



# Survey of Books for Children and Young People: Final Report

20 July, 2017

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Welsh Books Council, staff and students of the School of Welsh, Cardiff University, and all the participants for their assistance in carrying out this Survey.

# INTRODUCTION

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We believe that the field of children's and young adults' books is vitally important for Wales on many levels. The fostering and development of young readers is culturally and commercially vital but it is, above all, essential to the development of individuals and a society that are satisfied and informed. Providing appropriate material for those readers, whether analogue or digital, is therefore central from a commercial and social perspective.

The report is published in the context of the Government's Child Poverty, Welsh Language and Social Well-being strategies, and we believe that the field of children's and young people's books and their provision, regardless of social or linguistic background, is crucial.

Our commitment to the field is reflected in the fact that we commissioned this report in the first instance, and we would like to thank Dr Siwan Rosser of the School of Welsh, Cardiff University, not only for undertaking the work but for producing a high quality, useful and challenging report. That commitment is underlined further by our desire for this report, and the responses to it, to make a central contribution to our strategic direction over the next few years. The report is far-reaching and reminds the whole sector of their part in the book production chain and the promotion of reading.

We are proud of the work we have accomplished in facilitating ways for publishers to publish high quality titles in Welsh and English for children and young people, ranging from sponsoring and developing original authors and designers and outstanding adapters to offering central services that are key to maintaining industry standards; from providing information on books and general promotional material, both analogue and digital, to training and funding publishers to market their own publications. Furthermore, the Distribution Centre offers invaluable services to publishers and booksellers throughout Wales. Without the Centre it would be difficult for many of these bookshops to survive in the current economic climate, not only as booksellers, but also as valuable social hubs to support resilient communities. Likewise, Gwales distributes copies of titles and offers an online service to those without a local bookshop as well as serving the international Welsh community. We believe that this role, which offers guidance and support for the industry, is reflected in the report.

Similarly, the report reminds us of the importance of flexibility and creativity on the part of publishers and booksellers when responding to market requirements, and the need for them to be proactive in their efforts to sell their products. However, the report goes further and considers the role of parents and teachers, and the role of new and traditional media in reaching those parents and teachers. But of course, we are also reminded of Government's central role in offering strategic

leadership and funding in those areas that are central to its mission; areas which are themselves, in turn, central to this report.

In that regard, we look forward to discussing the report not only with the publishing sector but also with relevant Government departments, representatives of broadcasters and any other partners that are relevant to this area. We will be proactive in achieving this aim, but we will be just as ready to respond to enquiries from other organisations that are eager to be involved in this work.

The report raises many questions about the audiences for Welsh-language books, and we believe that we have a strategic role to play in identifying those audiences, and in assisting publishers as they strive to reach them. There is no doubt that the traditional audience needs to be nurtured. Sales are generally down, and attracting young people to read is a continuous if not unending challenge. However, that audience of readers is also multi-faceted. For example, one must ask if the information currently provided is as appropriate to Welsh-speaking homes as it is for bilingual or non-Welsh-speaking homes, where parents buy books for their children. What information these audiences need, and how to reach them through digital and traditional methods, are essential questions to answer.

But implicit in this also is the even greater challenge of reaching reluctant readers and those parts of society where reading, and especially reading for pleasure, is not an important consideration. The reasons for this are legion, but we hope that publishing this report gives us a reason to discuss with partners who have experience of working in the field.

We will implement some of the recommendations immediately by modifying internal procedures, organising training, conferences and market research, and inviting the industry, external partners and Government departments to respond and discuss ways in which they can contribute to the process.

Other recommendations depend on further developments within the Council. The report is timely on several accounts, but particularly in the context of the technological developments that will be needed to implement many of these recommendations. We are currently considering the future of stock and data computer management systems. These systems and their content provide the industry with the core data about the books, and are essential in providing ‘the right information to the right people at the right time’, particularly in the digital sphere and through social media. These recommendations will feed into the specification for that new system and the resulting funding application.

A number of other recommendations, such as the desire to move to a more balanced market in terms of original books and adaptations, will depend on the success of our efforts to facilitate the

creation and promotion of information about Welsh-language books and the willingness of publishers to encourage the creation and marketing of books for this market. But in that regard, and regarding many other fields within the books market, this report has mapped out the direction of travel for the Council over the next few years, and we look forward to submitting it to the Council's panels and committees.

**Helgard Krause**  
Chief Executive  
Welsh Books Council  
October 2017

## PRESENTATION

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Children's books are essential to the book industry in Wales. Over half (57%) the buyers of Welsh language books purchase children's books in Welsh (Beaufort Report 2017, p.16). There are many excellent examples of innovation and production of attractive books of the highest quality by our publishers. Consequently the majority of contributors to this survey, both children and adults, are proud of both the quality and diversity of Welsh language books for children. These books are also, of course, central to meeting the linguistic, educational and personal needs of children in Wales and in developing a confident, bilingual nation. Reading for pleasure in Welsh fosters and establishes a sense of ownership and belonging; develops cognitive skills, creativity and independent thought; and leads to wider educational, emotional and social benefits. It is therefore not a peripheral activity, but one that shapes attitudes about the future role of the Welsh language.

The support given to Welsh language books for children and young adults should therefore be considered in the context of the Welsh Government's policies on education, culture and social well-being. The Donaldson Report stresses that nurturing a love of reading 'enriches lives and contributes to well-being now and in the future' (2015, p.48). In addition, fostering strong literacy skills and stimulating interest in the Welsh language and culture is linked to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 objective of creating 'a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language' and is crucial in achieving the Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Furthermore, easy access to a variety of books that appeal to young readers from diverse backgrounds is vital in creating 'a more equal Wales' (Well-being Act, 2015) and implementing the objectives of the Welsh Books Council's Child Poverty Strategy (2016).

It will not be possible to realise the Welsh Government's ambition and Professor Donaldson's vision and create more Welsh speakers that are confident in their communication skills and articulate in their use of the language without instilling in them a love of reading. Reading is one of the essentials of language acquisition, and regular contact with the written language is required in order to gain proficiency. Reading a range of books that stimulate the imagination is one of the most effective and attractive ways of maintaining that connection. That is true for any language, but in the case of a minority language like Welsh it is even more significant, because reading offers an inexpensive and accessible way of maintaining regular contact with a language that may be peripheral, and sometimes invisible, in the experiences of some children beyond their school walls.

Consequently, the Welsh publishing industry should be considered as a commercial enterprise with significant social benefits and cultural capital. It relies on the relationship between public and private sectors. The public funding given to children's books supports the publishing industry, and the publishing industry subsequently provides the books that enable our children to acquire Welsh and gain the confidence to use the language to communicate and create. The Welsh Books Council is the central body in this relationship and converts Welsh Government support into an operational plan aimed at maintaining and promoting a vibrant, rich and creative book industry.

However, it is an extremely difficult period for everyone involved in the book trade in Wales. Constraints on public funding have had a direct impact on the number and range of books purchased for homes, schools and libraries. Moreover, some of the major information sharing activities about books (and creating a market for them) have been reduced or have expired (e.g. a book club for children (the former 'Sbondonics'), hard copies of the Children's Books Catalogue (now available on the internet/CD-R), and the Children's Books Conference). Confronted with this urgent situation, it is encouraging to see that the Welsh Books Council, by commissioning this Survey and other research projects in the area (Jones 2014, Thomas 2014), is prepared to take a fresh look at its provision and its role in supporting the Welsh language book publishing industry.

The purpose of this survey was to scrutinise the books for children and young adults\* published through annual funding by the Welsh Books Council, along with the relationship between promotion and sales in this context, and to offer an opinion on the direction of this field in coming years.

