



Process Evaluation of Cymraeg for Kids

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a process evaluation of the Cymraeg for Kids (CfK) programme, a Welsh Government-funded programme that aims to increase the number of children in Welsh-medium education and contribute to the Welsh Government's vision of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 1.2 Arad Research working with Bangor University were commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake the process evaluation; this summary of the final report follows an emerging findings report published in October 2018.¹

About Cymraeg for Kids

- 1.3 The CfK programme began in April 2016 and is delivered jointly by the Welsh Government and an external provider. In January 2016, Mudiad Meithrin (the contractor) was awarded a contract to deliver the programme for a period of up to three years.
- 1.4 CfK sessions are delivered to groups of parents/guardians (which will all be referred to as 'parents' in this report) and their young children and are free of charge. There are three main types of activities for groups: baby massage groups offered from 8 weeks old, baby yoga for babies 10 weeks and older, and story and rhymetime group sessions for children aged 0 – 3 years.
- 1.5 One of the programme's specific objectives is to establish arrangements for working in partnership with other relevant agencies and organisations such as health professionals, Flying Start and *Mentrau Iaith*, both to offer joint sessions and to reach wider audiences.²
- 1.6 The programme focuses on encouraging greater use of the Welsh language and making the first step towards Welsh-medium education. The audience targeted to take part in the groups comprises both those families with the potential to transmit the Welsh language and those families with no previous experience of using Welsh. In the most recent full year of delivery (2017–2018), almost 21,000 adults and 22,000 children attended almost three

¹ Welsh Government (2018) [Process Evaluation of Cymraeg for Kids: Emerging Findings](#). Social Research Number: 55/2018. [Accessed: 17 January 2019].

² Flying Start is the Welsh Government's flagship early years programme for families with children under 4 years of age living in disadvantaged areas of Wales. [Mentrau Iaith](#) are community-based organisations which work with individuals, organisations and businesses to raise the profile of the Welsh language in a specific area. There are 22 *Mentrau Iaith* in Wales. [Accessed: 17 January 2019].

thousand group sessions. Monitoring data shows that the numbers of sessions and attendees have grown substantially over the programme's lifetime.

About the evaluation

- 1.7 The aim of the evaluation is to explore whether the programme has been designed in a way that enables its objectives to be met and assess how the programme is being implemented in its current form. A mixed methods approach was adopted for the evaluation, which involved:
- a review of programme documentation;
 - development of research tools;
 - interviews with Welsh Government representatives;
 - interviews with the CfK manager, three senior officers and 26 regional officers working on behalf of the Contractor;
 - fieldwork with 125 parents during visits to 20 CfK group sessions;
 - interviews with 46 CfK partners and stakeholders;
 - development and testing of a Theory of Change (ToC).³
- 1.8 A full description of the methodology, including key principles and limitations is set out in Section 2 of the main report.

2. Findings

Aim and objectives of the programme

- 2.1 The findings of the evaluation show that the programme's aim and objectives were developed to align with the aims of the Welsh Government's (then) Welsh language strategy [*A living language: a language for living*](#) and Welsh Government officers and CfK staff considered that the programme's aims and objectives aligned with the current strategy, [*Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*](#).
- 2.2 The findings indicate that Welsh Government and CfK officers have a consistent understanding of the programme's aim and objectives whilst acknowledging that they are broad and open to some interpretation. Welsh Government and CfK officers also acknowledged that the way in which the programme's aim and objectives are articulated has been refined, largely based on the contractor's interpretation of them. This has, for example, led to the development of the concept of a 'bilingual journey'. Officers also felt they had sufficient flexibility to place greater emphasis on certain objectives (e.g. language transmission, acquisition, use, education) depending on the area or parents' linguistic background.

Target audience

- 2.3 The programme's target audience is broad and includes all families, regardless of their linguistic background, use, ability and intentions in relation to language transmission or supporting their child to learn Welsh. The CfK specification stated that the contractor is expected to provide support for parents of children up until the end of the Foundation Phase (age 7).

³ The ToC is a tool to articulate how a programme is intended to achieve its aims and objectives by making explicit the assumed links between the programme's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and long-term impacts. The programme's ToC is set out in Section 4 of the main report.

