract alongside other grant-funded activity delivered by Mudiad Meithrin on behalf of Welsh Government. There are more frequent Cymraeg for Kids management sub-group meetings (held every 6-8 weeks and focusing on more operational issues) between Welsh Government and Cymraeg for Kids programme managers. Welsh Government and Cymraeg for Kids managers noted that more frequent informal discussions take place in between these meetings. Both Welsh Government and Cymraeg for Kids staff interviewed to date reported that there was a good working relationship in place between them.
- 2.17 Regional officers are managed by three Cymraeg for Kids senior officers. Regional officers reported variations in how often they met their senior officer. Some regional officers reported that they met their line manager approximately every fortnight to plan provision and discuss any issues (with telephone discussions taking place at least weekly), whilst others reported less frequent meetings (this appeared to be mainly influenced by geographic proximity). Cymraeg for Kids staff reported that each senior officer convenes a termly meeting of all regional officers in their area and national meetings of all programme staff are held termly to focus on sharing good practice and continuing professional development. Overall, programme managers and regional staff reported that the line management arrangements worked well. However, some regional officers reported they would value more regular contact with their senior officer, which they stated was not currently possible due to the geographic distance between them.
- 2.18 Mudiad Meithrin submit quarterly monitoring data reports to Welsh Government. This includes data on the number of: sessions delivered; parents and children attending sessions; unique families engaging in the programme (estimated data); visits by programme staff to Cylchoedd Meithrin, Ti a Fi and private nurseries; presentations to parents in Parentcraft sessions; engagement activities with partners; and marketing and communications activity. The monitoring data gathered, and the methods used to collect the data, will be reviewed in more detail as part of the analysis for the final evaluation report.

Strategic planning

- 2.19 Mudiad Meithrin undertakes two key functions within the context of Cymraeg for Kids; Mudiad Meithrin is both the contractor responsible for working with Welsh Government to deliver Cymraeg for Kids, and a voluntary organisation representing a large majority of Welsh-medium early years care and education provision. The Cymraeg for Kids national manager and senior officers reported that they have contributed to Mudiad Meithrin's strategic planning processes for developing early years Welsh-medium provision at the national level. The programme's national manager sits on Mudiad Meithrin's national board and senior officers participate in quarterly planning meetings with Mudiad Meithrin's regional managers. Mudiad Meithrin reported that these strategic planning processes have led to Cymraeg for Kids groups being established and co-located in six locations that coincide with new Cylch Meithrin provision.
- 2.20 All Cymraeg for Kids staff reported that they have sought to develop partnerships with external organisations at the local, regional and national levels. To facilitate this, one of the programme's senior officers has been appointed as a partnerships manager. The Cymraeg for Kids national manager and senior officers reported that they have worked in partnership with Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Public Health Wales, Bookstart, S4C and Welsh Books Council on some national initiatives. The national manager and senior officers have worked in partnership with some local health boards (LHBs) and have delivered presentations about Cymraeg for Kids to University Midwifery departments. The national manager and senior officers in Mudiad Meithrin reported that they have worked in partnership with local authorities, leading to the programme being referenced in all local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). In some local authorities, programme officers attend WESP or Welsh language forums.
- 2.21 Cymraeg for Kids regional officers reported working in partnership with local schools, health visitors (usually via clinics or GP practices), Parentcraft, Flying Start staff, *Mentrau Iaith*, Welsh for Adults staff, family information services, libraries and the third sector (such as children's charities).⁶ The purpose of working in partnership was reported as being to: increase awareness of the programme (among partners and parents, particularly those from harder to reach groups); increase referrals between Cymraeg for Kids and partner organisations (and vice versa); work in partnership to deliver activities (e.g. sharing locations, co-delivery of sessions).
- 2.22 Programme staff reported that the strength of partnership working between Cymraeg for Kids and external organisations varied by sector and area. They commented that several factors could influence the development of partnerships such as:
- Whether officers had previously been employed by Twf in the area.⁷
 - It was reported that partnerships tended to be stronger in those areas where officers had previously been working as Twf officers. Programme managers felt that regional officers who had not previously worked on the Twf

⁶ Parentcraft sessions are antenatal classes run by the NHS which aim to prepare parents for their baby's birth and care. Flying Start is part of Welsh Government's early years programme for families with children under 4 years of age living in disadvantaged areas of Wales. Family information services are local authority services which provide free advice and information on a wide range of childcare options and activities for children and their families and carers. See also footnote 2.