'Books', therefore, are the focus of the Survey (as opposed to 'literature' in the wider sense of the word). Participants from all sectors defined books for younger children to read for pleasure primarily as material objects, between paper covers. This was also the case for young adults' books, but there was a greater demand for e-books for this age group in order to increase the readers' choice. Consequently, this report assumes that 'book' can either be in print form only, print and e-book or e-book only, depending on the nature of the individual publication. Several participants saw the potential of digital technology in attracting readers to a book and to expand and enrich their experience of the content, and a large number mentioned the creative potential of digital technology to create and share new content. This report therefore, emphasises that children and young people's books and reading experiences should be part of a wider cultural, digital and multimedia network that both develops the literacy skills and stimulates the creativity of young readers and writers.

[\*The general term ‘books for young adults’ was adopted for publications for the 12-14 and 14+ age groups, although it should be acknowledged that there is a fundamental difference in the content and mature nature of material aimed at younger teenagers compared to 14+ readers. It was judged appropriate to include books for these age groups in the Survey as they encompass the transition from children's literature to adult books.]

## **METHODOLOGY**

As well as examining data on publications, Welsh Books Council documentation and current research in the field, representatives of the following groups were consulted through online questionnaires, interviews and focus groups:

PRODUCERS: publishers, authors, Welsh Books Council, Welsh Government Education Department

PROVIDERS: booksellers, libraries

USERS: buyers, readers, children, young adults, parents, teachers

A link to the online questionnaires was shared through social media and traditional media (e.g. Golwg) and by targeting specific stakeholders e.g. schools’ mailing lists, consortia, booksellers, publishers. The limitations of such data collection methods should be noted (i.e. the slight bias towards respondents who follow Welsh language accounts on Twitter and follow current affairs through the medium of Welsh). In addition, focus groups and interviews were conducted with representatives from publishers, booksellers and school pupils (primary and secondary).

The online questionnaires were available for a period of 6 weeks (15 November - 8 January) with a response target of 150. There were 222 respondents to the Welsh language online questionnaire, and 27 respondents to the English online questionnaire. Respondents included representatives from all sectors. The English language questionnaire was engaged mainly with non-Welsh speaking parents who send their children to Welsh medium schools. These are important and largely neglected stakeholders, and the low response rate to the questionnaire reflects the lack of accessible networks to reach them. It should also be noted that Beaufort Research reports (2003-2016) do not include non-Welsh speaking parents of children attending Welsh medium schools in their omnibus survey on buying and reading Welsh language books. Individual interviews were conducted with non-Welsh speaking parents or who were learning the language in order to expand the data obtained through the online questionnaires.

Data from questionnaires and focus group interviews and observations were interpreted in order to evaluate different attitudes towards the quantity, range and diversity of Welsh language books available for children and young people.

Note: The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with Cardiff University’s Research Ethics policy. The online questionnaire was piloted with parents, children and Welsh Books Council staff, and some minor



changes were made as a result of their feedback. Questions from the online questionnaires are available for reference.

The aim of the recommendations made in this report is to suggest improvements to the current situation that will ensure that all aspects of our involvement with children and young adult's books contribute to the goal of creating lifelong readers. This is a significant challenge in the face of transformative cultural and technological developments. Of course, the struggle to maintain the habit of reading for pleasure, especially during young adulthood, is not unique to the Welsh language experience. Countless social, cultural and technological factors impact upon the time set aside for reading, and many of these are beyond the influence of the Welsh Books Council. However this report will outline some elements that are particular to the situation of the Welsh language that can be improved in order to enhance the reading experience of young readers of Welsh books and make the market more open and accessible to users.

There are implications in the findings of this survey for the work of the Welsh Books Council's Grants Committee, Children's Department and Marketing Department. There can be no differentiation between these areas as it is clear that one of the main findings of this research is that 98% of respondents - both children and adults - think that Welsh books for children and young adults deserve greater attention with a significant percentage feeling that they do not receive adequate information about titles suitable for young readers. With regard to the current situation, promotion and marketing were the main issues of concern for publishers and booksellers, and they wished to see more leadership from the Welsh Books Council on those issues.

But in addition to coordinating campaigns to increase the visibility of children's books and provide information for the public, the education sector and libraries, the Welsh Books Council must collaborate with external partners to ensure that Welsh books for children and young adults are elevated to a prominent status within publishing, education, and our society in general. The attitudes of children and young people towards reading depends on the value placed on books by the communities that they inhabit. It will therefore be necessary to expand the circles that reads and discusses books for children and young adults. That means motivating more adults as well as children and young people, to read books for younger readers and to take an interest in them.

Implementing this report's recommendations requires a clear strategy from the Welsh Books Council, effective partnerships with other organisations, and an increase in Welsh Government funding for children and young adults' books. By securing further investment to develop

authors, books and resources that will result in increased coverage for Welsh language books in the classroom and in our culture as a whole, it is possible to maintain a viable reading community that more of our younger readers will wish to be a part of.

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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Research commissioned by the Welsh Books Council Publishing Grants Panel, 2016 – 2017:  
**Number, range and diversity of Welsh books for children and young adults, sales and promotion**

## THE GRANTS SYSTEM

1: The Welsh Books Council should review the grants system in order to create more favourable conditions that encourage publishers to submit more applications for original children's publications, books for older age groups and joint projects between authors and illustrators.

2: In order to coordinate new books' marketing campaigns more effectively, the Welsh Books Council should define 'basic marketing' of funded children and young adult titles in greater detail. Separate guidelines for publishers should also be drawn up to accompany the Marketing Grant suggesting ideas and support with regard to engaging young audiences.

## AGE GROUPS

3: References to target age groups should be harmonised across the Welsh Books Council's publications and documentation. Target age groups should also be included on the entries for all titles on Gwales and the proposed children's books website, as well as facilitating browsing by age group.

## THE PUBLISHING PROGRAMME

4: The Welsh Books Council should encourage publishers to produce more books for 8+ readers and reduce titles for early years. The number of original fiction books for children 8–11 years and 12+ should be increased (which should include series with strong branding) as well as non-fiction books on contemporary topics.

5: It should be ensured that the background, scenarios and characters in books for children and young adults reflect the wide range of experiences of young people in Wales today.

6: Consideration should be given to reissuing popular Welsh language books or 'classics' from the past, and updating them as part of a specific genre or series in order to create a market with a strong indigenous brand that continues from one generation to the next. In order to ensure readers for these books, a suitable adaptation strategy would need to be drawn up for each text (in terms of language and style, content and format). Consideration should also be given to including translations of international 'classics' that are no longer available in Welsh (e.g. *Pippi Longstocking*) amongst these reissues.

7: The nature and purpose of bilingual books should be examined further and more flexible and creative use of both languages should be encouraged in order to give priority to assisting children and adults to read and understand the Welsh text.

8: Translating books for children and young adults into Welsh should be recognised as a specialised skill, and priority given to translation schemes that will provide a rich reading experience for the Welsh language reader. Furthermore, support should be given to translation schemes that expand and enrich the provision available in Welsh or offer an alternative reading experience in Welsh.

9: It should be ensured that the nature of each translation is suitable for the purposes of the book concerned. If the intention of the book is to appeal to readers who are less confident in Welsh, then that must be reflected in the linguistic content. Similarly, if the intention is to extend fluent readers, then titles should be found that are less familiar (from English and other languages) in order to provide them with a completely new and challenging reading experience. The Welsh Books Council should collaborate with the Wales Literature Exchange in order to identify opportunities to adapt international works.

10: The Welsh Books Council should not fund a greater number of translations than original books each year.

11: The Welsh Books Council should collaborate with external partners including publishers, Literature Wales, media, the Urdd and the National Eisteddfod to develop activities to stimulate ideas and mentor authors.

12: The Welsh Books Council should lead a discussion on the language and style of Welsh language books for a range of age groups and abilities and ensure that its publishing programme includes books on appropriate, clear and differentiated linguistic levels, in order to appeal to readers with a variety of needs.

### **BOOK PROMOTION**

13: A specific effort should be made to engage with parents in order to emphasise the importance of reading at home, supporting them to be part of their children's reading experience by co-ordinating online resources that are bilingual, lively and engaging to complement original publications, and working with schools to share information about books.

