

Trochi Iaith in Cylchoedd Meithrin: Translating Cymraeg 2050 into Practice

Module Code:
ECCP7002

Module: Critical
perspectives
in policy, planning
and delivery

Student Number:
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Date: January 10,
2026

Introduction – Focus, context, impact

Background – Cymraeg 2050 and early years immersion

What is Trochi Iaith & How Did We Get Here? – Evolution, policy influences, how policy is written

Policy Expectations, Strengths & Weaknesses

Job Descriptions vs Policy Reality

Data and Evidence – Workforce capacity and participation

Regional Variation – Welsh-speaker distribution across Wales

The Policy Gap – Implementation challenges

Existing Staff Welsh Language Support – Croesi'r Bont, Camau

International Comparison – Lessons from Ireland & Scotland

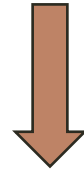
Overcoming Barriers / Innovation – Proposed solutions

Conclusion

Discussion / Questions

References

Big P
Cymraeg 2050
National Strategy



Little P
Welsh Language Policy
Local organisational policy



Trochi Iaith
Tool / Instrument

Cymraeg 2050:
A million Welsh
speakers

What Is Trochi Iaith and How Did We Get Here?

The Dull Trochi Iaith, as defined by Mudiad Meithrin, is the Language Immersion Method used in early years settings where Welsh is the primary language of communication (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022).



Historical milestones:



The 1847 Blue Books, which actively suppressed the Welsh language



The Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993, which introduced recognition and protection



The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, which gave Welsh official status



Cymraeg 2050, the national strategy aiming for one million Welsh speakers by 2050

- **Policy Expectations**

- Model Welsh language
- Support children/families
- Deliver care & learning entirely through Welsh

- **Strengths**

- Evidence-based early years immersion
- Promotes linguistic equality & rights-based approaches
- Aligns with Cymraeg 2050 goals

- **Weaknesses**

- Workforce Welsh fluency varies
- Limited guidance on partial immersion
- Regional inconsistencies & reliance on practitioner discretion