- 2.4 In practice, the CfK officers and most stakeholders understood the target audience to be parents with pre-school age children, although this is not formally documented as the target age range. Although the group activities are open to all parents with pre-school aged children, most of the CfK officers explained that they tried to reach non-Welsh-speaking parents or those who speak little Welsh or lack confidence speaking Welsh in particular. However, most CfK officers also emphasised that parents who spoke Welsh, or who had attended Welsh-medium education could also benefit from the programme and having a mix of parents from different linguistic backgrounds in the group sessions was beneficial. Many CfK officers noted that Welsh speakers and/or parents with older children attending Welsh-medium schools occasionally act as informal advocates supporting their work.
- 2.5 A range of approaches have been used by the Welsh Government and CfK officers to raise awareness of the programme and to share information with parents and stakeholders. CfK officers reported that their initial engagement with parents tended to focus on providing parents with information about the activities on offer in the programme's group sessions (e.g. baby massage or yoga). CfK officers explained that they tended to focus on communicating key messages relating to the benefits of acquiring the Welsh language and accessing Welsh-medium education at a later stage, during the delivery of group sessions and one-to-one conversations, rather than as part of the initial engagement.
- 2.6 The findings indicate that these approaches have been successful in terms of recruiting sufficient numbers of parents to ensure group sessions are well attended. CfK officers, parents and stakeholders reported that group sessions are generally popular and, in some cases, oversubscribed.
- 2.7 In terms of marketing the programme's group sessions, all CfK officers make use of Facebook as a method of advertising and communicating with parents. Facebook posts and print adverts for programme activities emphasise that all parents are welcome at the group sessions. Almost all parents interviewed, regardless of how they had initially become aware of the programme, reported that they had accessed their local CfK Facebook page.

Programme activities

- 2.8 The types of activities delivered in group sessions (baby massage, yoga, story/rhyme time and signing) have been selected by the contractor with an intention to provide a progression pathway for families with very young children. The activities were selected to appeal to parents with young children, taking into account the type of activities already available locally. Some stakeholders also confirmed that they communicated with CfK officers to avoid duplication.
- 2.9 All parents reported that the activities on offer through the programme were appealing, and many reported they had progressed from one set of group sessions to the next. Some parents reported that the specific activities had been the main thing that attracted them to attend CfK group sessions, rather than the language of delivery. In some cases, parents were unaware of the Welsh-language focus of the activity until they attended their first session.
- 2.10 Interviews with parents suggest that most have positive views on the way CfK staff delivered the activities, the venues used and the timing of activities. Although most parents were happy with the locations in which CfK activities were delivered, some parents who had travelled by car to attend activities noted that they would like to see more being delivered in their area. This was reinforced by some stakeholders who referred to a lack of Welsh-medium early years activities in some areas.

- 2.11 Most parents interviewed had positive views on the materials they had seen during CfK group sessions, although some parents indicated they would like to receive more materials, including variations on the ones they had already received.
- 2.12 The evidence suggests that CfK is having a positive impact on some parents' confidence in using Welsh, and this finding was supported by the observations of the CfK staff. For some parents, the engagement with the CfK programme was a platform for attendance at other Welsh-medium activities and for their own further research into Welsh-medium education. Some had already decided on a Welsh-medium school, either because they were seeking out Welsh-medium education, or that was the only, or most convenient, school for them locally. At this stage in their child's life (babies of a few months old), some parents were still unsure about the whole education system and what was available locally, including with regards to language medium.
- 2.13 Findings from interviews with parents indicate that they are not always aware of progression routes from CfK to other Welsh-medium provision. This suggests there is a need to further consider how all parents attending CfK group sessions can be made aware of other local provision, so that parents are better supported to make the transition from one to the other.

Geographic areas

- 2.14 The programme's expansion in 2017 has led to it having a wider geographic reach across Wales. However, the programme's reach within each region is dependent on the capacity of CfK officers to deliver activities. The contractor's chosen model of delivering a series of regular group sessions to parents means that CfK officers have to decide which areas they will target depending on a number of local factors, and therefore there are areas within each region where CfK group sessions are not currently being delivered. CfK officers and stakeholders indicated that there is a demand for CfK activities in geographic areas where CfK was not currently delivering, with CfK officers referring to examples of stakeholder requests to deliver additional sessions, which they were unable to fulfil. The evidence of potential additional demand for CfK activities among parents is based on the experiences of CfK officers and stakeholders. The evaluation's findings are therefore insufficiently robust to enable firm conclusions to be drawn on the size of this potential additional demand, although more systematic evidence could be gathered to assess the potential demand for increasing the scale and scope of the programme in future.
- 2.15 Programme officers reported that they have targeted specific locations and sought to align the establishment of CfK groups with other new Welsh-medium early years provision (e.g. new *Cylchoedd Meithrin*) in order to create new progression pathways to Welsh-medium education.⁴ However, regional officers also reported that they retain significant flexibility in selecting locations for delivering activities, taking into account a variety of local factors such as the availability of other similar provision (Welsh- or English-medium), suitability of locations and likely parental demand for the types of activities delivered by CfK.
- 2.16 The contractor works in partnership with other *Mudiad Meithrin* staff as well as Welsh Government, local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) groups, language forums and other stakeholders to plan where to deliver CfK activities and seeks to align this process with *Mudiad Meithrin*'s decisions about establishing other early years provision (*Cylchoedd Ti a Fi* and *Cylchoedd Meithrin*). The findings indicate it is too early to reach

⁴ [Cylchoedd Meithrin](#) are Welsh-medium playgroups. There are over 500 *cylchoedd meithrin* in Wales, with over 13,000 children attending them. [Accessed: 17 January 2019].

conclusions on the effectiveness of these processes for planning and prioritising areas. This aspect will require further consideration as part of any future evaluation of CfK.

