

## Case Study: Llanfairfechan Playgroup

Llanfairfechan Playgroup is a well-established early years setting located in a linguistically diverse area in North Wales. While the team has always been committed to providing high-quality care and education, staff recognised that Welsh language use across the setting was inconsistent and often limited to planned activities. In May 2024, the setting joined the Cynllun Plethu programme with the ambition of creating a truly bilingual environment where children would hear, see, and use Welsh throughout their daily experiences.

The setting is staffed by six practitioners, all of whom brought varying levels of Welsh language ability from complete beginners to those with some spoken confidence. Despite this diversity, the team shared a collective drive to improve their skills and embed Welsh naturally into their practice. The leadership team also made a clear commitment to whole-setting development, ensuring time, space, and structure were in place to support long-term change.

### Tailored Support Through Cynllun Plethu

From the outset, support for Llanfairfechan Playgroup was tailored to reflect the needs and pace of the team. Over a 10-month period, the setting received a structured and responsive package of development opportunities, which included:

Eight in-person visits by a dedicated Welsh Language Development Officer

Each visit focused on:

- Modelling Welsh language use in context (e.g. snack time, free play, group time)
- Observing staff-child interactions and offering constructive feedback
- Joint planning of bilingual activities and language-rich environments
- Co-developing Welsh Promise action plans aligned to the setting's development goals

### Staff participation in Camau training

All six practitioners were enrolled on to the Entry level Camau modules and are now progressing through the Foundation modules, with support provided to:

- Match learners to the appropriate level
- Encourage steady progression through online content
- Apply newly learned vocabulary in daily routines
- Reflect on learning through individual coaching sessions

### **Development sessions delivered on-site**

Development sessions focused on:

- Practical strategies for embedding Welsh into play
- Using rhyme, rhythm, and repetition to reinforce language
- Building confidence with common phrases and incidental language

### **Welsh Promise support and action planning**

Early Years Wales worked closely with the team to:

- Audit current Welsh language visibility and use across the setting
- Identify achievable targets for Bronze and Silver Welsh Promise awards
- Celebrate success at each stage, reinforcing staff motivation

### **Achievements and Impact**

The outcomes achieved by Llanfairfechan Playgroup over the 10-month period have been substantial and far-reaching:

#### **Staff Development**

- All six staff members completed Camau training modules relevant to their level, with several now preparing to progress to higher tiers.
- Staff have moved from limited, scripted Welsh use to spontaneous and confident bilingual interaction.
- Practitioners now use Welsh consistently during greetings, instructions, storytelling, and singing, with many integrating Welsh into unplanned child-led play.

#### **Welsh Promise Awards**

- The setting achieved both the Bronze and Silver Welsh Promise awards, demonstrating systematic improvements in bilingual planning, practice, and provision.
- Welsh is now clearly visible across the setting through signage, displays, resources, and wall prompts.

## Children's Language Exposure and Response

- Children, including those from non-Welsh speaking homes have developed a strong awareness of Welsh and regularly repeat, respond to, and initiate Welsh phrases.
- The playgroup has developed a library of bilingual songs and stories used daily, reinforcing language acquisition through routine.
- Some children have begun using simple Welsh spontaneously in their play, a testament to the rich linguistic environment now in place.

## Parental Engagement

- Families have responded positively to the increased Welsh presence, with bilingual song sheets and newsletters to help to build continuity between home and setting.
- Parents have commented on their children singing Welsh songs at home and showing curiosity about the language.



*"We now hear Welsh throughout the day with children responding naturally, staff using it without needing prompts, and parents noticing a real difference. It's become part of our culture, not just a weekly activity."*



## Reflective Learning

One of the most powerful aspects of Llanfairfechan Playgroup's journey has been the collective commitment to continuous improvement. Staff have embraced the support available, engaged honestly in reflective discussions, and taken ownership of their progress. Importantly, less confident practitioners felt safe to experiment with new language use, supported by a coaching culture that values effort and celebrates small wins.

The setting's leadership played a vital role in ensuring time was protected for training, sessions were embedded in team meetings, and bilingualism was recognised as a long-term cultural shift, not a short-term project.

## Next Steps

Llanfairfechan Playgroup is now planning the next phase of its Welsh language development journey:

- Progressing staff onto higher levels of Camau training
- Embedding Welsh into planning cycles, documentation, and curriculum design

- Developing child-led Welsh areas in continuous provision (e.g. role play, outdoor, construction)
- Working towards achieving the Gold Welsh Promise award
- Hosting a Welsh celebration event with families and the community to showcase their bilingual journey

## Conclusion

Llanfairfechan Playgroup's progress through Cynllun Plethu exemplifies what can be achieved when structured support is combined with commitment, collaboration, and courage to change. From hesitant beginnings, the setting has grown into a confident, bilingual environment where children are not only hearing Welsh but using it, enjoying it, and beginning their educational journey with pride in their language and culture.

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*“The difference is phenomenal. We're not just using Welsh, we're living it.”*

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