Job Description

VS

Policy Reality

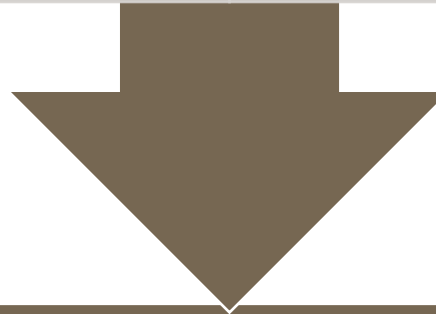
Data and Evidence

77.2% of staff
confident Welsh
speakers

183 staff
receiving
language
training

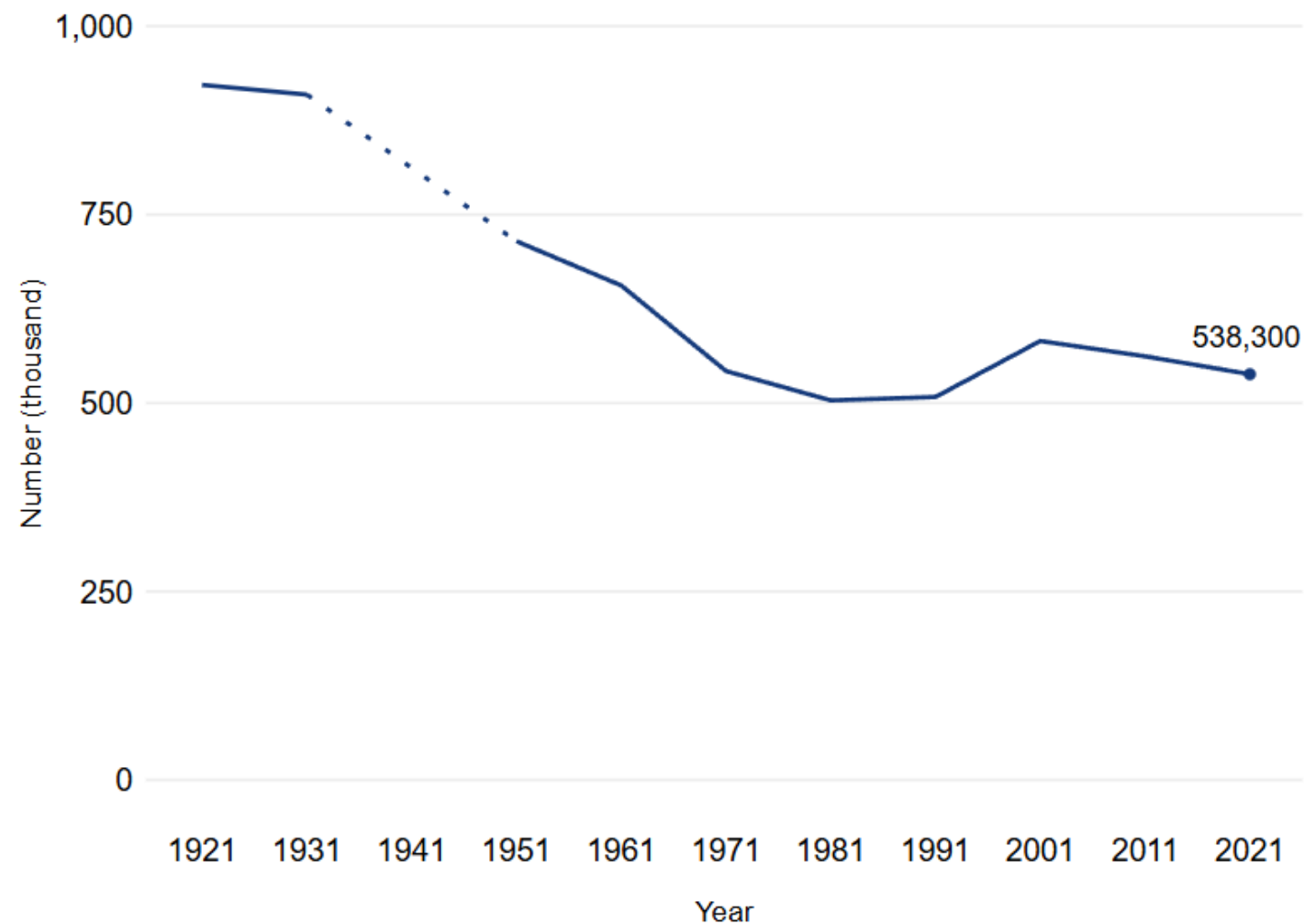
36 settings
identified 63
staff needing
further support

Significant
regional
disparities



(Education Workforce Council, 2024; Estyn, 2023; Mudiad Meithrin, 2025)

Chart 1: Number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, 1921 to 2021



<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html>



THE POLICY GAP



WHY DOES THE
GAP EXIST



IMPLICATIONS



<https://learnwelsh.cymru/work-welsh/camau/>

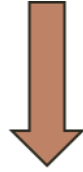


<https://meithrin.cymru/training/croesir-bont/?lang=en>

International Comparison



Barrier



Innovation



Outcome

Policy alone isn't enough: structured support and workforce development makes Welsh immersion successful for children, families, and communities.

Discussion/Questions

Audience views, opinions, experiences and ideas

- What are your thoughts on a blanket Welsh-language policy across all Cylchoedd Meithrin, considering the wide differences in numbers of Welsh-speaking staff and children in different regions?
- Do you feel that Welsh-language policy expectations match workforce realities in your area? If not, what are the main challenges you see?
- Have you seen staff successfully progress in Welsh through training programs like Camau? What worked well, and what didn't?
- How practical do you find the idea of embedding Welsh development into job descriptions and paid hours to develop skills?

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Presentation Notes to go with slide

Side 1 – Information page

Slide 2 – Contents page

Slide 3 – Introduction 2 minutes

Notes

My presentation will analyse the use of dull Trochi Iaith (language immersion) as a key implementation tool within the Polisi Iaith Gymraeg used by Cylchoedd Meithrin across Wales. The presentation examines how a national strategic policy (Big P), Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers, is translated into everyday local and organisational policy (little p) through immersion practices, and how this impacts children, families, and communities (Welsh Government, 2017; Mudiad Meithrin, 2022).

