

Context

In August 2016, full responsibility for the Welsh for Adults sector was transferred to the National Centre for Learning Welsh (the Centre). The Centre is an arm's length body that is funded by the Welsh Government and is based in the University of Wales, Trinity St David. It funds Welsh for Adults programmes delivered by 11 'Learn Welsh' providers. The Centre receives additional funding from the Welsh Government for the 'Work Welsh' programme, which aims to strengthen employees' bilingual skills in the workplace.

Since the Centre's inception, the number of learners enrolled on courses and the number of learning activities held has continued to grow (Welsh Government, 2020c). The national Work Welsh scheme figures were included fully for the first time in 2019-2020. However, there was a significant reduction in funding for this programme during 2020-2021.

This year, Learn Welsh providers continued to provide a full range of courses and informal learning activities virtually. A few providers offered a small range of face-to-face courses when circumstances allowed. As a result, we went ahead with the proposed inspection of the Centre and our first virtual inspection, in January 2021. In addition, during the summer term we carried out a series of try outs to pilot inspection approaches for blended learning.

Sector summaries: Welsh for Adults

Wellbeing

During the inspection of the Centre, which took place during the second national lockdown, nearly 1,700 learners completed our learner questionnaire. Nearly all learners felt safe and enjoy their learning, and most said that they receive good personal support from their tutors. Most learners found it easy to search for information and register for courses through the national digital platform. Overall, levels of learner satisfaction were high.

The Centre's leaders used feedback from learners to help plan the provision to meet their needs and interests. During the pandemic, the Centre experimented with planning provision by registering learners nationally and then working with individual providers to arrange courses in their areas at times that were convenient for learners. This enabled learners to contribute to the process of structuring provision, based on their availability.

Learn Welsh providers created an inclusive and supportive learning environment, which encouraged learners to practise their language skills without fear of making mistakes. Most tutors supported learners to set useful personal targets, evaluate progress and plan the next steps in their learning. Learners identified that attending courses had been beneficial to their wellbeing as well as their progress as Welsh learners.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum

Tutors have continued to develop their teaching methodologies for working in an online environment effectively. For example, they have developed strategies to engage learners in newly developed online and blended learning resources.

The Centre has been successful in bringing more consistency to Learn Welsh provision across Wales. It has created a national curriculum and course books across all levels. Using the Centre's established digital platform for learners to search, enrol and pay for courses enabled the sector to react quickly to the pandemic by moving most provision online. In addition to providing online learning, the platform hosts a range of digital resources that enables practitioners to share good practice. It also provides continuous professional development to Learn Welsh staff, including approaches to online teaching and learning. The National Centre has a small amount of funding to help learners to access courses, including those suffering from digital poverty. However, at present the use of this fund is limited.

Most learners reported that learning Welsh has helped them to feel part of the wider Welsh-speaking community.

Sector summaries: Welsh for Adults

Leadership

The Centre has developed a constructive and supportive working relationship with Learn Welsh providers, which enables them to conduct honest and challenging discussions, when necessary. Leaders from across the Centre and the 11 Learn Welsh providers have continued to work closely together to further adapt and improve provision, building on the regular meetings established to share practice early in the pandemic.

The Centre worked closely with the individual Learn Welsh providers to support the wellbeing and care of the workforce by providing a wellbeing and mental health programme with an external expert. Participation in the programme, which includes coping with change, mental resilience and taking care of wellbeing while working from home, has been high. This has had a positive impact on tutors' wellbeing and their continuing participation in the sector during the pandemic.

The Centre has developed to become an influential, national voice for the sector. It has succeeded in creating a wide range of strategic partnerships with national organisations to extend the formal and informal learning offer. The Centre has taken advantage of these partnerships to provide a varied and exciting range of opportunities for learners to use their linguistic skills, whether socially, culturally or professionally, including throughout the pandemic. It has a clear vision to transform the linguistic landscape of Wales by supporting learners to become active users of the Welsh language within their communities, workplaces and networks, whatever their level. As a result, the Welsh for Adults sector contributes effectively to the Welsh Government's aim of achieving **a million Welsh speakers by 2050** (2017).

