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Evaluation of the Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme for education practitioners

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
Advanced level (Course) (Uwch)	A part- or full-time course. The delivery model and target audience vary; for example, there are courses delivered on two days per week for a term, or shorter 'block' courses. The Advanced level courses are directed towards teachers or teaching assistants who are already Welsh speakers, and who teach in Welsh-medium or bilingual schools, in the main.
Consortium and Regional education consortium	A consortium is a body that provides education services to support schools in a region. There are four consortia: GwE (North Wales); ERW (Mid and West Wales); Central South Consortium; and the Education Achievement Service EAS (South East Wales).
Entry level (Course) (Mynediad)	A 5-week full-time course for teaching assistants working in English-medium primary schools.
Foundation level (Course) (Sylfaen)	An 11-week full-time course for English-medium primary schools.
Intermediate level (Course) (Canolradd)	A new course introduced in 2018. The course is directed towards at practitioners from English-medium primary schools.
Theory of Change	Theory of change is a method of planning and evaluation that explains how a programme or project's activities contribute towards a chain of changes that lead to the intended impacts.
Welsh in a Year	A new course introduced in September 2017; one year, full-time, for teachers working in English-medium primary schools.
WESPs	Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme for education practitioners ('the Scheme'). Arad, in partnership with researchers from Iaith Cyf., was commissioned to complete the evaluation. The evidence for the evaluation was gathered between March 2019 and March 2020.

About the Sabbatical Scheme

1.2 The Scheme offers periods of intensive study, away from the classroom, for education practitioners to develop Welsh language skills and gain confidence in bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies. A programme of courses is delivered across Wales under a contract with Welsh Government.

1.3 The courses are available at different levels:

- Entry (Mynediad): A 5-week full-time course for teaching assistants working in English-medium primary schools.
- Foundation (Sylfaen): An 11-week full-time course for teachers in English-medium primary schools.
- Advanced (Uwch): A part- or full-time course. The delivery model and target audience vary; for example, there are courses delivered on two days per week for a term, or shorter 'block' courses. The Advanced level courses are directed towards teachers or teaching assistants who are already Welsh speakers, and who teach in Welsh-medium or bilingual schools, in the main.
- Welsh in a Year: A new course introduced in September 2017; one year full-time, for teachers working in English-medium primary schools.
- Intermediate (Canolradd): A new course introduced in 2018. The course is directed towards practitioners from English-medium primary schools.

1.4 The Entry, Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced level courses are referred to collectively as 'block courses' in the remainder of this report, in order to distinguish them from the Welsh in a Year course. Further information on the content and form of the courses can be found at Annex A.

1.5 The Scheme was originally developed as a pilot in 2005 to deliver the objective of *Iaith Pawb* (the national action plan for the Welsh language at the time) of increasing the supply of practitioners who would be able to teach and train through

the medium of Welsh in a range of pre- and post-16 subjects. The initial pilot between 2005 and 2007 was jointly funded by ELWa and the Welsh Government, via a grant scheme to Bangor University and Cardiff University.¹ The pilot was extended to August 2010. Between January 2006 and July 2010, 240 practitioners completed the Sabbatical course.² New contracts were established through a procurement exercise for the delivery of courses for the 2011-14 period at Advanced, Entry and Foundation level in three locations: Bangor, Cardiff and Carmarthen. In September 2014, Welsh Government embarked on a new contractual period. This report was drafted towards the end of the period of these contracts, and new contracts for delivery were awarded from September 2020. Further details of the Scheme's contractual periods since 2005 can be found at Annex A.

1.6 The period in question, as set out in the evaluation tender specification, relates to academic years 2013/14 to 2018/19. During this period, 1,299 practitioners took part in one of the courses. Of these:

- **463** practitioners attended the Entry level course;
- **368** practitioners attended the Foundation level course;
- **175** practitioners attended the Advanced level course for teachers and **175** practitioners attended the Advanced level course for assistants;
- **14** practitioners attended an Intermediate level course (a new course introduced as part of the Scheme in 2018);
- **104** practitioners attended the Welsh in a Year course.

The aim of the evaluation and research methods

1.7 The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the Scheme and examine two elements:

- how, and to what extent the Sabbatical Scheme contributes to change in the way Welsh is taught or used as a medium of teaching in schools, and
- the contribution of the Sabbatical Scheme to Welsh-language or Welsh-medium professional development provision for practitioners.

¹ ELWa – The public body responsible for post-16 education and learning in Wales between 2000 and 2006.

² The Sabbatical courses were developed by providers during the period September 2005 to January 2006; the first course was delivered in January 2006.

1.8 Furthermore, these objectives were set for the evaluators:

- examine the Scheme's contribution to school teaching practices and curricular provision;
- examine the extent to which the Scheme is used strategically to bring about change;
- explore the Scheme's contribution in terms of developing practitioners' skills and capacity, in the wider context of their professional development;
- make recommendations for the strategic development of the Scheme in the wider context of professional development provision for practitioners;
- make recommendations about further evidence needs (if relevant) to monitor the future impact of the Scheme.

1.9 In assessing the impact of the Scheme, consideration has also been given to the wider factors influencing the Scheme and that may also be leading to a change in the way Welsh is taught or used as a medium of teaching. Other factors include the education policy context and other development opportunities. These external factors were included in the process of interpreting the theory of change underpinning the Scheme (see Chapter 4).

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The evaluation used a combination of methods to explore the main research questions. The mixed approaches aimed to ensure that the evaluation was based on as wide an evidence base as possible, including desk-based research and interviews with a range of stakeholders and participants. The remainder of this chapter provides more detail on each method.
- 2.2 Developing a theory of change was a central element of the study, and the qualitative research was carried out with stakeholders and a small sample of practitioners and headteachers to explore in greater depth the issues highlighted as the theory was developed. It needs to be borne in mind, therefore, that the evidence gathered about the experiences of individual practitioners and schools does not necessarily represent the experiences of the Scheme's beneficiaries more widely.

Evidence gathering methods

- 2.3 To answer the research questions, an evaluation was designed to gather evidence in relation to the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the Scheme. The methodology included desk-based research, interviews with stakeholders, interviews with practitioners who had participated in the courses, and with headteachers and /or members of the senior management team in schools that had released staff to attend the courses.

Interviews with stakeholders

- 2.4 Semi-structured interviews were conducted with officers from the four regional education consortia and Welsh Government, both face-to-face and by telephone, according to the interviewee's preference.³ The purpose of these interviews was to enable the evaluation team to examine in detail the planning and management of the Scheme, understand the background to the Scheme, and discuss the policy context. In addition, officers from the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner were interviewed and a telephone interview was conducted with the individual responsible for moderating the courses.

³ There are four regional education consortia in Wales working with schools to raise standards: GwE (North Wales), Education Achievement Service (EAS) in South East Wales, Central South Consortium and ERW (West Wales).

Desk-based research

- 2.5 A review of the Scheme's documents (contracts, monitoring reports, attendee data and a sample of 80 application forms) and relevant policy documents was undertaken to gain an understanding of the wider context in which the Scheme operates, as well as the processes involved in planning and delivering courses and recruiting practitioners to participate. This information also contributed to the development of the theory of change - see Chapter 4.

Interviews with course providers

- 2.6 Face-to-face interviews were conducted with representatives from the three training providers, including co-ordinators and tutors responsible for delivering different courses. During these discussions we examined:

- Training providers' input into the application process and their contact with practitioners and schools prior to the course;
- The design of the courses and how they have developed over time;
- The link between course content and curricular provision in schools and the emphasis placed on second language teaching methodologies;
- Management and scrutiny arrangements to ensure the courses were delivered to a high standard, as well as communication arrangements between the training providers and Welsh Government;
- Arrangements for monitoring the progress made by course participants and any other relevant monitoring/evaluation data collected by providers.

Interviews with practitioners

- 2.7 Welsh Government shared a database with Arad of all practitioners who had attended a Sabbatical course during the period September 2013 - August 2019. Arad used this list to formulate a practitioner interview sampling framework (Figure 2.1) which ensured representation of participants from all courses offered by the three providers across each year between 2013 and 2019. Participants were randomly selected from the database to match this sample and an invitation e-mail, and one reminder e-mail, were sent out in batches. The response was generally slow, so towards the end of the fieldwork period priority was given to reaching the requisite number of interviews over close adherence to the sampling framework. Over the fieldwork period, two-thirds of practitioners were e-mailed and this resulted in 46 in-depth telephone interviews.

2.8 The number of practitioners interviewed is set out in Figure 2.1, showing the cross-section by course and academic year. Interviews were broadly representative of area:

- North Wales (delivered by Bangor University) - 11 interviews.
- South West and Mid Wales (delivered by Trinity Saint David University)–22 interviews.
- South Wales Central and South East Wales (delivered by Cardiff University) - 13 interviews.

2.9 In most cases, the number of interviews conducted corresponded fairly closely to the number in the proposed sample. The number of interviews held with participants who had been on Foundation level courses, and those who had been on courses during the period 2016-17 period, was greater than planned, while the number interviewed from the Advanced level course for teaching assistants was lower than the proposed sample.

Figure 2.1: Sampling framework – interviews by course and by academic year

Course		Year of course						Total
		Sept '13 – Aug '14	Sept '14 – Aug '15	Sept '15 – Aug '16	Sept '16 – Aug '17	Sept '17 – Aug '18	Sept '18 Aug '19	
Entry/ Mynediad	Total participants	76	56	91	81	92	67	463
	<i>Proposed sample</i>	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
	Achieved	1	2	4	3	1	1	12
Foundation/ Sylfaen	Total participants	69	91	61	74	59	14	368
	<i>Proposed sample</i>	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
	Achieved	0	2	3	7	6	2	20
Advanced/ Uwch for teaching assistants	Total participants			48	50	55	22	175
	<i>Proposed sample</i>	-	-	2	2	2	2	8
	Achieved				1	1		2
Advanced/ Uwch for primary and secondary school teachers	Total participants	35	32	42	32	22	12	175
	<i>Proposed sample</i>	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
	Achieved	2	3	2	1	1	1	10
Intermediate / Canolradd (Also completed Foundation level course)	Total participants						14	14
	<i>Proposed sample</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Achieved	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Total	Participants	180	179	242	237	228	129	1,195
	<i>Proposed sample</i>	5	6	8	8	8	8	43
	Achieved	3	7	9	12	9	6	46

Welsh in a Year

- 2.10 Interviews were conducted with eight teachers who had followed the Welsh in a Year course - see Figure 2.2. This sample equated to around seven per cent of all practitioners who had attended this course during 2017/18 and 2018/19. This is a higher proportion of practitioners compared to the sample for block courses, deliberately so as the course is a relatively new one that has not previously been evaluated.
- 2.11 The 8 practitioners were randomly selected from cohorts within each year (5 from the 2017/18 cohort and 3 from 2018/19) and were invited by e-mail to take part in a telephone interview.

Figure 2.2: Sampling framework: number of practitioners interviewed by academic year

Course	Academic year			Total
		Sept '17 – Aug '18	Sept '18 – Aug '19	
Welsh in a Year	Total participants	36	67	104
	Proposed sample	3	5	8
	Sample achieved	3	5	8

- 2.12 The opportunity was also taken to gather evidence from individuals while they participated in Welsh in a Year courses by the three providers in the 2019/20 academic year. The fieldwork timetable enabled the evaluators to meet the practitioners on the Welsh in a Year course during the visits to the training providers. This fieldwork took the form of a whole-class discussion group in two cases, and discussions with individuals and in small groups of two or three in the other case. This provided an opportunity to gather information on practitioners' experiences while on the course, their concerns and aspirations in advance of returning to school, and an opportunity to refine the topic guide for practitioners.

Interviews with headteachers and senior managers

- 2.13 In addition to interviews with practitioners who had received training through the Scheme, a telephone interview was conducted with a sample of 26 headteachers and senior managers where practitioners from their school had followed a Sabbatical course.

- 2.14 The original aim was to interview 40 headteachers, with the intention that 30 of them would be selected from among the schools represented in the sample of practitioners interviewed. The rationale for this was to glean a whole-organisation perspective of the advantages and challenges associated with the training. This method of selecting a sample of headteachers proved challenging. The headteacher's contact details were not part of the participant database shared with the evaluators, therefore requesting a telephone interview with headteachers by contacting the school's general e-mail address was the method selected. Two e-mails were sent out to the headteachers of the schools where the participants interviewed worked, but the level of response was low. Only seven of the headteachers matching the participants' schools were contacted using this method. To ensure that there was sufficient headteacher input, the approach was changed to one of selecting a convenient sample of headteachers for interview in the last few weeks of the fieldwork. Towards the end of the fieldwork a line had to be drawn on the interviews slightly prematurely as schools were preparing to close in light of the COVID-19 crisis. A telephone interview was conducted with 26 headteachers.
- 2.15 Most (22 out of 26) were headteachers in schools where more than one practitioner had taken part in a Sabbatical course between 2013 and 2019. Teachers had also been supported through the Welsh in a Year course by eight headteachers.
- 2.16 These interviews were an opportunity to question them about the process of supporting practitioners to participate in the Sabbatical courses as well as understanding the benefits and challenges faced in doing so. It was also an opportunity to discuss how the skills and knowledge practitioners learned were used. The interviews also focused on the difference, if any, in attending the courses had made to the participants' teaching practices in the classroom as well as wider practices, policies, standards and ethos across the school.

Analysis

- 2.17 A thematic analysis of notes from interviews with practitioners and headteachers was carried out. The answers and issues raised by respondents were categorised by themes and in accordance with the research questions set out in the original specification. The process for analysis was as follows:

1. A random sample of ten responses for each question was reviewed by two researchers (each reviewing a different half of the sample).
2. The responses in the sample were coded to identify the issues or themes that arose most frequently, and the two researchers met to compare notes and agree a provisional list of principal themes.
3. One of the researchers then reviewed all remaining responses for each question and identified the themes from each answer, ensuring the themes identified remained consistent and identifying any new themes. This stage also included identifying variations in comments across the years, the institutions and course levels.

2.18 These were qualitative interviews and were not intended to be representative of all those who followed a Sabbatical course. Rather, the intention was to ensure a cross-section of participants across year groups and different courses. That needs to be borne in mind when considering the findings.

Strengths, challenges and limitations of the methodology

2.19 The aim of this evaluation was to understand how, and to what extent, the Scheme has contributed to the way in which Welsh is taught or used as a medium of teaching, and to understand this contribution in the wider context of Welsh language or Welsh-medium professional development provision for practitioners. A theory of change was prepared with the aim of understanding of the link between the Scheme's inputs, outputs and outcomes. The purpose of the fieldwork was to gather evidence to inform and develop the theory of change, and to examine the stages and assumptions included in the theory of change. The interviews focused primarily on the interviewees' practical experiences of the Scheme. The advantage of this approach was that it offered interviewees an opportunity to elaborate to a greater extent on their views and experiences of participating in the Scheme and refer to examples or explanations if appropriate.

2.20 One of the challenges of the approach was the time and resources required to arrange and conduct interviews with practitioners and headteachers. However, even faced with these challenges, 54 practitioners and 26 headteachers were interviewed as part of the fieldwork (around 4 per cent of all Scheme participants during the reporting period, 2013 - 2019). Despite the relatively small number of interviews, a

cross-section of practitioners who had participated in the courses across each year, as well as practitioners who had attended courses were secured by all three training providers. A point was reached where no new perspectives were identified in interviews, so we can be quite sure that the qualitative data collected provided a sufficient basis on which to answer the research questions. Other methods, such as a survey, would have permitted responses to be gathered from many more participants, but that information would not have been able to contain the same detail as is possible from an interview, thereby posing the risk of obtaining less robust findings.

- 2.21 It needs to be borne in mind, however, that more participants from 2016-17 and fewer from the advanced level course for teaching assistants, than originally planned, contributed to the fieldwork. It should also be noted that the responses gathered were limited to the practitioners available and willing to participate in the interviews. Other former participants, who did not respond to the interview request, may have had different views and experiences.
- 2.22 There was also a low response to begin with to the interviews conducted with headteachers (or a member of the senior management team) and the decision was made to change the methodology to gather headteachers' views through a convenient sample. This somewhat limited the ability to gather the views from practitioners and headteachers from the same school, so the opportunity to compare the experiences of participating in the same course from two perspectives was lost. However, this approach provided a means of gathering evidence from a wider sample of schools.
- 2.23 The most evident challenge, towards the end of the fieldwork period, was the onset of COVID-19 and the move to remote teaching. This limited somewhat the number of interviews possible with headteachers. A workshop with stakeholders also had to be cancelled. The aim of the workshop was to give stakeholders the opportunity to review the draft theory of change, therefore the theory of change presented in Chapter 4 has not been scrutinised or had as much input from stakeholders more widely as was intended.
- 2.24 Another limitation that should be remembered when reading the findings is that this evaluation does not include fieldwork with schools or practitioners who have not participated in any Sabbatical courses. The findings reported here do not, therefore,

include an analysis of possible reasons for non-participation or any counter-factual analysis.

3. Background to the Implementation of the Sabbatical Scheme

3.1 This section provides an overview of the policy context and a summary of how the Scheme is planned and implemented. The information is based on background documentation reviewed during the evaluation, together with information shared at meetings by Welsh Government officials and regional consortia officers and provider staff interviewed.

Policy context

Cymraeg 2050

3.2 Welsh Government's strategy for the Welsh language sets out the aim of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050. It recognises the contribution of the education system and a workforce with sound language skills to achieve this aim (Welsh Government 2017a, 2017b).

3.3 To achieve the target of one million speakers, Welsh Government will promote transformational changes that include:

- Increasing the proportion of all school year groups educated through the medium of Welsh from 22 per cent (based on 7,700 seven-year-olds in 2015/16) to 30 per cent (around 10,500 in each year group) by 2031, and then to 40 per cent (about 14,000 in each year group) by 2050.
- Transforming Welsh is taught to all learners so that at least 70 per cent of those learners can say by 2050 that they can speak Welsh by the time they leave school.
- Increasing the number of primary teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh from 2,900 to 3,900 by 2031 and to 5,200 by 2050; increasing the number of secondary teachers able to teach Welsh from 500 to 900 by 2031 and to 1,200 by 2050; and increasing the number of secondary teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh from 1,800 to 3,200 by 2031 and to 4,200 by 2050. (Welsh Government 2017a:12)

3.4 The Scheme has a clear role to play, particularly given that:

'Our greatest priority will be to increase the system's capacity to meet the need to expand Welsh-medium education and training, and to meet the need to improve how Welsh is taught in English-medium schools. For the statutory education sector, this involves workforce planning in order to train new teachers, support trainee teachers and teaching assistants, and expand sabbatical schemes and

professional learning opportunities for the current workforce' (Welsh Government 2017a:43)

Our National Mission

- 3.5 The Welsh Government stated its plans for education reform up to 2021 in *Education in Wales: Our national mission* (Welsh Government 2017d). Un of the priorities was to support and develop education professionals 'to teach Welsh as a living language and to ensure an increase in the numbers of education professionals who will be able to work effectively in Welsh-medium and bilingual settings'. In addition, the plan identified the need to 'establish more effective workforce planning systems to ensure that there are sufficient skilled teachers, including those able to work through the medium of Welsh', and to 'monitor the demand for staff in specialist areas relative to supply, including Welsh-medium provision'(Welsh Government 2017d: 26).
- 3.6 *Welsh in education: Action plan 2017-21* (Welsh Government 2017c) was published to pull together the relevant strands of *Cymraeg 2050* and *Education in Wales: Our national mission*. The action plan 2017-21 sets out the steps that need to be taken to develop the Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision in the statutory education phase, and particularly as part of the new curriculum. The action plan includes a commitment to 'develop and deliver a programme of professional learning, including the Welsh language Sabbatical Scheme, to ensure that teachers, supply teachers and support staff have the Welsh language skills and expertise in Welsh-language and Welsh-medium teaching' (Welsh Government 2017c:27).
- 3.7 A specific aim of the *Welsh in education* action plan is to expand the Sabbatical Scheme to provide opportunities for practitioners across Wales to access intensive Welsh language training. In recent years training has been offered primarily through the Scheme and through the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant allocated to the four regional education consortia ('the consortia') – see also paragraph 3.25.

Development of Curriculum for Wales

3.8 The independent review, 'Successful Futures' (Welsh Government 2015) and consultation with the workforce and education experts thereafter, led to the development of a new curriculum for Wales. The final version of 'Curriculum for Wales' was published in early 2020 (Welsh Government, 2020a). The new curriculum is underpinned by four purposes, namely to develop children and young people to be:

- ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Professional development context

3.9 The national approach to professional learning was launched in 2018, with a professional learning vision to complement and integrate with the education system in Wales as it evolves (Welsh Government 2019a). It sets out the entitlement of all practitioners to professional learning provision and is in line with other key features of education reform such as the new professional standards, and schools as learning organisations.