I have chosen to focus on workforce Welsh-language capacity due to my professional experience as an Internal Quality Assurance Officer for Mudiad Meithrin, working with Cylchoedd Meithrin across Wales. Staff Welsh-language skills vary significantly between settings and regions, which directly influences how effectively immersion is implemented and how closely policy reflects the aims of the national strategy (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024).

The presentation will explore how variations in workforce language capacity affect the consistency and quality of children's Welsh-language experiences, highlighting tensions between policy expectations and the practical realities of delivery within settings (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024).

Finally, the presentation will propose innovative ways to support practitioners' Welsh-language development based on data, evidence and international examples, their strengths and limitations, and using this analysis to suggest how the dull Trochi Iaith can be strengthened as an effective mechanism for delivering the aims of Cymraeg 2050 (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024).

Slide 4 – Background 2 minutes

Notes

Cymraeg 2050 is the Welsh Government's long-term national strategy aiming to achieve one million Welsh speakers by 2050. The strategy places a strong emphasis on early years provision, bilingual development, and the revitalisation of the Welsh language within communities.

The policy positions early years settings as a central component of Welsh-language revitalisation, highlighting immersion-based approaches as a particularly effective means of supporting natural language acquisition. Children are recognised as active participants in sustaining linguistic and cultural continuity, with early childhood identified as a critical period for bilingual development due to the social nature of language learning at this stage (Welsh Government, 2024; May, 2012).

Within this policy context, dull Trochi Iaith implemented in Cylchoedd Meithrin, operates as a practical delivery mechanism for achieving the aims of Cymraeg 2050. By embedding Welsh consistently across care routines, play-based learning and structured activities, immersion supports children from both Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking homes to develop confidence and emerging fluency in the language (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022).

Strengthening staff Welsh-language fluency and embedding Welsh consistently into daily practice enhances the quality of immersion experienced by children, supports families in engaging with Welsh beyond the setting, and contributes to the development of bilingual capacity within local communities (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024).

Slide 5 – What is ‘Trochi Iaith’ and how did we get here? 4 minutes

Notes

Dull Trochi Iaith reflects Wales’s progression from a history of linguistic suppression to contemporary efforts in language revitalisation and rights-based planning. Early years provision is recognised within Cymraeg 2050 as a critical intervention point, linking national strategic goals (Big P) with everyday practice in settings (little p).

This shift builds on key historical milestones: the 1847 Blue Books, which actively suppressed the Welsh language (practices like Welsh not); the Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993, which introduced recognition and protection; the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, which gave Welsh official status; and Cymraeg 2050, the national strategy aiming for one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and emphasising early years immersion and bilingual development (Welsh Government, 2024; May, 2012).

Within Cylchoedd Meithrin, dull Trochi Iaith is formalised through the Polisi Iaith Gymraeg, which states that Welsh is the primary language of communication. This policy is mandatory for membership, and bilingual or English-medium alternatives are not permitted. Immersion is embedded across all daily experiences, positioning Welsh as a natural medium of interaction rather than a subject. The policy is operationalised using the camau trochi framework, guiding practitioners to embed Welsh systematically across routines, play, and learning activities to ensure effective, gradual immersion (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022).

Despite its mandatory nature, the policy is written in relational and aspirational language, reflecting what Fairclough (2003) terms soft power discourse. Modal verbs such as “expected”, “should”, and “encouraged” are used to promote shared responsibility, professional autonomy, and relational compliance rather than punitive enforcement. Examples include: “Disgwyliwr i ymarferwyr fodlu’r Gymraeg drwy’r amser” (practitioners are always expected to model Welsh), “Dylai’r Cylch sicrhau amgylchedd trochi cyson” (the Cylch should ensure a consistent immersion environment), and “Anogir rhieni i gefnogi defnydd y Gymraeg” (parents are encouraged to support the use of Welsh).

