



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# A rapid review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh

A report by Steve Morris on the findings and recommendations of the 'Rapid Review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh'.

First published: 4 August 2021

Last updated: 4 August 2021

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## Background

1.1 On 24 February 2021, the Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing, and the Welsh Language, Eluned Morgan, announced in a written statement that she had commissioned a Rapid Review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh (henceforth "the Centre"). I, together with a team of experts, was asked to lead the review and report back by the end of July 2021.

1.2 The team and I were tasked with considering and providing recommendations on seven specific matters to inform the Centre's provision from 1 August 2022 onwards.

1.3 In the course of the review, we have sought the views of and held meetings with various stakeholders comprising users, providers, and managers of Learn Welsh provision as well as Welsh Government and Estyn. The report represents our independent findings and recommendations based on these meetings and discussions.

1.4 The context of the review being held during the ongoing Covid pandemic and at a time immediately after the Centre was inspected by Estyn should be noted. I

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would like to record my thanks to all who gave generously of their time to participate in the meetings with me and the team. I would also like to record my thanks to the members of the team for their support and guidance.

## Introduction

2.1 The National Centre for Learning Welsh was established following a comprehensive review of Welsh for Adults – a report called "Raising our Sights" – published in July 2013.

2.2 Following a competitive process, Welsh Government awarded the contract to house and undertake the role of developing the National Centre for Learning Welsh to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The grant and contract extend for the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 July 2022. The Centre was incorporated as a Limited Company on 6 January 2016.

2.3 The first matter that the rapid review was asked to consider was the progress of the Centre in realising the recommendations of the "Raising our Sights" report. This point is addressed directly under 4.1 below.

2.4 This rapid review has been undertaken to inform the decision regarding the Centre's provision from 1 August 2022 onwards. In doing so, the intention is for the findings and recommendations to help provide direction and scope a vision for the work of the Centre as it approaches the next period of its existence.

2.5 The core outputs agreed between Welsh Government and the Centre for the current grant period are:

- to be a visible organisation that sets the national strategic direction for the Learn Welsh sector and to operate from settings, and with partners, across the whole of Wales
- to provide leadership and strategic direction to all Learn Welsh providers
- to raise standards within the Learn Welsh sector and increase the numbers able to speak and use Welsh
- to develop a high-quality, engaging and appropriate national curriculum and

produce resources suitable for learners

2.6 There was general consensus across stakeholders in the meetings held with them that the Centre has made solid progress throughout this initial seven-year period ("Phase 1"). There have been notable achievements in all of the core outputs and there is now in place a body that provides national strategic direction for the Learn Welsh provision.

2.7 A new national curriculum has been produced together with associated resources and course materials. Propitious development and use of innovative interactive, on-line resources have not only provided a means to increase contact hours with the language but - crucially - ensured that in March 2020, provision could continue and switch to a virtual environment. Learners now have available to them a digital gateway '[learnwelsh.cymru](https://learnwelsh.cymru)' which allows them to find the right level of course, enrol, keep a track of their learning and access the resources to enhance their learning.

2.8 The twenty seven providers delivering in the Learn Welsh sector prior to the establishment of the Centre have now been reduced to eleven. Apart from one county and the Nant Gwrtheyrn residential centre, these correspond to particular geographical areas of Wales. There is evidence of a good working relationship and clear lines of communication between the Centre and the providers, which allow them to realise national strategy effectively at a local level.

2.9 Comparable data regarding numbers of learners have been available from 2017 to 2018. There has been an increase in the numbers of unique learners from 12,680 in 2017 to 2018 to 17,505 (including Work Welsh - 'Cymraeg Gwaith') in 2019 to 2020. The 2019 to 2020 cohort was distributed across the following levels:

- Mynediad (A1) - 70%
- Sylfaen (A2) - 11%
- Canolradd (B1) - 8%
- Uwch (B2) - 8%
- Hyfedredd (C1/C2) - 3%

2.10 In 2019 the Centre became an official publisher of statistics. The Centre's

data management plan will greatly facilitate monitoring of learner numbers, retention/attrition rates, intensity of provision and progress across levels. This will be invaluable in informing strategy for the Centre in the future and will enable closer scrutiny of its achievements against its strategic plans.

2.11 The work of the Centre is aligned with and contributes to a number of Welsh Government policy areas. These include, in particular, Cymraeg 2050, with a clear role to play in facilitating an increase in the numbers of those who speak (and use) the language as well as targeted interventions in the areas of family/intergenerational language transmission and the use of Welsh in the workplace. In addition, aspects of the Centre's provision have played a part in economic, educational, welfare and equality policies.

2.12 The funding for the Centre and its provision are located outside the statutory education sector. Welsh Government provides this funding through the grant agreement with the Centre. In 2020 to 2021, funding was allocated across three streams:

- Mainstream grant - £8,660,000: distributed by the Centre to the eleven providers to fund provision
- Core grant - £1,783,900: this covers the running costs of the Centre itself as well as its developmental work (which was reduced during the pandemic in 2020 to 2021 but will increase to £1,850,000 in 2021 to 2022)
- Welsh Work grant - £1,355,000 (scaled back in the pandemic during 2020 to 2021 but increasing to £2,500,00 in 2021 to 2022): this is ring-fenced for the Welsh Work provision and is separate from the mainstream provision grant

## Context

3.1 It was agreed to conduct and complete this rapid review over a period of four months. The principal aim of the review is to consider and make recommendations on a set of issues agreed with the Minister and to inform the provision of Learning Welsh moving into "Phase 2" of the Centre from 1 August 2022 onwards.

3.2 I was supported in the work by an advisory team of four colleagues and we met monthly from February to June 2021 to plan and review progress. The members of the team are:

- Professor Tess Fitzpatrick, Head of the Department of Applied Linguistics and Director of the Language Research Centre at Swansea University
- Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies, Chief Executive of Mudiad Meithrin
- Professor Enlli Thomas, Professor of Education Research and Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Welsh language) at Bangor University
- Rhian Huws Williams, previously Chief Executive of the Care Council Wales, current member of the Minister's Partnership Council on the Welsh Language and a member of the original review group which produced "Raising our Sights"

## Estyn

3.3 The timing of this rapid review followed an Estyn inspection of the Centre from 25 January 2021 to 28 January 2021. It was agreed that as far as possible matters considered during the inspection would not be duplicated in our review. To this end, representatives of Estyn were invited to present their main findings to a meeting of the review's advisory team prior to finalisation of the main discussion points which would form the basis for the focus groups we would hold with Learn Welsh stakeholders.

