

**Welsh Books Council audience
research: parents with limited
Welsh language skills**

Qualitative research findings



Prepared for:
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Audience research: Understanding the needs of parents with limited Welsh language skills who have children at Welsh-medium school

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1. Background, objectives and method

Cyngor Llyfrau Cymru / Welsh Books Council works in close partnership with schools, libraries, booksellers and other third sector organisations with the aim of stimulating interest in books, reading and literature in general. It delivers a number of schemes such as the Tir na n-Og Children's Book Awards, World Book Day, Quick Reads, author tours, book quizzes and competitions, often in partnership with the Book Trust, The Reading Agency, CILIP and SCL.

Welsh or bilingual books are used by children in families where parents' Welsh language skills can vary considerably. Regardless of language skills, the role of parents is essential in two key areas: decision-making over which leisure books to purchase for their children who attend Welsh-medium school; and supporting children with their reading. There are indications that parents with limited Welsh language skills whose children are at Welsh-medium school may find it difficult to support their children's reading at home through the medium of Welsh.

Dr Siwan Rosser of the School of Welsh at Cardiff University has made several related recommendations in a recent report entitled *A Survey of Books for Children and Young People*. These points have contributed to the need for this research. They include:

- How the nature and purpose of bilingual books should be examined further, with an emphasis on helping children and adults to read and understand the Welsh text. The report suggests that non-Welsh speaking parents feel that they lack the knowledge needed to support their children when reading at home whether via bilingual books or, for independent readers, bilingual information *about* books;
- Continuing efforts to engage with parents over the importance of reading at home by co-ordinating online resources that are bilingual, lively and complementary to original publications;
- A children's book strategy which should, among other things, involve preparing resources to enrich the knowledge of adults about children's books, inspiring enthusiasm and support;
- Ensuring that the publishing programme appeals to readers with a variety of needs.

One comment from a 2016-17 online survey quoted in the report highlights the challenge for parents who may not be fluent Welsh speakers / readers: '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'.

Children and young adults are key to the development of a new generation of Welsh language readers, Welsh speakers and customers for the Welsh language book trade. Non-Welsh speaking parents with children at Welsh-medium school have an integral role to play in these areas in terms of how they support their own children.

1.2 Research objectives

The research brief highlighted the following three key areas for the research to cover.

Information needs

- To understand the decision-making process for these parents when buying Welsh books and what information needs may be unmet currently;

Assumptions and current practices

- To understand the extent to which parents with limited Welsh language skills turn to recognised brands they can rely on rather than choosing original Welsh language titles;
- To gauge perceptions of original Welsh language books versus books written originally in English;

Bilingual books

- To explore what parents need from a bilingual book for younger children.

1.3 Research method

Given the nature of the objectives, the research used a qualitative approach to be able to explore the themes in depth. Four focus groups were conducted across four locations around Wales. All participants had children at a Welsh-medium school and defined their Welsh language skills from one of the following statements: *I can understand and speak some Welsh; I can understand a little Welsh but can't really speak or read it; I have no understanding of Welsh.*

Two focus groups were with parents who had children at Foundation Phase (nursery, playgroup, reception, Year 1, Year 2, aged 3-7); and two groups were with parents who had children at Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6, aged 7-11). The discussions took place at the end of February 2018 in Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), South Gwynedd and Wrexham. 29 participants attended in total with a mix of women (18) and men (11). The groups lasted up to 1.5 hours.

Qualitative investigation is not, by its nature, designed to be statistically representative. It is intended to be illustrative and to provide more understanding around a topic. Therefore, claims cannot be made about the extent to which any conclusions from qualitative content in this report may be generalised to the broader population.

Anonymised verbatim comments made by participants during the groups have been included in italics throughout this report and attributed based on gender, location and child's age group for which they were recruited. These comments should not be interpreted as defining the views of all. Instead they give insight into individual views on the themes identified.