While this discursive approach encourages trust and flexibility, it also introduces interpretive challenges for practitioners. Staff must make professional judgements about how immersion is maintained in practice, particularly when supporting children from non-Welsh-speaking homes. This illustrates the tension between a non-negotiable organisational policy and flexible pedagogical enactment in daily practice (Tannen, 2001).

Dull Trochi Iaith exemplifies how national strategic goals (Big P) are operationalised through local organisational policy (little p), balancing firm policy requirements with practitioner judgement and the lived realities of language acquisition.

Slide 6 – Policy Expectations, Strengths and Weaknesses 2 minutes

Notes

Policy Expectations

Trochi laith positions practitioners as central to Welsh-language transmission. Staff are expected to:

- Model fluent Welsh throughout the day
- Provide targeted support for children and families
- Deliver care and learning entirely through Welsh (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022)
Research shows that full immersion in the early years is highly effective in supporting natural language acquisition, reinforcing the practitioner’s role as a consistent language model (May, 2012).

Policy Strengths

- Evidence-based: Early childhood immersion develops natural language skills effectively (May, 2012)
- Aligns with rights-based approaches, including UNCRC Article 30
- Promotes linguistic equality, giving all children the opportunity to acquire Welsh (Welsh Government, 2022)
- Strong alignment with Cymraeg 2050 strategic goals
- Provides a consistent, systematic framework for early years immersion (Camau Trochi)

Policy Weaknesses / Implementation Challenges

- Assumes a workforce with consistently high Welsh-language competence, which is not present across all settings (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022)
- Limited guidance on transitional support or partial immersion models
- Regional variations are not fully addressed, creating inconsistency in delivery
- Heavy reliance on practitioner discretion can result in variable immersion quality (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024)
- Illustrates the gap between policy ambition and practical realities, consistent with Lipsky’s (1980) concept of street-level bureaucracy

Overall, Trochi laith is strong in design and aligned with national strategy, but its successful implementation depends on workforce capacity, context, and practitioner judgement—these workforce challenges are some of the key barriers to address.

Slide 7 - Job Descriptions vs Policy Reality 1 minute

Notes

There is a clear tension between Cylchoedd Meithrin's Welsh-language policy (Polisi Iaith Gymraeg) and Trochi Iaith, and the workforce reality reflected in job descriptions. Many roles list Welsh fluency as desirable rather than essential, reflecting practical recruitment challenges, particularly in regions with fewer fluent Welsh speakers (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024).

This gap between policy ambition and workforce capacity means that some Cylchoedd Meithrin cannot fully implement immersion as intended, resulting in inconsistent Welsh-language experiences for children (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024). Workforce capacity is therefore a critical factor in translating policy into practice.

Professional Evidence from Practice

In my role as an Internal Quality Assurance Officer, I have observed significant regional variation in Cylchoedd Meithrin all over Wales. In some settings, fewer than half of the staff are confident Welsh speakers, and in some cases, there may be only one fluent Welsh-speaking staff member. This limitation impacts the consistency, quality, and effectiveness of Trochi Iaith, highlighting the need for innovative strategies to strengthen workforce capacity (Mudiad Meithrin, 2025).

Slide 8 – Data and Evidence 1 minutes

Notes

This research was based just on Cylchoedd Meithrin:

National audits indicate that 77.2% of the staff are confident Welsh speakers; however, participation in language training is not universal. In 36 settings, 63 staff were identified as needing additional support to reach immersion-level competency (Mudiad Meithrin, 2025).

It is not clear whether every staff member in every Cylch participated in these audits, which may affect the completeness of the data.

This overlaps somewhat with the previous slide on job descriptions and workforce challenges, but the purpose is to provide quantitative evidence to support the qualitative observations. This data reinforces that workforce capacity is a significant barrier to effective implementation, underlining the need for innovative strategies to support staff development and strengthen immersion practice.