3.4 It is useful to have a summary of the main areas and conclusions of the **Estyn inspection** and these are listed below.

3.5 A summary and analysis of the main outcomes from Learn Welsh providers' inspections (4 to date).

3.6 Planning provision: "Learners' needs are at the heart of all activity, and the strategic aim to "develop an innovative programme of attractive and suitable courses for learners by making full use of the latest technology", is realised successfully." The creation of a national curriculum and course books was commended, and it was felt that the wide scope of the provision offered met learners' needs well. The idea of learners' needs being at 'the heart of activity'

has been further enhanced by the development of the digital platform (2.7). Marketing and communications strategies are seen as successful in increasing recruitment as is engagement with external groups and partners. Initiatives such as the 'Siarad' scheme are viewed as useful additions to the promotion of the use of Welsh outside of the formal class setting.

3.7 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers: "The Centre's senior managers provide the sector with inspirational leadership, which provides clear and effective strategic guidance." The support received (and benefits thereof) from the University of Wales Trinity St David is highlighted as is the clarity of the Centre's overall vision and strategic planning. A positive and solid relationship has been forged with the eleven providers and the committees which enable the realisation of strategy are embedded well in the Centre's structures. The Centre's response to the pandemic in 2020 is discussed here as is its role in collecting, analysing, and publishing data. Governance is briefly referred to here too.

3.8 Self-evaluation processes and planning for improvement: "As a result of robust self-evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance processes, leaders and managers have a full understanding of the quality of provision in the sector." The development of the National Quality Framework is discussed as well as processes to enable self-evaluation and inform areas for improvement (in which the learners' voice is a core component). Annual action and financial plans are produced as part of the Centre's strategic planning.

3.9 Professional learning: "Leaders succeed in creating a supportive culture and ethos to support the professional learning of all staff in the sector." Training has been enhanced by the introduction of 'Academi', a national platform for professional learning for Learn Welsh practitioners. Sharing of good practice across providers is actively encouraged. The relationship between officers of the Centre and its providers is described as a close one. The new qualification at levels 4 and 6 is noted (some of the units will be available on-line through 'Academi') although financial restraints mean that it is not yet available to be delivered.

3.10 Use of resources: "The Centre and provider managers plan purposefully and thoroughly when using grants to provide courses for learners at all

levels." The creation of the Centre has allowed for parity of fees across providers for the first time ever. There are regular monitoring opportunities whereby the Centre can scrutinise providers' costs, expenditure, activities, and measure performance against targets.

3.11 Three recommendations were made as a result of the Estyn inspection:

- R1: share the methodology for successful teaching and second language acquisition with other relevant sectors to support the Welsh Government's aim of achieving a million active Welsh speakers by 2050
- R2: continue to work with Learn Welsh providers to develop models of provision based on learners' availability
- R3: realise the Workforce Development Plan through 'Academi' as a focus for training and professional development within the sector

In addition, the Centre was invited to produce two case studies: (i) **Turning learners into users of the Welsh language** and (ii) **Creating a digital platform for the Welsh for Adults sector**

## Methodology

3.12 The seven main considerations that we were asked to review were approached either through focus groups, desk research or a combination of both. These considerations had been agreed in advance with Welsh Government officials, the Centre itself, the Welsh Government's independent Scrutiny Committee and the Minister.

3.13 The evidence base for the review included:

- a meeting with the Centre's chief executive and meetings of the review team prior to conducting the review
- scrutiny of relevant documentation and data provided by the Centre and Welsh Government, including the original "Raising our Sights" report
- randomised focus groups (including one person from each provider's area) representing the following stakeholders: (i) full time staff (ii) part time tutors (iii) Canolradd (B1) level learners who are continuing their study beyond B1

level (iv) learners who have reached Canolradd (B1) level but discontinued their study (v) Welsh Work learners (generally Mynediad (A1) level) and (vi) Welsh at Home learners. An explanatory leaflet was distributed in advance to those agreeing to take part in the focus groups giving more information on why the review is being held and the areas that would be discussed with them during the meetings

- meetings with relevant Welsh Government officials, and officers from the Centre

3.14 At least one other member of the advisory team joined me at each one of the focus groups. In each meeting, there was an opportunity for those present to add any relevant points they wished to bring to the attention of the team and they were also invited to submit further evidence by email by an agreed date. Many learners availed themselves of this opportunity.

3.15 Prior to the publication of this report, the findings were reviewed with the members of the advisory team and the Centre was invited to confirm that the report is factually correct.

## Findings

4.1 Our findings are presented below following each one of the seven areas the rapid review was asked to consider. As well as the deliberations of the team, we include here comments made by the stakeholders outlined in 3.13 during our meetings with them.

### Area 1

Consider whether the Centre's progress against the recommendations of "Raising Our Sights" has been achieved.

4.2 There were twenty four original recommendations. The Centre itself recently (April 2021) assessed its progress against the original recommendations and shared this assessment with the team. Each of the original recommendations

are noted below together with the team's critical evaluation of progress to date and further comments where appropriate, taking into account the Centre's own assessment.

4.3 R1: the Welsh Government should set out a clear policy for Welsh for Adults and:

- establish a National Entity to be responsible for providing strategic leadership to the providers and undertake developmental duties at a national level in relation to the curriculum, tutor training, research, marketing and e-learning among others
- establish a clear and effective process of moving responsibilities and funding to the new National Entity in order to fund developments at a national level which will avoid duplication and ensure clear and sound leadership and consistency for the programme area

4.4 The National Entity is now the Centre which is part of the University of Wales Trinity St. David's group following a competitive tendering process. It undertakes all the duties outlined in 4.3 R1 and its current contract runs until 31 July 2022. The Centre is recognised nationally as the body with responsibility for planning and developing the Welsh for Adults programme and there is agreement among stakeholders that this is managed and led effectively by them.