2. Sourcing and choosing Welsh language books

2.1 Using libraries

Before discussing triggers that prompted participants to buy Welsh language books, it should be noted that participants often referred to using their local libraries for Welsh language books; and that the children regularly brought leisure books home from school to read. Some participants in Gwynedd referred to very helpful Welsh-speaking staff who were able to suggest appropriate titles for parents to take home for their children. These parents also liked how they could browse the books and get an idea of how suitable they would be for their children.

And you can go and look what you are getting as well, and they are just very friendly and make recommendations. (F, Gwynedd, 3-7)

Parents tended to think that the selections in libraries were varied and 'quite comprehensive'. Some liked how the children could browse and pick their own titles in Welsh. Mobile libraries were also used by a few participants (RCT and Wrexham) and these were highly rated, for example containing 'a little box full of Welsh books'. In a couple of instances parents explained how they would sometimes buy a book their child had really enjoyed from the library.

We visit the library quite often and if there's something that they particularly like then I will go out and buy it rather than keep on borrowing it. (F, RCT, 3-7)

2.2 Prompts to buying Welsh language books

Participants highlighted a number of prompts to purchase a Welsh language book. Some of these prompts indicated a reactive rather than proactive approach to purchasing Welsh books, tying in with the way in which participants sometimes sourced books (discussed below).

Schools featured quite prominently as a trigger to look at purchasing Welsh language books although not on an especially regular basis. Some participants referred to school fairs (e.g. 'Scholastic' book fairs), booksellers visiting the school, books sales at school or via a magazine / leaflet sent out by the school. In Cardiff there was reference to receiving a bilingual 'magazine' once or twice a year through the school for Welsh language books that was the 'same version as the Book People'. Some participants, however, were unaware of this booklet. For one participant, Y Lolfa was believed to be the organisation that produced a 'pamphlet' of 'purely Welsh books, usually around Christmas time'.

When the school fairs come on again they have people come into the schools with bookstalls and all that, so that would be a prompt. (M, RCT, 3-7)

F: The school have book sales. That's the only place I've ever bought Welsh books. We use the library. . . . F: Twice a year there is a book sale at school and they have a Welsh side and an English side, and I let them get a couple of books each. Whatever they choose is what I'll get them. (South Gwynedd, 3-7)

According to a couple of participants in RCT, parents were not invited in to look at the books with the children when there was a book fair, although a number thought it was possible to see in advance a list of books that were on sale. They therefore had to give the money to the child to choose the books and were reluctant to give too much money to the child to look after.

In another example, a parent described how a bookseller set up a stall during parents' evenings which sometimes resulted in a purchase. Others who had not come across this method liked the idea. Similarly, one example was recalled in RCT of a local bookshop owner visiting the school with Welsh language books. However, the parents found the titles too expensive. The shop was thought to have since closed down.

The lady comes in on parents evening, she sets up a bookstand, so you usually get a book then because they have had a good parents evening! Choose a book! (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

We did have the local Welsh bookshop a year or two ago, but I don't think it did very well because most of his books were expensive and it just wasn't feasible for a lot of parents. (M, RCT, 3-7)

Some thought that it was cheaper to try to source these books they saw at school sales online, than to buy them via school book sales unless they were second-hand. In addition, some parents did not think that their school did a great deal to regularly support parents in sourcing books.

I tend to wait for the Christmas fairs and the Easter school fair, Summer fair, . . . they'd have second hand books where parents bring in their children's old ones, and you can buy them for a couple of quid . . . rather than the 12.99 or whatever they were to start with. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Participants in the Valleys felt that schools sometimes provided information on buying books, for example a website to visit, but did not think that they were given enough support via this channel.

The teachers sometimes have like, they send out little things like 'go to this website for games' and stuff like that, and now and again they point you to websites with books and all that. (M, RCT, 3-7)

In a final school-related example of prompts to buy a book, the child had been reading a Roald Dahl book at school so the parent bought another Roald Dahl story (in Welsh) in the hope that the child would also enjoy this title.

