

Ceredigion County Council's Work Welsh Scheme 2020/21

1) Introduction

A full programme of formal and informal learning was provided by Ceredigion County Council's Work Welsh Scheme in the 2020/21 academic year. This was the third year of the programme, which is arranged and delivered by the Council's Work Welsh Training Officer, Dewi Huw Owen, and which is run in partnership between the Council's Learning and Development team and the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

As a result of being held during the challenging time of the Covid-19 pandemic, every aspect of the 2020/21 scheme was delivered online. Therefore every aspect of the provision had to be adapted in comparison to the previous years of the scheme. Much work was put in to ensure the success of that transition, and by the end of the year the fruit of this labour was seen, as the successes of the scheme were celebrated on a national level.

This report provides a brief overview of the project during 2020/21.

2) Formal Learning

The Work Welsh scheme provided Intensive Welsh classes for 70 Council staff during 2020/21.

In accordance with the staff's requirements, as the students' language skills developed, the scheme provided education on 5 levels this year, up from 4 levels in 2019/20, and 3 levels in 2018/19.

Here is the distribution of student numbers across the levels:

Beginners: 12

Foundation: 31

Intermediate: 12

Advanced 1: 9

Advanced 2: 6

We can see that 15 students followed Advanced level courses (Advanced 1 and 2) in 2020/21. 13 of these – 9 Advanced 1 level students and 4 of the 6 Advanced 2 level students – reached these levels through studying with the Work Welsh scheme's courses in previous years. This is proof of the far-reaching impact of the progressive nature of the provision provided by the Work Welsh scheme in developing the language skills of Council staff.

The feedback forms returned by the students were filled with positive responses to the provision of the scheme.

One staff member studying at Beginners level noted the usefulness of the course as they provide services to their service users:

The course has been very beneficial within my role and will enable me to communicate better with service users.

A member of staff studying at Intermediate level reflected on how the courses helped them use more Welsh with their co-workers:

I have gained much more confidence this year. I'm not afraid to attempt Welsh with my colleagues and ask for their assistance. I now communicate as much as I can with my line manager in Welsh and when responding to Welsh emails.

An Advanced 1 level student explained how the course had helped them gain confidence to use Welsh in every aspect of their professional life:

Rwy'n fwy hyderus wrth siarad a phobl ar y ffôn yn Gymraeg yn y gwaith ac y gyffredinol, rwy'n deall cymaint mwy. Mae'r cwrs wedi fy helpu i fagu llawer o hyder ac rwy'n defnyddio'r Gymraeg yn fawr, mae fy ngwaith ar y ffonau ac mae'n ddefnyddiol iawn.

[I'm more confident in speaking with people on the phone in Welsh at work and in general, I understand so much more. The course has helped me gain much confidence and I use Welsh a great deal, my work is on the phones and it's very useful.]

A member of staff studying at Advanced 2 level commented that the grammatical tuition on the Advanced courses had been a great help to them in using Welsh:

Mae'r cwrs yn helpu fi llawer. Fi'n mwy hyderus i siarad ac ysgrifennu yn y Gymraeg. Dw i'n joiio dysgu'r gramadeg yn enwedig.

[The course helps me a lot. I'm more confident to speak and write in Welsh. I especially enjoy learning the grammar.]

A number of students also praised the way the course organizers responded to the challenge of having to move the courses online, as is expressed here in the testimony of one Foundation level student:

Although the move to online teaching wasn't easy, I have been enjoying the Zoom classes, I think Huw is doing a great job, so I just wanted to say thank you.

The Formal Learning component of the Work Welsh scheme was a success in 2020/21. The scheme's provision was increased, the challenges of the pandemic were met and overcome, and the good progress made in the scheme's first two years was continued and enhanced upon.

3) Additional Formal Learning

Bespoke courses for Best Interest Assessors (BIAS) were created and delivered in April 2021.

After identifying a need for training in the Council's provision in the field of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding, two officers in the field, Lynne Regan and Judith Andrews, worked together with the Work Welsh Training Officer to create 3

bespoke one-hour training sessions – 1 for assessors without Welsh skills; 1 for assessors who were learning Welsh; and 1 for fluent assessors.

The objectives of the courses were:

Group One – providing the active offer in Welsh in SSWB(W)A

Group Two – providing the active offer in Welsh in SSWB(W)A

Group Three – becoming familiar with relevant terms and phrases for the MCA and DOLS and becoming more confident in using them; becoming familiar with the relevant legal and technical terms surrounding MCA and DOLS and gaining confidence in using them correctly.

The courses were delivered in April 2021 and they received favourably by the students. They were also a topic of interest across the sector outside of Ceredigion.

Potential was recognized in their format to provide more bespoke short-form courses to respond to the specific language needs of individual departments within the Council. This will be actioned upon in 2021/22.

4) Informal Learning

A weekly Clwb Cinio was held on Zoom, along with a monthly Clwb Cinio event. The Clwb Cinio was attended by around 12 students weekly. Each event was attended by around 25 attendees monthly.

These were the events held this year:

November: Clwb Cinio Quiz.

December: Clwb Cinio Christmas Party.

February: Clwb Cinio Gig – Owen Shiers singing songs from Ceredigion.

March: Combined Clwb Cinio between Ceredigion and Conwy Work Welsh schemes – Owen Shiers and Gwilym Bowen Rhys singing, with semi-structured conversation opportunities provided for students of both schemes.

March: Cyngerdd y Gwanwyn / Spring Concert – an event arranged in partnership with Learn Welsh Ceredigion, Powys and Sir Gar. The Council's students joined with students from the public classes in the local area for their end of term event.

5) National Recognition

Ceredigion's Work Welsh scheme is highly regarded nationally across the Learn Welsh field. This was seen most clearly in the National Work Welsh Awards at the end of March 2021, where Ceredigion celebrated a triple success.

i) One of the scheme's students, Mariolina Lai, who is a Day Care Assistant at Min-y-Môr, came 1st in the category 'Student who has made the best progress at Foundation level or above'

ii) Another of the scheme's students, Alison Newby, who is a Numeracy, Literacy, and Business Tutor with Dysgu Bro, placed 2nd in the category 'Learner who makes the best use of Welsh in the Workplace at Foundation level or above'

iii) And Dewi Huw Owen, the Council's Work Welsh Training Officer, came 2nd in the category 'Work Welsh Tutor of the Year' after receiving many nominations from the students.

In the success of Mariolina and Alison we can see the impact of the scheme on improving and expanding the ability of the Council's staff to provide various services through the medium of Welsh. With Huw's award we can see a recognition of the appreciation of the scheme's students of the quality of the scheme and of the professionalism of those who coordinate and deliver it.

6) Work Welsh 2021/22

The Work Welsh scheme for the 2021/22 academic year is broader and more ambitious than ever before. In terms of Formal Learning, teaching will be provided to more students (over 90), in more classes (8), across more learning levels (6) than ever before. In terms of Informal Learning, plans are already afoot to relaunch the Council's Ffrind Iaith language friend scheme for online learning, and the scheme's Clwb Cinio will expand to include events arranged in partnership with the Work Welsh schemes at Conwy and Cardiff local authorities. In terms of Additional Formal Learning, plans are already in place to develop and deliver more specialised short-form courses for different departments within the council on the format of those delivered to the Best Interest Assessors. With these objectives forefront in the mind of the organisers, Ceredigion County Council's Work Welsh scheme steps purposefully into its fourth year.