Structures and processes

- 2.17 Management and support processes have been established between Welsh Government and the contractor, and these are generally considered by both parties to be working effectively. Programme officers also reported that management arrangements put in place by the contractor were generally working well.
- 2.18 Most CfK officers, parents and stakeholders had positive views on the quality of materials they had received although findings suggest there is an appetite for more materials, and variations on existing materials (e.g. song books, materials in digital formats). CfK officers would welcome a greater role in developing CfK resources for families, an element which is currently undertaken by the Welsh Government. Related to this, CfK officers and stakeholders reported they would like to see the programme responding more flexibly to requests from stakeholders (e.g. attending more national and regional events).

Monitoring

- 2.19 Regular monitoring arrangements have been developed by the Welsh Government and the contractor. The programme monitoring data presented in Section 3 shows that the programme has grown in size and scope since its inception.
- 2.20 Profile data and feedback is collected from parents who participate in CfK activities and choose to provide this information, if they register online or complete a feedback form following a series of sessions. The evaluation does not draw conclusions on the comprehensiveness, consistency and robustness of the data from these sources. However, the findings suggest that the type of data gathered and methods for doing so should be reviewed as this data would be likely to form an important part of a future evaluation of the programme.

Partnerships

- 2.21 Programme officers reported that partnerships with other organisations in different sectors have been developed at national, regional and local levels. Stakeholders and CfK officers reported that the nature of collaboration varied but generally included: communication and awareness raising (usually to facilitate referrals between CfK and stakeholder organisations); co-delivery of group sessions; CfK staff delivering group sessions in groups convened by stakeholders; providing advice or training and strategic collaboration.
- 2.22 Most stakeholder interviewees who had worked in partnership with CfK found the collaboration to be beneficial, either to themselves or to the parents they worked with. However, the evidence from CfK officers and stakeholders shows that there are variations in the strength of collaboration by area and sector. In some areas, partnerships with many organisations were reported to be in their infancy. There was a perception amongst programme officers and stakeholders that there are some challenges and barriers that limited the extent of partnership working. These included: CfK staff and stakeholder capacity and time as well as the strength of relationships between CfK officers and stakeholders (e.g. how well established these links were).
- 2.23 Although CfK has developed partnerships at a strategic level with many organisations, partnership working at the local level appears to be largely driven by contact between CfK officers and the stakeholders working in their local area. This means that the strength of partnerships can depend on the relationships between individuals and arrangements can,

therefore, be inconsistent and ad hoc as a result. This inconsistency was illustrated by differences in levels of awareness and communication with CfK among stakeholders from the same sector that were identified by CfK staff and those identified independently by the evaluators. As such there may be a need to consider how strategic managers in some sectors such as health can be persuaded to ensure staff are aware of CfK and are encouraged to refer parents to the programme.

- 2.24 Mudiad Meithrin undertakes two key functions within the context of CfK. Firstly, Mudiad Meithrin is the contractor responsible for working with the Welsh Government to deliver CfK. Secondly, Mudiad Meithrin is a voluntary organisation representing a large majority of Welsh-medium early years care and education provision. The findings show that CfK officers work in partnership with other Mudiad Meithrin staff (and other stakeholders such as local authority WESP groups and local language forums where appropriate) when planning where to deliver CfK activities. CfK and other Mudiad Meithrin officers reported that they had put structures in place that enabled CfK senior officers to provide input to decisions about establishing other early years provision (*Cylchoedd Ti a Fi* and *Cylchoedd Meithrin*).⁵

Theory of Change

- 2.25 A draft ToC was developed for the CfK programme which presents a logical progression of the various elements of the CfK programme and how they contribute to its intended aim of increasing the number of children in Welsh-medium education.
- 2.26 The process of developing a ToC for the programme has identified three interlinked strands to the programme. These are group session delivery, partnerships and the Welsh Government's role. The ToC also recognises that the programme operates in a broader context, contributing towards the Welsh Government's overarching goals as set out in the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy. Some initial testing of the ToC's validity has been undertaken through engagement with the Welsh Government and an initial review made of the availability of data against each of the items listed in the programme's draft ToC. Further testing will be required, involving the CfK contractor and the Welsh Government, in order to refine the ToC, and to identify further data needs.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 On the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations for the future delivery of the programme are presented.