3.10 Welsh Government is committed to 'developing a high-quality education profession' as set out in *Our national mission* (Welsh Government 2017c:3). In order to fulfil this commitment, Welsh Government 'will support teachers in Wales to be lifelong professional learners that reflect on and enhance their own practice to motivate and inspire the children and young people in their care' (p.25).

3.11 Professional standards for teaching and leadership were published in September 2017 and for teaching assistants in 2019 (Welsh Government 2019b). The professional standards focus on the essential elements of every teacher's work – pedagogy, collaboration, leadership, innovation and professional learning. They are based on 6 overarching values and dispositions including the Welsh language and culture. The standards set out descriptors of effective practice in relation to the Welsh language, namely:

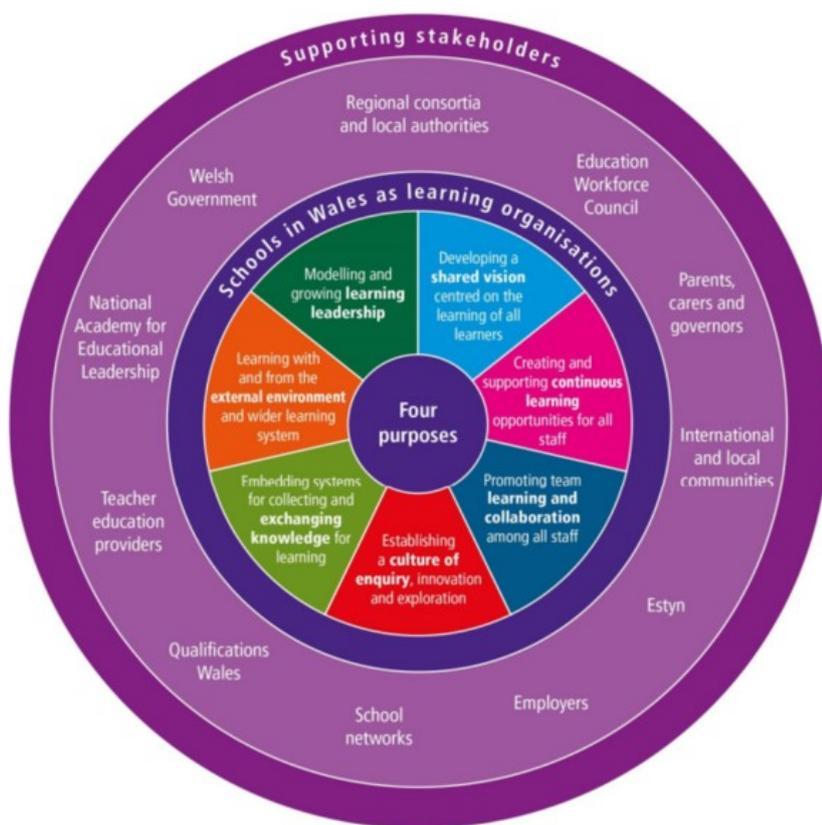
[Descriptor of 'language promotion' for teachers] The teacher actively seeks opportunities to apply and extend their understanding and skills in the use of the Welsh language.

[Descriptor of 'effective formal leadership' promoting language] Leadership seeks out and uses every opportunity to value and promote Welsh culture and extend the use of the Welsh language in formal and informal situations.

Schools as Learning Organisations

- 3.12 The development of schools as learning organisations is a key part of delivering the new curriculum, and a schools as learning organisations model was launched in 2017. At the heart of the model are the four purposes of the new curriculum (which are to develop children and young people into ambitious learners, enterprising contributors, ethical citizens and healthy, confident individuals). The model focuses on realising seven dimensions in schools (namely the seven segments in Figure 3.1) which include creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff. The seven dimensions underline what a school should aspire to and the processes it goes through as it transforms itself into a learning organisation. Within the model, the responsibility of delivering these seven dimensions is placed on a range of individuals, including school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents and local policymakers.

Figure 3.1: Schools as learning organisations model



Source: Schools in Wales as learning organisations: Interactive PDF, available from [Schools as learning organisations](#)

- 3.13 The model highlights the various stakeholders schools are expected to utilise for support on their journey as a learning organisation. Schools are encouraged to undertake a survey to establish how the school is currently performing as a learning organisation and identify areas for improvement. The results can facilitate discussions amongst staff and inform the planning of school improvements and whole school and individual approaches to professional learning.
- 3.14 In the context of the above developments, the period spanned by this evaluation can be seen as one of significant change for the education system and for the profession.

School Development Plan (SDP)

- 3.15 Schools are required to prepare a three-year rolling School Development Plan. This is the school's strategic plan for improvement, which sets out the steps a school will take to improve learner outcomes. Schools are expected to undertake a regular

self-evaluation of their performance, and this is used to inform the plan. Plans must set out how schools will achieve their targets in relation to their priorities, how they will use the resources available, and how they intend to develop their staff to deliver their priorities and targets. Schools can use the support of their regional education consortia challenge advisers to support them in identifying and implementing the necessary actions to secure improvements.

Implementation of the Scheme and delivery of the courses

History of the Sabbatical Scheme

- 3.16 When the Scheme was originally developed, as a pilot in 2005, the courses were targeted towards teachers and lecturers who already possessed Welsh language skills and needed support to use Welsh as a medium of teaching. Over time, the courses have evolved to target teachers and teaching assistants who want to develop skills in order to teach Welsh as part of the curriculum.
- 3.17 The Scheme has been subject to prior evaluations in 2007, 2010 and 2014 (Dateb 2007, Welsh Government 2010 and 2014). The latest evaluation in 2014 found there to be a positive picture of the Scheme among participants and stakeholders, and that there was a feeling among senior managers, participants and local authority officers that the shortage of Welsh language skills remained an issue that needed to be addressed to enable schools and colleges to be able to increase Welsh-medium and bilingual provision. The evaluation included four main recommendations:
- Purposeful and strategic targeting: Welsh Government should encourage local authorities to identify indicators for the success of the Scheme that support the priorities of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.
 - There is a need to improve the level of communication between local authorities / regional consortia and with course providers.
 - Further steps should be taken to raise awareness among headteachers of the opportunities and advantages offered by the Sabbatical Scheme. Up to that point, there had been a demand for the courses but it was acknowledged that a number of those who would have been eligible were not aware of the opportunity.
 - Strengthening and focussing the post-course support. Concern and / or confusion about post-course support was a common theme throughout the fieldwork.

3.18 This evaluation focuses anew on some of these themes, particularly the Scheme's contribution to the way in which Welsh is taught or used in schools. It also focuses on how the Scheme contributes to the professional development of practitioners, in terms of the Welsh language or Welsh as a medium of teaching.

Funding and numbers

3.19 The Sabbatical courses are delivered by three training providers via contract with Welsh Government. The three providers contracted to deliver during the reporting period were Bangor University, Cardiff University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. These three training providers are responsible for managing the delivery of courses across their areas, including commissioning sub-contractors to provide some of the training where necessary.

3.20 Welsh Government, based on discussions with the regional consortia, and on the basis of the budget available, determines the number of courses to be run per academic year, at what level (i.e. Entry, Foundation, etc) and in what location. Since its inception in 2005, the Scheme has also funded supply teacher costs and travel and subsistence costs for participants to enable schools and colleges to release them to attend the training courses.

3.21 In the 2018/19 academic year, there was a budget of £3.38m to implement the Scheme.⁴ In that academic year, the following were delivered:

- block courses at a range of levels with 143 participants;
- 5 Welsh in a Year courses in 4 locations across Wales with 68 participants (Welsh Government 2020b).

The budget for the Scheme has increased in the reporting period, as follows:

2013/14 = £1.981m; 2014/15 = £1.850m; 2015/16 = £1.588m; 2016/17 = £1.597m; 2017/18 = £3.050m; 2018/19 = £3.380m.

Recruitment

3.22 Since 2017 the consortia and local authorities have been responsible for targeting schools and recruiting practitioners to attend the Sabbatical courses. Following discussions, Welsh Government informs the regional consortia what courses will be

⁴ Source: Evaluation specification

available during the coming academic year, i.e. course levels, dates, locations and the number of places available. Regional consortia or local authority officials then actively inform schools and practitioners about the courses. Recruitment varies slightly between the regions. In two regional consortia, officers support and promote Welsh in schools and recruit practitioners, while in the other two regions it is the Welsh language advisory teachers who undertake this work. There is also an element of a recruitment role included as part of each training provider's delivery contract, and in accordance with their contract, 'they are expected to work closely with officers from the regional consortia to ensure that suitable candidates are identified and that schools/other organisations are targeted to participate in the Scheme'.

- 3.23 Training providers have quotas of places to fill, and the training is designed for groups of around 10 to 14 practitioners on each course. The minimum required for a course to run is 10 eligible practitioners. If at least 10 eligible applicants have not committed to a course 6 weeks before it is due to start, then the course will be suspended until there is a sufficient number of eligible practitioners available. If there are additional places available, after meeting the minimum of 10, the invitation to attend will be extended to other practitioners, beyond those originally targeted, including supply teachers, to reach the quota of participants required.
- 3.24 Practitioners wishing to attend a Sabbatical course must apply to Welsh Government for a place. The application form asks practitioners and their line managers to explain their reasons for applying for a place on the course, how the individual will contribute to the school development plan and how the school will ensure that the individuals continue to develop their Welsh language skills after completing the course. Welsh Government processes and checks that the applicant is eligible to attend the course; the application will then be shared with the relevant training provider, who in turn conducts an interview with the practitioner. One of the aims of these interviews is to ascertain whether the candidate's language level is appropriate for the course. Following the interviews, the provider shares a list of successful applicants with Welsh Government, who will inform applicants of the outcome of their application. It is the providers' responsibility to discuss practical details relating to course attendance with the individuals and regional consortia. Welsh Government's role at this point is to make arrangements to meet the delivery

costs and travel and subsistence costs of the practitioners who will be participating in the courses.

Post course

- 3.25 The role of the consortia is to provide follow-up support for the courses, through support from the *athrawon bro* and advisory teachers to the schools.⁵ The regional consortia receive specific funding through the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant to support the provision of Welsh and Welsh-medium training and professional development beyond that offered by the Sabbatical courses. In 2019-20 and 2020-21, this grant totalled £2.7m. As part of the grant conditions, the consortia prepare annual plans for the provision of professional learning (Welsh Government 2019b). In their annual business plans, the four consortia explain their plans to use data from their language skills surveys to gain a better understanding of the Welsh language skills position of the current workforce, and use this data to plan the professional learning offered in order to increase the number of practitioners able to teach Welsh as part of the curriculum and increase the number of practitioners able to teach through the medium of Welsh. They set out their intention to work with the Scheme's training providers in their region, and to support practitioner mentoring for those who have completed the Scheme. Local authorities also set targets for increasing the number of practitioners able to teach through the medium of Welsh and the number of practitioners able to teach Welsh as part of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

Course content and format: Block courses

- 3.26 The Entry level course is a 5-week full-time course for teaching assistants working in English-medium or dual stream primary schools. The course aims to provide teaching assistants with the necessary vocabulary and language skills to support their teaching colleagues.
- 3.27 The Foundation level course is an 11-week intensive full-time course for teachers working in English-medium primary schools. The course aims to offer Welsh language training to teachers in the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 and

⁵ Athrawon Bro are employed by local authorities and support the planning and delivery of Welsh language provision in primary schools.

support them to develop their Welsh language skills to foundation level and take the next steps to further develop their language skills. The course includes a range of elements such as oral work, grammar, methodology, and writing tasks. To promote fluency, sessions are allocated daily for paired or group conversation exercises. These exercises are designed especially for understanding, practising and confirming new constructions.

- 3.28 The Intermediate level course is a relatively new course piloted in Carmarthen in 2018. During the period under review, most of the practitioners involved in this course (all but 1) were teachers in English-medium primary schools who had already attended the Foundation level course.
- 3.29 The Advanced level courses are directed towards practitioners who are already Welsh speakers, either first language speakers or learners who wish to increase their confidence in using Welsh as a medium of teaching. Models of provision range from one day to two days per week for a term to 3 week block courses, depending on practitioners' requirements and school's ability to release them to attend the courses and recruit supply practitioners in their place.

Course content and format: Welsh in a Year

- 3.30 Welsh in a Year is a new course introduced in 2017. During the autumn term, practitioners attend university on a daily basis and receive training on oral work, grammar, methodology and written tasks. Visits are arranged to other schools for them to observe other practitioners delivering Welsh as a subject. During the term, they are expected to give short presentations, e.g., registration time, circle time and introduce a course and deliver micro lessons (roleplay teaching short lessons). In the spring term, the training at university continues but practitioners return to their own schools for one day per week. They work on a project or strategies to develop the Welsh language in their schools during these days, and work with an officer from their regional consortium or local authority. In the summer term practitioners attend university for three days per week, their own schools for one day, and a Welsh-medium school for one day per week or for a whole week during the last half term. They have an opportunity to observe teaching methods in a Welsh-medium school, practise their Welsh language skills, and co-teach some sessions.

Other Welsh language professional learning opportunities

- 3.31 The Scheme is not the only source of training or professional learning relating to the Welsh language and Welsh-medium teaching available to practitioners. There is support for schools from their regional education consortia challenge advisers beyond that offered by the Sabbatical courses (this support is funded through the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant). The National Centre for Learning Welsh also offers free online 'taster' courses that introduce Welsh vocabulary and everyday phrases. The Centre also offers free 'Welcome' courses that introduce simple vocabulary and phrases; one version of the course is tailored towards education practitioners.

4. Theory of Change

4.1 Theory of change is a method of planning and evaluation that explains how a programme or project's activities contribute towards a chain of changes that lead to the intended outcomes. A theory of change was prepared as part of this evaluation.

Developing the theory

4.2 Often, theories of change are developed when projects are being planned, to develop an understanding of the proposed changes. No theory of change was developed for the Scheme during its planning phase. Developing a theory of change at the point of evaluation is also useful as it highlights the key monitoring indicators required and identifies whether there are gaps in the data available. It also sets out a framework for assessing whether the Scheme is designed in a way that enables it to achieve the desired outcomes and provides a structure for analysing and examining the impact of the Scheme.

Interpreting and developing the Sabbatical Scheme theory of change

4.3 The starting point for developing a theory of change was desk-based research from moderation reports, previous evaluations, course promotion materials and discussions with Welsh Government officials. From this initial research, the main actions, from planning to longer-term impacts associated with the Scheme, were identified and confirmed. The initial research also identified some of the assumptions and conditions that needed to be established to enable the Scheme to achieve the desired outcomes. These findings were used to create our initial theory of change.

4.4 By identifying the actions that need to be taken to achieve the desired changes, and also considering the assumptions underpinning these, it was possible to identify the data and information the research needed to collect to show whether or not these changes had occurred. This, in turn, informed the content of the topic guides used during the fieldwork interviews (Appendix B).

4.5 After conducting the fieldwork, the evaluation team adapted and refined the draft theory, using the further findings and assumptions that emerged. The theory of change presented in this report is therefore one that has evolved during the

evaluation, into a process that has informed the research, and also into a research tool that has been refined based on fieldwork findings.

- 4.6 The intention was to review the theory further at the end of the evaluation fieldwork by holding discussions with wider stakeholders during a workshop session. The workshop had to be cancelled due to restrictions imposed in the light of COVID-19. As a result, there has been very little discussion on the theory among partners involved in the Scheme. The theory presented here should be considered to still be in draft form, and a form that would therefore benefit from further refinement.

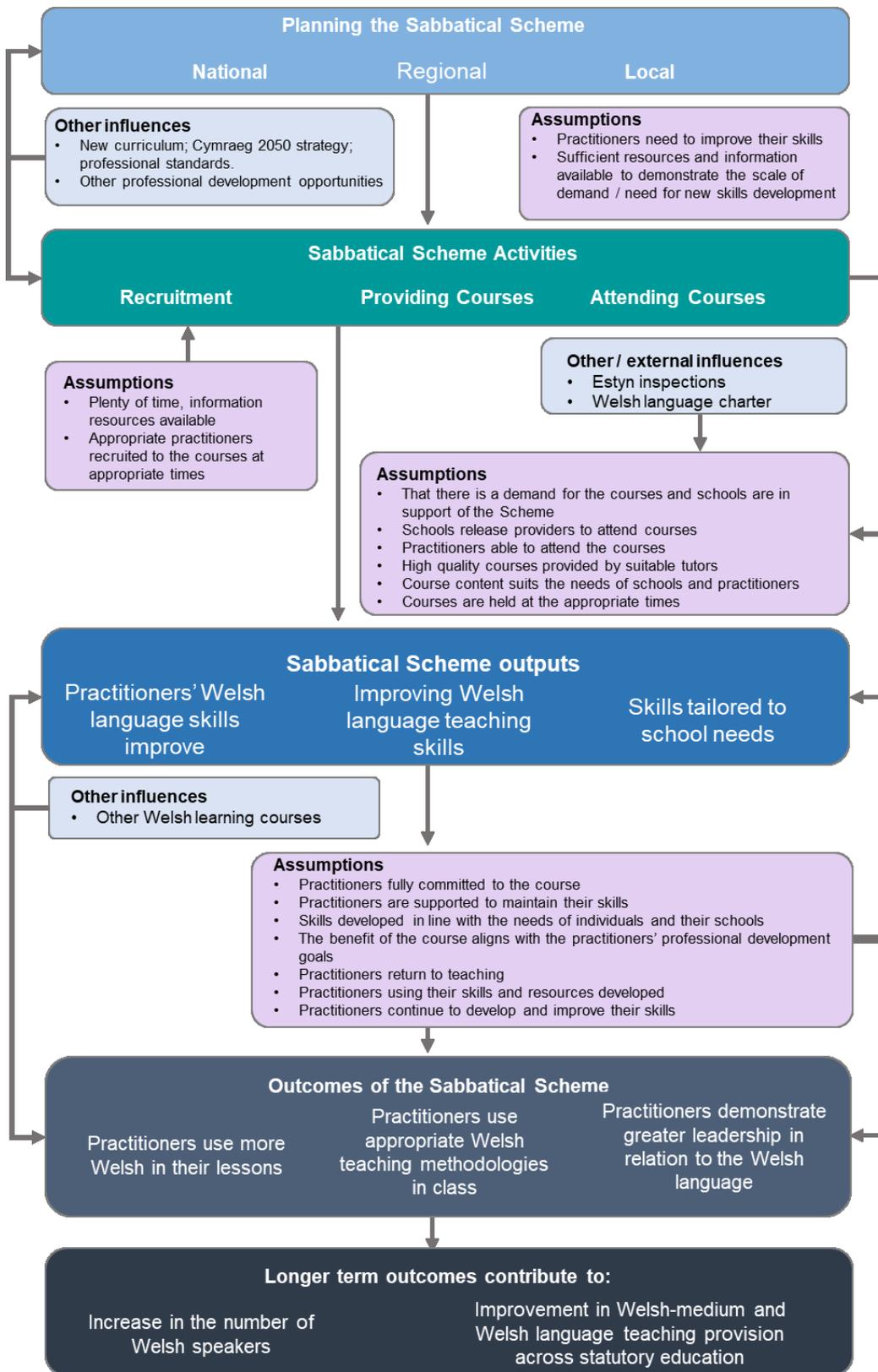
Description of the Sabbatical Scheme theory of change

Overview of the Theory of Change

- 4.7 The theory underpinning the Scheme is that practitioners' Welsh language skills and their use of teaching methodologies need to be improved, and that running Sabbatical courses away from the workplace is a good way of improving these skills. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the theory of change and shows the main logical steps, from the initial planning of the Scheme to achieving the outcome of improving language skills and methodology, and longer-term outcomes beyond.
- 4.8 The first stage of the theory relates to planning the delivery of the Scheme at a local, regional and national level. The next stage involves recruitment and training activities implemented as a result of these plans, followed by the expected outputs of those activities, including an improvement in Welsh language skills and Welsh language teaching skills (or teaching through the medium of Welsh for those attending an Advanced level course). The theory described in Figure 4.1 shows that achieving these outputs should lead to outcomes such as practitioners using more Welsh across the curriculum and / or using more accurate Welsh in class. The theory shows that these outcomes, in turn, should contribute to longer-term impacts such as improving the teaching and learning of Welsh in schools, increasing the number of practitioners able to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh, and increasing the number of Welsh speakers.
- 4.9 Finally, Figure 4.1 summarises the assumptions or conditions that need to be at play, as well as some of the external factors, that are beyond the direct control of the Scheme, e.g. national strategies and policies that influence the Scheme's

progress along these stages. These assumptions and the external factors are considered in more detail in the sections that follow.

