
Theme 1:

Increasing the number of Welsh speakers

Target: The number of Welsh speakers to reach 1 million by 2050.

There are two main methods of achieving a million speakers:

- **transmitting the Welsh language from one generation to the next in the family**
- **developing and sustaining skills through education and training, from the early years to Welsh-language provision for adults.**

This strategy acknowledges the key contribution of language transmission in the home to the future vitality of the Welsh language. However, since there is a limit to the additional number of Welsh speakers which can be created by language transmission from one generation to the next, the education and training system is the principal method of creating new Welsh speakers. We need to ensure that people of all ages have the opportunity to develop their Welsh language skills and use the language with confidence in their daily life.

Census data shows that the number of Welsh speakers increases by age up until the age of 15. The number of Welsh speakers then generally decreases between the ages of 16 and 25. One of the main objectives of this strategy therefore is to ensure that fewer young people lose their Welsh language skills when moving from statutory education to further/higher education, and that more reach their mid-twenties with a command of the language.

To underpin efforts to increase the number of Welsh speakers through the education system, it is vital that we develop a growing workforce able to teach Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh.

Aims:

- 1. Language transmission in the family:** provide our children with the best start in the language by expanding support for families to transmit the language in the home.
- 2. The early years:** expand Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point for Welsh-medium education.
- 3. Statutory education:** create a statutory education system which increases the number of confident Welsh speakers.
- 4. Post-compulsory education:** develop post-compulsory education provision which increases rates of progression and supports everyone, whatever their command of the language, to develop Welsh language skills for use socially and in the workplace.
- 5. The education workforce, resources and qualifications:** plan in order to increase and improve substantially:
 - the education and training workforce which can teach Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh
 - the resources and qualifications needed to support increased provision.

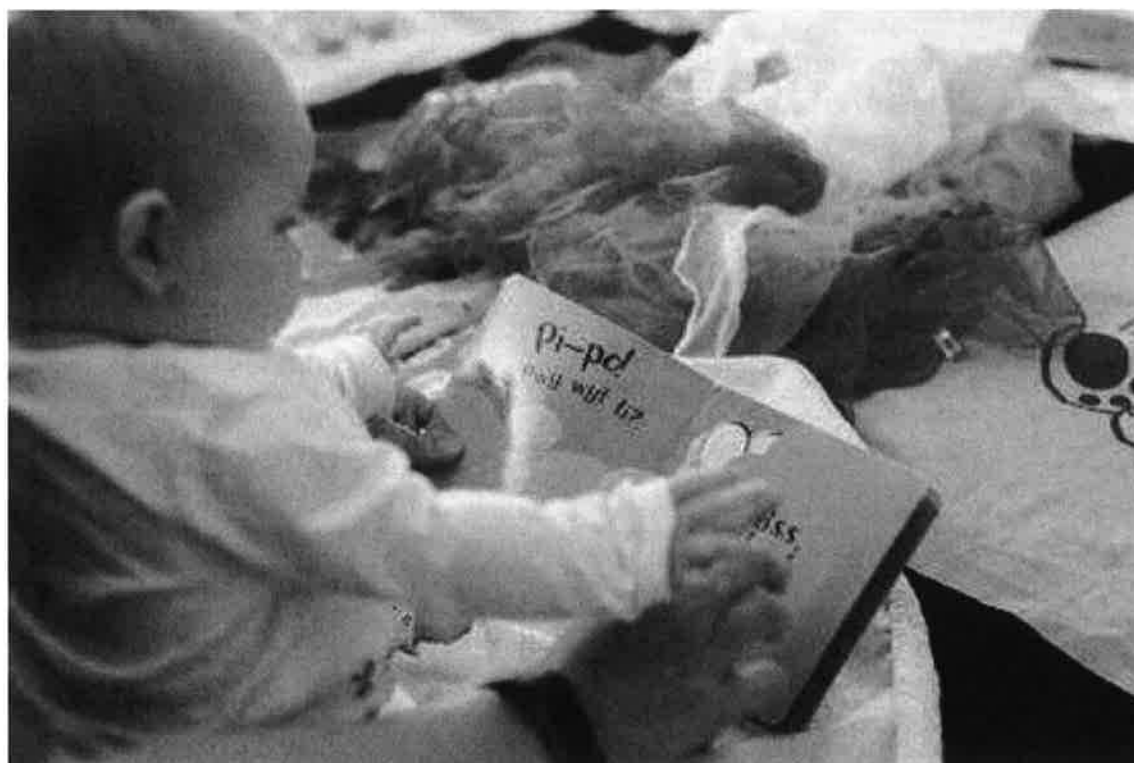
To achieve our target of a million Welsh speakers, we will drive the following transformational changes. Successful implementation will be dependent on a number of organisations working together.

