

## **CFA21 Dyfodol i'r Iaith**

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymraeg i bawb? | Cymraeg for all?

Ymateb gan: Dyfodol i'r Iaith | Evidence from: Dyfodol i'r Iaith

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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?**

#### **Lack of numbers**

Due to the lack of numbers of Welsh speakers and means of identifying Welsh speakers, there is a lack of opportunities to speak Welsh in the community and in the workplace. As a result, English dominates and is the norm both at community level and in workplaces.

#### **How to build confidence and enthusiasm**

While a minority of Welsh speakers are concerned about the future of the language and act to support it, a number continue to be rather indifferent, or belong to the majority group who use whichever language is clearly dominant within a particular linguistic domain. Confidence and pride must be fostered among the majority of Welsh speakers to use the language on every occasion possible.

#### **Lack of use of Welsh by popular organisations**

The fantastic work of the Football Association of Wales offers guidance as to what is possible in using the Welsh language confidently and to influence others at the same time. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of work to be done to get local sports clubs and other organisations to use more Welsh. The language isn't used in enough social settings, eg pubs and clubs, so the Welsh language does not become the norm.

#### **A lack of visible Welsh**

Another issue is the lack of visible Welsh on the high street, in businesses, restaurants and shops, which are frequented daily. English is again the norm, and this will not change until Welsh speakers can see that the language can be the norm.

#### **Lack of information about who speaks Welsh**

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Although some wear badges indicating that they speak Welsh, only a minority do this in popular social settings, and there is no easy way for Welsh speakers to know who else speaks the language.

### **A lack of Welsh in the household**

Use of Welsh in the household greatly influences the use made of the language. It is clear that not enough has been done to strengthen the use of the language in households.

### **English dominates on social media**

English is the main language of popular social media for most users. This, together with the popularity of Anglo-American mass culture, is bound to work against the use of Welsh.

### **Greeting others in Welsh**

Rather than have one "Shw mae?" "Sut Mae?" day, we need to encourage all Welsh speakers to use that greeting when meeting strangers. This would establish the attitude that this is the natural language and also our desire to use it. The trick is to change the mindset that English is the "norm".

### **Language with official organisations**

This is not the main issue: we feel that the Welsh Language Standards have paid too much attention to this at the expense of the conditions of everyday language use. Another issue is therefore using the language when writing to official organisations, which calls for a higher level of linguistic confidence. The new curriculum could possibly raise confidence, in this regard.

## **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?**

### **Welsh Centres**

The Welsh Centres established through the enthusiasm of residents have made a big difference. Without Canolfan Soar in Merthyr Tydfil, Tŷ Tawe in Swansea, Clwb y Bont in Pontypridd and others, the Welsh language would have no space in these towns. Numerous activities are held in these spaces, including a Welsh language shop, coffee mornings, folk clubs, choirs, gigs for young people, and a host of other events and activities. These centres don't reach everyone, but without them there would be a huge gap.

### **Other spaces, cafes and pubs**

Where there is no specific Welsh centre, having a space or building, or a cafe or pub where Welsh language activities are concentrated gives Welsh speakers the opportunity to come together.

### **Workplaces**

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In workplaces, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office 'Working Welsh' package should be used and Welsh speaking members of the workforce should be encouraged to use a 'Welsh speaker' or 'Welsh learner' lanyard. Similarly, receptions and public offices should be displaying desk signs and 'Working Welsh' stickers in order to raise awareness of the opportunities available for members of the public to use the Welsh in these settings.

### **High street establishments**

Shops, pubs, cafes, hairdressers and nail salons need to display in their windows if Welsh can be used in their establishments, and show that they welcome this. Extending common use of the lanyard to workers in these places would promote the use of Welsh. Employees of these establishments need to be encouraged to use Welsh first when greeting customers.

### **Public events**

At public events of all kinds, public sector bodies should give bilingual opening greetings and extend an invitation to attendees to contribute in Welsh. That would set a tone and context where Welsh speakers would be more prepared to use it. The National Centre for Learning Welsh and providers of Welsh language courses must also be enabled to place a new emphasis on holding community events to encourage more to go about learning Welsh.

### **Use of schools**

Schools could be centres for daily events and socialising for Welsh activity, leading to further interest among non-Welsh speaking parents who have chosen to put their children through the Welsh-medium education system.

### **Expanding Welsh-medium education**

We need a commitment from the Government that only Welsh-medium or bilingual schools will be created in the future if we want to aim to achieve the targets for growth. That isn't the situation as it stands. Eg it was announced by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council that a new Welsh secondary school will be opened in the county but that a nearby Welsh/bilingual primary school will be turned into an English medium school. The growth of Welsh education is extremely slow and as a result, 80% of pupils in Wales leave the education system unable to speak Welsh.