Slide 9 – Regional Variation 3 minutes

Notes

Welsh speakers vary significantly across Wales (APS = annual population survey)

- Gwynedd: 77.9% (APS, 2024)
- Anglesey: 63.6% (APS, 2024)
- Blaenau Gwent: 14.0% (APS, 2024)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf: 13.9% (APS, 2024)
- National average: 27.7% (APS, 2024)

In Gwynedd, where around 78% of the population speak Welsh, immersion is feasible. In contrast, in Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf, fewer than 15% speak Welsh confidently, making immersion delivery more challenging.

APS estimates show trends (27.7% Welsh speakers) compared with the 2021 Census (17.8%). Census figures remain the official baseline, while APS trends are useful for policy planning and workforce strategy. (Census every 10 years)

Reasons for the decline in Welsh speakers according to 2021 census:

- The biggest drop was among children and young people, the age group most likely to speak Welsh, which pulls the overall figure down.
- Demographic changes: fewer children overall.
- COVID-19 disruptions may have affected language learning and reporting of Welsh ability in children during the 2021 Census.
- Broader social and cultural factors such as migration patterns and community structures.

These regional differences highlight that workforce capacity, training, and contextual policy implementation are essential. A single national immersion policy cannot ensure consistent, high-quality Welsh-language experiences for all children (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Estyn, 2023).

Slide 10 – The Policy Gap 2 minutes

Notes

The Policy Gap

There is a clear gap between the ambitions of Trochi Iaith and the realities of workforce capacity. While policy expects consistent Welsh-language immersion, in practice this may not be possible due to staff language ability.

This gap is reinforced by legal and safety requirements, particularly child-staff ratios. In some settings, when staffing shortages occur, any qualified staff member may be used to meet ratios, even if they do not meet Welsh-language expectations. As a result, immersion can be inconsistent or deprioritised, illustrating how policy ambitions may conflict with operational realities (Welsh Government, 2023).

Why Does This Gap Exist?

1. Practitioners must prioritise tasks when policy expectations exceed available staff capacity, especially when legal ratios take precedence.
2. Street-level bureaucracy theory explains how frontline staff use discretion to manage competing demands and make practical decisions (Lipsky, 1980).
3. Implementation research shows that even well-designed policies struggle to achieve consistent outcomes if workforce planning and support are insufficient (Fixsen et al., 2005).
4. Aspirational language in policy can unintentionally widen this gap, as expectations may not reflect staffing realities or regional variations (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024).

Implication: This demonstrates that a one-size-fits-all national policy cannot fully account for regional differences in Welsh-language capacity. Workforce support, targeted training, and flexibility are essential for effective policy implementation (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Estyn, 2023).

Slide 11 – Existing Staff Welsh Language Support 2 minutes

Existing Staff Welsh Language Support

- Croesi'r Bont scheme supports settings to integrate Welsh throughout routines, providing practical guidance and resources. It is a language immersion support scheme that helps early years settings embed everyday Welsh usage with children and staff (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022). (officer comes out to settings)
- Camau provides structured pathways for individual staff language development (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024). (independent/online resources)

Strengths

- Provides practical guidance for embedding Welsh into daily routines
- Supports individual staff development
- Aligns with strategic aims of Cymraeg 2050

Limitations

- Uptake varies by region and setting
- Progressing from supportive immersion to independent fluency is a long-term
- They are not mandatory

While these schemes are valuable, uptake and impact vary, and achieving independent Welsh fluency remains challenging (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024). Building on these schemes, an innovative approach is needed to accelerate staff Welsh-language development and ensure consistent immersion experiences across all settings.

Slide 12 – International Comparison 2 minutes

Notes

Gaelic and Irish immersion programs face similar workforce supply and regional capacity challenges to Wales (Ó Murchadha, 2018; McLeod, 2018).

However, in Scotland and Ireland, staff language development is more structured and embedded within the role. Staff receive mentoring, protected training time, and clear progression pathways, reducing reliance on individual motivation (McLeod, 2018; Ó Murchadha, 2018).

In Wales, by contrast, staff typically develop Welsh skills through voluntary initiatives, such as Camau, outside of daily immersion practice (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024). This leads to variable immersion quality.

Lesson/take aways: While policy design is important, embedding workforce support within the role, with structured progression and mentoring, is crucial for consistent and effective immersion implementation (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024).