4.5 R2: the Welsh Government should:

- work with the National Entity and current providers to rationalise, with the aim of reducing the number of providers from the current 27 to around 10 to 14
- fund the providers

4.6 This recommendation was partially accepted by Welsh Government who argued that it would be more appropriate for the Centre to distribute the funding to the providers rather than Welsh Government. The process of reducing the number of providers from 27 to 11 was a lengthy and a time-consuming one which demanded a lot of time and energy from the Centre during its initial period of operation. One benefit of the reduction in the number of providers is that more of the funding now reaches core Learn Welsh services. Institutional overheads

have been reduced to up to 15% across the board. This rationalisation and re-targeting of resources was one of the main aims of "Raising our Sights". The funding allocation for 2020 to 2021 is noted in section 2.12 of this report.

4.7 R3: the National Entity and the providers should plan provision with the aim of increasing numbers and meeting the needs of learners, by:

- using and refining Welsh for Adults data collection and analysis processes and tracking learners' progression from one level / year to the next
- using market research to see why 2.1 million of the post-16 non-Welsh speaking population do not learn Welsh in order to identify and target prospective learners
- using information gathered in the 2011 Census to target new learners
- responding to learners' needs and developing flexible provision
- increasing the provision of intensive courses, developing a programme of intensive learning and trialling it to begin with in a small number of locations across Wales

4.8 It was acknowledged that the ability to analyse and use data for strategic planning was limited before the Centre was established. The Centre is now an official publisher of statistics and data can be compared from the year 2017 to 2018 onwards. The lack of data to be able to track learners' progression trajectories has meant that these aspects of the Centre's work have only recently been able to be scrutinised effectively. Nevertheless, detailed, fine grain data analysis is now possible. The Centre has been proactive in commissioning market research to target different cohorts of learners as well as research into motivation and raising confidence of learners.

Through its committee structures, research findings are cascaded to providers who are then able to plan accordingly. The Estyn report highlighted the very flexible nature of the provision now available through the Centre and the extensive range of curriculum resources that have been developed. Each provider is expected to provide a programme of intensive courses for its particular area. However, it is felt that more market research focused on gap analysis amongst those currently not engaged in learning Welsh is needed.

4.9 R4: the National Entity, in collaboration with the providers, should develop

and implement a comprehensive marketing and communications plan which is new and exciting, based on data, market research and the experience of previous campaigns and use effective methods including social networks to promote the programme area.

4.10 An annually reviewed national marketing strategy is now in place. The Advisory Board approves the national marketing strategy, and it is implemented with the help of the National Marketing Committee. There was evidence in the meetings with stakeholders that awareness of the national brand is good, albeit more often associated with the local provider rather than the Centre itself. Discrete marketing campaigns (often through digital channels) are used to target specific groups of learners or to promote particular nationally-agreed marketing themes.

4.11 R5: the National Entity, in collaboration with the providers, should develop an accessible service for learners and prospective learners to provide full information about the provision across Wales and ensure there is information and an overview of learning Welsh beyond Wales, offering leadership and support as required.

4.12 This was seen as a crucial element in the establishment of the Centre by Welsh Government. The setting up of the digital platform [learnwelsh.cymru](https://learnwelsh.cymru) has meant that for the first time, learners have a one stop port of call where they can access information, nationally, about courses including levels and degree of intensity. The Centre has developed the platform to offer additional (freely available) digital resources to support learners as well as news, information, and events. Awareness of this resource was evident in our focus group meetings and had been especially useful during the Covid pandemic.

4.13 R6: the National Entity should work with the Welsh Government and partners to develop and implement a Welsh in the Workplace strategy which will:

- be based on detailed and continuous research into the needs of different sectors in terms of Welsh in the Workplace
- identify and replicate good practice at an international, national and local level

- ensure that appropriate and flexible, tailor-made delivery models, assessment and resources are developed
- enable collaboration at a national and local level
- develop Welsh in the Workplace provision to become a strong brand which is recognised by employers

4.14 Since 2017, the Centre has received additional funding to put its Welsh Work plan into action and 2020 to 2021 saw a 25% increase in learning activities. Through its level checker and meetings with employers, the Centre helps them to identify the language levels of their workforces and tailors provision accordingly. Learners involved in the Welsh Work scheme value its flexibility and the support from employers. A perennial challenge in this sector is balancing the need to create time and space to learn with the fluctuating demands and priorities of the workplace. The variety of learning activities available is a positive response to this challenge.

4.15 R7: the Welsh Government should collaborate with the Welsh Language Commissioner to:

- ensure that the proposed Standards emphasise the contribution of Welsh in the Workplace language training and reflect the need for intensive and purposeful Welsh in the Workplace training
- enable umbrella organisations and prominent employers to network and share good practice in relation to Welsh in the Workplace
- enable employers and organisations who have influence over employers to take strategic responsibility for developing their staff's Welsh language skills and develop and promote Welsh in the Workplace

4.16 The Centre notes it has worked with the Commissioner in the context of the Welsh Work scheme and has contributed as appropriate to codes of practice. Sharing of good practice within the scheme is enhanced by an annual networking event with employers. The ability of the Centre to provide assistance for employers to assess the language skills of their workforce is an asset in this context and should continue to be developed.

4.17 R8: the Welsh Government and the National Entity, in partnership with the providers and other organisations, should promote Welsh for the Family by:

- building on the Welsh for the Family scheme and increasing this provision
- encouraging local authorities and schools to collaborate with Welsh for Adults providers in order to support parents to learn Welsh
- ensuring that Welsh for the Family is part of broader schemes and policies relating to children and families and family learning

4.18 The Centre has developed the Welsh for the Family scheme and set up the Welsh at Home (Cymraeg yn y Cartref) scheme. A steering group has been set up to lead the work, with Mudiad Meithrin as a core member of it. It collaborates closely with Mudiad Meithrin to provide the innovative Clwb Cwtsh programme, with the aim of encouraging parents to avail themselves of the Centre's main stream provision. New Welsh at Home courses have been created to facilitate progression and marketing campaigns tailored to target parents are held. The Centre's role is pivotal in ensuring that parents of children attending Welsh medium education have an opportunity to acquire the language with the potential to contribute to greater inter-generational use of the language and thereby Cymraeg 2050 policy.