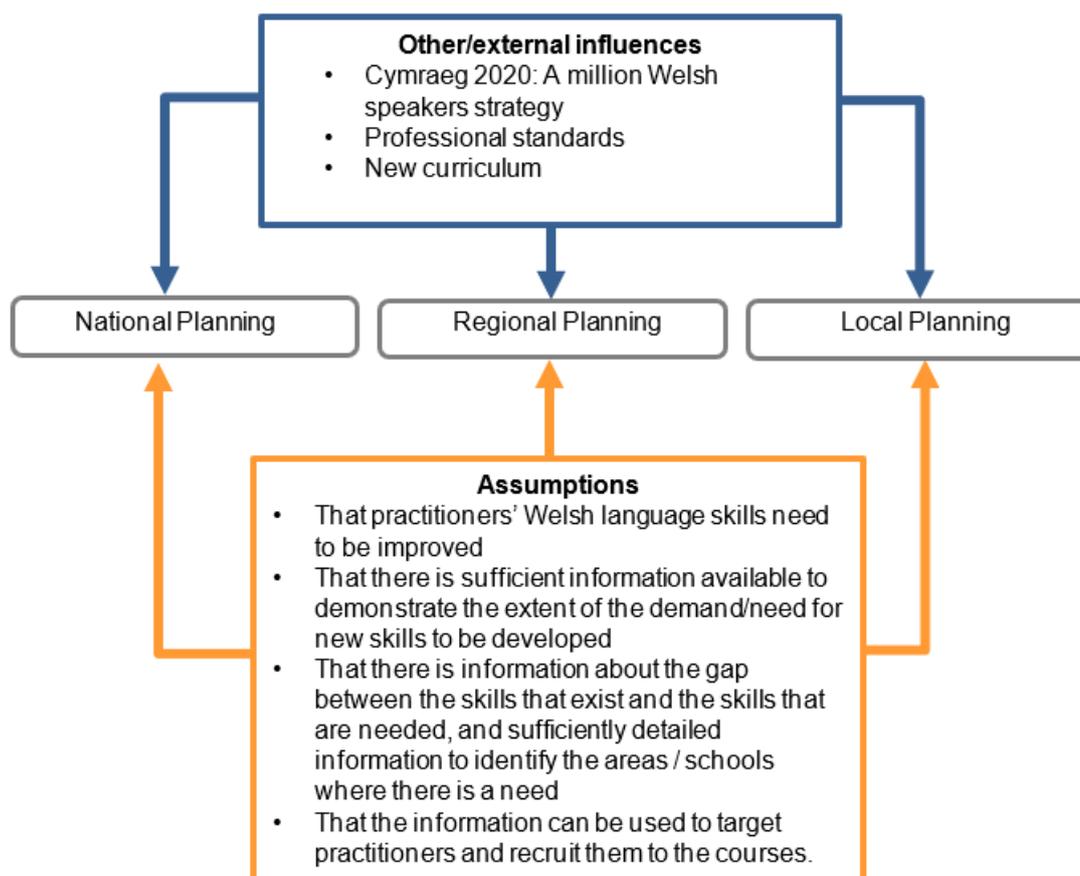
Figure 4.1: Overview of Sabbatical Scheme Theory of Change



Detail: Planning the Sabbatical Scheme

- 4.10 Figure 4.2 offers a more detailed look at the theory that shows what can influence the planning of the Scheme at a national, regional and local level together with the associated assumptions.
- 4.11 Our theory shows how national strategies and priorities can influence the need for the Scheme. For example, during the period under review in this evaluation (2013-2019), Welsh Government published its strategy for the Welsh language, *Cymraeg 2050*. The strategy sets a target of creating a million Welsh speakers by the year 2050. The strategy identifies the need to change the way Welsh is taught at school and increase the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh, if this target is to be achieved – see paragraph 3.3.
- 4.12 The period featured in the evaluation was also one of significant change in education, with the publication of a new curriculum that places expectations on schools to improve the way Welsh is taught from September 2022 onwards. During the same period the new professional standards were introduced which set out the need for practitioners to take action to seek opportunities to use and improve their Welsh language understanding and skills.
- 4.13 These policies and strategies set the context for the Scheme and drive the need to increase the number of practitioners able to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh. It is assumed that there is sufficient information available on how many practitioners need to be upskilled to achieve the aims set out in these strategies, and that this information is available in a way that enables upskilling needs to be understood at a local and school level. The evaluation fieldwork was designed to assess the extent to which there was sufficient information about the need to upskill practitioners.

Figure 4.2: Theory of Change at the Activity Planning Stage



4.14 Figure 4.2 describes the theory behind the design of the Scheme as understood by the evaluators, and presents the associated assumptions. There is some data already available that can shed light on some of the assumptions, and further evidence was gathered during the fieldwork for the evaluation. This is summarised in Figure 4.3 (and similarly in Figures 4.5, 4.7 and 4.9), i.e. consideration of the data already available to quantify what occurs in planning and to verify assumptions; the additional information gathered as part of the evaluation and the data and information gaps that remain.

Figure 4.3: Theory of Change at the Activity Planning Stage: data requirements

Data needed	Existing data and its source	Additional data collected as part of the evaluation	Gaps in available data
<p>The size of the gap between the Welsh language skills required, and the skills practitioners possess.</p> <p>This would provide us with information on the extent of the need to increase practitioners' Welsh language skills.</p> <p>In order to produce this information, data will be required on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the required number of practitioners with the ability to teach Welsh in English-medium schools and teach through the medium of Welsh; the number of practitioners able to teach Welsh in English-medium schools and teach through the medium of Welsh. 	<p>Sources</p> <p>School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC): An individual practitioner level collection by each school (including information about the school's language medium): Welsh language skills levels (according to the Welsh Language Competency Framework for Education Practitioners); a workforce that can work through the medium of Welsh (and does so, or not), and those who teach Welsh as a subject. In addition the SWAC will collect information on recruitment to vacancies by subject, and whether candidates were required to be able to teach through the medium of Welsh.⁶</p> <p>Frequency: annual</p> <p>Education Workforce Council Register of Practitioners: information on the number of practitioners according to their ability to speak Welsh; the number of practitioners according to their ability to work through the medium of Welsh, and the number of practitioners trained to teach Welsh as a subject. Note: the Register contains information about practitioners who are not teaching at the time.</p> <p>Frequency: annual</p> <p>Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC): numbers of practitioners able to teach through the medium of Welsh (Note: elements of data on workforce in PLASC will soon be replaced by the SWAC, but the data will continue to be a source for identifying trends over time)</p> <hr/> <p>Annual reports on the progress made on the Welsh language strategy <i>Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers</i> report on the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh, by sector. These reports provide a partial, annual picture at a national level</p> <p>Source – <i>Cymraeg 2050</i> annual report⁷</p>	<p>Information and views were gathered from stakeholders (regional consortia officers in particular) about the need for the training in their regions.</p>	<p>Consistent data at a national level relating to practitioners' Welsh language training needs.</p> <p>The difference between the Welsh language skills available among school practitioners and the Welsh language skills required.</p>

⁶ Information can be found on the Welsh Government on the [School Workforce Annual Census \(SWAC\)](#)

⁷ *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh Speakers* – Annual report 2019–20, available at [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers – Annual report 2019-20](#).

	<p>At a regional level, the regional consortia's high-level plans are presented annually in their business plans, but they do not contain details on workforce skills gaps.</p> <p>Source - Regional and county officers work closely with their schools to identify skills development needs but no information on this has been published.</p>		
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Implementation of the Scheme

- 4.15 Figure 4.4 describes the theory implicit in the Scheme's activities, namely running the courses, and recruiting practitioners to attend them. Recruiting the most appropriate practitioners to the courses depends on sufficient information existing on the extent of upskilling needed within the regional consortia to enable them to identify the most suitable practitioners. It is also assumed that sufficient time and resources are available to liaise with schools and practitioners to share the details and potential advantages of the courses as well as encouraging their participation. The theory also states that successful recruitment depends on the ability to ensure that it is the practitioners who will be able to use the skills once they have returned to school who are recruited to the courses.
- 4.16 It was beyond the scope of the evaluation to assess the content and standard of the courses themselves, and there is a process in place for moderating the content of the courses provided.⁸ However, the evaluation was able to gather information on whether the course content matched what practitioners and schools felt they needed. The evaluation was also able to examine whether the courses were being run during periods of the year that were best suited to schools and practitioners.
- 4.17 It is assumed that practitioners' willingness and ability to attend the courses also depends on a number of factors, including: support from their schools and schools' willingness to release them; that there is sufficient information about the courses available to them, that the courses are in convenient locations and at convenient times, and that practitioners attend the courses that suit their skills needs as individuals and the skills needs of the school.
- 4.18 The theory shows that there are other factors, beyond the process of raising awareness of the Scheme and the recruitment process, that could also influence the needs of schools and individual practitioners to increase their Welsh language skills and therefore, possibly, the demand for the Scheme's courses. As noted in Chapter 3, the Scheme is influenced by external factors such as preparing for a new curriculum and meeting new professional standards, and it is assumed that these considerations also, by now, influence practitioners' and schools' aspiration to participate in the courses.

⁸ There is a moderation contract as part of the Scheme. An individual is employed to moderate the three providers' courses and report on that to Welsh Government.

4.19 Interpreting the theory behind planning the Scheme's activities has enabled consideration of the available evidence to test the theory and evidence that needs to be gathered in order to review the recruitment and training activities. Figure 4.5 sets out the data available, and the data that would be required to fully assess the extent to which the Scheme is being implemented in a way that will lead to the desired outcomes. It also identifies some data and information gaps that remain.

Figure 4.4: Theory of Change for Scheme Implementation

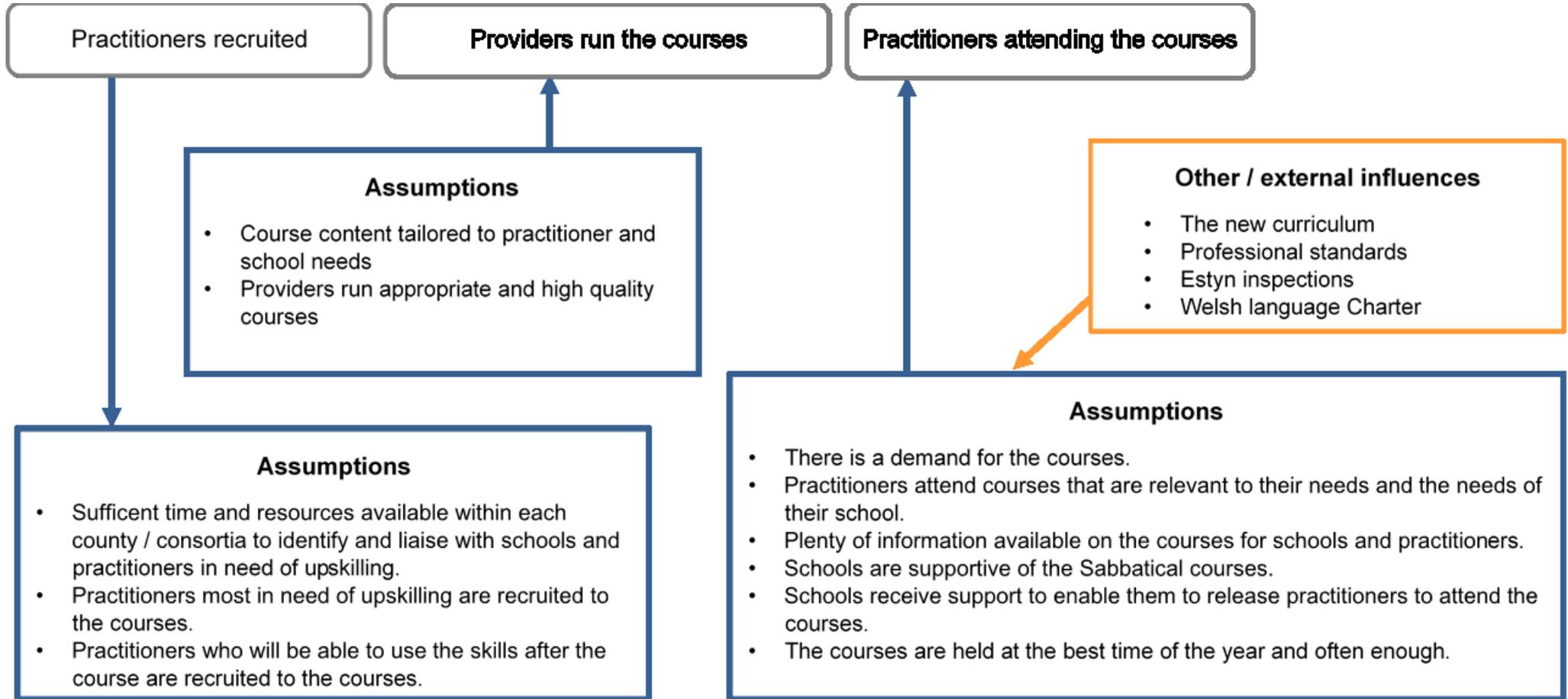


Figure 4.5: Theory of Change for Scheme Implementation: data needs

Data needed	Existing data and its source	Additional data collected as part of the evaluation	Gaps in available data
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of practitioners recruited on Scheme courses; • Number of courses run; • Number of practitioners attending each course. <p>By course and location.</p>	<p>Data on applications for courses.</p> <p>Monitoring data (provider and consortia reports to Welsh Government)</p> <p>Source: Welsh Government</p>		<p>No obvious gaps</p>
<p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there is a demand for the courses. 	<p>Some information on this is collected by regional consortia and local authorities.</p> <p>Source: Regional Consortia</p>		<p>Consistency in the level of detail of information available across regions and local authorities.</p>
<p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That schools are supportive of the courses; • That there is sufficient information available to schools and practitioners; • That practitioners can be released by the school to attend the course; • That courses are held in suitable locations; <p>That practitioners attend courses suitable to their level/needs and the needs of the school.</p>	<p>There are no data sources in existence that offer this data for the Scheme.</p>	<p>Exploring these areas was a core part of the fieldwork with practitioners, headteachers, training providers and regional consortia officers.</p>	<p>Feedback data relating to these points for all schools and practitioners.</p>
<p>How many resources the regional consortia / counties have to support the development of the skills</p>	<p>The regional consortia receive grant funding and as a grant condition, the consortia draw up annual plans for the provision of professional learning, including Welsh language skills courses.</p> <p>Source – There is information available on Welsh Government grant allocations to the consortia, and the consortia's annual reports are published. There is no breakdown available of what proportion of the funding goes on supporting the Scheme (recruitment to the courses and post-course support)</p>		<p>Information on how much of the funding available within the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant in Schools can be allocated, at a regional level, to support the planning of the Scheme.</p>

The Scheme's Outputs and Outcomes

- 4.20 In terms of outputs, it is expected that delivering the Scheme will improve practitioners' Welsh language skills and bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies, as Figure 4.6 shows.
- 4.21 The Scheme intends that the skills and teaching practices developed by the practitioners who attended the courses will enable them to use more Welsh in the classroom and, in a number of cases, across the curriculum. It is assumed that the courses need to be of a high standard, delivered by suitable and qualified tutors, and that practitioners are fully committed to these courses in order to achieve the output. It is also assumed that practitioners return to teaching in a school in Wales after completing the course and have the ability and confidence to put their new skills into practice. In addition, the theory is that practitioners' ability and confidence to put the skills into practice will be dependent on there being appropriate support and opportunities in school.
- 4.22 The Scheme is not the only training option available to support the development of school practitioners' Welsh language skills. For example, some consortia offer foundation level courses to practitioners in their area. The theory therefore identifies other influences that demonstrate that the outputs cannot necessarily be wholly attributed to the Scheme without also taking into account the other training and support that these practitioners may have received.
- 4.23 Another output included in our theory is that of supporting practitioners to show greater leadership in relation to the Welsh language within their school and to contribute to a more supportive ethos or attitude towards the Welsh language. The theory suggests that the Scheme's ability to achieve or support this depends on practitioners' ability to influence school policies and arrangements, and also on the extent to which the courses themselves develop practitioners' skills and support the objectives of practitioners' school development plans.
- 4.24 According to the theory, the Scheme develops skills that match the upskilling needs of individual practitioners as well as the skills required by their schools. In order to achieve this, it is assumed that the skills developed during the courses need to be in line with practitioners' professional development goals and support the aims of school development plans.

- 4.25 Figure 4.6 also shows how achieving the outputs can contribute to a number of outcomes, including practitioners using more accurate Welsh and including more Welsh in their lessons. These outcomes, in turn, will contribute to Welsh Government's strategic aim of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and support the changes in education brought about by the new curriculum.
- 4.26 It is assumed that the Scheme's ability to contribute to these outcomes depends on maintaining the outputs and outcomes over time, namely that those who have attended the courses maintain their skills or develop them further. This, in turn, depends on practitioners' ongoing skills needs being recognised in individual practitioners' professional development plans, and opportunities being available for them to continue to develop their skills.
- 4.27 Figure 4.7 sets out the data already available on outputs, and the data that would be required to gain a fuller picture of the Scheme's contribution to achieving the desired outcomes. It also identifies some data and information gaps that remain.