He'd been doing Charlie and the Chocolate Factory [at school] and they'd gone on a visit to Cadbury's and then he'd seen the film and he was really into it, and started talking about Roald Dahl. So I thought another one of the books just might be something he'd pick up at home. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Reflecting the **reactive approach**, participants sometimes recalled spotting a children's Welsh language book **when out shopping** and buying it, often because they were not expecting to see it (more so in Wrexham, RCT and Cardiff). For one non-Welsh-speaking parent, he was only able to decide it was appropriate for his son because it was to do with Doctor Who which his son loved.

F: I find them so difficult to come across that if I do see one I'll pick it up. M: Yeah, if something catches your eye, oh I've not seen that before, get that, see how she gets on with that. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

If I see them in the shops because it's such a novelty to see them in most shops, if I see them I'm like 'oh, Welsh books', so I'll have a look. (F, RCT, 3-7)

I bought a couple from charity shops. It's mainly because my oldest is into Doctor Who and I saw Dr Who Welsh books. I thought hey, he enjoys them. Had it not been something that I knew he was in to, I wouldn't have bought it because I wouldn't have known what level he is at. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

Specific occasions sometimes acted as triggers to consider buying a children's Welsh language book. It was an option for Christmas and birthdays, Easter, World Book Day and also a means of keeping the children occupied during holiday periods as well as practising their Welsh, given that it was not the main language used at home. Visiting the Eisteddfod could act as a prompt as well.

School holidays. Definitely. Just to keep them, especially Easter and through the summer holidays, the two weeks and the big long break, the six weeks. Just to keep the language skills going. (M, RCT, 3-7)

Linking in with encouraging the children to use Welsh outside of school, some parents stated that they would be motivated to buy Welsh language books to **support the children's Welsh language** development generally. One parent admitted that she only bought Welsh language books rarely because she simply could not understand them and therefore struggled to support the child at home (aged 7) including with pronunciation. She felt that the school was providing the necessary support in this respect so it was not a key role for her. Consequently, English language books were more likely to be used for bedtime.

I must admit, as an English speaker who struggles with the Welsh, I don't often get the Welsh books because I know that they are getting them at school. They are learning there and can be taught. Whereas I can't teach them, so I do buy books; but it is English books for story time. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

The child **enjoying an English language book** prompted a number of participants to decide to purchase the Welsh language version. The parent would then be able to support the child with the English version, as well as develop their own Welsh language skills. Some described how the trigger was based on finding an author they knew the child enjoyed (such as Julia Donaldson) which could sometimes be in Welsh and sometimes in English.

My son is into Diary of a Wimpy Kid and he's got all of the English versions. I've been seeing a few of the Welsh versions so I've got him one of those. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

We're Going on a Bear Hunt, we've enjoyed the English version and I've looked online for the Welsh version. I've done that with The Gruffalo and a popular book that I've got that the children are interested in and then I've gone and looked for the Welsh version then. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Word of mouth played a role in prompting some parents to think about buying Welsh language books. They commented how their children might come home from school and talk about a book that a friend had, wanting a copy themselves. Some participants felt the children wanted to fit in with their peers, in addition to having a book they would enjoy.

I think the kids tell each other what they like and that comes home as well sometimes. (M, Wrexham, 7-11)

With the ones that are English translated into Welsh, you know that the majority of the other children are reading those books as well, so you'd buy them so your children can fit in and talk about those books. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

They like to talk about it with their friends in school, I know my daughter's come home and she's spoken about how 'Ella's had this book to read and I'd like to read it'. (M, RCT, 3-7)

Further triggers to purchase included: as a treat for good behaviour rather than sweets; winning a competition at school and being rewarded with a voucher for a Welsh language bookshop (the parent had since returned to the shop to buy more books); and a book sale at work which very occasionally included Welsh language books for children as the comment below illustrates.

It's like a company and they drop sort of books off and games and activities and stuff for kids, for adults. They sort of leave them there for a fortnight, I think they go into school sometimes, for the teachers and stuff. (F, RCT, 3-7)

2.3 Sourcing Welsh language books

As section 2.2 highlights, there were a number of sources participants used to find Welsh language books. This section covers further sources identified, in addition to through schools as described above.