Slide 13 – Overcoming Barriers/Innovation 4 minutes

Notes

Trochi Iaith is evidence-based and supports bilingual development through full immersion (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2017). The policy is effective when staff can implement it, but workforce capacity varies across regions. In some areas, very few fluent Welsh speakers make consistent immersion challenging (Estyn, 2023; Education Workforce Council, 2024).

Proposed Innovation:

1. Assessment on Appointment

- All staff assessed against a minimum Welsh proficiency benchmark (clear benchmark for all settings)
- Those below the benchmark automatically enter structured progression programs, such as Camau, with mandatory participation.

2. Mandatory, Job-Embedded Training

- Staff must undertake Welsh-language training if required.
- Paid training hours are allocated within the working day.
- Job descriptions explicitly state these requirements, ensuring staff understand their obligations.

Expected Outcomes

- Aligns policy and recruitment with workforce realities
- Sets realistic expectations for immersion implementation
- Embeds language development into daily practice
- Improved Welsh immersion practices in settings
- Supports families’ engagement with Welsh and strengthens community bilingual capacity
- Provides incentive and structured support for staff to improve fluency

Strengths

- Tailored to local language context
- Supports gradual fluency progression
- Provides structured support and monitoring
- Ensures immersion for children

Limitations

- Requires coordination and monitoring
- Needs additional resources (time, funding, management)
- Engagement may vary by region

Why This Works

This approach aligns policy with workforce realities, creating a sustainable, structured pathway for bilingual workforce development. It balances policy expectations with practical staffing, ensuring staff below proficiency benchmarks receive required training. Children experience better quality immersion, families engage with Welsh at home, and community bilingual capacity is strengthened. This approach directly contributes to the goals of Cymraeg 2050 (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022; Welsh Government, 2024).

Future Consideration

Ideally, the policy could vary by region to reflect the different proportions of Welsh speakers, but policy is complex and difficult to amend. Long term, research into alternative approaches to early years language learning could be explored. Evidence suggests that one-size-fits-all immersion may not increase Welsh fluency uniformly across all regions, so differentiated methods could be piloted to adapt policy to regional contexts.

Slide 14 – Conclusion 2 minutes

Notes

This analysis has shown how Trochi Iaith in Cylchoedd Meithrin translates the national strategy Cymraeg 2050 into everyday early years practice. While evidence-based and strategically aligned, the policy's success depends on workforce capacity and regional context. The proposed structured workforce development approach — including fluency assessment, mandatory progression programs (e.g., Camau), and job-embedded paid training — addresses these barriers, ensuring consistent immersion while respecting staffing realities.

The benefits extend beyond the setting, children gain confidence and bilingual skills, families are better supported to engage with Welsh, and communities strengthen their bilingual capacity. By embedding policy expectations within practical support systems, Trochi Iaith demonstrates that high-quality immersion requires both clear guidance and investment in practitioners, ensuring the vision of one million Welsh speakers becomes a sustainable reality.

Slide 15 – Discussion/Questions (8 MINUTES)

We've explored how Trochi Iaith translates national Welsh-language policy, Cymraeg 2050, into day-to-day practice in Cylchoedd Meithrin. We've looked at the successes, the challenges with workforce capacity, and approaches to support staff development.

Discussion – any thoughts, experiences, and ideas on the presentation?

Prepared questions to guide the discussion.

1. What are your thoughts on a blanket Welsh-language policy across all Cylchoedd Meithrin, considering the wide differences in numbers of Welsh-speaking staff and children in different regions?
2. Do you feel that Welsh-language policy expectations match workforce realities in your area? If not, what are the main challenges you see?
3. Have you seen staff successfully progress in Welsh through training programs like Camau? What worked well, and what didn't?
4. How practical do you find the idea of embedding Welsh development into job descriptions and paid hours to develop skills?

Depending on how discussion goes, possible ending: Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and experiences. It's been valuable to hear how Trochi Iaith and Welsh-language policy work in practice across different regions.

Slide 16 – Reference List