Figure 4.6: Theory of Change for Scheme outputs and outcomes

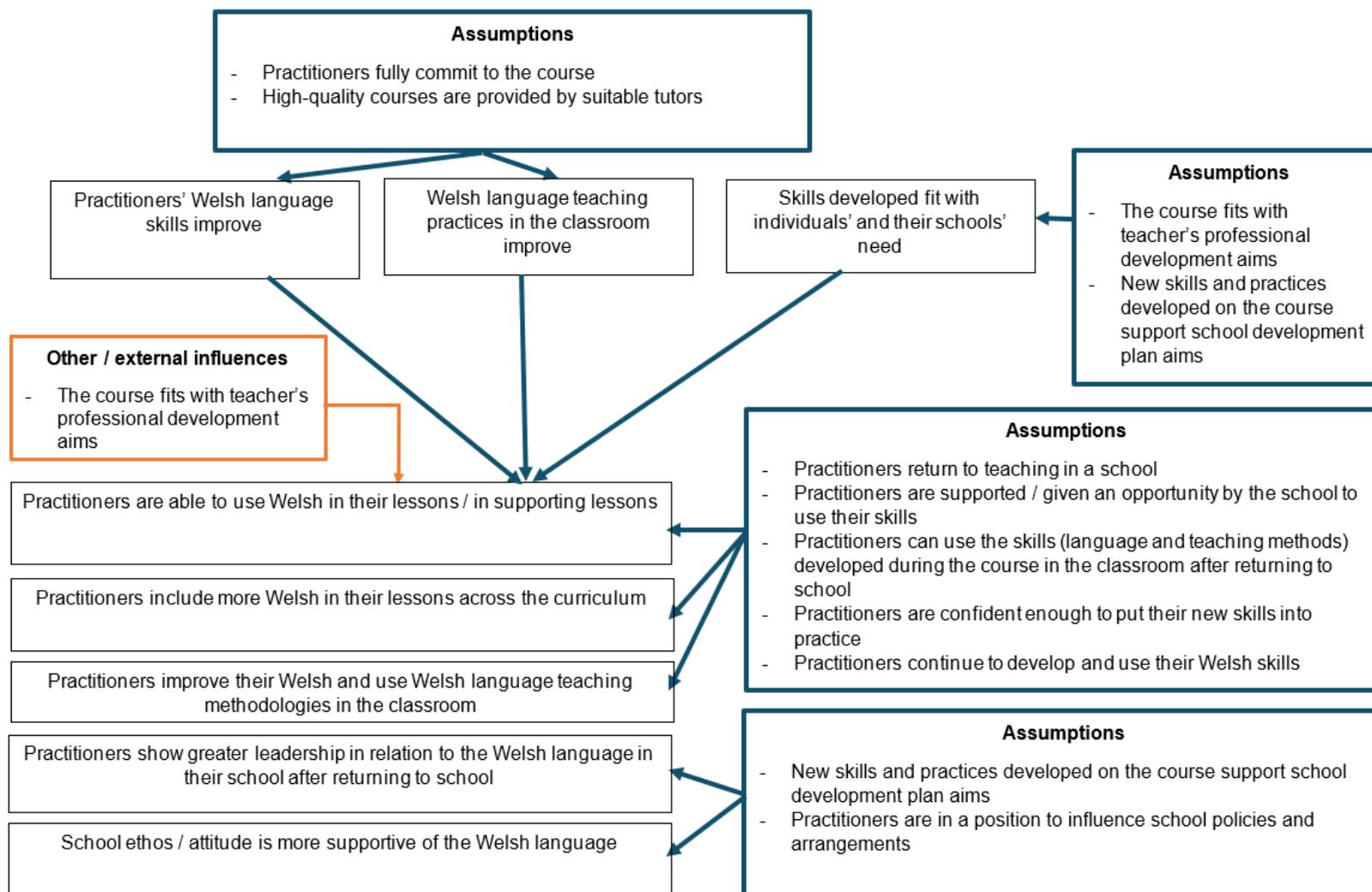


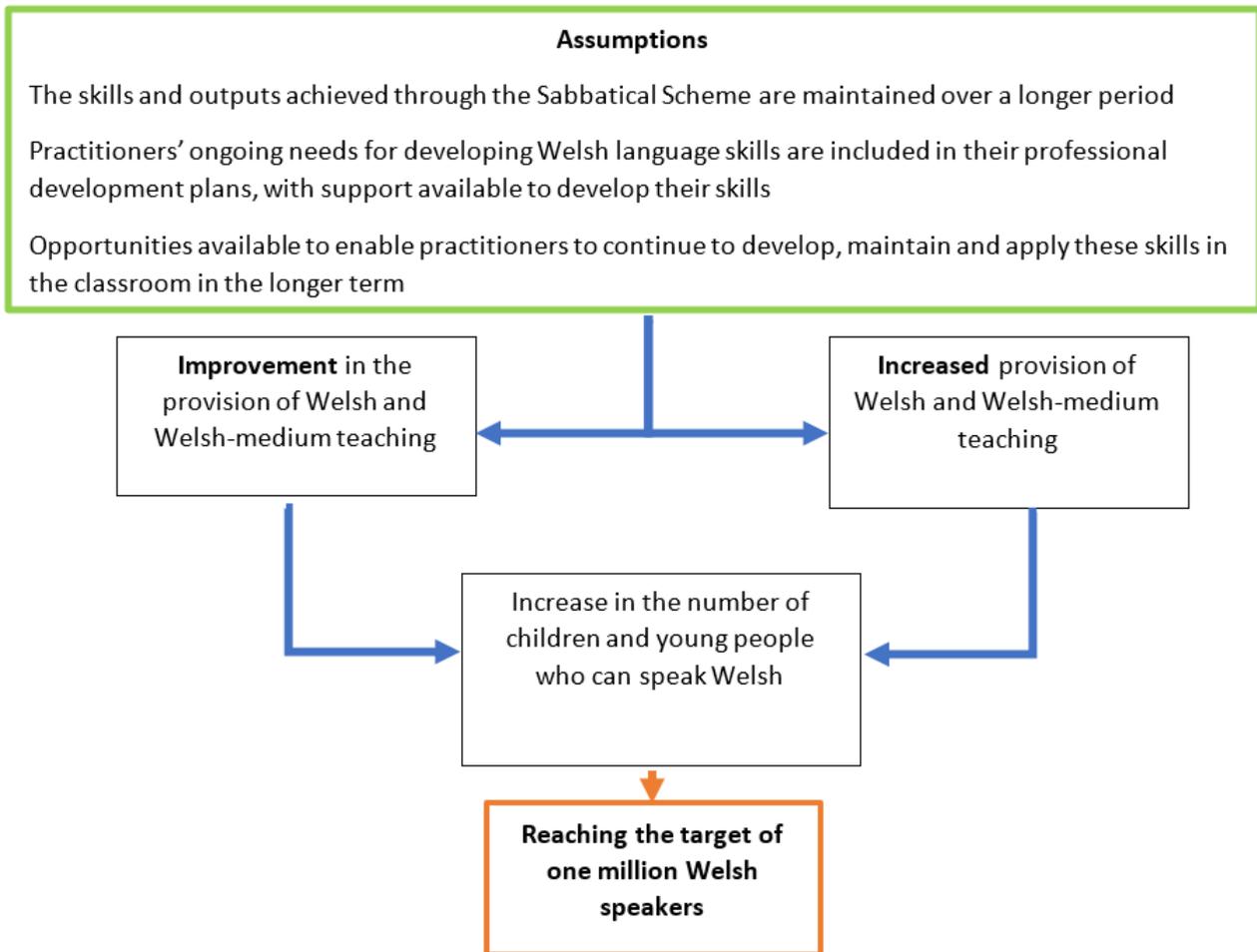
Figure 4.7: Theory of Change for Scheme outputs and outcomes: data needs

Data needed	Existing data and its source	Additional data collected as part of the evaluation	Gaps in available data
<p>Data to show outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of practitioners reporting that their language skills have improved and / or the number where assessment shows that skills have improved. • Number of practitioners reporting that their Welsh and / or Welsh-medium teaching skills have improved and / or the number where assessment shows that skills have improved. 	<p>Practitioners on Scheme courses have end of course assessments, but records of these assessments are not publicly available.</p> <p>Source – training providers</p>	<p>Information and views were collected from training providers, practitioners themselves and their headteachers</p>	<p>Monitoring data referring to the assumptions identified in the first column (data needed) that is systematically identified across all schools and practitioners involved in the Scheme.</p>
<p>Data needed to show if the assumptions are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence to show that the course is in line with teachers' professional development aims. • Evidence to show that the new skills and practices developed on the course support the school development plan aims 	<p>Information at individual school level</p> <p>Source - school development plans</p>	<p>Information and views were collected from practitioners themselves and their headteachers.</p>	
<p>Data needed to show if the assumptions are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of practitioners returning to teach in a school at the end of the Sabbatical course. • Number of practitioners reporting that they receive support / opportunity from the school to use their skills. • Number of practitioners indicating that they are able to use the skills (language and teaching methods) and resources developed during the course in class on their return to school. • Number of practitioners reporting that they are confident enough to put the new skills into practice. 	<p>No data sources relating to these assumptions available</p>		<p>Data referring to the assumptions identified in the first column (data needed)</p>

Longer term outcomes

- 4.28 According to our theory of change, delivering the Scheme's intended outputs will contribute to some longer-term outcomes, as Figure 4.8 shows. These include improvements and progress in the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools and teaching through the medium of Welsh. The assumption is that achieving these outputs will mean that practitioners with better language skills and a better understanding of the teaching methodologies will support learners' progress in terms of their Welsh language skills. This, in turn, will contribute to Welsh Government's strategic aim of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 4.29 It should be emphasised that the Scheme would only contribute towards the outcomes: there are a number of other factors that would also contribute to these longer-term outcomes. For example, teacher training and professional development activities undertaken outside the influence of the Scheme also contribute to improvements in the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools and teaching through the medium of Welsh. In terms of increasing the number of people able to speak Welsh by 2050, the factors influencing this extend from pre-school nursery education through to Welsh for adults learning opportunities. Therefore, the Scheme will contribute to these longer-term outcomes, and outcomes cannot therefore be directly attributed to the Scheme. However, if the Scheme achieves and maintains its intended outputs and outcomes, they are expected to contribute to the longer-term outcomes. According to the theory of change, the Scheme's contribution to these longer-term outcomes is based on the assumption that practitioners' needs in terms of developing Welsh language skills are included in their professional development plans. It also depends on the existence of opportunities to enable practitioners to continue to develop, maintain and use these skills in the classroom in the longer term.

Figure 4.8: Theory of Change of longer-term outcomes



4.30 Figure 4.9 sets out the data needed to review whether the Scheme has contributed to longer-term outcomes. It also sets out the sources of data currently available and gaps in the data.

Figure 4.9: Theory of Change of longer-term outcomes: data needs

Data needed	Existing data and its source	Additional data collected as part of the evaluation	Gaps in available data
<p>Data needed to examine contribution to longer-term outcomes.</p> <p>Note: for each of the areas below, the Sabbatical Scheme would merely contribute to these outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people's Welsh language skills 	<p>Numbers and percentages of speakers indicating ability in Welsh:</p> <p>Sources</p> <p>Population Census: numbers of people aged 3 and above indicating ability to understand, speak, read and write Welsh</p> <p>Frequency: every 10 years</p> <p>Annual Population Survey: numbers of people aged 3 and above indicating ability to understand, speak, read and write Welsh (also information on the frequency of speaking Welsh)</p> <p>Frequency: quarterly.</p> <p>National Survey for Wales: numbers of people aged 16 and above indicating ability to understand, speak, read and write Welsh (also information on frequency of speaking Welsh and fluency)</p> <p>Frequency: annual</p> <p>Language Use Surveys: numbers of people aged 3 and above indicating ability to understand, speak, read and write Welsh (also information on the frequency of speaking Welsh and fluency)</p> <p>Frequency: 1995, 2004-06, 2013-15; 2019-20</p> <p>Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC): information on pupils' fluency in Welsh and whether the pupil speaks Welsh at home (children aged 5 and above)⁶</p> <p>Frequency: annual</p>	<p>No additional data</p>	<p>Data that will enable an estimation of the extent to which the Scheme contributes to these outcomes. That is, the data gaps identified in Figures 4.3, 4.5 and 4.7.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practitioner skills: ability to teach Welsh and to teach through the medium of Welsh. 	<p>Sources</p> <p>School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC): An individual practitioner level collection by each school (including information about the school's language medium): Welsh language skills levels (according to the Welsh Language Competency Framework for Education Practitioners); a workforce that can work through the medium of Welsh (and does so, or not), and those who teach Welsh as a subject. In addition the SWAC will collect information</p>		

	<p>on recruitment to vacancies by subject, and whether candidates were required to be able to teach through the medium of Welsh.⁹</p> <p>Frequency: annual</p> <p>Education Workforce Council Register of Practitioners: information on the number of practitioners according to their ability to speak Welsh; the number of practitioners according to their ability to work through the medium of Welsh, and the number of practitioners trained to teach Welsh as a subject. Note: the Register contains information about practitioners who are not teaching at the time.¹⁰</p> <p>Frequency: annual</p> <p>Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC): numbers of practitioners able to teach through the medium of Welsh (Note: elements of data on workforce in PLASC will soon be replaced by the SWAC, but the data will continue to be a source for identifying trends over time).¹¹</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil attainment, and the quality of teaching 	<p>Source</p> <p>StatsWales: information on achievement in GCSE examinations</p> <p>Attainment data is available at school level, for planning and evaluation purposes at school, authority and regional level, but is not available at a national level. Learner attainment data is available nationally at GCSE level.</p> <p>Estyn inspections: the quality of teaching Welsh and through the medium of Welsh</p>		

⁹ [School Workforce Annual Census \(SWAC\)](#)

¹⁰ [Education workforce statistics](#) on the Education Workforce Council website.

¹¹ Available in [PLASC: Welsh Language](#) section of StatsWales website.

5. Findings

This chapter presents the evidence gathered through interviews held with stakeholders, headteachers and / or members of school senior management teams and practitioners. It covers planning at a national and regional level; the recruitment process; participation in the course and follow-up provision, and the impact and influence attending the courses had had. The findings presented elaborate on the stages and assumptions included in the theory of change.

Strategic planning and use of the Sabbatical Scheme

- 5.1 At a national level, the *Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers* strategy, the introduction of the new curriculum and the professional standards influence the need to improve Welsh language skills in the workforce and therefore the need to fund the training available through the Scheme.
- 5.2 Regional consortia officers are responsible for identifying the need for the courses within their region, and share this information with Welsh Government as part of the process of determining the number and level of courses that will be funded. The funding available via Welsh Government determines how much training can be supported. The consortia's local knowledge of the need for upskilling determines which geographical areas and which schools within these areas are to be targeted for this training.
- 5.3 The regional officers explained that they used a variety of methods to gather information on the potential needs and demand for Welsh language training courses and bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies among practitioners in their area. Some officers indicated that they met with headteachers and / or sent them letters and short questionnaires to ask them to identify their training needs. Other officers indicated that they co-ordinated a record or map of skills needs at school or cluster level. These methods have enabled consortia officers to identify schools and geographical areas where skills gaps exist, and consortia officers cited that there were a number of areas where skills gaps remain.
- 5.4 At a local level, Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) are one planning tool, and outline local authorities' intentions to deliver on goals and targets for Welsh-medium education in their area. One of the aims of the WESPs is for LAs to plan the workforce in terms of increasing its Welsh language skills capacity. The plans

are expected to refer to how the Scheme is intended to contribute to the development of these skills. A sample (12 of the 22) WESPs was reviewed as part of the evaluation's desk-based research. It found that most of the local authorities included in this sample referred to the Scheme in their WESP and indicated their intention in terms of increasing the number of practitioners who will participate in the Scheme and / or in using the Scheme in a more strategic way. Further details were limited. Only a small number of the WESPs studied went much beyond referring to the Scheme and gave details of how they intended to use the Scheme to meet the Welsh language skills needs of schools and practitioners in their area. These WESPs were prepared in 2016 (for the three-year period 2017 to 2020) and therefore the information contained in them is now dated.

- 5.5 It became clear from the evidence gathered as part of the evaluation that the data available at a local and regional level about the need to upskill school practitioners was dependent on the information collected from individuals within the consortia and the local authority. There is no consistent record of this information, and it is not widely shared. As the information is often collected during direct contact between consortia officers / *athrawon bro* and schools, it is assumed to be up to date. However, because the information gathering process is not consistent across areas and because the information is not shared systematically, there are limitations to the current arrangements.
- 5.6 In order to achieve greater consistency in the methods of collecting and recording this information, Welsh Government worked with the regional consortia in 2018 to undertake a teachers' Welsh language skills survey. One regional officer referred to using the results of that survey to plan to meet the development needs of the local workforce. However, despite there being a good response from the schools to that survey, the officer from the same consortium who expressed a view on this explained that the picture was incomplete, and that the results were of limited use in planning to meet needs.
- 5.7 Our theory of change shows that planning the Scheme depends on having evidence that shows how much demand there is for developing new skills, and that there is sufficient data available to identify the areas and schools where the greatest need exists for support and training provision.
- 5.8 The findings presented above suggest that authorities and consortia have developed informed planning approaches to needs in their areas. However, the

quality and nature of the data is not consistent, and in some cases is anecdotal in nature.

Recruitment

- 5.9 According to the theory of change, in order for the Scheme to achieve the desired outputs and outcomes, the courses need to recruit those practitioners most in need of upskilling. The Scheme's ability to do this is based on the availability of data and information that identifies where the training is most needed, and that the recruitment process is aimed at these schools.
- 5.10 It is consortia officers and local authority *athrawon bro* who are primarily responsible for engaging with schools and recruiting practitioners to the courses. Those officers have a good knowledge of the situation and needs of local schools and therefore, in the view of a number of stakeholders interviewed, are better placed than the training providers to use the information to inform the recruitment process. Consortia officers and training providers reported that the systems for identifying local need for training and targeting recruitment were working well accordingly, and had led to a large number of suitable practitioners benefiting from the Scheme.
- 5.11 As well as identifying the schools most in need of support, the recruitment process depends on time and resources being available to engage with schools. Consortia officers indicated that they were allocating time to do this. However, it was also noted that the time and resources available to them to focus on this recruitment process were at times limited.
- 5.12 Some of the responsibility for recruiting practitioners to the courses also falls within the remit of the training providers. This means that consortia officers, *athrawon bro* and training providers need to be involved in targeting schools. All interviewees from the regional consortia and training providers reported that there was good collaboration between them most of the time. However, a number of these interviewees also noted that not all aspects of the recruitment process ran smoothly. Some providers and consortia officers stated that involving a number of agencies in the process could lead to some confusion about who does what, with this at times creating a risk of unnecessary duplication of some recruitment activities.
- 5.13 Some stakeholders noted that a lack of communication and information sharing between partners had caused barriers in the past. An example was cited by one

consortium officer where a lack of knowledge of the eligibility criteria for the courses had led to a situation where they had recruited a practitioner to the Welsh in a Year course without understanding that he was not eligible because he had already been on a Foundation level course. The officer had not understood this, as that rule had not previously been clearly communicated to them. Another example of a lack of information sharing identified by some stakeholders from the regions was that confirmation from Welsh Government of what courses will be available in the coming year can be late. Regional officials explained that these delays reduced the time available for them to recruit to the courses, and posed some planning challenge to schools in terms of who they would release to attend courses.

- 5.14 Although only a small number of examples of challenges in the recruitment process were identified by the stakeholders interviewed, they highlight the confusion that can arise when a number of organisations are undertaking similar processes in terms of marketing and recruitment.
- 5.15 These findings suggest that there is a need to improve communication and information sharing among all organisations involved in the recruitment process. They also suggest that information relating to the eligibility criteria for each course needs to be made available and shared with all stakeholders regularly.
- 5.16 The findings noted above suggest that the recruitment process, although challenging at times, is targeted towards those schools where the greatest need for training has been identified. It is for individual schools to decide whether or not to participate in the Scheme, however, and as noted below, in many cases it is for individual practitioners to decide whether or not to participate. Regional officers also explained that the courses are not limited solely to those schools that are targeted. If other schools show a particular interest in the training, they will not normally be refused. In addition, if the demand for places on the courses is lower than expected among the targeted schools, the course will be offered to other schools in the region. As a result, although recruitment is purposefully targeted at schools where the need is greatest, this does not necessarily lead in all cases to a situation where it is the targeted practitioners and schools that attend the courses provided.
- 5.17 In addition, the evaluation found that it is not possible to predict the demand for courses in all cases. Consortia officers stated that there are cases where schools and individual practitioners who would benefit from the training, and are eager to

attend the courses, are unable to do so. This is often because other requirements within the school arise that prevent them from attending the course as intended.

Deciding to participate

- 5.18 According to our theory of change, in order to attract practitioners to participate in the Sabbatical courses, there must be a demand for those courses. It is assumed, therefore, that the courses provided are relevant to the needs of schools and individual practitioners, and that sufficient information about the courses is available to schools and practitioners.
- 5.19 Most of the headteachers interviewed indicated that they had heard about the Scheme by e-mail or letter from their regional consortium. This suggests that information about the courses is available, and that this information is targeted purposefully towards the schools that the consortia are trying to recruit to the Scheme. Two headteachers noted, however, that they had found information about the Scheme off their own backs as they had searched for training opportunities to improve their staff's standard of Welsh.
- 5.20 Most practitioners had heard about the Scheme through their school, either from their headteacher directly or through an advertisement from the consortium or a training provider through the headteacher. Some practitioners reported that they had heard about the Scheme from their colleagues or friends in other schools. A small number of practitioners referred to hearing from *athrawon bro* / advisory teachers or the Welsh language co-ordinator directly.
- 5.21 Within the 80 course applications reviewed, the reasons for participation cited by headteachers repeatedly were that they anticipated that the Scheme would:
- support them in delivering school development plan priorities relating to increasing the use of Welsh;
 - support them in responding to recommendations relating to the use of Welsh made during the Estyn inspection;
 - support them in introducing a Siarter Iaith / Cymraeg Campus - and work towards a Siarter Iaith / Cymraeg Campus award;¹²

¹² The Siarter Iaith (Language Charter) (Welsh-medium primary schools) and Cymraeg Campus (English-medium primary schools) are programmes to promote the social use of Welsh in primary schools. An [Evaluation of the Welsh Language Charter and related programmes](#) was published in 2020.

- enable them to increase the use of Welsh across all subjects in their school in order to respond to the requirements of the new curriculum.

5.22 The reasons varied slightly according to the type of courses that practitioners were applying for. The need to develop skills that would support some of the school's Welsh language strategic aims (and particularly to prepare for the new curriculum) was the main reason cited by headteachers for encouraging practitioners to attend either the Entry or Foundation level courses. This confirms some elements of our theory of change, that is, that factors such as the introduction of the new curriculum and Estyn inspections can influence the demand that exists for the courses among schools.

5.23 Also according to our theory of change, the introduction of the new professional standards during the period in question and the Welsh language requirements included in the standards should be an additional factor in influencing the demand for the courses. However, none of the applications reviewed cited the new standards as a reason for applying for any of the courses. As these standards were not in place until September 2018, they may not have become a priority for schools during the period covered by this evaluation.

5.24 The reasons cited by headteachers in the applications for the Advanced level courses were to a large extent about the need to raise individual practitioners' language skills. A number of headteachers in the applications for Advanced level courses referred specifically to the need to ensure that staff members were able to use good quality Welsh when speaking and writing in class, and also when communicating with parents. The headteachers provided the same reason for participation in the Advanced level course during the interviews.