Online was a commonly used starting point for seeking out Welsh language books. Amazon was mentioned fairly regularly: it was considered by some to be cheaper than buying books in high street shops / via leaflets at school. To illustrate this point, a parent described how they identified a book to purchase via a booklet through the school and then looked for a cheaper version online.

The first thing you do is go online isn't it, Google and everything. (M, RCT, 3-7)

Really effective [online as a source]. It gives you loads of pages of different places. Obviously, selecting the book is a bit different. (M, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Participants sometimes found (cheaper) second-hand books for sale online as well, for example on eBay, Amazon, Gumtree and in one case Facebook. In Wrexham and RCT, participants tended to comment that it was not that easy to find Welsh language books sold by bricks and mortar retailers and that their searches when buying often began online. Even then, generic searches did not always return very precise results. Sometimes, therefore, it was difficult to source Welsh language books unless the parent knew which particular title they were after.

I've bought a couple of second-hand books on eBay, which you can get, but they don't sell that much on there really. . . . I went looking for them. Sometimes it can be loads, sometime there's nothing at all. (M, RCT, 3-7)

F: I think they're hard to find. F: I go straight to the internet. F: I go to Google. . . . Especially since the Welsh book store in the market has gone. (Wrexham, 7-11)

Less often, 'specialist' Welsh language book websites were mentioned (e.g. Y Lolfa, Gomer) but familiarity across the sample was limited. According to one participant the range and content felt slightly limited and inward looking. It was understood why there was believed to be a focus on Welsh 'sport' and Welsh 'history' but this participant thought there could be more breadth. Further sites with an individual mention were Carreg Gwalch, Siop Cwlwm, Gwales, and Dref Wen.

How can I say? They're like specialist to Wales, they're all about Welsh sport, it's not about any other country sport. It's all about Welsh history, which I suppose is a good thing in the beginning, but it's limited to that, it doesn't tell you any English history or any other world history. (M, RCT, 3-7)

Physical **bookshops** were sometimes used to source Welsh language books, including second-hand book shops, charity shops and local independent retailers (e.g. Cant a Mil Vintage in Cardiff or a garden centre in Caerphilly). As will be discussed in the next section of the report, some parents were keen to be able to inspect a book before buying it.

In South Gwynedd, for example, a local independent retailer was believed to have a good selection of Welsh language books. Slightly further afield in Aberystwyth, some participants thought that there were a number of bookshops with Welsh language books. In this area, participants concluded that they were well catered for.

I think there is very little excuse for not being able to obtain Welsh books because there is a big selection around here. As you said, if you go into most book places around here, they have got Welsh books. (M, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

I like to go and have a look [in Aberystwyth], flick through them to see what they are actually like. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Views were slightly more mixed in Cardiff: some thought that options had improved over time, for example with WHSmith now stocking some Welsh language books (this was news to a small number of participants who responded that they would never have thought to look in WHSmith or Waterstones). Given that some participants thought that the situation had improved in Cardiff, it may be the case that those less familiar with the options adopted a less proactive approach to buying Welsh language books. As one participant summed up, 'you've got to really look for it. You've got to be keen'.

Doing my Welsh course, there is a shop down there that looks really posh and you think, I can't take the kids in there, they will break everything! Bu, they sell kids' and learner magazines. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

I think over the years it has got much better. With WHSmith, that was a little find for me years ago. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

Where would I go to buy one? I would probably go online. . . . I don't know about these shops, I've never walked into a shop and saw a Welsh book. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

In Wrexham and RCT, participants tended not to think that there were reliable high street options for sourcing Welsh language books; it required some effort to seek the books out in the areas they lived in. Other retailers that also sold books (e.g. Home Bargains, The Works) were thought to only rarely stock any children's books in Welsh. Gift shops with 'Welsh-orientated gifts' were occasionally thought to stock Welsh books but these were expected to be quite expensive. In Wrexham, participants lamented the closure of a Welsh books store in the local market in recent years.