14: The Welsh Books Council should cooperate further with **Welsh Libraries** to offer readers clear paths from one book to another.

15: a) The Welsh Books Council should urge the Welsh Government to increase the training given to **teachers** (as part of their initial training, and professional development thereafter) with regard to reading for pleasure in Welsh and to create a resource that will allow teachers to share information, reviews and recommendations about books (i.e. on the Hub).

b) The Welsh Books Council should provide advice and information to support this training by pursuing sponsorship to further develop the Council's Schools' Service.

16: Local **bookshops** should continue to be supported, particularly in their efforts to increase their use of the internet and social media, and to hold events in schools and the community. At the same time, a broader range of ways to view and purchase books needs to be expanded in order to reach new buyers.

17: A dedicated **website** for children's books should be created, with a sub-section for young adults' books (along with specific pages for teachers and parents) so that readers are able to search for books and gain access to a variety of related content including reviews, video clips and the latest news about books and authors.

18: The possibility of establishing a **reading club** for children and young adults should be explored, where such a club could create a strong feeling of belonging as well as membership rewards (i.e. book discounts, free products) but where there would be no administrative demands on any individual school.

19: Instead of developing a full catalogue of all publications, a **Reading Guide** resource should be compiled detailing a specific selection of publications for children and young people. This resource would recommend books, rather than list them, and be a helpful guide for readers, parents, librarians and teachers.

20: The circle of people who read children's books regularly should be expanded and used to create a network of advice sessions on books.

21: The Welsh Books Council should work closely with S4C and BBC Radio Cymru to increase **mass media** support for reading. With regard to print media, the Council should work with *Golwg*, *Urdd* magazines, local papers ('*papurau bro*') and so on in order to gain greater publicity for children and young adults' books. The Council should also work with media partners to develop platforms to sharing and creating literary and creative content, and giving a central role to children and young adults' voices.

22: The Welsh Books Council should hold **regular conferences** (with supplementary on-line and social media content) which would give people from all sectors involved in children's books an opportunity to network and develop new skills and ideas.

23: A **Children's Books Strategy** should be drawn up that confidently affirms the Welsh Books Council's leading role in the field of Welsh language books for children and young adults. The strategy will declare the Council's support for maintaining a viable children's books publishing industry that

- supports initiative and innovation
- recognises and acknowledges the specialist skill of authors, illustrators and editors of children and young adults' books
- offers an appropriate balance of original material and adaptations
- produces varied material, which is attractive and accessible in both content and language, for a wide range of readers from every background
- prepares resources to enrich the knowledge of adults (e.g. parents, teachers and librarians) about children's books and inspires their enthusiasm and support)
- leads co-operation with external partners to promote reading and creativity on multimedia platforms and making books a more visible part of the wider culture of children and young people.

# THE GRANTS SYSTEM

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## **AUTHORS' REMUNERATION**

Books for children and young adults are supported in two ways. Publishers are offered Programme Grants and Individual Book Grants in order to produce books. This allows publishers to offer a range of titles for publication, and the freedom to manage that range in order to respond to demand. In addition to this, authors are also offered support through Author Grant Schemes (A) and (B).

However, the terms of these grants are not sufficient to provide appropriate remuneration for authors to produce original, substantial books in Welsh, or skilful Welsh translations of major international novels (especially for ages 12+).

Over the past few years several authors have publicly expressed their dissatisfaction about the money they receive. Those concerns were reinforced by evidence gathered as part of this Survey, as many participants believe that the lack of warranted remuneration for authors and the conditions attached to current grants have a negative impact on both the quantity and substance of the original publications available.

This Survey found that changes to the Welsh Books Council grants systems could create more favourable conditions that would encourage publishers to attract authors to write ambitious books in Welsh.

The Author's Grant (A) provides more substantial remuneration for authors (£5,000-12,000), but the grant's conditions currently state that adult books take precedence: "The emphasis of the scheme is on books for adults, but not limited to books for adults. Publishers may submit an application under Scheme A to commission a short series of smaller titles by the same author, and that could be suitable to commission books for children or young people." Although this statement does not preclude the opportunity to invest in books for children and young adults, it does not create an environment that places adequate value on producing original, challenging material for young people in Welsh. The Author's Grant (B) scheme offers up to £3,000 to authors, and is seen as a way of nurturing new writers. The grant's conditions do not state that adult books should be given priority, but the wording could be strengthened to encourage publishers to use this grant to develop new writing talent for young readers.

Consideration should also be given to ways of facilitating illustrators and writers to collaborate on more projects. Some beautifully illustrated original titles have been published recently, but developing regular projects and maintaining high standards of design across the publishing programme should be a requirement. Establishing a conference and network for authors and

illustrators (see Book Promotion) would encourage greater collaboration between authors, illustrators and publishers.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: The Welsh Books Council should review the grants system (and amend the conditions of the Author's Grant (A and B) scheme) in order to create more favourable conditions to encourage publishers to submit more applications for original children's publications, books for older age groups and joint projects between authors and illustrators.**

### **MARKETING NEW BOOKS**

In rationalising the grants system, the requirements on publishers to promote those books funded by the Welsh Books Council should also be reviewed, as well as the support they can expect to receive from the Council. Expected support and requirements are currently unclear. For example, publishers are expected to 'undertake and carry the costs of basic marketing' for titles funded under the Programme Grant and the Individual Books Grant, but the meaning of 'basic marketing' is not clarified. The meaning of 'basic marketing' should be more clearly defined (with particular regard to the latest digital methods) and made a condition of all grants awarded. It is suggested that this 'basic marketing' could include a review by a reader from the appropriate target age group (written and/or video clip) and a short description that maps the book onto curriculum requirements for teachers.

When responding to this Survey, several participants reported a situation where books are published without hardly anyone noticing. There are exceptions to this, of course, and there was praise for some publishers' presence on social media in particular - although those media target adults mainly. Activities aimed at the target readers themselves attracted the greatest praise from participants - school visits, inviting children to review books and creating video clips and so on. These activities are beneficial on many levels - raising awareness of the book, promoting reading in general, enriching children's educational experiences and awareness of the place of the Welsh language outside the classroom.

The Welsh Books Council already acknowledges the additional financial demands involved in organising and conducting activities that go beyond 'basic marketing' by offering Marketing Grants. But only a minority of publishers take advantage of this opportunity to promote children's books, partly because additional requirements arise when attempting to work with young audiences. The Council should encourage more publishers, particularly those who are inexperienced in the area of marketing children's books, to apply for this funding by providing guidance summarising 'Good Practice' on the following: how to engage with children through schools, youth groups such as the Urdd and Young Farmers and so on; how to reach diverse audiences (in terms of geographical and linguistic background); and how to work with local and national organisations (libraries, museums, galleries etc.) that could offer locations with a meaningful connection with the theme of the book in question. Every marketing campaign



should also connect with a digital resource that can be shared on various platforms to reach as wide an audience as possible. As with other aspects discussed in this Report, a culture must be fostered that gives children the opportunity to be exposed to a wider range of Welsh language books. New book marketing campaigns is one medium that could be capitalised further.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: In order to coordinate new books’ marketing campaigns more effectively, the Welsh Books Council should define ‘basic marketing’ of funded children and young adult titles in greater detail. Separate guidelines for publishers should also be drawn up to accompany the Marketing Grant suggesting ideas and support with regard to engaging young audiences.**

“The general impression I have of the children and young people’s book industry here in Wales is that a large investment is made in commissioning and publishing a wide range of books each year, but unfortunately, there is no corresponding investment in marketing and promoting those books. That is, there has been a reduction in promotion in order to protect publications. Unfortunately, books on shelves are not able to sell themselves. More investment is needed in promotion and marketing.”

*Online Survey (2016–17)*

## AGE GROUPS

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There is no definitive method of classifying readers into age groups. However, the classification in Welsh Books Council publications and documentation (namely Gwales, a comprehensive online catalogue of books in Wales) and the Children's Books Catalogue (an annual list of current publications) does vary, and a large number of children's books listed on Gwales have no reference at all to any age group.