4.19 R9: the National Entity should develop an innovative e-learning strategy that will ensure e-learning is dovetailed with the learner's experience at all levels and is central to the entire programme area. The strategy will need to:

- be based on thorough research to develop an understanding of learners' and tutors' technical needs
- consider the pedagogical aspects of e-learning for Welsh for Adults
- be based on using the latest technology
- lead to the development of a single virtual site which is accessible on different platforms

4.20 In consultation with a specialist panel, a Digital Framework was established through which provision in this area is being developed, something that proved particularly apposite when the very quick transition to on-line learning occurred at the start of the Covid pandemic. Reference has already been made to the digital platform now in place which serves as a digital 'one stop shop' for learners. With the probability that e-learning is likely to remain an element of the provision in the near future at least, further research would be useful in evaluating the success of using methods such as blended learning, the virtual

classroom or self-study.

4.21 R10: the Welsh Government and the National Entity should collaborate with partners to develop a curriculum framework for defining and measuring Welsh language skills and hold a national discussion on defining fluency as part of the framework.

4.22 Producing a new curriculum has been a major piece of work from the very start of the Centre's operation. The new national curriculum is now in place and course materials developed providing a solid base on which other resources can be produced. The Centre can be considered a centre of excellence in this area and there is strong potential for other elements of language learning in Wales to benefit from closer links with it. It is widely claimed that completion of B1 level (Canolradd) equates with being a Welsh speaker although there was not unanimous agreement here. Given how important this definition is in terms of quantifying the numbers of new adult speakers of Welsh and of policy, there is a need for further research to confirm this definition.

4.23 R11: the National Entity, in collaboration with the Welsh Government, should implement the recommendations of Cardiff University research on the Welsh for Adults methodology, including:

- developing a national curriculum, ensuring there is an electronic version that tutors can adapt
- discussing the development of a corpus of vocabulary in collaboration with the Welsh Language Commissioner and Universities' Departments of Welsh
- ensuring that semi-formal learning activities are mainstreamed into courses
- revisiting the number of expected hours on a pathway to learning Welsh and redefining the hours and levels according to need
- considering alternative methods for intensive learning

4.24 These elements of the Welsh for Adults methodology research have all been addressed with the development of a research informed national curriculum. Centre officers are working with the CorCenCC team to apply the national corpus to the needs of Learn Welsh provision, for example in the production of frequency lists for Welsh. The new courses incorporate units of contemporary material which are distributed by the Centre and are appreciated

by learners who reported that this made their learning feel up-to-date, relevant to the here and now and allowed them to apply their language skills to current issues. There was evidence that this motivated some to develop links with external Welsh language bodies (for example the Mentrau Iaith) or at the very least to research specific topics in greater depth in their own time.

4.25 R12: the National Entity should be responsible for developing the curriculum centrally and ensuring that resources that are compatible with the curriculum are developed, which are:

- attractive, innovative, and diverse, to attract different types of learners and encourage the learners to practise different skills
- are authored by an experienced team which receives training, support, and recognition

4.26 The curriculum is discussed in 4.22 and 4.24 above. Course books were initially piloted and then rolled out to tutors nationally with specific training to ensure that they were confident in delivering the new courses. An experienced team of the Centre's practitioners worked together to create these new course books and associated resources.

4.27 R13: the National Entity and Providers should consult with other institutions to review provision at Proficiency level with the aim of ensuring that the provision is appropriately targeted.

4.28 Provision at this level attracts learners on the A1 to C2 continuum as well as Welsh speakers who may wish to improve confidence in aspects of their use of Welsh. The needs of these two cohorts at this level are not always similar or comparable (although they both often derive benefits from attending classes together, for example increased contact with first language speakers for the former). The Centre has produced an on-line Cwrs Gwella Cymraeg in the context of Work Welsh; however, it is recognised that materials that can target the specific language needs of individual learners are more appropriate here than a level specific course book.

4.29 R14: the National Entity should collaborate with Welsh language course providers in the further and higher education sector, in line with Welsh

Government guidelines, to avoid duplication and ensure value for public money; and establish a forum with private companies who provide Welsh language courses and include them in national discussions.

4.30 Since its inception the Centre, in consolidating its position as the National Centre for Learning Welsh in Wales, has improved cohesion and is seen as an important partner for other Welsh language providers to include in their discussions and plans. Formal partnerships have been established with private providers such as SSiW (Say Something in Welsh) and Duolingo which will benefit learners who study with them in facilitating progression routes and accessing the Learn Welsh network.

4.31 R15: the Welsh Government and the National Entity should revisit Welsh for Adults qualifications:

- moving the emphasis from accreditation towards assessment for learning, and ensuring that national arrangements are in place to moderate the assessment, in order to ensure national consistency
- providing training for tutors on assessment for learning
- reducing the number of examinations in order to give the qualifications status and ensure value for money
- consulting with awarding bodies as appropriate

4.32 The Centre works closely and effectively with the WJEC in maintaining and promoting the suite of Learn Welsh examinations. Although recognising that not all learners wish to engage with formal qualifications, they do nevertheless provide a target for many and there has been a 16% increase in the number of candidates during this first phase of the Centre. We can see no value in reducing the number of examinations - indeed, with the increasing uptake of Work Welsh provision together with the quantifying of Welsh speakers at around the B1 completion stage, the increase in the number of candidates sitting them is likely to continue. Learners are able to undertake self-evaluation of their skills through the Centre's interactive facilities.

4.33 R16: the National Entity, in collaboration with the providers, should develop a training strategy for tutors which will include:

- the development of a national Continuous Professional Development framework
- the provision of in-service training to meet tutors' developmental needs
- the provision of the National Qualification for new tutors or unqualified tutors

4.34 The Centre's 'Academi' is the main focus for its training programmes. Training is coordinated and delivered nationally and regionally with the Centre noting that 500 tutors received training during the 2018 to 2019 academic year. New qualifications for tutors are currently being commissioned which will further enhance their professional development.

4.35 R17: Welsh for Adults Providers should:

- improve quality, ensuring they share and implement good practice in order to make quality consistent for the benefit of learners
- plan the workforce for the future, endeavouring to ensure there are more full-time posts and career development opportunities for tutors in the programme area

4.36 The 2021 Estyn inspection confirms that the Centre has robust quality improvement structures in place. Planning to ensure that full-time career paths are available to create a critical mass of experienced Welsh for Adults practitioners (and administrators) is essential for the long-term sustainability and professionalism of the sector.