⁷ Twf was a Welsh Government-funded project which encouraged Welsh language transmission in families, which ran from 2002-2017.

programme needed to focus on establishing and developing local provision before focusing on partnership working.

- Capacity to meet with partner organisations.
 - Many staff (particularly those working part-time) reported that it was challenging to find time to plan and deliver sessions as well as working in partnership. This was reported to be particularly challenging where new relationships needed to be established;
- The ability and capacity of partner organisations to work in partnership.
 - Programme staff reported there were variations in the ability and capacity of partners to work in partnership, which they attributed to a variety of factors such as: a lack of time among stakeholders to plan and work in partnership; staff turnover in partner organisations; limited awareness and understanding of the programme among stakeholders;
- The willingness of partner organisations to work in partnership.
 - Programme staff reported that there were variations in the willingness of partners to engage. Some programme staff felt that this was due to a perception amongst some partner organisations that Cymraeg for Kids was competing with their services to engage parents. They also felt that it was influenced by how well-established the relationships were between the programme and stakeholder staff.
- The next phase of the evaluation will include meetings with national and local stakeholders to collect further evidence on their engagement with the programme, to test these emerging findings (see 1.10).

3. Closing remarks and next steps

- 3.1 Welsh Government and Cymraeg for Kids staff reported that they considered the programme's aims and objectives to be clear. Programme staff reported that they understood that Cymraeg for Kids aims to contribute to the strategic goals of the *Cymraeg 2050* Strategy.
- 3.2 The programme's target audience is broad and includes all families, regardless of their linguistic background, use, ability and intentions in relation to language transmission or supporting their child to learn Welsh. Cymraeg for Kids staff noted that the programme's messages are tailored to suit the background and circumstances of parents. The final evaluation report will explore the implications of the scope and breadth of the programme's aims and objectives, and also how these are understood by parents.
- 3.3 Programme staff reported that they have targeted specific locations and sought to align the establishment of Cymraeg for Kids groups with other new Welsh-medium early years provision (e.g. new Cylchoedd Meithrin) in order to create new progression pathways to Welsh-medium education. However, regional officers also reported that they retain significant flexibility in selecting locations for delivering activities, taking into account a variety of local factors such as the availability of other similar provision (Welsh- or English-medium), suitability of locations and likely parental demand for the types of activities delivered by Cymraeg for Kids.

- 3.4 The types of activities delivered in sessions (baby massage, yoga, story/rhyme time and signing) have been selected by Mudiad Meithrin with an intention to provide a progression pathway for families with very young children. All parents reported that the activities on offer through the programme were appealing, and many reported they had progressed from one set of sessions to the next. The views of parents on activities will be further explored in the final evaluation report alongside programme monitoring data.
- 3.5 Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin staff reported that the management structures that have been established (regular formal meetings and more informal day-to-day communication) are working effectively. Programme staff also reported that management arrangements within Mudiad Meithrin were generally working well.
- 3.6 Programme staff reported that partnerships with other organisations in different sectors have been developed at national, regional and local levels. However, the evidence collected to date suggests that there are variations in the strength of collaboration by area and sector. In some areas, particularly those where the Twf programme did not previously operate, partnerships with many organisations were reported to be in their infancy. There was a perception amongst programme staff that there are some challenges and barriers that limited the extent of partnership working.
- 3.7 The final report for this evaluation will further explore the views of parents/carers, programme staff and stakeholders on Cymraeg for Kids. The final report will also present a draft theory of change and further explore the programme's monitoring arrangements and their suitability in providing data that can be used as part of a future impact evaluation.



Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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