The method below is suggested for designating readers' age range. This classification is based on the 'Progression Steps' in the Donaldson Report, the Libraries Wales classification (on web pages 'Who's next...?') and the practice of children's books organisations in other countries:

0-4	Early years
5-7	First Readers
8-11	Younger Readers
12-14	Older Readers
14+	Young Adult

These age groups should be used to assist children, parents, booksellers, librarians and teachers and parents to search, find and display available provision. A number of contributors to the Survey wanted to see the appropriate age range displayed on marketing material, on Gwales and in bookshops. But no convincing argument was made for displaying age ranges directly on book covers. Although it was felt that such a marker would be advantageous to booksellers and parents in particular, librarians and those promoting children's books from day to day believed strongly that it would not benefit the readers themselves, as it could undermine their confidence. Every reader has different requirements, and there is a need to have booksellers, librarians and teachers available who can advise each individual when selecting a book suited to them. Achieving consistency in the age groups will be one way of facilitating that advisory work.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: References to target age groups should be harmonised across the Welsh Books Council's publications and documentation. Target age groups should also be included on the entries for all titles on Gwales and the proposed children's books website, as well as facilitating browsing by age group.**

# THE PUBLISHING PROGRAMME

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Contributors to the Survey were agreed on one aspect, namely what they would like to see in Welsh language titles for children and young people: appealing content that is well-written and presented between attractive covers. Basic ingredients, but ones which require substantial investment and a concerted effort if more such books are to be created in Welsh.

71% of respondents to the Welsh language questionnaire agreed with a statement that there was a wide selection of attractive books available for children under 12 years old. 42% agreed with the same statement in the English language questionnaire, with a higher percentage neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This is indicative of the insufficient connection between a number of non-Welsh speakers and the Welsh language book market that will be discussed below. The variety and volume of titles were commended, particularly those for young children, as was the recent improvement in standards of layout and format. Conversely, respondents noted that there was still room to improve the quality of book covers, greater consistency was needed in the standard of translations and more original books should be published. It was felt that there was a lack of variety in terms of genre and perspective (i.e. scenarios and world views in Welsh language books were too similar to each other).

More specifically, contributors were asked to express an opinion on the number of children's books for different age groups:

## **0-4 Early Years**

60% felt there was an adequate number of books available for this age group. 13% believed there were too many titles, with a substantial number of librarians and booksellers in this percentage. This was supported by comments stating that it was difficult to give adequate attention to so many new books on shelves in shops and that too many similar titles were competing with each other.

## **5-7 First Readers**

Again, 62% were satisfied that an adequate number of books were available, with a much smaller percentage believing that too many titles were being published (2%). A number of parents in particular stated that they were dissatisfied with 'reading scheme' books for this age group (not funded by Welsh Books Council grants) and that this had a negative effect on their perception of Welsh language books in general. There is room for closer cooperation between the Welsh Books Council and the Welsh Government Education Department and Education Consortia in order to ensure the quality of these titles.

## **8-11 Younger Readers**

The situation is completely different with regard to this age group, with 63% stating that not enough books were available. This was endorsed by comments from teachers and parents who said that readers turned increasingly to English language books after developing as independent readers (about year 3 onwards). Interestingly, 75% of publishers believed that an adequate number of books were available for this age group. This reflects the recent appearance of a number of adaptations of attractive series with strong brands for this age group (e.g. *Pump Prysur*, *Twm Clwyd*) as well as a number of original

series (e.g. *Swigod, Na, Nell!*). Again, most respondents perceived that these were insufficient to meet the demand, and a number of young readers expressed frustration that the choice for them was limited and that enthusiastic readers could read through the whole lot in a short time. A number called for series where the reader could follow a character from one book to another. Another factor affecting young readers' perceptions was that a substantial number of them did not come into contact with a wide choice because of limitations on the available range of books in the home, school, local shop and/or library and because Welsh language books do not have a prominent place in their surrounding environment (on the media or on the internet). A much more favourable impression could be made of the available material if a more accessible website than Gwales were available, to search for books and provide interesting information about them (see Book Promotion).

### **12+ Older Readers**

75% of respondents believed that not enough Welsh language books are available for young people in their teens. Comments supporting this statement were received from representatives of all sectors, with pupils being the most earnest in their comments. Even amongst the secondary school pupils who came into contact with a very wide variety of books (due to a school reading scheme), there was a strong feeling of there being insufficient content available relevant to their own lives and that the literary style of many of the books was not appealing and accessible (see Language and Style).

Formerly popular series have been discontinued (e.g. Pen Dafad, Mellt) and the number of new titles for this age group has recently decreased. A number of publishers expressed their wish to create material for these readers, but lack of financial support for book production was an obvious stumbling block. There is a reliance primarily on support from the Welsh Government Education Department, which commissions fiction for teenagers from time to time in order to fill gaps in provision identified by the Department's advisors. This Survey found that there is an opportunity for the Welsh Books Council to lead in this area, and to be recognised as the organisation providing the opportunity and freedom to create exciting and challenging fiction for these age groups. Although some questioned the need for 'young adult fiction' since the 13 year old reader can turn to novels intended for adults, having listened to young people's opinions it is clear that they are eager to have Welsh language novels that get to grips with their experiences. They call for more complex and challenging stories, not necessarily on 'dark' themes but full of energy, humour and imagination and in accessible language. "People of our age are trying to find ourselves and understand ourselves" as one participant said, and called for Welsh language stories to reflect and recognise that. Another said they "[would like to see] books that treat young people as they would like to be treated – as clever and creative citizens that are developing and expanding their world view every day."

Furthermore, it's possible to grow a specific market for these books because they can appeal to readers of all ages. There was mention of the crossover potential of some novels in the past e.g. *Adref Heb Elin* by Gareth F Williams (2006) and *Naw Mis* by Caryl Lewis (2009). But as yet there has been no specific campaign to create and maintain a market for Welsh language novels to appeal to the Young Adult fiction audience that is such a substantial part of the international book market, and which often links printed books with digital media (e.g. *Girl Online* by the online authoress, Zoella (2014)).

**RECOMMENDATION 4: The Welsh Books Council should encourage publishers to produce more books for 8+ readers and reduce titles for early years. The number of original fiction books for children 8–11 years and 12+ should be increased (which should include series with strong branding) as well as non-fiction books on contemporary topics.**

**RECOMMENDATION 5: It should be ensured that the background, scenarios and characters in books for children and young adults reflect the wide range of experiences of young people in Wales today.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Consideration should be given to reissuing popular Welsh language books or 'classics' from the past, and updating them as part of a specific genre or series in order to create a market with a strong indigenous brand that continues from one generation to the next. In order to ensure readers for these books, a suitable adaptation strategy would need to be drawn up for each text (in terms of language and style, content and format). Consideration should also be given to including translations of international 'classics' that are no longer available in Welsh (e.g. *Pippi Longstocking*) amongst these reissues.**

The current situation:

"Bilingual children seem drawn to popular English titles after about age 7. Welsh books are not seen as cool or trendy, something they only do in school."

"After Year 2, children undoubtedly prefer to choose English Language books – often because they appear more exciting."

"At every parents evening for over 10 years my children have been encouraged by teachers to read more Welsh, but even my total bookworm of a child just could not and cannot find anything of interest to read in Welsh – books on offer are often inaccessible due to over-complex and old fashioned language; or are overly worthy or dark; or are patronising and obviously 'teen' books about footballers or pop stars; or are a translation of a book that they could get hold of and read much more easily in English. The result is that my bookworm child reads the readily available English language books. Translating books into Welsh from other languages is valuable for some 'big titles' (like Harry Potter) – but books are really best appreciated and read in the language they were written in where possible. What we really need are many 'must-read' exciting series of children's and young-adult books devised and written in accessible Welsh."

What would you like to see in Welsh?