4.37 R18: the Welsh Government should ring-fence recurrent funding for Welsh for Adults within the budget for post-16 education, ensuring:

- that the new recurrent funding method is compatible with the principles outlined in this report
- that funding for semi-formal learning is mainstreamed so that it is an integral part of any courses
- that top-slicing levels in Welsh for Adults are consistent, fair and transparent and ensure value for money across Wales

4.38 The question of 'value for money' is addressed in a separate section of this report (see points 4.83 - 4.88). The Centre operates a continuous system of

monitoring expenditure of grant funding by providers and as mentioned in 4.6 top-slicing has now been rationalised, standardised, and reduced across the board.

4.39 R19: the National Entity, in collaboration with the providers, should:

- create a strong and consistent governance arrangement model
- continue with efforts to make fees consistent across Wales in order to ensure the lowest possible fee and equity for learners

4.40 The Centre operates within a governance structure which includes (i) a Company Board as the primary link between the Centre and its host institution (ii) an Advisory Board as the primary check that the Centre is realising its strategic objectives and (iii) the Welsh Government Welsh for Adults Scrutiny Committee that scrutinises the work of the Centre on behalf of the Government. The Centre administers a policy of standardised fees and discounts across all its providers and for every course thereby making intensive provision more attractive and fees less of a barrier.

4.41 R20: the National Entity, along with Welsh for Adults providers, should develop various methods of bringing Welsh speakers and learners together, including:

- organising engaging and regular informal learning activities across Wales
- building a national network of volunteers
- collaborating closely with Mentrau Iaith and clubs and societies of all types to assist them in welcoming learners
- making the widest possible use of modern technology
- sharing good practice
- considering the advantages of badges to identify Welsh speakers and learners
- collaborating with the National Eisteddfod's local committees to ensure continuity for the activity once the National Eisteddfod has left the area

4.42 Both in the focus groups and in individual learners' comments, the Siarad scheme has been identified as a successful one in pairing learners with confident Welsh speakers. Further discussion of the scheme and wider

collaboration with the Mentrau Iaith and other bodies can be found in sections 4.55 to 4.57. The idea of using a badge or another identifier for those who can speak Welsh in the community was raised by some of the learners and merits further attention through discussions with Welsh Government and the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner. In general, engagement with the National Eisteddfod's local committees and any continuity of activity after it has been held is undertaken by the local provider and this is entirely appropriate.

4.43 R21: key partners such as the Mentrau Iaith and papurau bro should extend their support for learners in creative and engaging ways.

4.44 It is clear that the Centre works constructively with the Mentrau Iaith and other relevant bodies to offer support to learners. The evidence for encouraging new speakers / learners to contribute to Papurau Bro is not so clear and there is potential to develop useful collaborations in this area.

4.45 R22: the National Eisteddfod should work with the National Entity to ensure a promotional role for Dysgwr y Flwyddyn / Learner of the Year and recognise the success of Welsh speakers who help learners.

4.46 This work is ongoing and was very apparent last year (2020) when the Centre worked with the National Eisteddfod to develop Gŵyl AmGen and ensure that the Learner of the Year competition was held in the Covid pandemic.

4.47 R23: S4C and BBC Cymru Wales should collaborate closely with the National Entity and learners to develop and implement a strategy that would ensure that their provision attracts new Welsh learners, supports existing learners and helps to develop the relationship between Welsh speakers and learners.

4.48 The Centre continues to collaborate with S4C and BBC Cymru Wales to ensure that the viewing/listening experience is optimised for learners, for example through subtitles, targeted programming and the creation of an on-line channel for learners within S4C Clic. There is potential for further collaboration with the media in Wales, in particular using the English language media (for example commercial radio) as both a marketing and an awareness tool.

4.49 R24: Welsh Speakers should take pride in their language and acknowledge the key role learners play in modern Wales, taking their responsibility for welcoming and supporting the learners seriously, at an individual level and at a society and club level.

4.50 The Centre can play a part in this but it is also a responsibility for the wider Welsh language community. There is a role for the Centre in facilitating discussion here and identifying examples of good practice that have resulted in assimilation of new speakers. The positive relationship it has with partners such as the Mentrau Iaith and other Welsh language organisations provides a way of advancing this national discussion.

### **Additional comments**

4.51 A word used by many of the stakeholders to describe the Centre is 'powerhouse'. In the first phase of its existence, it has succeeded in realising the ambitions and recommendations of "Raising our Sights" and is recognised as a body that coordinates, plans, delivers and develops Learn Welsh provision at a national level. The rationalisation and standardisation of the provision have been progressed effectively and it was appropriate for the Centre's focus to be in these areas during its initial period of operation.

4.52 In the second phase of its existence, this role as a key and strategic institution central to the acquisition of the Welsh language needs to be developed and strengthened. It will now be possible for strategy to be based on evidence from the Centre's own data and this will strengthen its ability to drive forward policy priorities such as creating more speakers and users of Welsh. As well as utilising more robust data, there is also a role in relation to identifying and brokering best practice together with practice based on research.

4.53 In consideration of Phase 2 of the Centre, it would be timely to consider whether the current model of governance is appropriate.

## Area 2

Consider whether the Centre's activities contribute to efforts to realise the relevant "Cymraeg 2050" targets.

4.54 The whole 'raison d'être' of the Centre is to create new speakers of Welsh and contribute to "Cymraeg 2050". Terms such as 'new speaker', 'learner', 'user of Welsh', 'speaker of Welsh' need to be clearly defined and understood across the spectrum of provision from Welsh Government and the Centre to tutors and learners themselves. This in turn enhances and facilitates the ability to ensure that these targets are actually being realised.

4.55 Integration of learners or new speakers of Welsh into local Welsh speaking networks was a recurring theme in the focus groups. In the context of "Cymraeg 2050" and the use of Welsh in the community, this is important. In those areas of Wales where Welsh is still a community language, integration is arguably less of a challenge (notwithstanding point 4.50 above) although even here it needs to be planned and carried out in cooperation with local agencies. However, there is more of a challenge in the more anglicised areas of Wales where Welsh speaking networks are not so obvious. In terms of "Cymraeg 2050" this is not just a challenge for adult learners of Welsh but also for those who have received Welsh medium education as well as Welsh speakers moving into these areas.