### **The benefits of bilingualism**

We need grassroots plans that reflect specific challenges in order to change the attitudes of some, encourage others to start using their Welsh again and to realize the immediate benefits of being bilingual. There is a role here at grassroots level for mentrau iaith, but they need much more financial resources and personnel to try to tackle the situation. The Government could also commission and carry out marketing campaigns and promote the Welsh language as part of Welsh civic heritage and place bilingualism in a European and global context. We are still be too close to an English and British mindset.

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### **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?**

#### **Sport**

Popular sport and culture programmes for young people through Youth Services, the Urdd, Young Farmers, sport clubs and mentrau iaith create renewed interest and social opportunities for pupils and young people to have fun through the medium of Welsh. Mentrau iaith need to adopt activities that lead to raising the confidence of Welsh speakers to use the language for all occasions and understand that it is more than just a means of communication. Welsh announcements in some football and rugby grounds help to give space to the language, and there are many possibilities to increase this across the country.

#### **Music festivals**

Tafwyl in Cardiff is a prominent example of a Welsh music festival that attracts thousands. Smaller festivals are held in different places, eg Barry and Swansea. Such mass events attract Welsh and non-Welsh speakers alike and introduce many to the cultural world of Wales.

#### **Eisteddfodau and Urdd competitions**

We know that organisations such as the Urdd create a great buzz in terms of sport opportunities Eisteddfod competitions. District and county eisteddfodau attract hundreds to the Welsh language. Similarly, sport competitions attract young people to enjoy in an atmosphere where Welsh can be the main language. Opportunities to hold more of these activities in the Eisteddfod area need to be mapped in order to show that the Welsh language is part of life beyond the classroom.

#### **Events for learners**

Many coffee mornings/afternoons take place that give learners the opportunity to speak the language. These are happening all over the south. We need good publicity for adults (and families) of learners and immigrants who have embraced the Welsh language. Examples of these people are constantly seen on the internet and in Welsh magazines. In turn, there is potential to spur others to follow their example and underline the special place of our language and culture in the minds of the Welsh speakers.

#### **Choirs**

There are a large number of choirs in less Welsh-speaking areas of Wales. Some highly successful Welsh choirs have started, especially in the Cardiff area. Where it is not possible to have Welsh-speaking choirs in an area, encouraging choirs where there is a large amount of singing in Welsh is a means of attracting speakers and learners to come together to use the language.

#### **Interest classes and activities**

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Interest classes, whether literary, historical, walking tours, or drawing, are a means of stimulating the use of Welsh. There are successful examples of these in many counties.

### **Creating Welsh-speaking workplaces**

Welsh-speaking workplaces can be rare in these areas. Welsh-medium schools currently provide the best opportunity to create Welsh-speaking workplaces.

#### **4. How could technology and digital offers help to use the use of the Welsh language, to identify those who use the language infrequently or lack confidence?**

### **Growth during the pandemic**

During the pandemic, the mentrau iaith and Learning Welsh for Adults transferred to operating online, as did the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd Eisteddfod. That led to a buzz of Welsh online and a remarkable growth in the numbers enrolled on Welsh learning courses such as duolingo and SaysomethinginWelsh. It must be considered how that experience can be taken advantage of to see what the mentrau iaith can still do and into the future.

### **Audiovisual use on the high street**

Audiovisual use of Welsh needs to be increased through technology eg audio announcements in supermarkets such as Lidl and Aldi and the Post Office. So too with ATM machines that give customers a choice of language and in self-service grocery shops.

### **Social platforms**

Most digital social platforms mainly use English, such as Instagram, TikTok, to the extent that it's difficult for Welsh to gain a foothold on these. Video games are mostly in English only. It would be good to develop a presence for the Welsh language on these.

### **Podcasts**

We understand that the number of viewers of S4C on Clic and BBCiPlayer has increased, which again underlines the importance of Welsh provision and content onlinem, but it would also be good to see if it is possible to increase the offer of Welsh and bilingual podcasts in order to attract audiences of Welsh speakers and learners.

#### **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?**

### **Generating interest**

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We believe that the main legacy of such events is to generate interest and increase momentum anew in learning and using Welsh, drawing on Welsh speakers, learners and non-Welsh speakers alike to contribute to that excitement. The year or two of preparation for the Eisteddfod provides a special opportunity to develop Welsh language activities in an area.

### **Leaving a legacy**

It would be good for the Eisteddfod to aim to positively provide for the continuation of these activities in the areas wherever it is held. An example is that the Swansea Welsh Centre campaign was launched during the Eisteddfod. This was not an Eisteddfod activity, but down to local enthusiasts. It would be good for the Eisteddfod to consult with local enthusiasts to try to leave a specific legacy to promote the Welsh language.