"Novels for young people; non-fiction books for children aged 6-10; digital books for children for iPad etc.; books for girls that are not pink, about horses or princesses and full of glitter! More stories/tales from around the world, but not in a compilation – those are attractive to parents, but not to children (too heavy, difficult to handle, and also expensive). More series to encourage children to want to call in again to a book shop to buy another part of the series."

"Contemporary books that set a challenge to the more able and talented but are still within their world."

"Really interesting, exciting stories with accessible language."

*Online Survey (2016–17)*

## **BILINGUAL BOOKS**

Although bilingual books was not one of the fields investigated by this Survey the subject did come up in discussions, particularly with parents, booksellers and book promoters. The number of bilingual books has increased recently and varies from word and picture books to illustrated storybooks. All are aimed at early years children, and are primarily used in families with mixed languages and non-Welsh speaking households, as a way of enabling non-Welsh speaking parents to share the reading experience with their children. It is also assumed that these books are used in the context of learning Welsh as a second language. The Survey revealed a demand for such titles in bookshops and from non-Welsh speaking participants or Welsh learners. However, the Welsh Books Council should ask publishers to explain the nature and purpose of the use of bilingualism, and demonstrate how they are going to ensure that both languages are presented skilfully, without interfering with layout and design. In addition, it should be considered whether a more flexible and creative attitude towards bilingualism would be more useful for non-Welsh speaking parents or those learning the language. (e.g. assistance in how to pronounce words and phrases in Welsh; having the main Welsh text in language that a 5-7 year old child can read aloud together with a separate English sub-text that the parent can read, which strengthens and extends both the child and parent's understanding of the main text). It could be possible to collaborate with providers of books for language learners, to find new and useful ways of combining both languages.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: The nature and purpose of bilingual books should be examined further and more flexible and creative use of both languages should be encouraged in order to give priority to assisting children and adults to read and understand the Welsh text.**

# TRANSLATION

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The translation of children's books into Welsh has probably received more attention than any other aspect of children's publishing in recent years. Considering the socio-linguistic situation of the Welsh language, such a situation should not be entirely unexpected. The arguments in favour and against publishing translations are passionate and polarised and reflect the complex, unequal relationship between minority and dominant languages in bilingual contexts. On the one hand, the majority language is attractive to the minority language speaker and offers access to worldwide culture. On the other hand, the instinct to abstain from that language is strong amongst those who wish to establish and protect cultural separateness. Furthermore, there is a clear perception that translation restricts the resources available to support original books and is therefore a threat to the indigenous publishing industry.

One of the core fields of this Survey was to look at these arguments, their source and their implications in order to assist the Welsh Books Council to define its stand on the translation of children's books and incorporate appropriate points for action.

Translation has always been an integral part of the Welsh language publishing industry for children, as it has been in the development of literary traditions world-wide. Translation has been used throughout the centuries to meet specific and varied requirements: to fill gaps in provision, to obtain material rapidly, to set a pattern for original authors to follow, to have the best of world literature available in Welsh, to extend the reader's world view, and to introduce new ideas and experiences. Furthermore, in a multimedia, multilingual world, translation is more important than ever. It is an activity that fosters relationships and understanding between world cultures. Indeed, the English language publishing industry is the exception, translating as little as 3% of children's books from other languages. The rest of the world translates as a matter of necessity.

It should therefore be understood that the arguments commonly expressed regarding Welsh language books for children do not challenge 'translation' as such, and opportunities to seek inspiration beyond the boundaries of the Welsh language should be robustly defended. Most of the contributors from all sectors supported translation:

68%	agreed strongly/agreed to some extent with the statement that it was important to adapt a variety of popular books from English.
76%	agreed strongly/agreed to some extent with the statement that adaptations attract readers.

Of the unstructured comments received regarding translation, 64% expressed support and 30% expressed opposition. Respondents referred to the advantages of translation, such as attracting readers who would not otherwise read Welsh language material, the standard and quality of

format and design, and the marketing advantages linked to recognised brands. This is supported by sales figures.

**Average annual sales between 2008 and 2014:**

Adaptations	64,358
Original books	22,854

**Number of books published annually, average between 2008 and 2014:**

Adaptations	68
Original books	29

However, the main disadvantage noted was the negative effect that the recent emphasis on translation had on the ability of the book industry to develop its own authors. Only a minority feel that translation is completely unnecessary, but it must be acknowledged that a substantial number of respondents who supported translation also expressed concerns about its effect on the market. Of the 64% who were in favour of translation, 45% believed a better balance was needed between translations and original books. Support for the translation of children's books is therefore conditional on a strong desire to see greater investment in producing and promoting original books. This is reinforced by the fact that 88% of respondents stated that they agreed strongly/agreed to some extent with the statement that more original books than adaptations should be published. The view therefore is that adaptations are needed, but that they should not be more numerous than original books.

This response highlights support for the basic principle that a Welsh language book market is desired that has its own character and identity. But it is also a response to the sheer volume of translations seen on bookshelves in recent years. Since 2008, the Welsh Books Council has funded an average of 97 books annually, with an average of 70% of those each year being translations. This undoubtedly is at the root of so many recent discussions on translation and the claims that 'too many' children's books are translations (e.g. *Dan yr Wyneb*, BBC Radio Cymru, 16.6.2014).

There is a clear demand for a change in the balance in favour of original publications, and that demand was also made by non-Welsh speaking respondents. The majority of respondents to the English language questionnaire were also of the view that there was a need to translate popular material from English, but that more original books than adaptations should be produced. In addition, in individual interviews, the majority of parents admitted that they chose to buy translations for their children because they trusted the story and brand, and did not have sufficient knowledge about Welsh language books to venture buying them. All noted that they would be prepared to buy original Welsh language books if they received specific recommendations for their children's age groups.



Young readers' responses were also supportive of translations, provided that there is a greater choice of original books than translations. But their comments also highlight that the number of translations is not the only cause of dissatisfaction. After comparing responses from different parts of Wales and readers from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, it is clear that it cannot be taken for granted that translations for independent readers will be welcomed or enjoyed by everyone (respondents were aged between 10 and 14 years). In responding to the question whether they like to read books that are also available in English, 54% of respondents to the online questionnaire said 'no'. But when discussing with readers in individual schools the response from three quarters of readers was 'yes' or 'yes sometimes'. It became obvious that the influence of the public debate on translations was affecting some readers' perceptions, particularly in secondary schools, and that they were very aware of the cultural and political context. In general, the majority of respondents based their view on personal reading experiences. The response of young readers can be summarised as follows:

- A substantial number of readers welcome translations because they enjoy reliving the same story in a new form (similar to watching a film after reading a book), particularly in the 8–11 age group.
- In contrast, about the same number of readers do not see the purpose of reading the same story again in translation, and this is more pronounced for older age groups.
- Readers have a positive relationship with translations they read in Welsh first where there is no element of comparison with the original English text e.g. *Smot*, *Tudur Budr*.
- A number of readers who are less confident in Welsh see reading a translation of a familiar book as a good way of improving their language skills (this is also true of readers who are less confident in English).
- Readers have high expectations that translations will be as good as the original texts. They are discouraged by translations that are too complex in their use of language or are unable to express the atmosphere and energy of the original text.

#### **The European Context: the Basque Country and Ireland**

There is variation in the practice of publishing translations for children in other minority languages. In the Basque Country, there is a broadminded attitude towards translation. The decision on whether to offer public money to support a title depends on the strengths of the book concerned, not whether or not it is an original title. In 2015, 79% of children's books in the Basque language were translations and joint publications with other Iberian languages. But it should be noted that translation in the Basque Country offers access for young readers to literature in a multitude of languages, as books are translated from Spanish, French, English, German and Italian (together with some lesser used languages). Also, although translations are more numerous, original books have higher status, and are promoted prominently within the education system (Zubillaga, 2017, p.4). The books translated into Welsh, however, are completely reliant on one source language, namely English. Only one Welsh publisher translates books from other languages. The findings of this Survey suggest that it is this reliance that leads to the perception that translation is harmful to the Welsh language book industry. It appears, to some, to be a reflection of a culture that our young readers can already access through the medium of English.