Target audience

- **Recommendation 1:** The Welsh Government should consider amending the stated target age range of the programme to parents of pre-school-aged children, rather than children aged up to 7 as outlined in the original CfK specification. This would better reflect practice, and how the programme is understood by wider stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 2:** The Welsh Government should maintain the current flexibility within the programme which enables CfK officers to include parents from different linguistic backgrounds within group activities.

⁵ *Cylchoedd Ti a Fi* are local baby and toddler groups managed by a committee of parents or volunteers. There are over 500 *Cylchoedd Ti a Fi* registered as members of Mudiad Meithrin across Wales, and over 8,000 children attend them. [Accessed: 17 January 2019].

Programme activities

- **Recommendation 3:** The Welsh Government should ensure that the specification for the next phase of CfK continues to include sufficient flexibility and scope for contractors and the Welsh Government to review and amend the types of activities offered through the programme and to trial new activities when opportunities arise.
- **Recommendation 4:** Where practicable, CfK officers should offer parents a ‘transition session’ towards the end of a series of CfK group sessions so that parents are made aware of the availability of Cylch Ti a Fi groups and other activities in their area, and are supported in their transition to them.

Geographic areas

- **Recommendation 5:** The Welsh Government and the contractor should consider gathering more systematic evidence of the potential demand for CfK group sessions during the next period of delivery to inform a review of the scale and scope of the programme. This would enable the Welsh Government to further investigate this evaluation’s findings that, based on the perceptions of CfK officers and stakeholders, there is additional demand among parents for the types of activities offered through CfK.
- **Recommendation 6:** The Welsh Government and the contractor should continue to regularly review the geographic areas where CfK is delivered and ensure that the programme is responsive to changes in the education and early years sectors (e.g. establishing CfK groups to feed new schools, or plugging identified gaps in pre-school provision). This process should also align with wider language planning and should include systematic involvement by CfK officers in the development and review of WESPs, local language forum meetings and input into Mudiad Meithrin’s regional planning.

Structures and processes

- **Recommendation 7:** The Welsh Government should consider allowing the contractor to manage a portion of the funding allocated to marketing and developing resources for the programme. This could enable the contractor to react more quickly and flexibly to the needs that they identify among parents or stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 8:** The Welsh Government should consider opportunities to develop a wider variety of materials that could be used in CfK group sessions. This could include more digital resources that could be adapted by CfK officers in response to identified local needs.

Monitoring

- **Recommendation 9:** The Welsh Government should ensure that comprehensive and robust profile data is gathered from parents including baseline information on their socio-demographic and linguistic profile when beginning their participation in the programme.
- **Recommendation 10:** The Welsh Government and the contractor should review the CfK monitoring data arrangements and consider the recommendations made in Section 4 of this report to ensure that there is robust and comprehensive data available for undertaking a future outcome evaluation.

Partnerships

- **Recommendation 11:** The Welsh Government and the contractor should consider what approaches could be taken to facilitate increased partnership working and help overcome the challenges and barriers (including perceived challenges and barriers) to collaboration identified in this evaluation.
- **Recommendation 12:** The contractor should work closely with Welsh Government, Mudiad Meithrin and local authorities to ensure that CfK provision is planned strategically to align with the developments set out in WESPs.
- **Recommendation 13:** The Welsh Government should consider how to raise awareness of CfK and its aim and objectives amongst all partner organisations who come into contact with the programme's target audience.
- **Recommendation 14:** The Welsh Government should consider how senior managers in the health sector can ensure their workforce identify increased opportunities to cascade information about CfK to those delivering services to parents.
- **Recommendation 15:** The contractor should develop a more systematic approach to sharing details with stakeholders about the group activities it delivers (e.g. through regularly disseminating timetables of group sessions with stakeholders).

Theory of Change

- **Recommendation 16:** The Welsh Government and contractor should review and refine the ToC at the outset of the next round of the CfK contract (due in 2019). Furthermore, the research design for an outcome evaluation of the programme should further develop and test the ToC, as a step towards developing an evaluation plan for the programme.
- **Recommendation 17:** The Welsh Government should ensure that a ToC is developed in advance of implementing any successor scheme to CfK.

Full Research Report: Sioned Lewis, Hefin Thomas, Tanwen Grover, Eluned Glyn, Cynog Prys, Rhian Hodges and Einir Roberts (2019). Process Evaluation of Cymraeg for Kids. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 06/2019.

Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/process-evaluation-cymraeg-for-kids/?lang=en>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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