5.25 These findings suggest that headteachers consider the opportunities for upskilling offered by the Scheme as being in line with their school's Welsh language strategic needs and that they consider the training offered through the Scheme as a way of addressing them. The headteachers interviewed emphasised that the desire to participate would not have been sufficient to enable them to release practitioners to attend the courses if they had had to meet supply costs.

5.26 Within the sample of application forms reviewed, practitioners' motivation to apply varied according to course level. Most cited reasons relating to their desire to improve Welsh language skills as part of their own professional development. For example, among the practitioners applying for the Entry level course, several

referred to the opportunity to be able to use more incidental Welsh inside and outside the classroom as the main reason for wanting to attend the course. The main reason given by practitioners applying for a place on the Foundation level course was the opportunity to improve their ability and confidence to use more Welsh as well as developing new ideas on how to use more Welsh in the classroom. The desire to improve grammar, understand language rules and be able to write more accurately in Welsh were the main reasons given in the applications for the Advanced level courses. These candidates also wanted to be able to use more accurate Welsh in the classroom to improve the language skills of the children in the class.

5.27 Although most practitioners cited reasons relating to their personal professional development as the main reason for applying for a place on one of the courses, some of the practitioners interviewed (10 out of 54 across the courses) cited the link between course participation and their school's development plans, citing similar examples to those noted above by headteachers.

5.28 Regional officers' views on practitioners' and headteachers' reasons for choosing to participate supported that identified by headteachers and practitioners themselves. However, some regional officers indicated that they were aware that some headteachers had a less positive agenda for supporting their practitioners to attend the course, and that they were wary of that:

'I am aware that some headteachers want to get rid of a teacher for a year, for various reasons, so the team has to watch out for that; but I hope the staff know their areas'. (Regional consortium officer; translation from Welsh)

5.29 Most of the headteachers interviewed indicated that where a member of their staff had attended Foundation and/or Entry level courses, they offered all practitioners in their school the opportunity to participate in these courses and did not select specific practitioners to apply. In these cases, therefore, it was individual practitioners who chose to participate in one of the courses or not, not the school. The main reason for this, given by headteachers, was that it was not possible to force practitioners to attend the course. These headteachers stated that they also felt that the individual practitioners' motivation and personal interest in improving their Welsh language skills should be the main reason for choosing to follow the course.

'We inform all the teachers about the offer of doing the course and see who's interested - to date only one teacher has shown interest and taken up the course'. (Headteacher of an English-medium primary school)

'Once we find out which courses are being run each year, as well as when and where they are being delivered, we let staff members know and ask anyone who's interested to let us know. We don't usually restrict people although the practicality of releasing staff can be a challenge'. (Headteacher of an English-medium primary school)

- 5.30 Although most headteachers allowed practitioners to decide for themselves whether or not they wished to apply for one of the courses, there were some exceptions. Some headteachers offered examples of how they had refused to allow some practitioners who wanted to attend one of the courses to do so because of other commitments that the practitioners had in the school at the time. Very few examples were offered by headteachers in the interviews of targeting or encouraging specific teachers to attend Entry and Foundation level courses. This relatively unbiased approach to selecting practitioners to attend these courses seems to be at odds with the more strategic intentions for participation in the Scheme identified by headteachers in the application forms. This approach of self-selection raises the question of whether this ensures that the most appropriate practitioners, as identified in the theory of change, are enrolled on the courses in all cases – that is, the practitioners who most need to be upskilled as well as those who will be able to use the skills after the end of the course.
- 5.31 In the case of the Advanced level courses, headteachers offered examples of how they had encouraged specific practitioners in their school to attend the course to improve some elements of their language skills. However, even with the Advanced level courses, there were several situations where the practitioner's desire to attend the course was the starting point for seeking a place.
- 5.32 Among headteachers who had supported a Welsh in a Year practitioner, there were more examples where headteachers, or other members of the senior management team, had been more proactive and had placed more emphasis on selecting (or refusing to allow) practitioners to attend the course rather than allowing the decision to sit with the individual practitioners. The headteachers interviewed explained that releasing a member of staff for a whole year was a significant time investment on the part of the school and the practitioner. Most of these headteachers wanted to

ensure that the practitioners selected to attend the Welsh in a Year course were able to undertake the course commitments and were able to take on responsibilities for improving or increasing the provision of Welsh-medium teaching and /or activities, across the school after completing the course.

Information and support before starting the course

- 5.33 Our theory of change shows that sufficient information is needed about the courses to ensure that practitioners choose to attend the courses provided through the Scheme. Most practitioners interviewed noted that finding further information about the courses was easy once they had successfully applied for a place on one of the courses. Practitioners reported that they had obtained this information through prior conversations with the course tutors, and sometimes from other practitioners who had attended one of the courses.

'They gave me a little more insight into the kind of workload that I should expect and so on'. (Foundation level course practitioner)

- 5.34 However, some of the practitioners (10 out of the 54) felt that they had not received enough information about the level of the course and the expectations upon them during the sabbatical period. Two of these were supply teachers who were given a place on a course after being on a reserve list, and who were perhaps outside the usual process in terms of receiving information through schools. The other eight had difficulties finding the right information:

'It was difficult to find the right information at the beginning - the sabbatical website and [University] websites are not entirely in line with each other in terms of dates. But once I was in contact with the main tutor, I had enough information, because I got information directly from her and I knew what to review beforehand'. (Foundation level course practitioner)

- 5.35 Most practitioners stated that they had had an informal telephone or face-to-face interview with the course providers, in order to assess the level of their language skills and have a conversation about the content and expectations of the course. A small number indicated that they had not been interviewed, or that they did not remember being interviewed.

- 5.36 The theory of change shows that ensuring that schools are supported to release practitioners from their day-to-day job for a period of time is an important element of

practitioners' ability to attend the courses. As stated in Chapter 2, schools receive financial support through the Scheme to pay for a supply teacher / teaching assistant. However, several practitioners and headteachers referred to the additional good support they had received from an officer from the local authority or the region. This included support in relation to information on the administrative side e.g. processes associated with arranging a supply teacher. However, they did express concern that the capacity of those officers to offer support appeared to have been reduced in recent years.

Views on the courses

- 5.37 Our theory of change shows that providers' ability to run courses that will lead to the desired outputs depends on their ability to run appropriate, high-quality courses.
- 5.38 All providers deliver the same syllabus across the centres; most Sabbatical courses have been accredited and each university's internal procedures are implemented for quality assurance. It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess the course quality. Therefore, those questioned were not asked to comment on this.
- 5.39 The theory of change also shows that delivering courses that will lead to the desired outputs depends on the content of the courses meeting the needs of practitioners and schools. It is also based on the assumption that the courses are held at times and in locations convenient for practitioners to attend. The following paragraphs present the findings of the evaluation relating to these points.

Structure and nature of courses

- 5.40 There was a strong consensus in practitioners' and headteachers' responses that the structure and content of the courses was suitable for them. A large number (spontaneously) stated their view that the teaching provision was also of a very high standard. The majority also considered the location of the course convenient, and the time of year and course duration appropriate. There were some exceptions to this, however. Some participants, particularly assistants in more rural areas, found it difficult to travel to the course location.
- 5.41 The majority of practitioners and headteachers felt that the duration of courses was appropriate. However, of the 22 practitioners who had attended the Foundation level course, four indicated that they would have preferred the course to have been

longer, as they felt that course duration was not sufficient to enable them to develop their language skills to the level they would have wished.

- 5.42 Two headteachers who had released practitioners to attend the Welsh in a Year course felt that the course was too long. Allowing teachers to be out of school for 12 months was said to be too disruptive to the school and to the practitioners themselves. As a result, these headteachers were less eager to release teachers who may wish to undertake a Welsh in a Year course in the future.

'The one term course is brilliant but having a teacher out of school for a year is challenging. This teacher who was on the year course felt 'out of the loop ' when she returned and found it difficult to step back to school on her return – it took a little time to adjust'. (Headteacher of an English-medium primary school).

- 5.43 Another headteacher, who had released one teacher to attend a Foundation level course, said they had no intention of releasing any practitioners to attend the Welsh in a Year course. The headteacher felt that a year was too long for a teacher to be out of school – particularly in the current period with many changes associated with the introduction of the new curriculum taking place within schools.

'It [The Foundation Course] was just the right length of time to make sure that the teacher could develop the skills without the process being too disruptive to the school. A year long course may, in my opinion, have been too long'.

(Headteacher of an English-medium primary school).

- 5.44 Although funding is available to pay for supply staff while the practitioner is away from school, the above findings suggest that this is not always enough of an incentive to release them from school.

- 5.45 Some of the practitioners who had taken part in the Foundation level course and their headteachers stated that finding a convenient time to attend the full-time course for 11 weeks was always going to be challenging. In their view, there is never an ideal time but that some terms are less convenient, for example the beginning of the autumn term when teachers are getting to know their new class, or the summer term when teachers need to produce end-of-year reports. One teacher who had attended the Intermediate level course during the summer term explained that she had developed good Welsh language skills during the course. However, the end of the course coincided with the start of the school summer holidays, and as she did not have the opportunity to speak any Welsh outside school during the

summer, she felt that her Welsh language skills had become 'rusty' by the time she returned to school and before she had had the opportunity to use them in her class.

- 5.46 The theory shows that encouraging practitioners to attend the courses depends on the assumption that the courses are held at convenient times and in convenient locations. The above findings suggest that the times and locations for holding the courses were not convenient for all practitioners included in the sample interviewed – but for the majority the arrangements were satisfactory.

Course content

- 5.47 Over half of the practitioners interviewed (from all course levels) felt that their course was very intensive, and some explained that they often felt out of their depth, particularly during the first week of the course. This was the case for practitioners who had attended the Foundation and Entry level courses mainly. In almost all cases, these practitioners also stated that they felt that the experience, though challenging, had been worthwhile, and welcomed the fact that they had been pushed hard to improve their Welsh language skills.
- 5.48 Practitioners from all courses explained that their language skills, both written and oral, as well as their teaching methods, had been assessed regularly. Most (around three quarters) felt that the assessments were appropriate and that they were comfortable with the assessment methods. However, of the practitioners who had followed a Foundation level course, five reported that they had found the assessment stressful, and two stated that they felt that too much time had been allocated to assessing progress. In their view, this time could have been used to learn more.
- 5.49 Training providers and regional officers felt that the content and structure of the courses suited practitioners' needs, but they raised a few points about how, in their view, the provision currently available could be improved. All regional officers interviewed, in addition to some providers and headteachers, were eager to consider other and alternative methods of developing Welsh language skills. Some offered ideas about methods of organising training within the workplace and moving towards more distance learning so that there were additional options for practitioners to improve their skills without committing to an intensive Sabbatical course.

- 5.50 The above ideas were offered as suggestions of additional elements that could be included as part of the Scheme. The ideas offered raise questions about the understanding among the different stakeholders of the scope of the Scheme. It is clear from the comments that there is a demand for more Welsh language training and support for practitioners, in addition to what is currently available. However, consortia already have a role in delivering this type of less intensive training to supplement the Scheme. It was clear from the interviews that a number of practitioners and headteachers consider the Scheme to be the principal, if not the sole source of Welsh language training and support available to them. That may be what sits at the heart of their view that the Scheme needs to evolve and expand to provide other types of support and training.
- 5.51 Based on the evidence gathered, it appears that further consideration may need to be given to how practitioners and headteachers understand and use the Scheme, rather than the Scheme design needing to change. Rather than expecting the Scheme to provide practitioners' entire Welsh language training, with the task of developing skills being complete at the end of a course, it is possible that they should be guided to look beyond the Scheme towards other training and support options (see paragraph 3.31), as part of individual practitioners' continuing professional development plans.
- 5.52 The theory of change shows that delivering courses that attract schools and practitioners is based on the assumption that the content of courses meets practitioners' and schools' needs. The findings presented above suggest that the content of courses provided through the Scheme meets the needs of the practitioners and headteachers interviewed.

Follow-up support after the courses: regional consortia

- 5.53 An output sought within the Scheme is that practitioners who attend the courses can:
- use Welsh in their lessons / in supporting lessons;
 - include more Welsh in their lessons across the curriculum;
 - use bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies in the classroom.

According to our theory of change, practitioners' ability to achieve this is based on the assumption that practitioners attending the courses:

- are supported and given the opportunity by the school to use their skills and resources after they return to school, and
- continue to develop and use their Welsh language skills after they return to school.

5.54 The evaluation considered how much support schools and practitioners received as part of the Scheme after they completed the course, and what other activities practitioners and schools were undertaking to maintain the skills developed during the course.

5.55 The Government's contract with the training providers is solely for the delivery of the courses, and the formal contact between the providers and participants ends at the end of the course. However, whilst offering support to practitioners after they have completed the sabbatical course is not part of the contract, some practitioners said that training providers had kept in touch with them after the course and had offered them informal after-care support in the process.

5.56 The role of the consortia is to provide follow-up support for the courses, and they do this via the support of the schools' *athrawon bro*/advisory teachers. Funding this provision, however, is outside the Scheme's contract, and it is for each individual consortium to determine what they fund and how they do so. However, some consortia officers noted that the time available to them to provide schools and practitioners with after-care support was limited. Officers explained that this had increasingly been a challenge in recent years with the number of former participants rising, and resources to support them remaining unchanged. The training providers also felt that there was a 'shortage of advisory teachers' and a lack of time to support the schools following the course.

5.57 Since these views were expressed by officers, one of the training providers has been contracted to create resources, including an after-care package, that will be developed in partnership with the consortia. This will increase the amount of after-care resources to which officers can refer practitioners from now on.

5.58 Practitioners interviewed were asked if they had received support after the courses, and the majority stated that they had not received any support from anyone outside the school following the courses.

'No after-care from the local consortium or the university - we would expect more considering investment in the course is high.' (Welsh in a Year course practitioner; translation from Welsh)

[There was] 'no support as I recall – just straight back into it after the course.'
(Entry level course practitioner)

5.59 Some practitioners and headteachers explained, however, that they had received support to put into practice what had been learned on the course, including school visits by *athrawon bro* to observe and provide feedback on lessons and refresher lessons. Some practitioners also stated that they had had a session with a consortium officer and their headteacher to help them plan how they were going to incorporate the skills and practices developed during the sabbatical scheme period in the classroom.

'We had a meeting with an [consortium] officer and the headteacher in September and we now have a plan [for using more Welsh in class] for the year.'
(Welsh in a Year course practitioner; translation from Welsh)

'The *athrawes bro* tends to provide it [support after the course]. The staff member had lengthy meetings with her, and lessons were monitored.' (Head of an English-medium primary school)

5.60 Most practitioners and headteachers stated that they would welcome more support after the course and felt that this should be offered as part of the Scheme. In the case of the Welsh in a Year course in particular, practitioners, headteachers and providers shared the same aspiration of the need, in their view, to formalise slightly the after-care available in the period following the course. Some stakeholders suggested that there should be a requirement or support for Welsh in a Year course practitioners, as part of their terms for undertaking the course, to complete specific tasks or challenges during the year following the course to maintain their enthusiasm and Welsh language skills. This is another example that suggests that some practitioners and headteachers are misinterpreting the role of the Scheme as one which supports practitioners' continued skills and teaching practice development.

Follow-up support after the courses: support from the school

- 5.61 Of the 54 practitioners interviewed, 20 indicated that they had been supported by their headteachers or other colleagues in their school to support them in implementing the Welsh language skills they had learned. Examples of support varied from Welsh-speaking colleagues making a concerted effort to speak Welsh to them outside the classroom, to specific sessions with the headteacher or during in-service training days to plan how they were going to use these skills in class.
- 5.62 Of the 54 practitioners, nine stated that they had not received any support from their school after completing the course. Some of these practitioners felt that there was no need for additional support on their return to school. On the other hand, around a third of the practitioners (17) indicated that they would have liked to receive more support from the school and / or other agencies after the course had finished.

Continuing professional development

- 5.63 It is neither the role of the Scheme nor the responsibility of the regional consortia alone to support the continuing development of individual practitioners' Welsh language skills. Schools and individual practitioners have a responsibility for their own continuing professional development as set out in the schools as learning organisations model. There are also other Welsh language professional learning opportunities available to practitioners – see paragraph 3.12.
- 5.64 There was clear evidence in a number of practitioners' application forms for the Scheme of their intention to use the courses as part of their personal professional development. However, practitioners could offer very few examples during interviews, and only a small number stated that they had continued to seek opportunities to develop their Welsh Language skills and bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies after completing the course.
- 5.65 Several practical reasons were given for this (time pressures, responsibilities outside school; change of role in school). Though these reasons may be valid, the evidence suggests that maintaining the skills has not been a priority for them as practitioners nor for their schools during the years following the course. This may suggest that practitioners believe that a short-term commitment is all that is needed to improve their Welsh Language skills and teaching methodologies – i.e. attending the Sabbatical course. If so, they would not necessarily consider the Scheme as

being one step within their continuing professional development in relation to their Welsh language skills and teaching practices, but rather would consider their participation in the Scheme as being the only step required.

- 5.66 There were some examples, however, of practitioners who had continued their Welsh language development after the course – via support from consortia officers and through their own endeavours. Practitioners noted that this had enabled them to further increase and improve their use of Welsh in the classroom.
- 5.67 Returning to our theory of change, if practitioners do not maintain and strengthen their skills as part of their continuing professional development, then this will likely affect their ability to include more Welsh in their lessons across the curriculum. So too will the Scheme make less of a contribution towards improving the teaching of Welsh and through the medium of Welsh.

Impact of the courses and the Scheme

- 5.68 Our theory of change shows the factors that must be in place to ensure that attending the courses improves practitioners' Welsh language skills as well as their practices of teaching Welsh (apart from the Advanced level courses), and through the medium of Welsh in the classroom. According to the theory, developing or improving these skills and teaching practices should enable practitioners to use more Welsh in class and include more Welsh in their lessons across the curriculum. The findings presented in this section are based on practitioners' views on how and to what extent they are putting into practice the skills and teaching practices developed, and the impact this has had on the way they teach Welsh or use Welsh as a medium of teaching.

Impact on language skills and confidence in using Welsh

- 5.69 All of the practitioners interviewed noted that, in their view, their Welsh language skills had improved as a result of participating in the Sabbatical course. In addition, most indicated that their confidence in using those skills had developed or improved. The assistants who had attended the Entry level course stated that they felt they had developed sufficient Welsh language skills to enable them to use these skills effectively in the classroom. Although the Entry level courses were relatively short, there was enough content in the course, according to interviewees, to enable

them to use incidental Welsh with children in class and when carrying out other tasks such as reading short stories in Welsh to groups of children: tasks they were unable to carry out in Welsh before attending the course.

5.70 Most practitioners who had attended the Foundation level course felt that their confidence in Welsh had increased following the course. However, there was a greater diversity of opinion among this group of interviewees. While most felt that the course had been suitable for them, a third (seven out of 22) indicated that they would have liked to have improved their skills and confidence further. These practitioners explained that the increase in their language skills had not been sufficient to enable them to use Welsh in the classroom to the extent that they would have liked. The practitioners who attended a Foundation level course were also more likely than practitioners on other courses to report that they felt their skills and confidence had diminished over time since attending the course, and therefore felt that they needed further training and support.

5.71 All interviewees who had attended Advanced level courses (both the advanced level courses for assistants and the advanced level courses for teachers) indicated that they felt there had been a significant increase in their Welsh language skills. As this course was for practitioners who could already speak Welsh, increased accuracy in their language, particularly their written language, was the main feature identified by those who had participated of these courses. Some reported that the course had enabled them to use more accurate Welsh terms in their lessons and offer a good language model for their learners.

'I come from a non-Welsh-speaking family but had a Welsh-medium education but I lacked confidence with grammatical things like mutations, etc. Although I could speak Welsh before the course, I didn't have the confidence to use the language at school. After the course I had the confidence I needed.' (Advanced level course practitioner for assistants; translation from Welsh)

'Had I not attended the course, I wouldn't have had enough confidence to teach at a Welsh School. I definitely wouldn't be where I am today [in a Welsh-medium school] had it not been for attending the course.' (Advanced level course practitioner for teachers; translation from Welsh)

5.72 The examples shared of using the new language skills were more numerous among those who had followed the Welsh in a Year course. Most practitioners on the Welsh in a Year course felt they were almost fluent in Welsh after the Sabbatical

period and as a result of the course. This was highlighted in the fact that six out of the eight interviewed chose to conduct the interview entirely through the medium of Welsh. These practitioners offered examples of how the increase in their Welsh language skills and vocabulary had enabled them to deliver Welsh-medium lessons across a number of subjects, and to be confident in correcting pupils' written and oral work in their school.

