

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Ymchwiliad: Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (Cymru) 2015

Ymateb gan: Mudiad Meithrin

-

Welsh Parliament

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Inquiry: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Evidence from: Mudiad Meithrin





Equality and Social Justice Committee

Consultation: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Post legislative scrutiny

Contact Name: Angharad Morgan

Role: Policy Manager

Organisation: Mudiad Meithrin

E-mail address: [REDACTED]

Mudiad Meithrin's background

Mudiad Meithrin is a national voluntary association of Meithrin groups, Ti a Fi groups, wrap-around care and Welsh language day nurseries. Our aim is to create new Welsh speakers, campaign for Welsh-language care and education for all children, support our members and plan strategically to develop new services.

We have grown a great deal since 1971. Today, there are around 1,000 Meithrin groups, Ti a Fi groups, 'Cymraeg for Kids' groups, 'Clwb Cwtsh' sessions and nurseries under the Mudiad Meithrin banner providing early years experiences for around 22,000 children every week. Our aim overall and through the 'Set Up and Succeed' scheme is to increase the number of settings that provide childcare services, nursery education and wraparound care for young children and to expand services in existing settings (to avoid replacing historical and longstanding Welsh provision).

We have seen over 4,500 individuals qualify directly into our Welsh-medium workforce with childcare qualifications, through our National Training Scheme and the Cam wrth Gam Schools Scheme. The Mudiad is a centre with Agored Cymru, WJEC and City and Guilds accreditation and recognition, as well as CACHE, for the provision of the full range of post 14 and post-16 Child Care, Play, Learning and Development qualifications as well





as providing Level 5 Child Care, Play, Learning and Development courses in Leadership and Management. The Mudiad has direct claim status for a number of these courses following particularly high external quality checks.

We also work very closely with parents to provide help and advice to enable them to develop and support the work of the groups in the home, to pass on the Welsh language to their children or to start learning Welsh. We are a registered charity employing over 200 people nationally, with an additional 2,000 working in the groups and nurseries, and around 1500 volunteering as part of management committees. The groups are supported by a national network of professional staff who advise on a range of issues, such as business support, qualifications and staff recruitment, promoting good practice, staff training and working with local authorities.

Mudiad Meithrin's response

1. *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* is one of the 7 national well-being goals, with the number of people who can speak Welsh being one of the national indicators - and identified as a key milestone. Whilst also considering the 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy, we maintain that preserving the Welsh language in our communities should be one of the strategic goals and a central principle of any new plans that are recommended.
2. In order to realise the Welsh Government's objectives, it is necessary to show how important the Welsh language is to daily life, why its restoration is vital and exciting for everyone, and why speaking and taking ownership of the Welsh language is beneficial to all individuals and communities.
3. It must be ensured that linguistic planning within and for our Welsh-speaking communities takes place in an integrated, holistic, interconnected manner, so that all aspects reinforce each other.



4. The results of the 2021 Census highlighted the need for purposeful action to increase the numbers able to speak Welsh across Wales, and that the education system and the early years care and education sector have an integral role to play in moving towards this goal.
5. While we recognise the important role of Welsh-medium statutory education to the viability of Welsh-medium communities, we note the importance of collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin and other Cwlwm organisations in order to plan to ensure provision of early years care and education through the medium of Welsh, within easy reach of all communities in Wales, to realise the aim of creating and increasing demand for statutory Welsh-medium education in all our communities.
6. The Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities' analysis of the 2021 Census raises concerns that this subconscious trend in terms of inter-national transfer is no longer completely common, even in the areas with the highest density of Welsh speakers.
7. In the 2021 census, a fall was seen in the transmission rate of the Welsh language among couple households where one adult could speak Welsh, from 45.4% in 2011 to 40.4% in 2021. Rates of transmission of the Welsh language in the home in couple households where only one partner speaks Welsh were higher when the woman was the Welsh speaker. However, the percentage of these families passing on the Welsh language in the household was less than 50%. The transmission rates for single parent households (male or female) are the same (53%).
8. It should also be taken into account that some studies indicate that the mother's language is the best predictor of the child's linguistic development. The (last) census data supports this, and shows that the probability within mixed-language families of passing Welsh on to the next generation is 10% higher in families where the mother speaks Welsh. Specific interventions need to be considered to work with fathers who can speak Welsh in mixed-language families.



9. Paying more attention to the impact and significance of gender through all actions would be beneficial. It must also be taken into account that in families where both parents speak Welsh, 20% of these, for whatever reason, decide to not speak Welsh with their children. When discussing attempts to persuade, and to influence people, appropriate targeting is crucial, and this requires taking gender, age, ethnic background, and religion into account.
10. The recent report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities¹ (July 2024) notes that without the support of the education system, only in a few communities could children from households where Welsh is not spoken acquire the language
11. Education and care are policy areas that have the ability not only to protect and promote communities' current Welsh networks but also to create new Welsh speakers, work that is vitally important in order to maintain and strengthen Welsh-speaking communities of the future. To this end, the children who have not yet started school are essential from the point of view of socialising use of the Welsh language. There is potential to provide more Welsh social activities to nurture, develop and maintain the habit of speaking Welsh with the youngest children, and to support the use of Welsh within the social networks of parents, grandparents and carers.
12. The main aim of the Cymraeg for Kids programme is to increase the number of children in Welsh-medium education and care. The programme's objectives are supporting parents, parents-to-be and other family members to introduce and use Welsh in the home, passing Welsh on to their children, and supporting children's linguistic development, both socially and educationally. This is done through a diverse programme of baby groups, including baby massage, baby yoga, story sessions, signing and song, and Me and My Baby sessions, which are specifically for parents in the pre-natal period.
13. Cymraeg for Kids groups play a key role by supporting parents to speak Welsh and choose Welsh language education, and also support the health and well-being of



new parents. The groups are suitable for families from the pre-natal period up to when the child is around 18 months old. Afterwards, families are encouraged to attend the local Ti a Fi group, then on to the Meithrin group and then Welsh language education. So the language journey is clear to the parents from the very beginning.

