



Introduction

In January 2023, Sarah Jenkins took on the role of manager at St Padarns Playgroup, a childcare setting located in Aberystwyth, West Wales. With extensive experience in early childhood education, Sarah quickly identified a gap in Welsh language proficiency among the staff. Recognising the importance of the Welsh language in fostering a deeper connection to the local culture and curriculum, Sarah undertook the Camau program to empower her team with the skills and confidence needed to integrate Welsh into daily practice. Welsh Language Development through Camau.

As part of the Welsh Government's ambition to promote Welsh language usage in all aspects of public life, Sarah recognised that enhancing staff Welsh language skills was essential for creating an inclusive, bilingual environment for the children. The Camau program offered a structured framework, providing resources, training, and support for staff to develop their Welsh language skills in a professional context.

The program helped staff members from diverse linguistic backgrounds learn how to incorporate Welsh into their interactions with children and parents, creating a more immersive Welsh-speaking environment. By ensuring that staff were supported in their Welsh language journey, St Padarns Playgroup was able to deliver on its promise of offering a bilingual setting for all children.

Practical Application and Impact on the Setting

Initial Training and Tailored Support

Through the Camau program, staff began their Welsh language development journey with tailored sessions that focused on practical and everyday language. The training was designed to cater to different levels of Welsh proficiency, ranging from beginners to more confident speakers.

- Induction sessions for new staff included basic Welsh language greetings and useful phrases, enabling them to start using Welsh right away in the playgroup setting.
- Weekly sessions allowed staff to practice their Welsh in a supportive environment, with guidance on pronunciation, vocabulary, and how to integrate Welsh into daily routines with children.

Creating a Bilingual Environment

With staff gaining confidence in using Welsh, the playgroup environment gradually transformed into a more bilingual space. Staff greeted children and parents in Welsh, incorporating simple phrases such as "Bore da" (Good morning) and "Hwyl fawr" (Goodbye). This small change made a significant impact on the children, who began to pick up the language themselves.

- As staff became more comfortable using Welsh, they naturally started using it to engage with children during play, circle time, and activities.



- The program's ongoing support created a positive learning environment, where staff felt empowered to take risks and make mistakes without fear of judgment.

Outcomes and Future Plans

The positive impact of the Camau was evident in the day-to-day functioning of St Padarns Playgroup. Staff became more comfortable speaking Welsh in front of the children, and their enthusiasm for the language grew as they saw the benefits of using it in their practice. Looking ahead, Sarah and her team plan to continue strengthening their Welsh language provision. Their goals include:

- **Advanced Welsh Language Training:** Providing opportunities for staff to further their Welsh language skills, moving beyond basic phrases to more advanced conversational Welsh.
- **Welsh Language Resources:** Expanding the range of Welsh language books, materials, and resources to support both staff and children.
- **Inclusive Welsh Activities:** Encouraging staff to lead Welsh-themed activities, such as Welsh cultural celebrations, which involve both children and parents.

By committing to Camau, Sarah has set St Padarns Playgroup on a path toward becoming a fully bilingual setting, where both staff and children thrive in a rich, Welsh-speaking environment.

Conclusion

The implementation of Camau at St Padarns Playgroup has been a transformative experience for both staff and children. Through targeted training and continuous support, the staff have gained the Welsh language skills needed to create an immersive bilingual environment, enriching the children's cultural experiences and enhancing their sense of belonging in a Welsh-speaking community.

Sarah reflects on the change:

“The journey of learning Welsh with the team has been incredibly rewarding. It's not just about speaking the language; it's about creating a space where Welsh is part of who we are and where every child and adult feels included in that journey.” St Padarns Playgroup is now a prime example of how investing in staff language development through programs like Camau can have a lasting impact on the quality of care, inclusivity, and cultural richness in early years settings.