5.73 Although practitioners considered their language skills to have increased since attending the course, it is not possible to attribute practitioners' linguistic ability at the end of the course entirely to the training received. Practitioners' linguistic ability at the end of the course was also partially dependent on their linguistic ability at the beginning of the course. Practitioners' own assessment of their linguistic ability in Welsh prior to attending one of the courses varied according to the course level. Most practitioners who had attended the Entry level course stated that they had almost no Welsh language skills before starting the course. Most practitioners who attended a Foundation level course recalled some Welsh since their school days and / or had attended lessons in their own time before attending the course. Most practitioners who had attended the Advanced level courses reported that they had received Welsh-medium education and one had done a degree through the medium of Welsh. For these, the Advanced level course was an opportunity for them to improve the accuracy of their Welsh and to be more confident to use the language in the classroom.

5.74 Among the practitioners interviewed who attended the Welsh in a Year course, two were born and educated outside Wales and therefore had not learnt Welsh at school. One of the practitioners had done Welsh second language A level while at school. All had some Welsh language skills and had either attended courses of their own volition in the past or had received some degree of Welsh education at school. Therefore, the language skills of practitioners who attended the courses were not solely attributable to the training. However, on the basis of the evidence gathered, it appears that the training improved the skills they possessed.

Impact on teaching methodology

5.75 In addition to improving practitioners' language skills, the Sabbatical courses provide participants with training on teaching methodologies. Practitioners offered examples of new teaching techniques they had learned on the course. These were

Welsh language teaching techniques as well as techniques and resources to introduce more Welsh or improve learners' Welsh literacy skills in lessons across the curriculum. One practitioner who had attended an Entry level course stated that the course had shown him possible methods of using Welsh words during incidental play in Foundation Phase lessons.

- 5.76 Practitioners on the Foundation level course shared most examples of how they had adapted and changed their teaching methods after completing the course. Some stated that the methods developed in terms of how to teach Welsh as a second language had been particularly useful to them.

'I learnt a lot about how to teach a language as a second language – for example describe a scene using visual pictures as prompts - then repeat the exercise but without the picture etc - one of many good examples they showed us.'

(Foundation level course practitioner)

A number of practitioners who had attended the Foundation level course stated that they had been introduced to teaching resources as well as methodologies during the course, and this had enabled them to introduce more Welsh in other subjects across the curriculum. Some of the ideas were based on games or activities relating to a particular topic or theme that included Welsh terms:

'[We were given] lots of ideas of how to use Welsh in various instances; we were introduced to magazines, new books, and programmes and games. I picked up lots of ideas from the other teachers on the course.' (Foundation level course practitioner)

'All the resources and lesson plans developed during the course were pulled together and shared with everyone in the group at the end of the course. So, I've got access to those even now, and I still use them when delivering lessons across the curriculum'. (Foundation level course practitioner)

Using Welsh language skills and Welsh-medium teaching practices in Welsh in the classroom

- 5.77 For practitioners to use more Welsh in the classroom and include more Welsh in lessons across the curriculum, practitioners need to use the language skills and teaching methods developed during the course in the classroom on their return to school.

- 5.78 There were a number of examples given of how the language skills and teaching techniques developed by the Scheme participants were being used in the classroom. All the teaching assistants who had attended the Entry level course said that they had introduced more Welsh in the classroom as a result of the course.
- 5.79 The majority of those who attended a Foundation level course (20 out of 22) also stated that they had used more Welsh in school following the course, but it was not always clear from these responses how many used the language regularly in the classroom. The two who had not used more Welsh as a result of the course were supply teachers and felt they did not have enough confidence to use more Welsh as they frequently changed class and school. However, one of the supply teachers noted that she had received far more supply work since completing the Foundation level Sabbatical course because she could now offer Welsh language skills.
- 5.80 Of the 22 participants who participated on a Foundation level course, seven reported that they had introduced more Welsh across the curriculum following the course. In some cases, this was because the school's policy and focus had required them to do this; that is, factors other than having attended the course had caused this change to happen. On the other hand, two practitioners reported that they had introduced more Welsh across the curriculum because the course had motivated and inspired them to do so.
- 5.81 Some of the Foundation level course participants said that they did not feel very confident in using more Welsh in class after completing the course. In addition, these practitioners stated that, in their view, their skills and confidence in using Welsh had diminished over time. Because of this, one practitioner noted that he barely used any Welsh in the classroom at all any more.
- 5.82 All participants on the Welsh in a Year course offered examples of how they had introduced more Welsh across the curriculum in their classes. One practitioner gave examples of how they had used resources developed during the Welsh in a Year course on the Football World Cup to introduce more Welsh in relation to geography. Another practitioner stated that they had used the resources and teaching methodologies from the course to develop and deliver history lessons bilingually.
- 5.83 The Welsh in a Year practitioners recognised that an increased focus on the delivery and use of more Welsh across the curriculum was largely influenced by external elements such as the new curriculum. However, practitioners on the one

year course felt that the skills and techniques developed on the Sabbatical course had enabled them to use more Welsh:

'A lot has changed. Now I'm teaching things in Welsh all day and across the curriculum in Welsh.' (Welsh in a Year course practitioner; translation from Welsh)

- 5.84 One participant on the Welsh in a Year course stated that what she had learned through the course about second language teaching methodology had made her realise that she could expect much more from her pupils in relation to their ability to learn and use Welsh. This had encouraged her to 'push' her pupils a little further by introducing the Welsh language in all subjects.
- 5.85 Although practitioners of the Advanced level course already used Welsh, they felt that the course had improved their language accuracy, and in their view, the quality of their lesson delivery. Examples offered included a practitioner using Welsh terms where there had been a tendency to use English terms before attending the course.
- 5.86 Although the examples cited above provide anecdotal evidence relating to the skills developed and how they are used, there is no wider evidence of how the skills developed by all practitioners who attended the courses are used or the difference they make. Schools are expected to set out evidence in their school development plans as to how this training has made a difference. However, it does not appear from the interviews conducted with consortia officers that any such evidence is produced or collected at a regional or national level.

Impact on the use of Welsh across the school

- 5.87 Most practitioners and headteachers interviewed stated that they believed there had been an increase in the informal use of the language outside the classroom, and more broadly across the school since practitioners from their school had been on one of the Entry, Foundation or Welsh in a Year courses. Among the examples offered were increased use of incidental Welsh when talking to colleagues and pupils outside the classroom, more Welsh-medium visual displays, and more Welsh-medium work in the classroom.

'The language has rubbed off on other colleagues and they're more willing to use Welsh with each other. Children now hear Welsh being used more naturally.'
(Headteacher of an English-medium primary school)

'Speaking Welsh with other teachers and children now - children starting to respond in Welsh now too.' (Welsh in a Year course practitioner; translation from Welsh)

- 5.88 Of the practitioners who had attended the Foundation level course, four stated that they had introduced more school assemblies in Welsh since completing the course, and others had encouraged more Welsh language activities throughout the school including Eisteddfod days.

'I wrote a script in Welsh for the school eisteddfod and am now conducting assemblies in Welsh - I couldn't do that before the course.' (Foundation level course practitioner)

- 5.89 There were numerous examples of increased use of incidental Welsh by practitioners after attending the Sabbatical courses, but clear evidence that the Scheme was what prompted the increase. According to headteachers, there are other factors, such as preparing for the new curriculum, some schools' involvement with the Welsh Language/Cymraeg Campus programme, or the practitioner's personal motivation, that have influenced this increase also. However, the Scheme appears to have facilitated the increase, although other factors have also influenced the need to aim for the increase. As such, it is possible to conclude that these other factors, and the Scheme, reinforce each other in contributing to the change in the way Welsh is taught and used in schools.

Impact on practitioner leadership

- 5.90 One of the outcomes the Scheme seeks to achieve is that practitioners demonstrate greater leadership in relation to the Welsh language within their school upon their return. In order to investigate whether practitioners had done this, headteachers and practitioners were asked whether individuals took on additional responsibilities within their school as a result of the course. A number of practitioners referred to examples where they now played a more prominent role in organising and running activities in Welsh and encouraging enthusiasm in others.
- 5.91 Assistants who attended the Entry level course shared some examples of how they support planning for increasing the use of the language across the school. Their ability to do this was, in their view, as a direct result of having attended the course.

5.92 A greater number of examples were provided by those who had attended the Foundation course of activities or arrangements in their school for which they had taken the lead since attending the course. These included:

- Undertaking the role of Welsh language co-ordinator at their school;
- supporting the current Welsh language co-ordinator to develop new whole-school activities in Welsh;
- starting a new Welsh language club for pupils at the school;
- establishing a parents' group where parents could come together to learn more Welsh songs and incidental Welsh that they could then use to encourage their children to use Welsh at home.

Of the eight who attended the Welsh in a Year course, four were responsible for improving the delivery and increased use of Welsh across all school activities. One explained that she had taken on a number of additional responsibilities after the course, including leading on the Welsh language across the school, presenting ideas to support Welsh across the curriculum to the senior management team, and reviewing the accuracy of Welsh content in pupils' workbooks across the school. Another practitioner was responsible for raising the standard of Welsh and English across her school.

5.93 It appears from this small sample of interviews that some practitioners who took part in the Scheme have taken on new responsibilities which influence the teaching of Welsh across their school. However, it is not clear from this evidence whether the additional responsibilities taken on by these individuals were as a direct result of their participation in the Scheme. Some practitioners had already taken on these responsibilities before attending the course, and others had attended the course in preparation for the additional responsibilities they were expected to undertake after completing the course. Nonetheless, in all cases, practitioners felt better able to undertake these responsibilities as a result of attending the course.

Influence on ethos and attitude towards the Welsh language

5.94 Headteachers and practitioners were asked to indicate whether they felt taking part in the Scheme had influenced their school's attitude and ethos towards the Welsh language. Most most headteachers and practitioners deemed that their schools already had a positive attitude and ethos towards the Welsh language. This is to be

expected in Welsh-medium schools (where practitioners had followed an Advanced level course) but the perspective was consistent across the schools. Headteachers and practitioners felt that participation in the Scheme had supported rather than influenced the Welsh language ethos in their school.

5.95 However, a small number reported that the Scheme had had a positive influence on their school's ethos attitude,

'Yes – did have a positive influence in attitude to Welsh, there was not much focus on Welsh language or culture before. The teacher has introduced a bit more of both since returning [from the sabbatical course].' (Headteacher, English-medium primary school)

5.96 Nevertheless, even among the headteachers and practitioners who reported they had seen a change of attitude recently, they felt that other factors were the principal influences, rather than their involvement in the Scheme. Practitioners noted that the Welsh language was increasingly becoming a priority in their school for a number of reasons, including the introduction of the new curriculum, the response to recommendations following an Estyn inspection and participating in the Siarter Iaith programme.

5.97 Schools' current attitude and ethos towards the Welsh language appears to have a greater influence on practitioners' ability to put into practice the skills and practices developed than the influence the skills and abilities developed by practitioners have on the schools' ethos towards the language.

Sharing skills and teaching practices with colleagues

5.98 Supporting individuals who have benefited from the courses to share the teaching practices they have developed with other practitioners, can increase the use of Welsh in lessons at their school. Headteachers were asked whether there were any arrangements in place for practitioners to share their experiences and new skills with their colleagues upon their return to school. A number of headteachers who had supported practitioners to attend a Foundation level course offered examples where practitioners shared ideas and experiences with their colleagues regularly during staff meetings or during day-to-day networking within the school:

'The teacher [who attended the Foundation course] is always sharing ideas and resources with other members of staff.' (Primary school Headteacher).

'I've shared resources [with colleagues] not sure if they've used them though'.
(Foundation level course practitioner)

- 5.99 Some headteachers and practitioners offered examples of more formal processes including leading in-service training sessions relating to increasing the use of Welsh at the school and emphasising the need to include Welsh in lessons across the curriculum at staff meetings.
- 5.100 However, these examples were in the minority and limited mainly to the practitioners who had participated in the Welsh in a Year course. Most headteachers interviewed stated that there were no specific arrangements in place at their school to enable participants in the Scheme to share their experiences across the school.

Sharing experiences beyond school

- 5.101 Stakeholders were asked whether there were procedures were in place for practitioners to share their experiences more widely beyond their own schools after the course. Consortia officers talked about conferences and events where some of those involved in the Scheme had had an opportunity to speak about their experiences. Only practitioners who had attended the Welsh in a Year course gave examples of how they had shared their experience and teaching skills with other schools. This included one example where a school had received a grant from the consortium to release the practitioner from their school for a few days to deliver Welsh lessons at another school within their cluster.

Barriers

- 5.102 This section reflects some of the barriers to achieving the proposed aims of the Scheme, highlighted through the evidence gathered. It revisits some topics that have already been discussed in earlier sections, but does so in the context of the barriers associated with them.

Barriers to participation

- 5.103 Some headteachers stated that it was not always possible to find a suitable teacher or assistants to cover, and therefore it was not possible to release staff to attend the courses. For example, one headteacher stated that arranging supply cover to

replace assistants responsible for caring for children with additional learning needs and the most experienced teachers at the school, was particularly challenging.

- 5.104 Some headteachers stated that the introduction of the new curriculum had led them to consider the need to invest in the Welsh language skills of the workforce and therefore their need for the Sabbatical courses. However, it was also noted that they did not feel that they were currently in a position to release practitioners to attend a Sabbatical course, because they needed to remain in school to support preparations for the other practical work relating to the new curriculum.

Barriers to putting skills into practice

- 5.105 The most common barrier identified by practitioners was the lack of time available to plan how best to use their language skills and new teaching methods in class upon their return to school.

'Everyone is so busy and they come back off the course and straight back into the classroom environment. I barely have any time to ask them about what they've learned etc.' (Primary school headteacher)

- 5.106 Another barrier identified by two practitioners who had attended a Welsh in a Year course was the challenge of reorienting back into school after being away for a year. Although they had maintained contact with their schools and had returned to school regularly during the spring and summer terms, this contact had not included spending time back in their own classroom. For these practitioners, the process of readjusting to teaching their class was difficult for a while.
- 5.107 Another factor that may be hampering the longer-term influence of the Scheme is the sustainability of the skills and teaching practices developed. For example, a number of practitioners who had attended the Foundation level course stated that the skills they had developed had deteriorated over time, and that they had therefore lost their confidence in using the language.
- 5.108 It needs to be noted that there are likely to be a number of factors that could affect how long practitioners are able to maintain their skills, including their personal enthusiasm to do so. However, other factors beyond their control can have an influence, including the priority placed on Welsh in their school and their school's level of planning in relation to the use of Welsh within lessons across the curriculum. Evidence from the fieldwork suggests that if these skills and practices

are not put into practice soon after practitioners return to school and on a regular basis thereafter, then their ability to implement them will decline relatively quickly.

Barriers to demonstrating the wider and longer-term impact of the Scheme

5.109 The fieldwork gathered evidence on the delivery of the Scheme's aims from the sample of schools and practitioners interviewed, as well as through interviews with other stakeholders and desk-based research. However, as the sample of schools and practitioners interviewed was relatively small (around 4 per cent of all Scheme participants), we cannot be absolutely confident that the conclusions of the evidence gathered relate to everyone who participated in the Scheme during this period.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the Scheme and to examine how, and to what extent, the Scheme contributes to a change in the way Welsh is taught or used as a medium of teaching in schools, and the Scheme's contribution to practitioners' Welsh language or Welsh-medium professional development provision.
- 6.2 Evidence was gathered using mixed methods: developing a theory of change was a central element of the study, and the qualitative research was carried out with stakeholders and a sample of practitioners and headteachers to explore in greater depth the issues highlighted as the theory was developed. It needs to be borne in mind, therefore, that the evidence gathered about the experiences of individual practitioners and schools does not necessarily represent the experiences of the Scheme's beneficiaries more widely. This chapter presents our conclusions and provides recommendations based on the evidence gathered.
- 6.3 The evaluation report was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on fieldwork undertaken before the pandemic began. Clearly, therefore, the climate in terms of delivering the Scheme has changed in recent months, with a number of courses being postponed for practical reasons, and others being converted into online courses. In considering the conclusions and recommendations that follow, it is important to bear in mind that the context in terms of implementation has changed.

Overall findings

- 6.4 The policy context highlights the need to improve teachers' Welsh language skills in line with the requirements of the professional standards and the new school curriculum. Welsh Government has also set an ambitious target of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and has emphasised the importance of the education sector in achieving this aim. As a result, Welsh needs to be taught to all pupils, and in order to achieve this, there is a need to ensure that practitioners possess the skills to do so.
- 6.5 Although there is no robust data available to show the skills gap between what is available and what is needed in terms of education practitioners' Welsh language skills, the evidence gathered for the evaluation indicated that there is a skills gap in many geographical areas and in individual schools. It appears, therefore, that there

continues to be a need for specific intervention to increase the school practitioners' Welsh language skills and Welsh teaching methods.

- 6.6 The evidence gathered from a sample of practitioners, headteachers and other stakeholders for the evaluation indicates that they are generally satisfied with the design and content of the Scheme and they suggested only minor improvements. All practitioners interviewed reported that the Scheme had improved their Welsh language skills and bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies. The evidence also shows that there is still a demand among headteachers and practitioners for the sabbatical courses provided. This evaluation therefore concludes that the Scheme makes a positive contribution to practitioners' Welsh language skills, and that there continues to be a need for the Scheme.

Recommendation 1 – Welsh Government should continue to fund and support the delivery of the Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme as part of a programme of professional learning for school practitioners.

Strategic Use of the Sabbatical Scheme to create change

- 6.7 The Scheme is targeted towards those schools and practitioners where the greatest need to develop practitioners' Welsh language skills has been identified by consortia officers. In doing so, the Scheme supports Welsh Government's strategic priorities, as identified in *Education in Wales: our national mission*, to support and develop the education workforce 'to teach Welsh as a living language and ensure there will be greater numbers of education professionals able to work effectively in Welsh-medium and bilingual settings' (Welsh Government 2017d:26). The requirements of the new curriculum in terms of ensuring that learners can use Welsh have focused schools' and practitioners' attention towards improving their Welsh language skills, and this also appears to have contributed to the demand for the Sabbatical courses. It should be noted that the Scheme has existed since before the above-named strategies and policies were introduced, but the evaluation found there to be an alignment between the aims of the Scheme and the aims of these strategies.
- 6.8 At an individual institution level, the Scheme is used to meet priorities included in a number of school's development plans. These plans often include intentions and actions to increase the use of Welsh inside and outside the classroom. These

priorities are in turn influenced by objectives or requirements regarding the Welsh language in national policies or developments including the new curriculum, and schemes such as Cymraeg Campus or the Siarter Iaith.

- 6.9 The new professional standards require practitioners to continually develop their Welsh language skills. However, these new standards only became statutory in September 2018 and therefore little evidence was seen of their influence during the period covered by this evaluation. With the professional standards now being used by all teachers and school leaders, it will be important for the opportunities offered through the Scheme to be seen in the context of the professional standards.

Recommendation 2 – In promoting the Scheme and recruiting practitioners, regional education consortia officers should draw schools' attention to how the Scheme contributes to realising the aims of Welsh Government's education and Welsh language strategies and to enabling practitioners to meet the professional standards.

- 6.10 Although a number of schools identify the need to improve practitioners' Welsh language skills and bilingual or Welsh-medium teaching methodologies in their school development plans, there does not appear to be any clear requirement on schools to provide further evidence as to how, or to what extent, skills and methodologies have been put into practice after the practitioners' sabbatical has ended. There was no clear evidence available (beyond self-reported evidence from the sample interviewed during the evaluation interviews) of how these skills and practices are used in the school in the months and years after practitioners have been on a course. Without this information, it is not possible to draw a clear conclusion as to the extent to which the Scheme has been used strategically to create change. In order to assess the impact of the Scheme in a more systematic way, a more specific process of recording the use of the skills back at school and sharing that information with the consortia and Welsh Government would be essential. A recording process could also be a way of strengthening a number of other elements i.e. helping to plan the after-course support, helping to ensure that schools and practitioners make full use of the new skills developed and contributing to a pool of good practice on how to make the most of the new skills.

Recommendation 3 – Regional consortia should ensure that schools that release practitioners to attend courses systematically report on how practitioners use their new skills after they return to school at the end of the course. Regional consortia should support schools to include this evidence in their school development plan and in discussions with the challenge advisors.

