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## CFA15 Mentrau Iaith Cymru

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol |  
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymraeg i bawb? | Cymraeg for all?

Ymateb gan: Mentrau Iaith Cymru | Evidence from: Mentrau Iaith Cymru

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### 1. What are the main barriers that prevent wider use of the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers, and what might help to change this?

**Barrier:** Opportunities to participate in leisure activities through the medium of Welsh are piecemeal in nature. Consider public services funded from local authority budgets: children's services; youth services; family support services; childcare after school and during holidays; community regeneration programmes; sport and leisure; culture and tourism programmes. The provision is in English by default, and individuals must seek out pockets of Welsh language provision if they wish to use their Welsh language skills.

**Solutions:** Local authorities must earmark fair funding for Welsh language provision in every element of their services that creates opportunities to participate in leisure activities (see above). If local authorities do not have the workforce to cater for this, they should fund third sector bodies to do so on their behalf. Local authority promotion strategies could be used as a means of strengthening public bodies' provision if they are given the appropriate status, accountability and oversight; these strategies should also be a driver for expenditure. If the Public Service Boards were to adopt such promotion strategies and earmark funding to implement them, it would make a huge difference. This funding would not have to be new money, but could instead entail a fairer allocation from the overall budget.

**Barrier:** Not much use of the Welsh language is made in sports clubs. So many children and young people attend sports clubs of all kinds, and these clubs, on the whole, do not even know which children are able to speak Welsh. All coaching and socialising happens in English.

**Possible solution:** A commitment from the Sports Council to improve the situation by funding collaboration projects, providing incentives to establish Welsh language coaching pathways and encouraging the use of Welsh within clubs. Learning from good practice elsewhere (such as Cymric football club in Cardiff) and funding the Mentrau Iaith to support community and competitive clubs to increase their Welsh-medium activity.

**Barrier:** All private sector leisure provision – shopping, eating out, gyms and so on – use English as a default in the experiences they provide.

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**Solutions:** Without a Language Act that compels operators to use the Welsh language, we must invest in targeted campaigns and programmes to convince them of the benefits of doing so, working with them to encourage the use of Welsh in their spaces. Bodies like the Mentrau Iaith can contribute by working with key businesses, but the Mentrau must be resourced to do this work. We must ensure that development grants are available to businesses that are active in communities, with associated conditions regarding the use of the Welsh language. Furthermore, procurement processes for such provision should require a meaningful commitment to encourage the use of Welsh.

Workplaces in these areas also use English by default, and very few workplaces in every sector encourage the development and use of Welsh language skills in the workplace. Additional steps should be taken to compel workplaces, be they in the public or private sectors, to encourage the use of Welsh at work.

**Barrier:** The lack of opportunities to use Welsh after leaving Welsh-medium education is a major challenge. Young people lose their Welsh language skills rapidly if they do not happen to be employed in posts that require them to use these skills.

**Possible solutions:** See below.

## **2. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?**

- Expanding the provision of after-school and holiday clubs in Welsh-medium schools, thereby encouraging the use of Welsh outside educational environments, to every Welsh-medium school.
  - Welsh language cultural festivals in every county to create temporary Welsh language spaces in towns, with all of the excitement and activity associated with the preparations for such events.
  - Experimental and ambitious programmes to empower groups of young people to create social activities through the medium of Welsh in their communities after leaving Welsh-medium schools.
  - Attractive Welsh-medium work experience opportunities for young people when completing the compulsory elements of the Welsh baccalaureate
  - Occasional work opportunities, for example during school holidays, in workplaces that offer Welsh language spaces – the Mentrau Iaith, holiday clubs, Welsh language centres and so on.
  - Contemporary projects to spark young people's interest in their culture and language – folk dancing and music.
  - Welsh language community and cultural centres.
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- Programmes to engender confidence and boost use of the Welsh language in the workplace, which would serve to encourage use of the language at work and would connect individuals with opportunities to socialise through the medium of Welsh to reinforce their skills.
  - Additional core funding and support for the Mentrau Iaith to enable them to provide much-needed opportunities to socialise through the medium of Welsh in their communities, around the school, and to collaborate with and influence other bodies that provide similar activities.
  - Additional support for traditional community provision, such as the Urdd clubs, Welsh language choirs, chapels, and the *papurau bro*, to enable them to reach out to young audiences and prosper into the future.
  - There is also potential for the following bodies and events to do a great deal to encourage greater use of the language in social contexts:
    - Leisure centres
    - Park Runs
    - Swimming clubs
    - Careers Wales
    - Supermarkets, shops and pubs
    - Cultural programmes in public buildings (theatres, libraries and so on).