On the other hand, public bodies in Ireland have only recently started funding translations from English – before 2015 the only original volumes were funded together with occasional translations from languages other than English. But despite the policy change, the number of translations that publishers can offer is limited by their publication programme to 10%. On the whole, there has been a good response to recent translations of popular novels (such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Horrid Henry*) and a high level of sales achieved – but there are strong demands to look again at this policy due to concerns that a number of the translations are too difficult for readers (particularly those with Irish as a second language) and that it undermines original books. Participants in the Survey from Ireland said that translations were appealing and were bought by parents who could not read Irish, but that the reading experience was disappointing for a number of readers who were not fluent in the language.

Although translated children's books have their place and their advantages, and are generally supported, the findings of this Survey show that there is a need to acknowledge and tackle these two main factors:

1. The quality of translations and their sources

**RECOMMENDATION 8: Translating books for children and young adults into Welsh should be recognised as a specialised skill, and priority given to translation schemes that will provide a rich reading experience for the Welsh language reader.**

**Furthermore, support should be given to translation schemes that expand and enrich the provision available in Welsh or offer an alternative reading experience in Welsh**

**RECOMMENDATION 9: It should be ensured that the nature of each translation is suitable for the purposes of the book concerned. If the intention of the book is to appeal to readers who are less confident in Welsh, then that must be reflected in the linguistic content. Similarly, if the intention is to extend fluent readers, then titles should be found that are less familiar (from English and other languages) in order to provide them with a completely new and challenging reading experience. The Welsh Books Council should collaborate with the Wales Literature Exchange in order to identify opportunities to adapt international works.**

2. The balance between original books and translations

**RECOMMENDATION 10: The Welsh Books Council should not fund a greater number of translations than original books each year.**

"I believe strongly that a balance of books is needed. *Dyddiadur Dripsynd* transformed the desire of pupils in my class to read books in Welsh."

"English novels can be read in the original form. It's a waste of time and energy in my view to adapt them. A number of those working on adaptations are people who could be commissioned to write original books, together with other authors."

"They attract children who would not as a rule be reading in Welsh. What is unfortunate is there is no stage then to lead children towards similar original books e.g. "You like *Horrid Henry*, what about these original ones?"

"Obviously, it's better that a young person reads Welsh language translations of one of David Walliams' books than not read in Welsh at all but it is heart breaking that money is going towards translating English books instead of producing original books in Welsh and developing young and exciting new authors."

"Adaptations from English will obviously sell more, because of the familiar names, Dahl, Walliams and so on BUT in my view they are more likely to lead children who read in Welsh already towards books in English by these authors – the original will always be better than the adaptation. It's good to have them here as an option but they should not be given as much financial support as original books. Children need to have books that are available only in Welsh – popular series like *Na Nel*, *Alun Arth*, *Rwdlan*. Similar things are needed for older children, ones that are simple but good and keep children in the world of reading in Welsh. At ages 9-11 children who are bilingual and enjoy reading often stop reading in Welsh – there is a need for ORIGINAL SERIES that can be read one after the other."

"The standard of the adaptation is important and the right kind of author must be attracted for this, and sometimes the choice is unsuitable. There are also concerns about the standard of editing. My children have noticed a number of times where there are typos and defects in the names of characters and places in a number of prominent adaptations...The impression is that there is not enough investment in this field, and that it is then seen as a "cheap and easy" method. Mistakes can make children reject adaptations and turn to the original English."

"Crafting a good adaptation is a skill and it should be recognised. I am fed up of the unfair criticism that adaptations are second rate compared to original books. There should be investment in good adaptations of a high standard."

*Online Survey (2016–17)*

## DEVELOPING AUTHORS

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It should be acknowledged that substantial investment and a long term plan are required to make the Welsh language book industry for children and young adults less dependent on translations. There will be a need to collaborate with publishers and external partners in order to provide opportunities to develop authors' ideas and talent. Working jointly with Literature Wales, the Urdd, National Eisteddfod and the media (amongst others) activities should be developed to inspire ideas (e.g. creative workshops, writing competitions) that convert into specific publishing projects. Stakeholders and creative individuals should be identified that have the appropriate creativity and experience of the book market in Welsh, English and internationally to both inspire and mentor authors.

**RECOMMENDATION 11: The Welsh Books Council should collaborate with external partners including publishers, Literature Wales, S4C, BBC Cymru, the Urdd and the National Eisteddfod to develop activities to stimulate ideas and mentor authors.**

"[I would like to see] a plan to develop and mentor children's authors – I'm glad that young authors are encouraged to write volumes for children and young people. But there is a need to nurture authors and offer opportunities also for authors of all ages and backgrounds and from all parts of Wales."

"There is a need for suitable investment in our authors to make it financially worthwhile for them to produce original titles and through that to ensure status for this field."

"In view of the serious cuts it's important to support the publication of original books in Welsh for children and young people. But there is a need to raise the standard. Venture to publish new, exciting authors and earmark more money to publish books for young people."

*Online Survey (2016–17)*

## LANGUAGE AND STYLE

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When asked about their general opinions on Welsh language books for children and young people, the number of striking comments made by participants regarding language and style was striking. Although no specific question on the subject was asked in the questionnaire, language ('difficult', 'complex' or 'dialectal') was the most notable factor mentioned by the majority of contributors as the main barrier to young readers reading Welsh books.

50% of the teachers responding to the questionnaire said that the linguistic content of Welsh language books was one of the main barriers to readers, with one in two stating that dialect was the main barrier. Many teachers in south Wales felt that the dialect of too many books was too northern and that many of their pupils found the dialect too difficult for them.

Debates about dialect in children's books is not a recent phenomenon. For example, it was the cause of a public disagreement between the notable literary figures Kate Roberts and Iorwerth Peate in *Y Llenor* in 1931. Kate Roberts did not consider it possible to create natural and meaningful dialogue without dialect. But Iorwerth Peate felt that writing in a colloquial orthography was 'a slack and incorrect style of writing', and warned against using this practice to make the work easier for readers in other parts of Wales. No one familiar with *Sioned* (1906) or *Un Nos Ola Leuad* (1961) would doubt the rich and compelling potential of dialect in literary prose, and whilst many complain about dialect in children's books, others are strongly in favour of its use. Furthermore, although many children of secondary school age complained about dialect, it became apparent in discussions that dialect is not the main problem *per se*. Rather, contributors were of the opinion that not enough novels for their age group managed to create credible natural speech for the characters. Some stated that too many authors try to imitate the language of young people without properly understanding the phraseology and use colloquial vocabulary or slang in order to sound contemporary. However readers could sense this immediately, "We don't talk like that!" said one respondent. Rather than using dialect as a way of making a book more accessible and appealing, we must recognise that reading a text written entirely in dialect, where the sounds of that dialect are represented in the orthography, requires extended linguistic skills on the part of the reader. Readers/teachers/parents should be informed that these types of novels are better suited to 'more able and talented' readers (unless they are familiar with that dialect).

As well as dialect, respondents also commented that the language and style of many books was too 'difficult' and/or too 'literary'. Some children stated that 'words are difficult to understand', 'the language is too complex' and that the style of Welsh books was 'too descriptive', and that reading Welsh books was 'more difficult' than reading English books. Insightful comments were made by some enthusiastic readers in the focus groups that the style of many Welsh books appears to be laboured, and called for a more direct writing style, with more humour.

Therefore, although many pupils considered reading to be something to do in order to relax (especially before sleeping) and to escape to another world (realistic or magical), the majority of them did not *choose* to read a Welsh book to relax in their spare time. They mainly equated reading Welsh books with schoolwork. This is confirmed by the responses of teachers to the questionnaire. 62% stated that only a minority of their pupils chose to read Welsh books independently (i.e. beyond the books set by the teacher).