- **Make rapid progress to expand Welsh-medium early years provision by 150 nursery groups over the next decade to facilitate a seamless transition into Welsh-medium education.**
- **Increase the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22 per cent (based on 7,700 seven-year-old learners in 2015/16) to 30 per cent (about 10,500 in each year group) by 2031, and then 40 per cent (about 14,000 in each year group) by 2050.**
- **Transform how we teach Welsh to all learners in order that by 2050 at least 70 per cent of those learners report that they can speak Welsh by the time they leave school.**
- **Increase the number of primary teachers who can teach in Welsh from 2,900 to 3,900 by 2031 and 5,200 by 2050; increase the number of secondary teachers who can teach Welsh from 500 to 900 by 2031 and 1,200 by 2050; and increase the number of secondary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh from 1,800 to 3,200 by 2031 and 4,200 by 2050.**
- **Reform the post-16 Welsh-medium and bilingual education and skills offer to ensure that young people have the opportunity to continue developing bilingual skills to support a prosperous economy.**

1. Language transmission in the family

In transmitting Welsh to their children in the home, parents/carers can provide a beneficial basis for their children's linguistic development.

Research into the factors influencing Welsh language transmission and use in the home has explored aspects such as the Welsh language ability of the parents, the role of attitudes towards Welsh and English, and the pragmatic elements of managing one or more languages in the household. Research undertaken by Gathercole et al. (2007) found that the factors appearing to be the most significant in influencing the language spoken by the child and spoken by parents to the child included parents' linguistic background and the parents' ability in Welsh (which was highly correlated with a number of factors including use of Welsh with friends and close social networks). In this respect, there is a clear link with the second theme of this strategy, which discusses the development of social opportunities for adults and families to use Welsh. Recently published research (Welsh Government 2017b) shows that language use and transmission are personal and complex issues, and suggests how Welsh speakers' orientation towards the use of the language can change over time.



The findings of the Welsh Language Use Survey 2013–15 (Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner 2015) show that Welsh speakers who have learnt Welsh at home as young children are more likely to be fluent than those who have learnt to speak the language at school. The survey also shows that fluent Welsh speakers use the language more often than non-fluent Welsh speakers. Another fact revealed in the survey is that young Welsh speakers are more likely to have learnt to speak Welsh at school than anywhere else, and that older Welsh speakers are more likely to have learnt Welsh at home as young children than anywhere else.

At present there are different transmission rates in couple households in which two adults could speak Welsh (82 per cent), couple households in which one adult could speak Welsh (45 per cent), and lone parent households in which one adult could speak Welsh (53 per cent). We will tailor our interventions to reflect these variations.

No government can control how people behave in their homes, or force a parent/carer to speak Welsh with their child. It is crucial therefore that we encourage and support families to use Welsh with their children, promoting the advantages of Welsh-language opportunities to parents and prospective parents, and ensuring that families have opportunities to learn Welsh.

These messages will need to be embedded in the work of the many professional people who come into contact with parents and prospective parents, including midwives, primary care providers, and services which provide information to families, in order to create a clear and consistent picture of the Welsh language and bilingualism at crucial times during the child-rearing years. We will aim to increase awareness among the professionals who support new and prospective parents of the importance of language transmission in families, to embed positive linguistic practice among children and young people, the parents of future generations.

The importance of language transmission remains a key aspect of our strategy, and as we see an increase in the numbers acquiring the Welsh language through the education system, and therefore a higher proportion that have acquired the language at school rather than at home, the challenge in relation to language transmission will change over time. We will need to tailor policy accordingly.

Our aim: provide our children with the best start in the language by expanding support for families to transmit the language in the home.

2. The early years

The long-term aim for our early years provision is to reach a position where children under five have had sufficient contact with the Welsh language to be able to start on their journey towards fluency.

Over the last four decades the voluntary sector, under the auspices of Mudiad Meithrin, has sustained Welsh-language nursery care, developing opportunities for children throughout Wales to receive Welsh-medium early years care and services.

By formalising early years' care and services and mainstreaming the Welsh language, there is an opportunity to maintain and strengthen the role of the Welsh-medium sector in future, as well as ensure children in settings across the early years sector can further develop their Welsh language skills, in order to expand opportunities for future generations.



Along with developing the use of Welsh across the sector and significantly increasing the capacity in Welsh-medium early years provision, we must also ensure parents/carers and prospective parents understand the range of provision available to enable them to make an informed choice about their child's future. Evidence on the

availability of Welsh-medium childcare suggests that there are gaps in the provision in some parts of Wales, and also that there is variation in the methods used to assess demand for Welsh-medium provision (Save the Children 2015; Welsh Government 2016a; Welsh Government 2016b; Welsh Government 2017a)

Embedding the goal to expand Welsh-medium early years provision, as well as ensuring a greater understanding of the range of programmes targeted at disadvantaged children, families and communities can make a vital contribution to the tackling poverty agenda, and ensure all children across Wales, regardless of their background or where they live, have the opportunity to become confident Welsh speakers.

We will look to make rapid progress by expanding Welsh-medium early years provision by 150 nursery groups over the next decade to facilitate a seamless transition into Welsh-medium education.

Our aim: expand Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point for Welsh-medium education.