### **3. Can you share examples of successful initiatives or activities that have encouraged Welsh language use in areas where use of the language is limited?**

- Menter Iaith Caerffili's after-school clubs.
  - Menter Caerdydd, Conwy, Gwendraeth Elli and others' work in developing young bands.
  - Welsh language cultural festivals; for example, Gŵyl Tawe, Ogi ogi Ogwr, Tafwyl, Ffiilffest, Parti Ponti.
  - Welsh-medium sports clubs for children; for example, the Urdd or partnerships with existing sports clubs.
  - Awareness-raising efforts and encouragement of local ownership of the Eisteddfod; for example, in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
  - Universal youth work provision in Cardiff's Welsh-medium secondary schools (partnership between the local authority, the Urdd and the Menter Iaith).
  - Soar Community Centre in Merthyr and Tŷ Tawe, for example, which are safe spaces to use Welsh as a default language.
  - Twmpdaith (Menter Maldwyn).
  - Opportunities for 'coffee and a chat' provided by Mentrau Iaith in all parts of Wales.
  - Mural-making workshops in English-medium youth clubs .
  - Workshops or clubs for adults: yoga, cookery, art, walking tours.
  - Choirs
  - Gigs and all of the efforts to develop young bands (for example, Menter Caerdydd).
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- Sessions for parents and children in libraries (for example, Magi Ann, Symud gyda Tedi).

#### **4. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?**

- A Welsh language option offered by default on car park payment machines, tills, computers and so on.
- More apps/experiences through the medium of Welsh, with information provided about what is available.
- More influencers able to model use of the Welsh language on social media.
- More people at a grass-roots level speaking to parents and showing them how to use Welsh language resources.
- Opportunities for young adults to participate in digital activities through the medium of Welsh (coding, video games, podcasts).

#### **5. What impact, in your view, do cultural events such as national Eisteddfodau or Welsh language festivals have on Welsh language use, particularly in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?**

The arrival of the Eisteddfod in areas where there is a lower density of Welsh speakers is crucial to the Welsh language's viability. It provides an opportunity for speaking Welsh to become the norm for the minority in the area for a limited period of time. It is vital that minority language speakers have this experience, which gives a wider context to their language and culture, allows them to feel less isolated and makes the language fun and relevant to their area. For those who do not speak Welsh, it is a window to a culture and language that belong to them, and an opportunity to foster an interest and desire to engage further with the language, to develop their skills and to become more fluent. Seeing the positive effect the Eisteddfod's arrival has had on an area's businesses gives the Welsh language a new and enhanced status, and the language is, as a result, seen as something that brings economic benefit. Above all, it reinforces the use of Welsh among children, young people and families, and the experience of having an Eisteddfod in their area remains with them forever. However, the work of the Mentrau Iaith, volunteers, third sector bodies and local authorities leading up to an Eisteddfod's arrival, be it the National Eisteddfod or Urdd Eisteddfod, is just as important as the event itself, and we must ensure that sufficient resources and support are available in the area in the year leading up to the Eisteddfod and for a year after the event to maximise the benefits, and to ensure that a sense of inclusion and ownership is shared as widely as possible. If this does not

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happen, there can instead be a feeling that a Eisteddfod lands on an area then departs abruptly. In areas with a lower density of Welsh speakers, this can reinforce polarisation between Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers, making the latter feel that the event is irrelevant and is even an inconvenience for local people.

Having already mentioned the importance of one kind of festival to the Welsh language in areas where there is a lower percentage of Welsh speakers, the importance and positive impacts of Welsh language festivals in general cannot be overstated. The impact is similar to that outlined above in terms of the Eisteddfod, but other festivals can be even more important because they emerge from the community and take place within it. They bring people together to create an event, to create a temporary Welsh language space for the duration of the festival, but they also spark activity and a sense of excitement through the medium of Welsh in schools and in the community in the run-up to the event. Wales has excellent festivals, and we must find a way to fund them adequately. The Mentrau Iaith that co-ordinate festivals strive tirelessly to source funding every year, and are eager to ensure that the festivals remain free of charge.

#### **6. How might these events (whether large or small in size) be adapted or improved to better serve communities with fewer Welsh speakers**

- Specific funding for Mentrau Iaith to support and promote festivals on an annual basis.
- Increasing core funding for the Mentrau Iaith to ensure that they have adequate human resources to co-ordinate annual festivals and to drive local ownership and impact.
- Sufficient resources and support for volunteers to spark enthusiasm in the period running up to an Eisteddfod or festival.
- Sufficient resource to support local infrastructure – stallholders who operate bilingually.
- Experimental and ambitious programmes to draw hard-to-reach audiences into the excitement surrounding events.
- Marketing campaigns to promote events as widely as possible.
- Peripatetic officers working between the National Eisteddfod and the Mentrau Iaith, co-ordinating community engagement with the Eisteddfod in the year before the event itself.
- Resource to measure the impact of events on use of the Welsh Language.

#### **7. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committees attention about the Welsh Government's approach to supporting the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?**

##### Grants

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A specific area with a lower percentage of Welsh speakers should be selected for a study to measure whether expenditure from the Levelling Up fund on activities that have a community element has had a positive impact on use of the Welsh language. The findings of such a study may lead us to recommend the imposition of more robust conditions on funds administered by the public sector, so that a fairer amount of spending from grants that fund community activities is earmarked for Welsh-medium activity.

By the same token, it would be particularly interesting to undertake a similar study of expenditure by the Sports Council.

### Procurement

Accountability for providing activities through the medium of Welsh or bilingually must be tightened and strengthened in public sector procurement processes for any service that includes an element of interpersonal engagement/community activity.

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