



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

‘Rho Gynnig Arni’ – a training and mentoring scheme to improve confidence of Welsh speaking staff

March 2024

Background

Coleg y Cymoedd was eager to increase the number of staff who used the Welsh language in their work. It became clear to the Welsh Language Manager that a number of staff had attended Welsh medium schools and were Welsh speakers, however they did not use the Welsh language at work. The College decided to develop a scheme to encourage Welsh speakers within the workforce to use more Welsh at the College.

What prompted you to develop the scheme?

It became apparent that there was a lack of confidence among Welsh speaking staff, and that this was partly the result of a lack of opportunities for them to practice and use their Welsh skills. It was also noted that several members of staff were happy to use Welsh orally but were less confident when writing in Welsh. Staff expressed that they did not have enough awareness and understanding of the grammatical rules of the language and many were under the impression that their Welsh was not good enough to use in professional setting.

What is the Rho Gynnig Arni (“give it a go”) scheme?

The mentoring and training scheme 'Rho Gynnig Arni' was launched in 2019. The Welsh Language Manager undertakes a mentoring role to tutor staff who already have Welsh language skills in order to improve their skills and confidence to use the Welsh language in their work.

The mentor holds 1 to 1 sessions with staff, to provide them with the opportunity to:

- Practice writing and speaking Welsh
- Complete language/grammar exercises
- Get answers to questions about the language

- Get feedback on written and oral work and an opportunity to proofread and edit documents that have been drafted in Welsh (such as email, letters and PowerPoint presentations).

The Welsh Language Manager would meet with the staff termly or every half term (depending on the individual needs) in order to discuss progress and any further training needs.

How did you put the scheme into practice?

A campaign was launched to promote the mentoring scheme via email, Teams messages, and posters on the screens of each campus. The College conducts an annual survey of the linguistic skills of the Workforce and decided to target those staff who had Welsh language skills at Level 3 to Level 5.

Once enough staff had expressed an interest, the Welsh Language Manager contacted the line managers of each member of staff to get their approval for the member of staff to attend the sessions. It was agreed with the human resources department that the staff could record the time of the sessions as part of their allocated professional development hours. The Welsh Language Manager would discuss with the member of staff and the line manager to agree a convenient time for the sessions. On some occasions, the Line Manager needed to arrange free time for the member of staff so that they could be free to attend.

An assessment was made of the linguistic skills of each member of staff before preparing tailored resources based on the needs that had been identified (e.g. focus on mutations / dependent mode etc.).

What were the outcomes of the scheme?

The staff who were part of the scheme started using more Welsh as part of their work and this stimulated an increase in the use of the Welsh language in general across the College. Staff were also more confident when using the Welsh language in informal situations as well as in the capacity of their job. It was noted that everyone who was part of the scheme felt more confident to have a go at drafting bilingual documents. The language used by staff both orally and in writing had also improved in terms of quality and accuracy. Another advantage was that staff enjoyed using the Welsh language together and everyone looked forward to the sessions with the Welsh Language Manager.

There are also financial benefits to the scheme as staff are more willing to draft text in Welsh or bilingually, resulting in less resources spent on translating content.

What advice do you have for others interested in implementing a similar scheme to mentor and encourage staff to use more Welsh in their organisations?

An experienced language tutor who has the ability and expertise to adapt the sessions to meet the various needs of the staff members is needed to lead the scheme. Securing the agreement and approval of the line manager is also key in order to facilitate the arrangements without too much disruption to timetables and workloads.

Contact details

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Welsh Language Commissioner's opinion

The Welsh Government's strategy, Cymraeg 2050, talks about the workplace as a key space for increasing the use of the Welsh language. It states that the workplace is central to our everyday lives and important in terms of the linguistic development of individuals. It provides the setting and opportunity for speakers at all levels to use and practice the language.

I am aware that many people have received Welsh medium education but that they do not use the language once they have left education. The workplace is therefore an ideal space for them to practice their Welsh skills and give them opportunities to use the language both informally and professionally.

During my time as Welsh Language Commissioner, I want to see a conscious effort by organisations to increase the opportunities they provide to use the Welsh language, and I welcome proactive ventures such as the "Rho Gynnig Arni" scheme by Coleg y Cymoedd. This plan shows a clear commitment by the College to encourage and support its staff to develop, improve and refine their Welsh skills. I also believe that there are several transferable elements to the scheme and that other organisations could have a go at implementing similar schemes with their workforce in order to see an increase in the use of the Welsh language among staff.