The Scheme’s contribution to developing practitioner skills and capacity, in the wider context of their professional development

- 6.11 The evidence gathered through the evaluation suggests that the Welsh language skills of the practitioners interviewed have improved, in their view, as a result of attending one of the Sabbatical courses. Examples were offered as to how practitioners had put these skills into practice in the classroom and in school life more widely. Some examples were also offered where schools had planned how practitioners' skills would best be used upon their return from the courses. These examples included giving practitioners who had participated in the Scheme additional responsibilities for co-ordinating Welsh activities across the school. However, steps to make best use of the skills developed during the course were not evident within all schools where a practitioner or headteacher was interviewed, and other factors (specifically the Siarter Iaith) had also had an influence.
- 6.12 A small number of practitioners questioned had not used the Welsh language skills developed through the Scheme at their school. The reasons for this ranged from a lack of confidence or clear opportunities to use them, to cases where their ability and confidence to use the skills had diminished over time. Others explained that there had not been an opportunity to practise or attend further training as they had intended.
- 6.13 There were a number of examples of practitioners who had been supported by their headteachers and *athrawon bro* to plan how to put the teaching practices developed into practice upon their return to school. However, this was not evident in all cases. In a number of cases, the expectation was that practitioners would use these practices in the classroom immediately upon their return from the course with no additional support from the school.
- 6.14 Most practitioners and headteachers recognised the need to maintain and further develop Welsh language skills and teaching methodologies once they had completed the course, and many said that they wanted more support. Many

headteachers, practitioners and other stakeholders appear to expect this ongoing development support to be provided through the Scheme, as a supplementary package, although this is not part of the design of the Scheme or part of the contracts to deliver the courses. It is the consortia who provide follow-up support for the courses, outside the Scheme's contract. Some consortia officers stated that the time available to them to support schools and practitioners with after-care support was limited. Some examples were offered of individual practitioners who had gone about maintaining and extending their Welsh language skills further of their own volition after completing their Sabbatical course, and it was these practitioners who tended to use these skills regularly in their lessons. Since the fieldwork ended, one of the training providers has been contracted to create resources, which includes an after-care package that will be developed in partnership with the consortia.

Recommendation 4 - Regional consortia should share clear information with participants on the nature and source of follow-up support available on the conclusion of the course. Expanding on the work that has begun on an after-care package, this task could include mapping the follow-up support and training available across each region and developing a clearer understanding of the follow-up support needs.

Recommendation 5 - Regional consortia should extend their support for practitioners and schools by offering further support on how to plan to make the best use of the skills developed by practitioners during the Sabbatical courses.

- 6.15 The findings suggest that further attention is needed of how the Scheme fits with school development plans, and the role of the Scheme within a range of professional learning provision for practitioners. In addressing this further, the role of practitioners themselves would need to be emphasised, along with the role of school leaders in taking responsibility for recognising and attending to the continuing professional development needs of their staff, rather than expecting taking part in the Sabbatical Scheme in itself to be the only solution. As part of this, how the regional education consortia could support practitioners and schools by facilitating access to training and follow-up support upon practitioners' return to their schools should be considered.

Recommendation 6 - Welsh Government and regional consortia should emphasise that Sabbatical Scheme courses are one form of training, among an array of professional learning possibilities. This should be done to encourage and support schools and practitioners to consider the Scheme as one method of supporting the development of practitioners' Welsh language skills and bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies and not the sole method.

The Sabbatical Scheme's contribution to school teaching practices and curricular provision

- 6.16 Practitioners who attended the Foundation, Advanced and Welsh in a Year courses stated that they had developed new teaching practices as a direct result of the course. These included practices relating to the teaching of Welsh as a second language and resources to support them in delivering more Welsh across the curriculum. Practitioners who had participated in the Entry level course stated that they had also learnt more about the rules of writing the language and had developed in confidence. Evidence was also gathered by practitioners and some headteachers to show how these skills have been put into practice by those who had attended the course.
- 6.17 For the Scheme to succeed, practitioners must be able to share the new teaching practices with colleagues in their schools at the end of the course. There were examples of practitioners sharing their knowledge of the teaching practices and resources developed during the Sabbatical period with colleagues during in-service training days. This sharing did not happen consistently, and the extent to which skills and experience are shared again appears to be dependent on individual practitioners' enthusiasm and ability to do this, rather than as a result of intentional planning within the school.
- 6.18 A small number of examples were also gathered - both from schools and consortia officers - of how practitioners share their teaching practices with other schools within their cluster or across regions and consortia. These tended to be practitioners who had attended Welsh in a Year courses, and there were few examples of this among practitioners who had attended the other courses.

Recommendation 7 - Schools, local authorities and regional consortia should support practitioners to share teaching practices and examples of implementing their new skills with colleagues and other schools in order to extend the reach of the Scheme's impact.

Evidence for evaluation purposes

- 6.19 The evaluation gathered evidence through desk-based research and interviews with stakeholders and a sample of schools and practitioners (around 4 per cent of all practitioners who participated in the Scheme during the period 2013-2019). Although the sample size is appropriate for qualitative research and offers an opportunity to explore the research questions in depth, it should be noted that the small sample of schools and practitioners interviewed means that we cannot be confident that the conclusions of the evidence gathered are representative of all those who participated in the Scheme during the period under review.
- 6.20 The evidence gathered for the evaluation provides information relating to the impact of the Scheme on practitioners and schools in the short term. It does not enable us to draw firm conclusions as to the Scheme's contribution to longer-term outcomes. To reach these conclusions, further quantitative data would need to be collected and reviewed. The process of developing the theory of change highlighted some key data areas that would be needed, as well as some gaps in the data currently available at national and regional level.

Recommendation 8 - Welsh Government should consider undertaking quantitative research to gather information from beneficiaries of the Scheme – practitioners and schools alike – to contribute to a fuller picture of the Scheme's impact.

- 6.21 The evidence gathered through the evaluation process suggests that the theory of change offers an accurate reflection of the logic flow between the Scheme's inputs, outputs and outcomes and its contribution to longer-term outcomes. Nonetheless, the theory presented in Chapter 4 should be considered a draft theory that would benefit from further verification and refinement. This should include detailed discussion with stakeholders – a stage that was not able to be completed as part of this evaluation due to COVID-19 restrictions. The process of analysing the theory has also revealed certain gaps in data: the evidence on which the evaluation findings are based is, on the whole, limited to observations and examples provided

during interviews. The conclusions could have been strengthened had documentary evidence been available, and data against indicators of practitioners' use of skills after returning to school (see Recommendation 3 above).

Recommendation 9 - Welsh Government should address refining the theory of change for the Sabbatical Scheme by (i) including more stakeholder input; (ii) making the widest possible use of data already available in terms of workforce skills capacity (ability in Welsh language and to teach through the medium of Welsh), and (iii) dealing with the gaps in data and evidence that have been highlighted in this evaluation to ensure a fuller understanding of the Scheme's contribution to longer-term outcomes.

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Welsh Government (2019a) [Hwb pages on the national approach to professional learning](#)

Welsh Government (2019b) [Hwb pages on professional standards](#)

Welsh Government (2020a) [Curriculum for Wales Guidance](#)

Welsh Government (2020b) [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh Speakers Annual Report 2018-19](#)

Annex A: Information on Sabbatical Scheme courses

Figure A.1: Summary of course content

Course	Description
Entry level course (Mynediad) Full-time 5 weeks	A full-time, 5-week course for teaching assistants working in English-medium primary schools. The course aims to provide participants with the vocabulary and language patterns they need to enable them to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support their teacher colleagues in delivering the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning in the Foundation Phase; • support their teacher colleagues in teaching Welsh at Key Stage 2; • introducing incidental Welsh to all aspects of school life, whether in class, on the yard or at an extra-curricular level.
Foundation level course (Sylfaen) Full-time 11 weeks	This is a full-time, 11-week course for teachers working in English-medium primary schools. The course aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach practitioners the grammar and vocabulary of the language; • develop practitioners' confidence in using Welsh in school in a wider range of contexts; • provide practitioners with the language resources and confidence to deliver Welsh second language to learners up to at least National Curriculum level 5; • prepare practitioners to deliver some lessons or parts of other curriculum subject lessons through the medium of Welsh; • foster accuracy so that teachers offer learners a good language model; • share good practice in the teaching of Welsh second language; • develop teachers' knowledge of second language teaching methodology; • expand knowledge of suitable resources and other recent developments in Welsh, fostering progressive subject leaders; • produce confident Welsh speakers.
Intermediate level (Canolradd)	A new course introduced in 2018. The course is directed towards practitioners from English-medium primary schools.
Advanced level course (Uwch) Part-time	The delivery model varies, but can be two days per week for a term. The Advanced level courses are directed towards practitioners who are already Welsh speakers and who want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extend their language skills orally and in writing in a professional context. • reinforce and develop their personal language skills in teaching, assessment and undertaking various administrative duties; • develop their knowledge of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching methodology; • be confident in dealing with their subject's terminology effectively and accurately; • develop confidence in checking pupils' language accuracy.
Welsh in a Year Full-time One year	The course focuses on developing practitioners' language skills to enable them to develop the way Welsh is used and taught in their schools. Emphasis is placed on using Welsh across the curriculum as well as giving practitioners the opportunity to work strategically to develop bilingualism in their schools. Practitioners prepare resources and deliver cross-curricular lessons following the areas of the new curriculum as well as developing skills to be able to assess and offer linguistic feedback to pupils.

Source: Specification for the evaluation of the Sabbatical Scheme, training providers' websites.

Figure A.2: Summary of Sabbatical Scheme background

Contractual Period	Attendees	Provider	Level	Number of participants	Strategic context at the time
Round 1: Pilot 2005-2010	Teachers and Further Education lecturers possessing Welsh language skills already	Bangor University and Cardiff University. Expanded towards the end of the period to include University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Grant Scheme)	Advanced (Pilots of courses at Entry and Foundation level at University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Aberystwyth University.	240	The Sabbatical Scheme was originally developed as a pilot scheme in 2005 to deliver the objective of 'Iaith Pawb' (the national action plan for the Welsh language at the time) of increasing the supply of practitioners able to teach and train through the medium of Welsh in a range of pre- and post-16 subjects.
Round 2: New contracts were established for delivering courses during the period 2011-2014	Teachers, teaching assistants and further education lecturers	Bangor University; Cardiff University; University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Procurement)	Advanced, Entry, Foundation	717	In April 2010 Welsh Government Welsh-medium Education Strategy was published. One of its strategic aims was to develop national and regional infrastructure to deliver Continuing Professional Development in Welsh-medium methodologies and Welsh language skills for practitioners, to improve standards of Welsh-medium and Welsh teaching and learning.
Round 3: Sept 2014 – 2017; ac extended to 2020	Teachers and teaching assistants. Further education lecturers (to 2017). Since 2017 the provision for further education lectures has been via the National Centre for Learning Welsh Work Welsh scheme	Bangor University (delivering courses in the GWE region); Cardiff University (delivering courses in the EAS and Central South Consortium regions); University of Wales Trinity Saint David (delivering courses in the ERW region); Good practice sharing contract; contract for resource provision);		Between Sept 2013 and July 2018 there were 952 participants	<i>Welsh-medium Education Strategy 2010</i> still in operation. <i>Welsh in Education: Action plan 2017-21</i> was published in December 2017 setting the direction for developing Welsh-medium and Welsh education over the four year period, in line with the vision set out in <i>Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers</i> and <i>Education in Wales: Our national mission</i> . Workforce planning and development is one of the Plan's objectives, and there are a series of actions to address this area.
Welsh in a Year: 2017 academic year onwards.	Teachers working in English-medium primary schools	2017/18: Bangor University (course in Ruthin); Cardiff University (Cardiff); University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Carmarthen). 2018/19 a 2019/20: Bangor University (Ruthin); Cardiff University (Cardiff); University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Carmarthen and Swansea).	Welsh in a Year course	2017/18: 36 2018/19: 68 2019/20: 73	

Annex B: Topic Guides

Topic guide: practitioners

Topic guide: headteachers/SLT

Topic guide: Welsh Government – Sabbatical team

Topic guide: Welsh Government - indirect/strategic role

Topic guide: regional officers

Topic guide: training providers

Topic guide for practitioners

Notes for researcher:

- The 'course' is used to refer to the Sabbatical Scheme at entry, foundation and advanced level, as well as Welsh in a Year.
- For all questions, researcher to prompt for details, examples and rationale for the response, as appropriate.
- Where appropriate, researcher to ask on what basis observations are made (e.g. observations of impact / difference).

	Entry	Foundation	Advanced	WiaY
Background				
<p>1. Please provide an overview of your role and responsibilities in your school. <i>Confirm teaching role.</i> <i>Confirm school-level responsibilities, including relating to Welsh language.</i></p>			✓	
<p>2. Please provide an overview of your level of experience with the Welsh language prior to attending the course. <i>Did you receive any of your formal education through the medium of Welsh?</i> <i>Had you undertaken any Welsh language courses previously?</i> <i>How would you describe your level of Welsh language skills prior to attending the course?</i> <i>Prompt to ask for level of Welsh language skills e.g. entry, foundation, intermediate etc.</i> <i>What – if any – Welsh language teaching or Welsh-medium teaching were you delivering prior to attending the course?</i></p>			✓	
Initial engagement with the course				
<p>3. Please explain how you came to attend the course. <i>How and when did you first hear about the course?</i> <i>How was the decision made about who from your school should attend the course?</i> <i>What were your reasons for applying? Prompt for personal motivation and external influences.</i></p>			✓	
<p>4. Were you provided with any support and/or information before you attended the course? <i>Who provided this support and/or information?</i> <i>Please describe the support and/or information you received.</i> <i>Was this support and/or information adequate to prepare you for starting the course?</i></p>			✓	

Delivery of the course				
5. What are your views on the structure of the course? <i>Length</i> <i>Intensity</i> <i>Location</i>				✓
6. What are your views on the content of the course? <i>Relevance to your role in the school</i> <i>Balance between teaching methodologies and improving your language skills</i> <i>Relevance to curriculum requirements</i> <i>Any perceived gaps in content</i>				✓
7. Were you provided with resources and/or did you develop resources for use in the classroom during the course? <i>Please describe these resources and how you have used them.</i>				
8. What are your views on the teaching of the course? <i>Quality of the teaching</i> <i>Balance between practical exercises e.g. role play, micro lessons and the theory</i> <i>How engaging</i> <i>Communication with trainer</i>				✓
9. What are your views on how your progress was assessed during the course? <i>Please provide an overview of the assessment process.</i> <i>Intensity</i> <i>Appropriateness</i>				✓
Impact of the course				
10. Did attending the course make a difference to your Welsh language skills? <i>Please describe.</i>				✓
11. Did attending the course make a difference to your confidence to use the Welsh language? <i>Please describe.</i>				✓
<i>Confidence to use Welsh in your school in a variety of contexts</i> <i>Confidence to hold conversations in Welsh</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Confidence to use technical language relating to your subject area</i> <i>Confidence to check pupils' language accuracy</i>		✓	✓	✓

<i>Confidence to model Welsh language skills for colleagues and pupils.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Did attending the course make a difference to your use of Welsh within the school? <i>Please describe.</i> <i>Introduction of incidental Welsh in different school contexts</i> <i>Use of Welsh across the curriculum</i> <i>Delivering (or supporting delivery of) Welsh language elements of the new curriculum in different key stages</i> <i>Delivering (or supporting delivery of) elements of lessons through the medium of Welsh.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Did attending the course make a difference to your teaching practice? <i>Please describe.</i>	✓			
<i>Skills and ability to support the teaching of Welsh in your school</i>	✓			
<i>Skills and ability to teach Welsh in your school</i> <i>Skills in (and familiarity with) Welsh as a second language teaching methodologies</i> <i>Language accuracy, in order to act as a good language model for pupils</i> <i>Skills to assess and provide feedback to pupils on their Welsh language</i>		✓	✓	✓
<i>Ability and confidence to teach through the medium of Welsh</i> <i>Reinforcement of Welsh language skills for assessing and undertaking administrative activities</i> <i>Knowledge of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching strategies</i>			✓	
14. Did attending the course make a difference to planning and leadership for Welsh language across your school? <i>Please describe.</i>	✓			
<i>Influence on how you and your school plan for teaching Welsh across the school</i>	✓	✓		✓
<i>Expanding knowledge of suitable resources and Welsh language teaching methodologies</i>		✓	✓	✓
<i>Your role as a leader in the Welsh language subject area</i>		✓	✓	✓
<i>Working strategically to develop bilingualism in your school</i> <i>Preparing resources and delivering cross-curricular lessons in line with the new curriculum areas.</i> <i>Preparing for the new curriculum (where appropriate).</i>		✓	✓	✓

15. Did attending the course make a difference to your school's ethos and attitude towards the Welsh language? <i>Please describe.</i>			✓	
16. Overall, what difference has your participation in the course made to your school?			✓	
Post-course support and plans				
17. Please describe your first few weeks upon your return to the school after completing the course.			✓	
18. Was there support or subsequent provision available to you once you returned to your school? What was the nature of this provision and who provided it? <i>What support was available within your school?</i> <i>What support was available within your school's cluster?</i> <i>What support was available from your local authority?</i> <i>What support was available from your regional education consortium?</i> <i>Was this support suitable and adequate?</i> <i>By now, what support or provision is available to you?</i>			✓	
19. Are there any plans or structures in place for you to share your new experience and knowledge with colleagues? Please describe these plans or structures. <i>Within your school</i> <i>Within your school's cluster</i> <i>At local authority level</i> <i>At regional level.</i> <i>Are these plans suitable and adequate?</i>			✓	

Barriers and necessary improvements				
<p>20. Have you faced any barriers in being able to use your new experience and skills for teaching and learning? What are these barriers? How have they or how could they be overcome?</p> <p><i>Barriers within the classroom</i></p> <p><i>Barriers within the school</i></p> <p><i>Barriers at cluster or regional level</i></p>		✓		
<p>21. Are there any improvements to the Sabbatical Scheme you would suggest?</p>		✓		
<p>22. Are there any further matters you would like to raise in relation to the Sabbatical Scheme or in relation to the evaluation?</p>		✓		

Topic guide for headteachers / SLT (Entry, Foundation and Welsh in a Year)

Notes for researchers:

- The 'course' is used to refer to the Sabbatical Scheme at entry, foundation and advanced level, as well as Welsh in a Year.
- For all questions, researcher to prompt for details, examples and rationale for the response, as appropriate.
- Where appropriate, researcher to ask on what basis observations are made (e.g. observations of impact, data).

Background

- 1. Please provide an overview of your role and responsibilities in your school.**
 - a. Confirm role.
 - b. Confirm school-level responsibilities, including relating to Welsh language.
- 2. Please provide an overview of your school's engagement with the Sabbatical Scheme.**
 - a. How many teachers have accessed courses?
 - b. Over how many years?
 - c. Which courses have been accessed e.g. Entry, Foundation, Welsh in a Year?
- 3. What are the key outcomes you hope to achieve through your school's involvement in the Sabbatical Scheme?**
 - a. What school priorities or challenges might the Sabbatical Scheme help you address?

Engagement with the Sabbatical Scheme

- 4. How do you receive information about the opportunities offered through the Scheme each year?**
 - a. Who provides you with this information?
 - b. What information do you receive?
 - c. Is the school offered Sabbatical Scheme opportunities every year?
- 5. Why did you decide to participate in the Sabbatical Scheme?**
- 6. How does your school decide which teachers or TAs (and how many) apply to attend a course?**
 - a. Who is involved (inside and outside the school) in making this decision?
 - b. What criteria do you use for deciding which teachers or TAs apply?
 - c. Are decisions made on a short-term / year-by-year basis, or part of a longer-term plan?
- 7. Having decided to participate, what information did your school receive in advance of the teacher or TA attending the course?**
 - a. Please explain.
 - b. Who provided this information?
 - c. Was this information adequate (i) for you to understand what was expected from / what was involved for you as a school and (ii) and for the individual(s) to understand what was expected of them / what was involved?
- 8. What information did teachers or TAs from your school who attended courses receive in advance of attending the course?**
 - a. Who provided this information?
 - b. Was this information adequate?

Engagement: Strategic Engagement

- 9. Is the Scheme used to support wider school planning and/or strategies, and if so, how and to what extent?**
 - a. Prompt on - School Improvement Plan

- b. Professional development / staff CPD planning
- c. Welsh language planning
- d. Strategies for responding to new curriculum requirements

- 10. (If not already answered) Are there discussions and decisions made about the scheme involving others beyond the school – e.g. with partners at cluster, local authority or consortium level, with regards to,**
- a. Selecting practitioners to take part
 - b. Providing support after attending the course
 - c. Making use of practitioners' new skills

Design of the courses

- 11. What are your views on the design of the courses?**
- a. Prompts if needed – length, intensity, levels, content, accessibility.