4.56 One suggestion is to promote the creation of communities of practice in areas of interest to groups of Welsh speakers in these areas. The Siarad scheme has been successful in linking learners with Welsh speakers in their areas but might achieve even greater success by concentrating on common communities of practice thereby putting individuals with similar interests (for example sports, hobbies, cultural activities) in touch with each other. These connections would be more likely to persist in the future with the potential to develop into a Welsh language community of practice thereby shifting the language into new domains.

4.57 Further innovations for moving the language from the classroom into the community need to be scoped / piloted. There is a role here for the Centre not only in evaluating what works best but also which partners are the most effective

in realising community integration of learners. It could be argued that the Mentrau Iaith are best placed to identify potential Welsh speaking collaborators in any new schemes. The Catalan experience - Voluntariat per la Llengua - is a successful model administered by the Consortium for Language Normalisation. Such schemes require investment in staff time and other resources (for example ensuring sufficient numbers of volunteers) to be most effective.

4.58 Use of the data now available to the Centre will help better understand who those engaged in learning Welsh are and how this fits in with "Cymraeg 2050" targets. Recruitment of specific groups seen as important in the context of "Cymraeg 2050" can be monitored and targeted if necessary.

4.59 In 4.22 the use of achievement at B1 level as a definition of a new speaker of Welsh was discussed. Evidence from our discussions in the focus groups supports the suggestion there that further research is needed to confirm the B1 definition.

4.60 Another important cohort with potential to contribute to the realisation of "Cymraeg 2050" are those under 25 years of age who have studied Welsh as a subject in the English medium school sector. The gap between what they might have achieved in school and B1 level is unlikely to be as great as that for a complete beginner and their motivation once they enter the job market is likely to be greater. Targeting and encouraging this particular group might prove a cost-effective contribution to "Cymraeg 2050" targets.

4.61 In a similar way, provision which raises the confidence of those speakers who have received first language education (in particular those in more anglicised areas who received their education through the medium of Welsh) to enable them to feel more inclined to using their Welsh in their communities would be a fruitful new avenue to explore.

## Area 3

Consider the Centre's response to Covid, and whether the developments resulting from it offer opportunities for long-term changes to how the Centre operates or how Learn Welsh provision is delivered.

4.62 There is general agreement that the response was excellent. Within three weeks, all provision had shifted to on-line. Digital developments had been in progress for some time and Covid accelerated this work. This has changed the landscape with different ways of learning: face to face, virtual, blended, self-study.

4.63 Most learners on all programmes welcomed the greater flexibility offered and new students were reached. There is a desire to return to face-to-face in the future but many would call for the retention of some online provision, so that learning mode can be fitted to individual circumstances. Supplementing face to face teaching with online material and activities, in a blended learning model, is a good option for retaining both flexibility and intensity of provision.

4.64 Most providers are located in institutions with robust IT support and training programmes.

4.65 Attendance at other activities such as Sadyrnau Siarad has also increased.

4.66 Tutors felt that Zoom / Teams had allowed them to retain their own networks and support groups during the pandemic. The Centre's on-line resources are good and the website informative. The response to Covid also engendered a feeling of being one 'team' across those working in all the providers.

4.67 The Centre has been working more closely with Duo Lingo and SSiW. There are many opportunities for learner-centred curriculum here. There is a need to monitor and learn from the learner experience of using multiple platforms in order to address any potential obstacles, for example different varieties of Welsh used. This is not a problem in itself (indeed, it might even be beneficial) but scaffolding and strategies for learners might help.

4.68 Greater use of on-line courses at higher levels where there are geographically low numbers has meant that their feasibility has been maintained. This development has been welcomed by learners and enhances progression. The Centre might wish to look at adding some complementary off-line provision at this level too, such as pre-recorded classes which could be accessed in learners' own time.

## Area 4

Consider the current activities and responsibilities of the Centre, and whether the expertise that has been gained and the resources that have been created since its inception offer opportunities to extend the Centre's activities to statutory education fields.

4.69 Recommendation 1 of the Estyn inspection calls on the Centre to share their expertise in successful teaching and second language acquisition with other relevant sectors. This is presented in the context of contributing to the achievement of "Cymraeg 2050" but we see this also as confirming the potential development of the Centre in 'Phase 2' as a centre of excellence - a powerhouse - and an important influencer in second language acquisition in the Welsh language context. In order to develop this, we think it would be useful for the Centre to reflect specifically on those areas of pedagogy and curriculum where it excels.

4.70 Following the discussion in 4.60 above, we would reiterate that there is need to investigate further the demand for provision for those wishing to pursue Welsh as a subject after completion of the current second language [1]GCSE. Motivations and attitudes change due to many factors including age, educational context and job aspirations. Shifting these learners along a continuum from around A1 /early A2 to B1 is more cost-effective than working with complete beginners but current resources / provision are unlikely to be appropriate for this cohort. Moving to a cohort which begins at 16 years of age would require a change to the Centre's remit but we would endorse further investigation here with appropriate resources provided.

4.71 Following from 4.69, it is possible to see the Centre becoming a hub for development and innovation regarding methodology, pedagogy, and curriculum with open-source materials (including teacher materials). This could offer the opportunity for the Centre (in partnership with, for example higher education institutions/further education colleges and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol) to expand into areas such as training the education workforce, sharing resources and good practice with the second language sector in schools and developing

language skills for further education subjects. Long-term provision and development needs scaffolding through growing professional communities of practice, for example open-to-all annual conferences on the teaching of Welsh (at all levels and contexts) embracing papers on pedagogical innovations, learners case studies, theory-driven practice, empirical studies, policy-practice alignment.

4.72 There is recognition that the Centre encourages innovation and the trialling of new ideas (Work Welsh / Welsh at Home) and this in turn encourages providers to be thinking of new ideas. Even though the Centre is the 'public face' of Learning Welsh, most learners are much more aware of their local provider than the Centre itself. While this may not be of great importance from the 'user' perspective, politically and strategically it is desirable to maintain the profile of the Centre in the public eye as the powerhouse for all aspects of Learning Welsh.

4.73 The availability of reliable and complete data through the Centre's central management system means that evidence-based information can be accessed to, for example monitor and trace progression. Data-mining will ensure that strategies and planning in 'Phase 2' of the Centre's existence will be more focused.