There are examples of powerful, clear and vivid writing for children in Welsh, and many of our contemporary authors were praised by both children and adult respondents to the Survey. There is evidence of detailed editing work on a significant number of titles, but readers' confidence is undermined if the phraseology is not sufficiently accessible. This does not imply that there is a desire to see simplified, dull and lacklustre language. On the contrary, it means that a more detailed process is required to scrutinise the techniques used by authors/editors in order to ensure that books with a range of varied linguistic levels are produced. By being more explicit about the linguistic content of the books, it would be possible to better identify the intended target readers of the titles produced. The Welsh Books Council should lead a discussion on the language and style of Welsh language children's books (and could benefit from the experience of working on the 'Stori Sydyn' campaign to encourage more adults to read), ensuring that every book funded by them is written or translated in an appropriate style, thus ensuring that a wide range of books, from the elementary to the challenging, are produced.

**RECOMMENDATION 12: The Welsh Books Council should lead a discussion on the language and style of Welsh language books for a range of age groups and abilities and ensure that its publishing programme includes books on appropriate, clear and differentiated linguistic levels, in order to appeal to readers with a variety of needs.**

"There is too much northern dialect which alienates many of the children in the south, especially those from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds. The language needs to be simplified."

"The dialect is also a problem with Welsh books as the translations are often more difficult than the original and the children lose their confidence and fun!"

"One clear difficulty is that the language is too complex for the target audience (the opinion of my 10 year old daughter whose first language is Welsh)."

*On-line Survey (2016–17)*

# BOOK PROMOTION

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To further develop the market for Welsh books for children and young adults, reach new readers and customers, and ensure that the Welsh Books Council is able to attain the objectives outlined in its Child Poverty Strategy (2016) to ‘disseminate information about reading materials to a variety of audiences’ and to ‘contribute towards family inclusion in order to ensure the necessary support for children and young people’, it must undertake a co-ordinated promotion campaign that encompasses the home, school and public domain.

## 1. THE HOME

The home environment is vital in nurturing a positive attitude and a love for reading, and parents have an important role in guiding, recommending and supporting their children to read for pleasure. This Survey shows that most parents who responded felt that greater attention should be paid to children’s books. The information available to parents is sporadic and intermittent, with some parents receiving the ‘Festive/Summer Reads’ leaflets through schools or local papers, and others by visiting Welsh bookshops and/or the library with their children. Therefore the connection with Welsh language books depends on geographical area (i.e. is there a local Welsh language bookshop nearby) and social networks. However, additional information on those books is limited even in the case of those familiar with Welsh publishing due to the lack of discussion, reviews and book recommendations. Therefore a large amount of Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking parents find it difficult to know which books to buy for their children. This leads many to buy mainly translations.

Furthermore, non-Welsh speaking parents in particular feel that they do not have the necessary knowledge of Welsh literature to support their children when reading at home. Many of them, naturally perhaps, called for more bilingual books to assist them in this regard, so that they are able to discuss characters and themes with their children. However, it is felt that bilingual information about books, rather than bilingual books, is most suitable for parents with children who are independent readers.

Research based on Welsh reading tests show that children at 11 years old from Welsh-English and English only language backgrounds ‘read less accurately and comprehended less aspects of the texts’ than children whose main language is Welsh (Rhys and Thomas, 2013, p.648). One of the reasons why this may be is lack of exposure to the written language outside the classroom and negative perceptions about the appeal of Welsh language books: ‘Children who habitually read English books instead of Welsh outside of school limit their abilities to enhance their knowledge of words and limit their experiences of decoding and transforming letters into sounds in Welsh’ (ibid., p.649). This is true for all children, but is especially so in the case of children who have few opportunities to engage with the spoken language outside the

classroom. 'Increasing engagement with Welsh literature outside school would benefit their Welsh literacy in the long term' (ibid.). It is vital that information about books is not limited to one language group only, and that every home has access to information that will assist in increasing the connection between their children and the Welsh language. A 'note to parents' could be included on the back covers of books referring them to websites which include recommendations i.e. '10 things you could ask your child about this book', and specific recommendations about other books to read.

**RECOMMENDATION 13: A specific effort should be made to engage with parents in order to emphasise the importance of reading at home, supporting them to be part of their children's reading experience by co-ordinating online resources that are bilingual, lively and engaging to complement original publications, and working with schools to share information about books.**

## **2. THE LIBRARY**

To support reading in the home, libraries are unquestionably essential institutions. The success of the 'Summer Reading Challenge', a joint venture between the Reading Agency, the Welsh Government, the Welsh Books Council and Welsh Libraries show that libraries are places that inspire children to enjoy reading. Additionally, the online Resource 'Who's Next...?' leads young readers from one book to another <https://llyfrgelloedd.cymru/whos-next/>, and there is an opportunity for the Council to support the Welsh language content of this resource. But this is a sector which has suffered grievously due to public expenditure cuts over the last few years. Although children's services are fundamental to every local authority's provision, the number of Children's Librarians has decreased substantially over the last few years. Consequently, the number of individuals who have expertise in the area of Welsh language books for children and young adults has also decreased, and supplementary activities by libraries to promote reading (particularly for school age readers) has declined. The Council should cooperate to protect the interests of Welsh libraries in the face of any further cuts.

**RECOMMENDATION 14: The Welsh Books Council should cooperate further with Welsh Libraries to offer readers clear paths from one book to another.**

## **3. THE SCHOOL**

The Welsh Books Council has already recognised the 'need to raise awareness about children's books amongst teachers... and the importance of leisure reading to support the requirements of the Literacy Strategy' (Operational Plan 2017-18, p. 14). 96% of teachers who contributed to the Survey agreed that 'nurturing reading for pleasure' is a priority for them, but 76% 'found it difficult to find enough time to nurture reading for pleasure in the classroom'. In further discussions, it became apparent that the information teachers have about books varied greatly between individuals. The Council's schools officers offer a vital and valuable service by visiting



primary and secondary schools nationwide. But there are limits on what these 3 individuals can achieve. The Welsh Government should be urged to increase financial support for this scheme which will improve engagement between schools and the Council, recognise the purpose and value of the service to teachers, and increase the number of schools who benefit from this service. In the context of the Donaldson Report and the importance placed on reading for pleasure as one of the main methods of developing skills and confidence in Welsh and creating a bilingual workforce for the future, it is vital to support teachers in more practical ways by providing useful information on the content of books and their suitability for a variety of curricular requirements. There is a responsibility on the Education Department, Estyn, the Education Consortia and institutions that provide support for teachers to co-operate with the Welsh Books Council to encourage teachers' interest in books from the beginning of their careers and throughout their professional development, and to establish a resource for teachers to share information, reviews and recommendations.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 15:**

**a) The Welsh Books Council should urge the Welsh Government to increase the training given to teachers (as part of their initial training, and professional development thereafter) with regard to reading for pleasure in Welsh and to create a resource that will allow teachers to share information, reviews and recommendations about books (i.e. on the Hub).**

**b) The Welsh Books Council should provide advice and information to support this training by pursuing sponsorship to further develop the Council's Schools' Service.**

#### **4. BUYING BOOKS**

This Survey demonstrates that Bookshops are still a vital focal point for buying Welsh books and learning about available titles. There was particular praise for shops that offer advice and book recommendations, and those that allocate appropriate space to display books (and displayed covers as opposed to spines), and that are welcoming places for children. Most Survey respondents acquired their information on new Welsh books for children and young adults by visiting bookshops. Partnerships between shops and schools to run bookstalls and arrange author visits were also praised. However, over half the children/young people who participated noted that they had 'never been' to a Welsh bookshop, and a similar number noted that 'nobody' bought them Welsh books. Most respondents were of secondary school age, and some comments stated that bookshops were not viewed as places that tried to attract this age group.