### **Continuing to travel**

That is why it is key that the National Eisteddfod continues to travel through Wales every year. In this way, organisations such as the National Centre for Learning Welsh, the Urdd, Merched y Wawr and Mudiad Meithrin need to create follow-up links with communities that host the Eisteddfod in order for that subsequent interest to transfer to creating growth in the number who can speak Welsh and create regular events through the medium of Welsh in order to make it relevant to the social life of areas with fewer Welsh speakers.

### **Mentrau iaith as a catalyst**

There is also a key role for the mentrau iaith as a catalyst and co-ordinator of the process of turning interest into grassroots action.

### **Using learners as motivators**

Perhaps the best people to focus on non-Welsh speakers are a combination of adults that have gone about learning the language, non-Welsh speaking parents that have decided to send their children to Welsh-medium education and natives Welsh speakers that know their local area very well.

### **The Night Out scheme**

There is also the opportunity to benefit from the Arts Council of Wales Night Out scheme to increase the number of social events in Welsh.

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

### **Interagency arrangements**

Consider how best to put in place interagency standard arrangements that will ensure the best possible legacy as a result of the new interest that is arising in the Welsh language so that it does not

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all come to an end without leading to growth. It has already been noted which organisations should contribute to this.

### **Role for local authority education departments**

There is also an important role for local authority education departments and specifically around Welsh-medium schools in the Eisteddfod area in order to target non-Welsh speaking parents, the pupils themselves and well-wishers in order to create momentum and social activity in 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?**

### **Sufficient funding and staff**

As with any linguistic intervention, sufficient funding is required to employ staff in organisations to influence the grassroots. The truth is that there a number of mentrau iaith do not have a sufficient workforce, which means that a small group is trying to promote the language across large geographical areas. To have a real community impact, there must be an increase in the workforce of mentrau iaith at county or district level and give them specific responsibility to build on work in areas with fewer Welsh speakers.

### **Learning the history of Wales and the Welsh language**

The National Curriculum needs to give a fair place to local studies relating to history and language, so that young people have an awareness of the place of the Welsh language in the history of their towns and villages. This in turn will contribute to increasing interest in their identity and their native language.

We need to target those born and raised in Wales that do not speak the language with regard to the story of Wales and its language, and with regard to learning Welsh. There is a tendency to forget about this cohort and focus entirely on immigrants from England. Nationally, according to the 2021 Census, it may be seen that 22% of residents were born in England and 71% were born in Wales (19% in 2011 could speak Welsh but it's likely that not all were born in Wales). Statistics were published by the Office for National Statistics for 2011 stating that only 25% of immigrants to Gwynedd went about learning Welsh and around 20% in Ceredigion.

### **Developing a community development strategy**

The traditional Welsh-speaking society in these areas has crumbled. It is difficult for Welsh speakers to find each other. The number of Welsh-speaking households is decreasing. A community development strategy is needed as a basis for many of the activities and events that we

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have already identified, so that local authorities can create their own programme for developing the Welsh language in communities.

### **Using the Welsh Language Standards**

Use must be made of the Welsh Language Standards to promote the language. Local authorities have a duty to produce a programme to promote the Welsh language every five years, but there are no specific guidelines for these programmes. Specific, challenging and creative standards must be set, which will ensure that consistent work is done in terms of developing the Welsh language as a community language.

### **Locating Government departments in these areas**

There has been a very positive growth in the numbers of Welsh speakers in the Cardiff area over the last twenty years. The Welsh language there benefits from demographic changes, with a large number of Welsh speakers moving to the capital. This has happened because Cardiff has a high number of public and national institutions: the Senedd, the BBC, WJEC, the Urdd, Learning Welsh for Adults etc. These organisations have a relatively high number of Welsh-speaking jobs and Welsh speakers. It would be good to locate some national institutions in less fashionable parts of Wales where there are fewer Welsh speakers, so that young people go to work there, causing demographic changes that will benefit the Welsh language.

### **Setting targets for local government**

As with other plans that set targets for local government (eg WESPs), it would be beneficial to have a national programme to increase the use of the Welsh language. This would use national media to promote the language, and could set specific targets for local authorities, which could include running campaigns relating to the use of Welsh at home, encouraging the learning of Welsh, and identifying the possibilities of using the language. There is scope for using public buildings, such as libraries, county halls and leisure centres, as hubs for the Welsh language. This could include exhibitions relating to the language in the different areas, and provide space for running Welsh language events and classes.

### **Opportunities to work through the medium of Welsh**

As part of the national programme to increase the use of the Welsh language, it would be good to set targets for public bodies in terms of jobs where Welsh would be used as the main language of work, and to encourage positive language practices in workplaces in general, especially in places where there is direct contact

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