It's very, very rare that you see them [in retailers], except that when you see them it's a novelty so you pick it up just because it's there. (F, RCT, 3-7)

I find the little quiet villages around like Llangollen, you find little hidden gems. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

It was observed in the groups that participants on occasion made notes on sourcing books that others mentioned – 'I've picked up loads of useful things here today', as one parent commented. Some in Cardiff stated how they were reluctant to speak to Welsh-speaking parents because they did not speak Welsh themselves but felt that they might be missing out the opportunity to ask about Welsh books.

Further sources mentioned included:

- The health visitor, with ‘a couple of Welsh language books’ provided when the child was born and again at two years old;
- The Nene community newspaper in North East Wales which reportedly sometimes contained a leaflet with Welsh language books for sale;
- Swapping Welsh language books with other parents in the past.

2.4 Choosing Welsh language books

Parents in this research mainly chose **familiar and popular** children’s stories that had been translated from English into Welsh. Books parents knew children would like included those by David Walliams, Roald Dahl and Julia Donaldson, together with stories such as Sam Tân, The Gruffalo, Peppa Pig, Room on the Broom, Sometimes I like to curl up in a ball, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Diary of a Wimpy Kid and Harry Potter. Books written in English were often considered ‘the safe option’, as one participant summed it up.

*I tend to pick the popular ones, ones that you know a little bit about yourself. . . .
Roald Dahl and things like that. (M, RCT, 3-7)*

If it’s the English version you know what it is. . . .Gangsta Granny, you know what it is so you can get the Welsh version. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

I try and find things like Roald Dahl that I know they love. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

In addition, parents’ own familiarity with the books, particularly those aimed at older children, helped participants with their efforts to support their child’s reading and comprehension. In one example, a parent explained how they might sometimes also have the English version of the book to help them discuss the story with their child.

I think I’d support my child more with that one, because I would be like, well, I will have the English one, read it, and when they’re halfway through go ‘oh, has this happened yet in the story?’ and have a little chat about it. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Parents across the groups highlighted identifying **age appropriate** Welsh language books as a key need when making choices. When buying books for younger children, participants tended to feel that it was not too difficult to come to a decision on what the child might enjoy. A judgement was made based on the illustration style, colours and amount of text in the book, often combined with familiarity with the title or character. These factors underline the need some parents had to be able to inspect books for young children before they buy them.

At the moment it’s quite easy, as long as it’s got bright colours and stuff like that, then they’ll pick it [5 year old]. (F, RCT, 3-7)

M: She is only three and any Welsh book that I would get out would be big . . . bright pictures, large letters. Basic. Apple, banana. Snake. F: I think it’s straightforward with young children. As long as it’s colourful and bright. (South Gwynedd, 3-7)

The pictures and colours thing is important, certainly for mine, because its vivid and bright and sort of enthuses them. They're more likely to read it than if it's dullish colours. (M, RCT, 3-7)

This need to be able to inspect a book in a shop helped some parents to come to a decision on what to buy for younger children. It was therefore appreciated when a title being sold online (e.g. on Amazon) provided examples of the pages' appearance, so that the parent could 'get a feel for the imagery and text' and also 'whether it's bilingual inside'.

In the shops themselves I'll have a flick-through, see what the book itself is like, what the structure is like because I'm the one who is going to be reading them. (F, RCT, 3-7)

I use Amazon a lot . . . because you can look inside the book then. You can view all of the pages. . . . How many lines it's got. . . . I've got bad eyesight as well so that's important and also, I want to try and match it up with her ability and my ability as well [7 year old]. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Similarly, parents appreciated it when a **short description** was provided in English for less familiar titles. This proved to be particularly important for parents who were choosing books for older children in the 3-11 age bracket. Recalling an insert in the Nene community newspaper in North Wales, one participant felt that the leaflet did not contain enough information about the books to help him decide which might be suitable for his children.