Impact

Note: Researchers to ask on what basis observations are made (e.g. observations of impact, data).

- 12. Did attending the course(s) make a difference to teachers' and TAs' Welsh language skills?**
- 13. Did attending the course(s) make a difference to teachers' and TAs' confidence to use the Welsh language?**
- 14. Did attending the course(s) make a difference to teachers' and TAs' use of Welsh within the school?**
- a. Introduction of incidental Welsh in different school contexts.
 - b. Use of Welsh across the curriculum.
 - c. Delivering (or supporting delivery of) Welsh language elements of the new curriculum in different key stages.
 - d. Delivering (or supporting delivery of) elements of lessons through the medium of Welsh.
- 15. Did attending the course(s) make a difference to teachers' and TAs' teaching practice.**
- a. Skills and ability to teach / support the teaching of Welsh language in your school.
 - b. Knowledge of Welsh second language teaching methodologies.
 - c. Understanding of good practice in relation to teaching Welsh second language.
 - d. Understanding of correct language in order to act as a good language model for pupils.
 - e. Skills for assessing and providing feedback to pupils on their Welsh language.
- 16. Did the school's participation in the Sabbatical Scheme make a difference to planning and leadership for Welsh language across your school.**
- a. Teachers' and TAs' roles and responsibilities.
 - b. Impact on how the school plans for teaching Welsh across the school.
 - c. Expanding knowledge of suitable resources and good practice in Welsh language teaching methodologies.
 - d. Working strategically to develop bilingualism in your school.
 - e. Preparing for the new curriculum.
- 17. Did the school's participation in the Sabbatical Scheme make a difference to your school's ethos and attitude towards the Welsh language?**
- 18. Overall, what difference has your school's participation in the Sabbatical Scheme made to your school?**
- a. What level of influence – if any – have teachers and TAs who attend the courses been able to have in your school?

Post-course support and plans

- 19. Is there support or subsequent provision available to teachers and TAs once they return to the school? What is the nature of this provision and who provides it?**
- What support is available within your school?
 - What support is available within your school's cluster?
 - What support is available from your local authority?
 - What support is available from your regional education consortium?
 - Is this support suitable and adequate?
- 20. Are there any plans in place for teachers and TAs who attend courses to share experience and knowledge with colleagues? Please describe these plans or structures.**
- Within your school.
 - Within your school's cluster.
 - At local authority level.
 - At regional level.
 - Are these plans suitable and adequate?
- 21. Is there any support available for schools who have taken part in the Sabbatical Scheme?**
- Support for schools to make best use of teachers' and TAs' new skills.
 - Please describe this support.
 - Who provides this support?
 - What are your views on this support?
 - Support for schools to provide suitable aftercare for teachers and TAs who have attended courses.
 - Please describe this support.
 - Who provides this support?
 - What are your views on this support?

Barriers and necessary improvements

- 22. Has the school faced any barriers in being able to access the Scheme? What are these barriers? How have they or could they be overcome?**
- Prompt: Explore barriers at different levels – at the practitioner level; at a school level; and beyond the school, i.e. at cluster/local authority/regional level.
- 23. Has the school faced any barriers in being able to take advantage of any impacts resulting from practitioners' attendance on the Scheme? What are these barriers? How have they or could they be overcome?**
- Prompt: Explore barriers at different levels – at the practitioner level; at a school level; and beyond the school, i.e. at cluster/local authority/regional level.
- 24. Are there any improvements to the Sabbatical Scheme you would suggest?**
- 25. Are there any further matters you would like to raise in relation to the Sabbatical Scheme or in relation to the evaluation?**

Topic guide for scoping interviews: Welsh Government officers – Sabbatical Scheme team

Note 1: 'Scheme' is used here to refer to the Sabbatical Scheme at entry, foundation and advanced level and the Welsh in a Year course.

Note 2: Where appropriate it will be necessary to ask on what basis comments are made (observation, monitoring data, etc.).

Background

1. Please provide an overview of your role.
 - a. Confirm title and role.
 - b. Main responsibilities, including input into which programmes/other schemes.
2. Please explain the background to the development of the *Sabbatical Scheme – courses at entry/foundation level and advanced*, noting, in particular:
 - a. The theoretical basis for the Scheme
 - b. What is the Scheme trying to change or improve?
 - c. In what way, if any, does the Scheme build on previous interventions and/or research in the field?
3. Explain the background behind the development of the *Welsh in a Year course*?
 - a. Why is the course established?
 - i. What is the course trying to change or improve?
 - ii. What was the need and rationale for establishing it?
 - b. In what way, if any, does the course build on previous intervention and/or research in the field?
 - c. Any new considerations / challenges arising from its introduction?

Design

4. What was the process for planning the design and scope of the Scheme?
 - a. Who (and what partners) were involved in the planning process?
5. What are the key features of the Sabbatical Scheme?
6. What is the process of planning the content of the courses, and who is leading on that?
7. What are the assumptions underlying the design of the Scheme? (Note - To begin the process of preparing the Theory of Change)
8. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the design of the Scheme?

STRATEGIC ROLE

9. What is the relationship between the Scheme and The Welsh Government's priorities? In particular,
 - a. What is the scheme's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for the *Welsh language*?
 - b. What is the plan's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for the *Welsh language in education*?
 - c. What is the plan's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for *education / curriculum reforms*?
 - d. What is the plan's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for *continuing professional development provision*?

10. How does the Scheme fit with the reforms to the curriculum and to the assessment arrangements in Wales?
11. At a national level how are all sabbatical scheme courses being used strategically to create change in Welsh-language and Welsh-medium provision in schools?
 - a. Please provide an overview (if known) of how practitioners are targeted?
 - b. Please provide an overview (if known) of the support for practitioners before and after attending the courses.
 - c. Provide an overview (if known) of the procedures in place for practitioners to share their experiences after they have completed their training.
12. Is the Sabbatical Scheme used strategically locally and regionally to plan educational provision as far as you are aware? What is the evidence for this?

ACTION / ROLE OF THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

13. Outline the role of the Welsh Government in relation to the Scheme.
 - a. What is the balance between the supervisory/management role and the executive role of the Government of Wales?
 - b. Explain the nature of the collaboration between the Welsh Government and other implementing partners, specifically (i) the providers and (ii) the consortia.
14. Please provide an overview of the management and administration of the scheme undertaken by WG.
 - a. Are there any specific aspects of the Scheme's operation that are particularly challenging?
 - b. Have any challenges been reported by other partners in implementing the Scheme?
15. Are there any variations in the way the Scheme is implemented in different parts/regions of Wales and by the different training providers? If yes, what are the variations and what are the reasons for them?
16. In your experience of managing the implementation of the Scheme, what are the conditions and characteristics that influence the ability of partners (training providers, consortia, authorities and schools) to implement the Scheme effectively?
17. What are the monitoring and quality assurance arrangements for the Scheme? By whom?

CONTRIBUTION TO D PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTITIONERS

18. What impact will the Sabbatical Scheme (at the different levels and Welsh in a Year) have on:
 - a. the development of practitioners' Welsh language skills and their ability to teach Welsh (and how will the impact be identified in the short and longer term?);
 - b. the ability and confidence of practitioners to use language patterns correctly with pupils and the ability and confidence of practitioners to teach through the medium of Welsh (specifically the advanced courses)
 - c. planning in schools and how is the Sabbatical Scheme being used strategically to create change (and how will the impact be identified in the short and longer term?);

- d. regional planning (i.e. how the Sabbatical Scheme is used strategically by the consortia);
 - e. the use of Welsh across the curriculum;
 - f. occasional use of Welsh in school;
 - g. the school's attitude towards the Welsh language.
19. What evidence / indicators are currently being used to report on the above (question list 18) and on other Outcomes of the Scheme?
- a. Who is responsible for collecting and scrutinising the evidence?
 - b. How is the information used?
 - c. Are there possible methods of refining this process?
20. What factors and conditions contribute to facilitating or hindering the impact of the Scheme?

ANY OTHER MATTERS

21. Are there any other issues you would like to raise in relation to the Scheme or in relation to the evaluation?

Topic guide for scoping interviews: Welsh Government officers – indirect/strategic role

Note 1: 'Scheme' is used here to mean the Sabbatical Scheme at entry, foundation and advanced level and for Welsh in a Year.

Note 2: Where appropriate it will be necessary to ask the basis of the comments (observation, monitoring data, etc.).

Background

1. Please provide an overview of your role.
 - a. Confirm title and role.
 - b. Main responsibilities, including input into which programmes/ other schemes.
2. What is your understanding of the Sabbatical Scheme – courses at entry/foundation level and above?
 - a. What is the Scheme trying to change or improve?
 - b. In what way, if any, does the Scheme build on previous intervention and/or research in the field?
3. What is your understanding of the Welsh in a Year course in particular?
 - a. Why is the course set up?
 - b. In what way, if any, does the Cplan build on previous intervention and/or research in the field?
 - c. Any new considerations / challenges arising from its introduction?
4. Outline the role of the Welsh Government in relation to the Cplan, and your role.

Design

5. Were you involved in designing the design and scope of the C-plan?
 - a. What was the process for designing the design and scope of the Scheme?
 - b. Who (and what partners) were involved in the planning process?
6. What are the assumptions underlying the design of the Scheme? (Note - To begin the process of formulating the Theory of Change)
7. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the Design of the Scheme?

STRATEGIC ROLE

8. What is the relationship between the Scheme and The Welsh Government's priorities? In particular,
 - a. What is the scheme's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for the Welsh *language*?
 - b. What is the plan's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for the Welsh language in *education*?
 - c. What is the plan's expected contribution to the Welsh Government's strategic vision for education / curriculum *reforms*?
 - d. What is the expected contribution of this Plan to the Welsh Government's strategic vision *for continuing professional development provision*?
9. How does the Scheme fit with the reforms to the curriculum and to the assessment arrangements in Wales?
10. At a national level how are all sabbatical scheme courses being used strategically to create change in Welsh-language and Welsh-medium provision in schools?

IMPACT

11. What impact will the Sabbatical Scheme (at the different levels and Welsh in a Year) have on:
 - a. the development of practitioners' Welsh language skills and their ability to teach Welsh (and how will the Welsh Government (and others such as the consortia and schools) be able to identify the impact in the short and longer term?);
 - b. the ability and confidence of practitioners to use language patterns correctly with pupils, and the ability and confidence of practitioners to teach through the medium of Welsh (specifically the advanced courses)
 - c. planning and how is the Sabbatical Scheme being used strategically to create change (and how will the impact be identified in the short and longer term?);
 - d. c regional planning (i.e. how the Sabbatical Scheme is used strategically by the consortia to develop Welsh language skills of their practitioners);
 - e. the use of Welsh across the curriculum;
 - f. occasional use of Welsh in school;
 - g. the school's attitude towards the Welsh language.

12. Based on your understanding of how the Scheme is being implemented, whether and factors and what conditions contribute to facilitating or hindering the impact of the Scheme?

ANY OTHER MATTERS

13. Are there any other issues you would like to raise in relation to the Scheme or in relation to the evaluation?

Topic guide for scoping interviews: Regional Officers

Note 1: 'Scheme' is used here to edit the Sabbatical Scheme at entry, foundation and advanced level and the Welsh in a Year course.

Note 2: Where appropriate it will be necessary to ask the basis of the comments (observation, monitoring data, etc.).

BACKGROUND AND PLANNING

1. Please provide an overview of your role.
 - a. Confirm the job title and position within the consortium structure.
 - b. Main responsibilities, including which programmes/Scheme.
 - c. Any relevant previous posts/roles.
2. What was the process for planning to use the *Sabbatical Scheme – courses at entry/foundation level and above* in your region?
 - a. Who was involved in the process? What was their input?
 - b. What was the nature of the contact between your consortium officials and Welsh Government officials as part of the process of planning how to implement the Scheme in your region?
 - c. In what way, if any, does the course build on previous intervention or other schemes?
3. Explain the background behind the development of the Welsh in *a Year course* in your region.
 - a. Who was involved in the process? What was their input?
 - b. What was the nature of the contact between your consortium officials and Welsh Government officials as part of the process of planning how to implement the Scheme in your region?
 - c. In what way, if any, does the course build on previous intervention or other schemes?
 - d. Any new considerations / challenges arising from its introduction?

STRATEGIC PLANNING

4. What is the relationship between the Scheme and other plans / programmes / provisions at school, authority and consortium level? (eg. School Improvement Plans, initial teacher education; Curriculum for Wales developments, county and regional strategies; other courses e.g. Welsh for adults).
 - a. Do you think the Plan enriches or adds value to other strategic plans? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

- b. Do consortia /LAs plan other provisions and prioritise which practitioners should have access to these provisions to add value / avoid duplication with the Sabbatical Scheme?
5. What is the Plan's contribution to the consortium's plans and strategies (e.g. the business plan; request a copy if not on the web).
 6. At a regional level how all Sabbatical Scheme courses are used strategically to create change in Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision in schools.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME

[Discussion by Scheme, if appropriate]

7. Please provide an overview of the model of implementation of the Scheme in your region.
 - a. Number of practitioners (and schools) involved.
 - b. What is the process for deciding which practitioners are involved in the training? Who decides, and what are the criteria?
 - c. What is the role of (i) local authorities and (ii) schools in implementing the Scheme?
 - d. Do the consortia / LA provide direct input into the courses? What is the nature of the input?
 - e. How does a school/practitioners find out about the Scheme? / How do you communicate the objectives of the Scheme?
 - f. What guidance, training or guidance is provided by the consortium on the Sabbatical Scheme?
 - g. How, and to what extent, do practitioners receive support before attending the courses? Who provides the support and what is the nature of the provision?
 - h. How, and to what extent, practitioners are supported (i) during the training and (ii) on their return to their schools to put their skills into practice. What is the nature of this provision and who provides it?
 - i. Are there procedures in place for practitioners to share their experiences more widely after they have completed their training? How is this implemented?
 - j. Explanation of any variations between schools / clusters. What do you think is the explanation for the variations?
 - k. Do some schools/practitioners choose not to participate? What do you think are the reasons for this?
 - l. Explain the nature of the link between the consortium and (i) the Welsh Government (ii) training providers (iii) other local authorities (iv) consortia.
 - m. Which other stakeholders do you normally work with? What is the nature of the contact and collaboration?
8. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the Design of the Scheme?
 - a. Are there any specific aspects of the Scheme's operation that are particularly successful?
 - b. Are there any specific aspects of the Scheme's operation that are particularly challenging?
 - c. Have any challenges been reported by others (e.g. practitioners, schools) in implementing the Plan?
 - d. Have these challenges been addressed? How and by whom? Are there any solutions to consider / implement?

9. In your experience of managing the implementation of the Scheme, what are the conditions and characteristics that influence the ability of partners (training providers, authorities and schools) to implement the Scheme effectively?
10. What are the monitoring and quality assurance arrangements in place?

IMPACT

11. What impact will the Sabbatical Scheme (including Welsh in a Year) have on:
 - a. the development of practitioners' Welsh language skills and their ability to teach Welsh (and how will the impact be identified in the short and longer term?);
 - b. the ability and confidence of practitioners to use language patterns correctly with pupils, and the ability and confidence of practitioners to teach through the medium of Welsh (specifically the advanced courses);
 - c. designing provision within schools and how the Sabbatical Scheme is being used strategically to create change (and how will the impact be identified in the short and longer term?);
 - d. regional planning (i.e. how the Sabbatical Scheme is used strategically by the consortia);
 - e. the use of Welsh across the curriculum;
 - f. occasional use of Welsh in school;
 - g. the school's attitude towards the Welsh language.
12. What evidence / indicators are currently being used to report on the above (list of questions above) and on other outcomes of the Scheme? Who is responsible for collecting and scrutinising the evidence? Are there possible methods of refining this process?
13. What factors and conditions contribute to facilitating or hindering the impact of the Scheme?

ANY OTHER MATTERS

14. Are there any other issues you would like to raise in relation to the Scheme or in relation to the evaluation?

Topic Guide for training providers

Note 1: 'Scheme' is used here to edit the Sabbatical Scheme at entry, foundation and advanced level and the Welsh in a Year course.

Note 2: Where appropriate it will be necessary on what basis the comments are made (observation, monitoring data, etc.).

Overview and Background

1. Please provide an overview of your role.
 - a. Confirm title and role.
 - b. Main responsibilities, including input into which other courses/schemes.
2. Explain how you came to offer a *Sabbatical Scheme – courses at entry/foundation level and above*, in your organisation noting, in particular:

- a. In what way, if any, does the Scheme build on previous intervention and/or research in the field?
3. You explain how you came to offer the *Welsh in a Year course*?
 - a. In what way, if any, does the course build on previous intervention and/or research in the field?
 - b. Any new considerations / challenges arising from its introduction?
4. Please provide a summary of the provision in your organisation for (i) Sabbatical Scheme – courses at entry/foundation level and above and (ii) Welsh in a Year?
 - a. Confirm which lot in the contractual period from September 2014 onwards.
 - b. Confirm the area of provision.
 - c. What are the course locations (why these locations).
 - d. How many are taking the courses this year, and how many have taken the courses in recent years.

Structure and content of courses

5. Please provide a summary of the courses offered by your organisation:
 - a. What is the structure of the courses (ask about: length; how many days a week; is there distance learning)
 - b. Are there mentors / personal tutors? How does the personal mentor / tutor system work?.
 - c. What is the content of the courses?
 - d. What is the nature of the lessons?
 - e. What is the nature of the exercises / activities that participants need to be completing
 - f. Are visits included as part of the offer?
 - g. are there any tasks taking place outside the classroom?
 - h. How are resources for the courses prepared?
 - i. (For the advanced courses) – how are the courses tailored to specific cohorts of practitioners? Is there an adaptation to different levels of language skills? Is there an adjustment according to the amount of support required?

Course design

6. What is the basis of course content?
7. Is there the same content across the training providers?
 - a. if there is a difference in the content, who determines the content?
 - b. Do you co-ordinate / communicate with other providers to ensure consistency?
8. How do you as providers (or course designers) ensure that the courses respond, and support practitioners to respond, to curriculum reforms and to the assessment arrangements in Wales?

Assessment and moderation

9. What is being assessed as part of the courses?
10. Which courses have been accredited, and by whom?
 - a. Do participants see the value of receiving accreditation for their Learning?

11. What is the moderation process?
- Is this a useful process? Do you act on any feedback received?

Contact with practitioners

12. Do you have input into the application process for practitioners? Do you see their application forms? Time?
- From your experience, to what extent are practitioners targeted to access the courses?
 - How does these targeting take place? Who leads and delivers the process?
 - Do you think this approach to targeting is effective?
13. How and to what extent do you as an organisation provide information to, or support, practitioners before they attend the courses and on their return to their schools? What is the nature of the support/information?
- Ideally, what in addition would you want to provide as support/information?
 - Should anyone else be providing support/information to the practitioners? How should this work?
14. Do you have procedures in place for practitioners to:
- Share their experiences to disseminate good practice / teaching techniques with other practitioners after they have completed their training? How is this implemented?
 - Engage with networks to discuss the challenges and successes of teaching, course experiences, good practice? How is this implemented?
15. Do you gather views on the courses / feedback from practitioners during and after the course? Feedback/views on what? Based on the evidence from this feedback, is the experience of attending the course / been positive for practitioners?
- What else have you learned from their feedback?
 - Have you changed your provision as a result of the feedback – what have you changed?
 - Can you share a summary/results with us?

Strategic Role

16. To what extent does the Scheme fit with, or add value to, other Welsh language learning opportunities available to practitioners ?
17. To what extent does the Scheme fit with, or add value to, the professional learning available to practitioners?
- How the Scheme fits into the 'package' of regional / national professional learning available.
18. In your experience of delivering courses, what are the conditions and characteristics that influence the ability of partners (Welsh Government, consortia, authorities and schools) to implement the Sabbatical Scheme effectively? What is the basis of these comments?
19. What are the conditions and characteristics that influence the following (if known):
- the development of practitioners' Welsh language skills and their ability to teach Welsh,
 - practitioners' ability and confidence to use language patterns correctly with pupils,

- c. school planning and how the Sabbatical Scheme is used strategically to create change
- d. regional planning,
- e. the use of Welsh across the curriculum,
- f. occasional use of Welsh in school,
- g. the school's attitude towards the Welsh language?

ANY OTHER MATTERS

20. Are there any other issues you would like to raise in relation to the Scheme or in relation to the evaluation?