4.74 Although 'research' was included in the original remit of the Centre, it has been an under-explored area to date. Going forward, the Centre should enhance its credentials as a national 'powerhouse' in the sector by developing itself as a hub for research innovation. It should capture expertise and grow knowledge identifying areas where further research could improve practice, for example. This could be achieved through the dispersal of competitive research grants with a specific focus. Deciding and identifying research priorities would be coordinated by the Centre with input from providers, relevant experts and through the planning of its strategic objectives.

4.75 The Centre has succeeded in developing a number of useful partnerships which have had mutual benefits, for example Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and the potential to reach new audiences. This in turn has allowed the Centre to expand its reach and influence.

4.76 The relationship and partnership with the Mentrau Iaith is a crucial one as this is often where the interface between the classroom and the community is realised. This role of the Mentrau Iaith needs to be recognised by Welsh Government and allowance made for it in their funding agreements as there is a perception in some that this aspect of their work is not currently resourced.

## Area 5

Consider if the Centre has given sufficient attention to developing Learn Welsh opportunities for new and specific audiences, for example non-Welsh speaking parents, and people of colour and ethnic minorities including refugees and asylum seekers.

4.77 We have referred to improved data collection in several sections of the report and its importance is again evident when determining which demographics are under-represented in the Learn Welsh take-up.

4.78 The focus groups were asked to think of their own communities and comment on any specific groups they thought should be targeted. These included:

- parents whose children are in English medium schools but studying for GCSE level Welsh
- families where one parent speaks Welsh but the other doesn't
- prospective parents, such as those planning a family
- specific work sectors, for example health

4.79 On-line opportunities running parallel to (and separate from) in-person classes are likely to appeal to people unable to easily travel to classes (for example isolated rural communities, single parents, time-poor individuals, people with physical or social constraints on mobility) - assuming availability of dependable broadband.

4.80 The sector in general is willing and eager to develop opportunities for any audience. Where this has happened, for example in the case of refugees and asylum seekers, there is appreciation of the support and encouragement

provided by the Centre. It is also important to encourage groups to engage with the Centre through a proactive approach. The Centre has done some research into the barriers preventing some who wish to learn Welsh from doing so. Other possible areas for this kind of investigation would be, for example why some learners do not progress beyond certain levels such as B1 to B2 (Uwch).

4.81 Although this is not within the field of expertise of the Centre, it would be useful to explore how advice might be offered on strategies for changing the language used with a particular person, for example within the family or with a partner / children. Advice on opportunities to use Welsh outside the classroom more generally would be a welcome addition too, for example a user forum convened by the Centre listing Welsh-speaking retailers / service providers.

4.82 The impact of the opportunities developed by the Centre during its first phase is summed up in this redacted communication received from a class by the team during the review: "Rydyn ni'n dod o leoedd gwahanol yn wreiddiol, ('enwau nifer o wledydd o dri chyfandir'). Ond Cymraeg yw'r iaith sydd yn uno pob un ohonon ni. Dim Saesneg. Dim iaith arall. Cymraeg yw'r iaith i ni. Rydyn ni i gyd yn byw yng Nghymru nawr a rydym yn galw Cymru ein cartref ni.... Felly, bydd ein plant ni a phlant ein plant ni yn parhau i siarad a defnyddio Cymraeg."

("We originally come from different places, ('the names of countries from three continents'). But Welsh is the language which unites each one of us. Not English. Not any other language. Welsh is the language for us. We all live in Wales now and call Wales our home... So, our children and our children's children will continue speaking and using Welsh.")

## Area 6

Review the Centre's data regarding the numbers that Learn Welsh, and approximate costs per person, and consider what factors can be used to define value for money, for example comparing with the support provided for University students in Wales, and what outcomes are achieved by other language teaching methods, and the standards achieved.

4.83 There was no clear consensus as to a definition of "value for money" in the

context of the Learn Welsh sector. Opinions ranged from simply dividing the grant received by the Centre by the numbers who achieve B1 level, to making comparisons with the support provided for, for example university students in Wales, to claiming that any such options would be meaningless because they do not encompass the range of 'values' beyond mere language proficiency level (community membership, empathy - also see 4.88). A common response was that the Centre's main role is to create new speakers of Welsh and how can this be measured in the context of value for money?

4.84 Numbers of unique learners in the sector are discussed in section 2.9. A shared view was that it is important not to just measure the impact of the Centre and value for money solely based on "numbers in the system". In addition, their role in shaping and influencing is difficult to quantify and measure in terms of value for money.

4.85 From the standpoint of the standard of the teaching/learning, the service available and the actual price paid, there was general agreement that there is value for money.

4.86 An important consideration is that since the establishment of the Centre, more of the funding has found its way to frontline services and institutional overheads rationalised.

4.87 In the next phase of the Centre, it will be important to evaluate how any shift to digital and on-line resources might influence the future model of learning and impact on the current shape of provision and its associated financial model.

4.88 One learner's comment sums up the difficulty in determining what 'value for money' means in the Learn Welsh context: "Mae gallu siarad Cymraeg yn amhrisiadwy" (Being able to speak Welsh is invaluable). It is important to capture the benefits of the current provision. Learners' 'exit proficiency' is only one aspect of 'value'. Just as important are aspects such as sense of community (of classes and of being welcomed into the Welsh-speaking community), empathy, respect, and intellectual engagement amongst others.

## Area 7

Recommend how Ministers can best secure provision after 31 July 2022 (by means of a grant similar to the current arrangement or by adopting a different regime).

4.89 The consensus is that the current arrangement is working well. The relationship with the host institution has enabled effective human resources, financial and ICT infrastructure systems that the Centre's staff therefore do not need to spend time on. As Phase 1 of its existence draws to an end, there is a solid foundation in place on which the Centre can build and expand in Phase 2 to become a strategic influencer and powerhouse working with Welsh Government to ensure that the sector plays a full role in realising policy.

4.90 As far as possible, we believe that funding should be committed over a long term to enable forward planning, for example to enable clear career paths in the sector and ensure retention of experienced tutors. The professionalisation of teaching Welsh needs promoting - to most learners, their tutors are the 'face' of the Centre.