Sometimes [online] they have a little summary as well, by the side of it, for the newer books you don't know much about - that can be helpful. (M, RCT, 3-7)

The description of the books as well will be in Welsh and English, so I find it quite important to know what the book's about before I buy one. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

It's just the cover of the books and the price, you don't really get a lot of information [in the leaflet on] what the book's about. (M, Wrexham, 7-11)

Deciding whether a book was suitable for an older child was therefore not always easy, especially if a parent was less familiar with a title – there were fewer pictures and more text. This need included knowing that it would be suitable but still challenging for the child. Participants also wanted to be reassured that the child would enjoy it. The Book People were thought by one participant to be a good example of providing information on suitability for its English language books. Looking ahead, parents with younger children felt that choosing Welsh language books for older children would become 'a bit more complicated'.

I think that makes it a challenge when you're looking for books because it's knowing the content. My son's seven now, so it's knowing how to pitch it so it's challenging enough but retaining the interest. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

The age suitability. Especially with the older books, if you don't understand everything you just need to check that it is suitable for your child. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

I do look at the ages. It's the first thing I look for is what age because I don't know what I'm buying because I can't understand. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

If I had known what was actually in the story then I probably would have known it wasn't for him [having bought a book for her child]. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

Some participants therefore did not think they were very well supported, as parents with limited Welsh language skills, seeking books for older children.

None [support]. There is nothing that I see. They have both brought home a whole range of Welsh books by now. There is nothing on there that I've seen that is in English that would give me clues [aged 9 and 7]. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

[3-7 year olds] are round about the same as the younger, the nought to twos, because you get all the Fireman Sam and the Peppa Pig and Sali Mali, but then when they get to junior age . . . the Welsh books are harder. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

In addition to summaries in English, **ratings or reviews** of books by other parents were mentioned from time to time as an influence when buying Welsh language books online (e.g. on Amazon).

They'll say something like 'my daughter really enjoyed this'. . . . If it's got a good star rating, 9 out of 10, if it's affordable I would buy it. (M, RCT, 3-7)

Price, however, was still an important factor. Participants regularly referred to the price of Welsh language books versus English books which on occasion affected their propensity to purchase them. This was especially the case for a couple of participants if they had any doubts over whether or not the child would enjoy the book. According to one parent, paying the extra for a Welsh language book added a little 'pressure' in hoping the child enjoyed the book. There was, though, some acknowledgement that this was a result of much smaller print-runs.

I don't mind paying for it if he's going to enjoy it and it's going to be what he wants so if I'm not sure, price sometimes comes in to it more. . . . [The greater expense] puts the pressure on then I think because then there's that little bit of, oh I really hope he reads it because it costs so [much] . . . and it kind of takes that essence of enjoyment and fun out of the book. It makes it more loaded in a way. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

When you can get five books for £5 in the Works, or 10 for £5 sometimes, and then you're spending £7 or £8 on one short story [in Welsh] it's going to make a massive difference in buying power when you've got limited funds to buy books and perhaps multiple children to buy for. (F, RCT, 3-7)

References were made to preferring **bilingual books** for the younger age group so that the parent could easily support their reading and also improve their own Welsh as they read along with the child. (Perceptions of bilingual formats in books are discussed later in section 5.)

The pre-school books that do have the English in smaller letters running along-side the Welsh - I choose those . . . I love those. [Others agree.] [They work] really well, because I read the Welsh, but I can track the English, and I am learning! It is really helpful. So, more of those, I think. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

There's a really massive selection of books [on Gomer] and some of them are bilingual so I like buying them so that I can follow the story as well. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

That would influence my decision to buy a book because my partner doesn't read or speak Welsh at all. He could read it in English and then I could read it in Welsh. If there was something I was stuck on the gist of what was happening on that page, I could glance at it in English and then put more feeling into the reading in Welsh. I wouldn't really consider buying a book that wasn't in both languages. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Books that tied in with **TV programmes or a film** that the children liked was something that parents sometimes looked for to help them decide on what to purchase. Participants normally had English language programmes in mind when identifying this aspect of their children's preferences.

It's usually linked to something they watch on TV. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

As mentioned earlier in this report, visits to the local library staffed by first language Welsh speakers were a benefit for some parents when selecting books. Staff were able recommend titles that would be appropriate for the participants' children. Libraries also afforded some parents the opportunity to browse and identify books that they expected their children would enjoy.