These responses reflect the need to make the market easier for buyers by increasing the connection between children and their parents and Welsh language books. Since bookshops are not readily available in all areas of the country, more must be done on the internet and social media to reach audiences. Respondents of all ages wanted to see more use of Facebook (81%) and Twitter (65%) to promote books: only a small number were aware of the brand

@LlyfrDaFabBooks (The Welsh Books Council's Children's Books Department). Furthermore, more opportunities are needed to buy books nationwide, offering discounts and giving local shops opportunities to co-operate with schools and other groups to hold book promotion events. E-books were not one of this survey's areas of research, and very few respondents raised the subject in their responses. It appears that print books were the priority for most, but there were calls from respondents of secondary school age in particular, to ensure that Welsh language books are also available digitally.

**RECOMMENDATION 16: Local bookshops should continue to be supported, in particular in their efforts to increase their use of the internet and social media, and to hold events in schools and the community. At the same time, a broader range of ways to view and purchase books needs to be expanded in order to reach new buyers.**

## **5. GENERAL PROMOTION**

The success of campaigns such as BookSlam and the Summer Reading Challenge show that it is still possible to create enthusiasm and excitement about reading. The challenge is to maintain and extend this excitement across reading age groups, in all areas of the country and throughout the year. To facilitate the task of promoting books at home, in libraries, in schools, in shops and in our culture in general, the Welsh Books Council should consider implementing the following, and pursue further funding and collaboration with external partners.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS 17-22:**

**17: CHILDREN'S BOOKS WEBSITE.** The website could exist within Gwales, or independently, but the style and ethos of the interface should engage directly with young readers, with specific pages for 'teachers' and 'parents'. Additionally there would be a section for Young Adults within this website. This website would contain details of all publications and would allow users to search by title, author, series, genre, age and publication date (see, for example, the BookTrust's BookFinder resource). Details of all publications would contain a 'What book next?' section to direct the user to similar titles. Also, the website would contain the latest news about books and authors, reviews by children, interviews with authors (text and video clips), and spoken books (it could be possible to work with publishers and other partners to collect recordings which already exist on various websites and digitise recordings from the past). The existence of such a website could challenge the negative perceptions about the lack of variety and number of Welsh language books, as it would enable easier access to this content than is currently possible on Gwales.

**18: READING CLUB.** The possibility of establishing a **reading club** for children and young adults should be explored, with a strong feeling of belonging as well as membership

rewards (i.e. book discounts, free products) but where there would be no administrative demands on individual schools.

**19: READING GUIDE.** Instead of providing a full catalogue of all publications, a **Reading Guide** resource should be compiled detailing a specific selection of publications for children and young people. This resource would recommend books, rather than list them, and be a helpful guide for readers, parents, librarians and teachers. (For an example of what is possible see INIS Reading Guide, Children's Books Ireland (2015–2016) <http://childrensbooksireland.ie/reading-guide/>)]

**20: SHARING EXPERTISE.** The number of people who read children's books regularly should be increased and used to create a network of advice sessions on books (i.e. in a book fair, leisure centre, festivals, library, bookshop, eisteddfod, similar to Ireland's 'Book Clinics' <http://childrensbooksireland.ie/book-clinics/>).

**21: BOOKS AND THE MEDIA.** The Welsh Books Council should work closely with S4C, Radio Cymru and digital content developers to create multimedia clusters that would allow readers to connect Welsh books with their wider culture. A book does not exist by itself in a vacuum; the most successful books are a part of a multimedia network which extends and expands their appeal. 71% of respondents noted that they wanted to see items about books on radio and television programmes. The recent attention to the Tir Na n'Og awards, which are given to the best children's books from Wales, was praised. However, most of these items were aimed at adults. More could be done to reach younger audiences, e.g. establishing children's panels to shadow the official judges and creating a television show to follow their progress. It could also be possible to base programmes on successful 'BookSlam' competitions (i.e. a book quiz on the radio/television between the teams who reach the final). A large amount of young respondents were enthusiastically in favour of seeing Welsh books as a part of their wider cultural environment on the screen, in games, merchandise, on social media and on the internet. There were specific references to television adaptations, and to the use of digital media e.g. YouTube and Vlogger. In print media, there should be more co-operation with *Golwg*, *Urdd* magazines, *O'r Pedwar Gwynt*, and local media etc. to gain greater publicity for Welsh children and young adults' books and reviews. Furthermore, there is potential to develop imaginative and creative methods of creating and sharing content digitally by giving a central role to children and young people's voices. The Welsh Books Council should work with partners to develop platforms that will allow more opportunities to respond, discuss and adapt content which is already in print, and create a space to develop new ideas which could be a foundation for future titles.

**22: A CONFERENCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S BOOKS.** The Welsh Books Council should hold regular conferences which would give people from all sectors involved in children's books an opportunity to network and develop new skills and ideas. The programme should include contributions that reflect the work of the various sectors to ensure representation from education, publishing, libraries, authors and illustrators. It would also be an opportunity for publishers to display their latest work, and to develop a professional community for authors and illustrators which would encourage co-operation and sharing experiences. To expand the impact of the conference beyond the day itself, it should be supported by a webpage on the Children's Books Website which would contain the day's programme, information on speakers, useful links etc. Additionally, social media should be used to encourage and expand the discussion.

"Promote, promote, marketing, marketing. And children's books get very little attention in the media. There needs to be more opportunities for children to share their opinions on books – short, simple and honest reviews on the radio/television (at peak hours!)/national and local papers."

"There needs to be a multi-platform format created which is fun and creates a community of readers who will turn into natural ambassadors amongst their circles of friends. No profile = No awareness = No reading."

"It is crucial that schools reach the widest range possible of parents that wouldn't necessarily go to 'search' on the internet or 'come across' Welsh books in the bubbles of their personal Twitter and Facebook pages."

"The material needs to be delivered via schools. The Books Council's leaflets specify the prices and titles, but there is not enough descriptions or reviews. Receiving a leaflet through schools from neutral institutions is a way of finding suitable/attractive titles of a high quality for children."

"Please provide bilingual sales materials for Welsh books, parents are not necessarily as fluent as their children and they are the decision makers when it comes to purchasing."

"Events; challenges; display bus; vouchers" "loyalty card' scheme" "reading club" "books for £1: special offers" "training courses and resources for teachers" "promoting and marketing throughout the year (not just Christmas and Summer)" "celebrate our children's authors more"

*Online Survey (2016–17)*

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS BOOKS STRATEGY

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The Welsh Books Council's aims and mission have been clearly stated (Looking Forward, 2016, p. 6-7) and reflects its central role in supporting the publishing industry in Wales. The Council is fully committed to promoting the Welsh children's books industry, as shown in recent research commissioned on this subject, including this Survey. But the Council's documentation reflects a degree of uncertainty about its exact role in this particular area. For example, *Looking Forward* clearly states that several elements influence the children's books industry, some offering opportunities and others posing challenges, but what is missing is a clear vision about the role the Council wants to assume (e.g. the emphasis on promoting literacy in the curriculum is welcomed, but no explanation is given on how the Council will actively support this). Some comments were received by contributors to the Survey that support this impression as they called for a clear strategy and understanding of the various functions that contribute to producing and promoting books for children and young people.

Creating a specific strategy for children and young people's books would draw all the necessary functions together within one specific campaign and would reflect the importance of books for children and young people in order to create a creative, dynamic and bilingual community.

**RECOMMENDATION 23: A *Children's Books Strategy* should be drawn up that confidently affirms the Welsh Books Council's leading role in the field of Welsh language books for children and young adults. The strategy will declare the Council's support for maintaining a viable children's books publishing industry that**

- **supports initiative and innovation**
- **recognises and acknowledges the specialist skill of authors, illustrators and editors of children and young adults' books**
- **offers an appropriate balance of original material and adaptations**
- **produces varied material, which is attractive and accessible in both content and language, for a wide range of readers from every background**
- **prepares resources to enrich the knowledge of adults (e.g. parents, teachers and librarians) about children's books and inspires their enthusiasm and support**
- **leads co-operation with external partners in order to promote reading and creativity on multimedia platforms and make books a more visible part of the wider culture of children and young people.**

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