14. Mudiad Meithrin supports a network of Ti a Fi Groups, with some led by volunteer leaders, and others by employed Ti a Fi Officers. These groups offer a weekly opportunity for families to come together in their local community to share experiences, build relationships and develop emotional and practical support networks. They offer safe places to meet, strengthen community links and reduce the feeling of isolation that is so often felt by families with young children. All of this while also introducing and encouraging use of Welsh in the community.
15. Financial cuts affect us all, and we see local authorities having to prioritise statutory services within their current budgets. This has led to a reduction in the funding available to employ specialist officers to work with Ti a Fi groups. In order to continue offering these valuable local experiences, long-term investment is needed to secure a paid organiser for Ti a Fi groups.
16. We see the current cuts also affecting the provision of the Croesi'r Bont language immersion program (which offers an immersion framework for early years settings across Wales bridging with the schools that feed the Cylch) and its relevant schemes (Camfa and Clebran) which immerse practitioners to be able to work in Welsh, as well as raising the linguistic confidence of Welsh speakers who work in the early years.
17. Recruiting individuals to volunteer as members of the cylch's Voluntary Management Committee can be challenging due to the pressure on the individuals as employers of the cylch's staff as well as other regulatory requirements. We are working with a group of volunteers from voluntary management committees to start the work of revising these models. It must be noted that a change from a voluntary



management model will mean additional costs for each location, and therefore require more financial investment in the early years.

18. A lack of awareness of where the Welsh language is used is an obstacle for Welsh speakers and learners. It is suggested that promoting the ability to communicate in Welsh, as well as the fact that its use is welcomed, is a way of solving this obstacle.
19. Lack of time is a major obstacle for individuals who are interested in learning Welsh, so introducing Welsh lessons in the workplace as part of a professional learning plan would be very beneficial to increase wider use of the Welsh language in communities.
20. We note the need to increase the number of people who can work through the medium of Welsh in a number of areas and specialist services that are part of the life of young families, including midwives, health visitors and various other professionals. It must also be ensured that language awareness training is a core element of the professional development of employees across the sectors involved in young families' lives, in order to ensure that the messages conveyed regarding the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism are accurate and consistent.
21. There is a need to keep working with experts in the area of nudge theory and behavioural change, learning from the work that has already been carried out in the field of health, as a means of increasing goodwill towards the Welsh language and further normalising its use. There is a need to develop a better understanding of the things that influence the attitudes and linguistic choices of individuals. Professor Bernadette O'Rourke's recent work in mapping language use within multilingual cities provides an objective way of mapping the language use of multilingual citizens in their daily lives.
22. Over the course of this Senedd term, there will be a need to reopen or expand 50+ of the Meithrin groups (as well as Ti a Fi groups, in areas where they do not already exist), continuing to support all of the Meithrin groups to remain open as important



- community resources. We also note the need for significant capital funds to pay for extensions and modifications, as finding suitable locations will be challenging.
23. There are a number of historically successful schemes that could be reintroduced, subject to some minor updates. We refer specifically here to schemes such as *'Kids Soak it Up'*, *'Mae dy Gymraeg di'n Grêt'* and *Cymraeg o'r Crud*. The provision and implementation of these schemes (along with the necessary financial investment) would once again support and increase Welsh language transmission and the use of the language within families and the wider community. These schemes also offer a means of discussing the benefits of the Welsh language, bilingualism and multilingualism in a general context and in the context of Welsh education, in particular, with the families who attend the sessions.
24. To this end, Mudiad Meithrin is calling on the Welsh Government to expand its activity in the area of language transmission by supporting parents and extended family members through various programmes and groups, such as Ti a Fi groups, 'Cymraeg for Kids', 'Clwb Cwtsh' and 'Cymraeg yn y Cartref'. Activities that will only be possible if an additional budget is given for extending and increasing the services already provided.
25. We are setting three priority areas in our manifesto for the 2026 Welsh General Election: (i) Ensuring quality care and early education provision with fair funding; (ii) Raising confidence, knowledge and skills within the early years workforce, the volunteer body and parents/carers; (iii) Planning childcare and early education provision that supports the objectives of the Welsh Language and Education Bill and contribute towards creating one million Welsh speakers by 2050.
26. We need to develop and invest in plans that support communities to work together in the long term, rather than on 'task-and-finish' projects only. We need to build and support communities to invest time to develop clubs and community initiatives for the benefit of their communities. Meithrin groups and Ti a Fi groups are examples of community assets that are necessary to enable communities to flourish, offering





opportunities for children and their families to come together and build natural support networks in their square mile, and do so in Welsh.