I go in to the village libraries around so I'd have an idea of what to look for on Google or something like that after. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Their first language Welsh speakers, aren't they? So, they could always recommend books to you should you not be able to choose yourself. (F, South Gwynedd)

A small number of participants acknowledged that they took a more passive role in choosing books by letting the children choose the stories because it was not always very easy for parents to know what to select.

I buy them but I couldn't tell you what they are because I can't pronounce them. She just picks her own. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

I just let Lily choose her book. I don't really know what it says, but she's reading the book and laughing along, and I'm like 'I'm sure that's okay', but perhaps I shouldn't be doing that. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

Further needs or issues mentioned in relation to choosing books included the following:

- Children wanting to read English rather than Welsh language books;

So we get that in their school bags [leaflet from Y Lolfa] and I do look at it and I have browsed it but my children as a Christmas gift would prefer an English book to a Welsh book, so I've never bought one [from the leaflet]. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

- Books that contained a 'social story' to help a parent's children who had special educational needs;

The children love the stories, not really realising the hidden messages behind them, so we get those in English and Welsh and they enjoy those ones. (F, RCT, 3-7)

- Knowing which books for younger children used rhyme and rhythm was also factor for a couple of participants when looking for suitable books because the children enjoyed them so much;
- Wanting to see diversity in Welsh language books: one BME participant commented how her daughter (7-11) did not think there was much BME representation in Welsh language books; however, another BME participant countered that he and his children were content with the diversity in the books they read;
- Being able to find books that would definitely appeal to boys (aged 7-11). A couple of participants commented how they sometimes found it difficult to identify books they thought their sons would enjoy.

I do find it not just in Welsh reading books but in English reading books, a lot of them seem to cater more for girls and considering statistically boys are difficult to engage to read. Even the colours on the covers, if there's more purples and pinks he's not going to want to go near it and even in terms of themes he's very much into cars and things like that. So it's the topic as much as anything else sometimes but definitely the colours. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

3. Original Welsh language titles

3.1 Awareness and perceptions of original Welsh language titles

Across all the groups there was virtually no spontaneous mention of children's books written originally in the Welsh language. When prompted as a topic, participants in the main reflected that it was not something they had consciously thought about when buying books for their children. In most cases, participants could not name a children's author writing in Welsh or identify characters or series of stories with the exception of Sali Mali. In isolated

cases, there was awareness of a local author or, for one participant, an author who had visited the school when she was a pupil (and left a lasting impression). This realisation was considered 'a shame' by some participants that there was so little awareness of Welsh authors and characters. Participants surmised that there was very little promotion of original Welsh language books.

I feel like a traitor [for not buying original Welsh language books]. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

F: If you wanted to look for Welsh books, you'd have to know the Welsh names and the Welsh authors, and we don't know any of that stuff, so how are we going to look for it? . . . F: There's nothing there jumping out at you, telling you to 'buy me'. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

There was consequently a view expressed that there should be a sense of loyalty towards original Welsh language books as it represented part of people's culture and heritage. Reading more original Welsh language titles could help to expose children to more of the nation's culture and its history of story-telling (ideally with a modern twist), which was deemed important by some parents. Interestingly, in a few cases, participants stated how the discussion had sown a seed in their minds to look for titles written in Welsh – something they had not previously considered.

F: That would motivate me to think actually they've got a history of story-telling and passing on tales. M: There's probably a real niche there, that someone could tap into in a modern way. Maybe I haven't seen it, but you know there's probably a massive market for that. . . . F: I'd definitely buy into that. (Cardiff, 7-11)

What matters to me about all that is my child having exposure to Welsh literature and culture. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

F: I think for me the appeal of it as well if it was written by a Welsh author there'd be some kind of connection. F: Culture. F: I think it's about being proud of your culture and that would provide another opportunity for doing that. (Wrexham, 7-11)

Just the fact that you have put it in our head [will encourage me]. I had never really considered trying to buy an authentic Welsh authors' book for my children to read. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

As discussed earlier in this report, however, participants were influenced by what they knew their children liked or would enjoy, which was often authors writing in English. A number of participants commented how they did not see their children getting excited about any original Welsh language titles. Books written in English were less of 'a gamble', according to some. They were also expected to have much larger marketing budgets to promote the titles creating a desire to buy the latest stories from well-known authors.