4.91 A grant based on a set of targets is not in our opinion the best way forward. Often it is difficult to identify the basis for giving specific targets and in the past this has had the effect of skewing provision towards satisfying criteria for meeting these targets rather than the needs of the learners. On the other hand, we would favour 'strategic targeting' which would encourage and promote policy priorities, for example more language training for parents/prospective parents; expansion of Welsh Work and working with employers to give workers time away from the workplace to attend courses; continued emphasis on intensive provision. A clear process for enabling conversations about 'strategic targeting' between the Centre and Welsh Government needs to be in place in time for 'Phase 2' of the Centre's development.

[1] This refers to the **GCSE second language qualification**

# Recommendations

5.1 In the opinion of the team, the Centre has delivered on the majority of the recommendations of "Raising our Sights" during its first phase. It has succeeded in putting in place a solid foundation on which "Phase 2" can be based. We recommend that a new agreement be drawn up by Welsh Government which allows the Centre to plan for the long-term so that it can continue to deliver Learn Welsh provision in "Phase 2" from 1 August 2022. We see this second phase as one in which the Centre will consolidate, strengthen, and develop its role and increase its reach in line with the recommendations below. This should form the basis of the next Welsh Government contract with the Centre.

## The Centre as a strategic influencer

5.2 Recommendation 1: a primary focus for "Phase 2" should be to develop and strengthen the Centre as a powerhouse and strategic influencer in the acquisition of the Welsh language. The Estyn inspection calls on the Centre to share their expertise in successful teaching and second language acquisition with other relevant sectors. The Centre should be encouraged to work with partners to identify those areas of pedagogy and curriculum where it excels with a view to becoming a national hub for development and innovation regarding methodology, pedagogy, and curriculum in language learning.

5.3 Recommendation 2: the Centre should develop itself as a hub for research innovation in language acquisition. Identifying and funding areas of research that have the potential to inform its provision will be another key indicator of the Centre's focus in "Phase 2".

5.4 Recommendation 3: a clear process for enabling conversations between the Centre and Welsh Government about 'strategic targeting' of provision needs to be in place in time for "Phase 2" of the Centre's development.

5.5 Recommendation 4: in consideration of the recommendations above and the Centre entering into "Phase 2", it would be timely for it and Welsh Government to consider whether the current model of governance is appropriate.

## **Broadening the remit of the Centre**

5.6 Recommendation 5: the Centre and Welsh Government to explore how in "Phase 2" its remit might expand into areas such as training the education workforce, sharing resources and good practice with the second language sector in schools and developing language skills for further education subjects.

5.7 Recommendation 6: the Centre and Welsh Government should scope expansion of provision and remit to those between 16 to 25 years of age who have studied Welsh as a subject in the English-medium school sector.

5.8 Recommendation 7: the Centre should explore with appropriate language planning agencies and partners how advice might be offered on strategies for changing the language used with a particular person, for example within the family or with a partner / children.

5.9 Recommendation 8: the Centre's role in facilitating the learner's journey from the classroom to the community needs to be more clearly defined. It should be recognised that opportunities to use Welsh in the community can be a challenge not just for adult learners of Welsh but also for those who have received Welsh-medium education as well as Welsh speakers moving into these areas. Holistic planning to realise and expand these opportunities needs to be undertaken with appropriate partners.

5.10 Recommendation 9: the Centre to look into expanding the 'Siarad' scheme into the creation of communities of practice putting individuals with common interests (for example sports, hobbies, cultural activities) in touch with each other.

5.11 Recommendation 10: the Centre and Welsh Government to evaluate how much investment in staff time and other resources would be needed to allow for this expansion of the Siarad scheme and to allocate them accordingly.

## The Centre's provision

5.12 Recommendation 11: the Centre to evaluate the success of using methods such as blended learning, the virtual classroom and self-study to optimise provision as we move on from the period of the pandemic by using appropriate research methods.

5.13 Recommendation 12: the Centre to develop resources, provision and partnerships to expand provision at C1+ Gloywi (Hyfedredd) level.

5.14 Recommendation 13: the benchmark of completion of B1 level (Canolradd) as a marker of fluency needs further research and the criteria used outlined.

5.15 Recommendation 14: the Centre and Welsh Government to plan to ensure that full-time career paths are available to create a critical mass of experienced Welsh for Adults practitioners (and administrators).

## The Centre's knowledge management

5.16 Recommendation 15: the Centre to tie strategy more closely to evidence from its own data and findings from gap analysis, thereby strengthening its ability to drive forward policy priorities such as creating more speakers and users of Welsh.

5.17 Recommendation 16: the Centre to use the data now available to them to better understand who those engaged in learning Welsh are and how this fits in with "Cymraeg 2050" targets. This should inform the recruitment, monitoring and targeting of specific groups seen as important in the context of "Cymraeg 2050" and relates to Recommendation 3.

## Developing partnerships

5.18 Recommendation 17: the Centre's partnerships with private providers such as SSiW (Say Something in Welsh) and Duolingo should be continued. Making

learners aware of these three types of provision (SSiW, Duolingo and Learn Welsh) and facilitating movement between and across learning providers would benefit them through making progression routes clear.

5.19 Recommendation 18: the current partnership with the WJEC to provide examinations and qualifications for those learners who want them should be maintained. Further investigation into ways of linking these qualifications to language requirements for a bilingual workforce should be undertaken.

5.20 Recommendation 19: the Centre to continue to work constructively with the Mentrau Iaith and other relevant bodies to offer support to learners. In particular, partnerships that would provide opportunities for learners to work with Papurau Bro should be investigated.

5.21 Recommendation 20: the Centre to look at further collaboration with the media in Wales, in particular using the English language media (for example commercial radio) as both a marketing and an awareness tool.

5.22 Recommendation 21: the Centre to facilitate discussion with other Welsh language or international institutions / bodies to identify examples of good policy / practice that have resulted in assimilation of new speakers.

5.23 Recommendation 22: Welsh Government to discuss and define with the Mentrau Iaith their role as a key partner with the Centre in assimilating learners into their local Welsh-speaking community.

## Closing remarks

In Phase 1 of its existence, the Centre has succeeded in reorganising, restructuring and leading national Learn Welsh provision, realising the vision of 'Raising our Sights'. Throughout this report, we have highlighted how we propose that it builds on this success and vision as it moves to the next stage. We look forward in Phase 2 to the Centre developing its potential to be a powerhouse for language acquisition across the entire continuum and to be a strategic influencer in the application of this expanded role to the realisation of Welsh Government language policies and planning.

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