I only really know Dylan Thomas, things like that. You know, I wouldn't be able to name any of the modern children's Welsh authors. (M, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

He wants to read David Walliams, he wants to read the current stuff. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

They are all English authors that she really loves. . . . She does bring home Welsh books, she just doesn't rave about them as much I guess. I don't know. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

If it's more of a well-known author like Roald Dahl, and when they get translated you're more likely to go for a well-known author that's been translated than a Welsh author because they're not well known enough and you don't know enough about them. (M, Wrexham, 7-11)

The original English books could also be tied in to popular children's TV programmes whereas this association was not made with original Welsh language titles and TV tie-ins. The familiarity equated to confidence for some parents in their ability to support their child's reading. In short, it would be money well spent in some participants' minds.

You have got a certain comprehension, haven't you [with English language authors]? And a bit more confidence, to read that book, if you recognise some of the pictures on the book. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Giving the subject more thought, and from a positive perspective, some participants expected that an original Welsh language children's book might 'flow' better than perhaps a translation from the English. It might therefore be easier for the children to understand the Welsh used. Original titles in Welsh may also help with the child's learning, according to some, as it would likely contain idioms and turns of phrase that would not crop up in a book translated from the English. In some participants' minds this would become more important as the children read longer books with fewer pictures.

I would like to go for more books that are written originally in Welsh because I don't know if this is true or not, as I'm not Welsh, but my guess is that there is a bit more of a flow to them because they are written in their own language. . . . Some phrases that are just very colloquial . . . he would never get from a translated book. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

That's going to be more accurate with mutations and things like that. . . . A lot of things get lost in translation or they get twisted because of the mutations. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Pausing for further reflection, some participants in one group commented how they also had in mind books where 'we would understand it – that's for us'. Consequently, it was acknowledged among some that perhaps they were thinking slightly more of themselves than their children when buying books.

Recalling their limited experiences and perceptions of original Welsh language titles, participants on occasion felt that these books seemed a little dated, for example in relation

to the illustration approach or content – lacking in ‘fun’. These comments tended to relate to story books that were brought home from school to read. Content-wise, a couple of participants in one group with younger children found some of the stories in original Welsh language books ‘quite dark sometimes, . . . steeped in witchcraft and legends’ which could be ‘quite alarming for children [aged 5-7]’. Some also felt that the range of original Welsh language books was quite limited; and that such books did not have a very high profile.

M: There seems to be a real up and down quality to some Welsh books, so some of the books the kids will bring home, they won't really enjoy that much. . . . In terms of just the plot, whether the book is fun to read. . . . M: Outdated. F: Yeah, old-fashioned. F: Limited. F: I don't really have a view. (Cardiff, 7-11)

Sometimes the imaging in Welsh books isn't up to the same standard as English books. It can be quite dated and like Enid Blyton-y rather than as modern and bold. Sometimes they're great, and sometimes they're quite dated. (F, RCT, 3-7)

M: Sometimes the subject matter is just kind of stuck in the 60s. . . . F: I find some of the sort of really early books that they bring home, like the Sali Mali and books like that, I find them, I don't know, they are just not as . . . F: Relevant. F: Yes! As children's books that I read in English. They just seem to be stuck. F: Dated. (South Gwynedd, 3-7)

F: They're all about witches, or very eerie clowns and they don't like that very much. F: Nor do I. (South Gwynedd, 3-7)

4. Suggestions for supporting parents with sourcing and choosing Welsh-medium books

4.1 Sourcing Welsh language books

Participants tended to focus on **schools** as their principle suggestion for helping parents to find out about Welsh language books. Examples put forward included a magazine regularly received with books for sale. Some in RCT thought that a similar method had been used in the past and had found it useful. As stated earlier in the report, a number of participants mentioned that they received a booklet once or twice a year from school. A format similar to the Book People was suggested in another group. This participant explained how her child would explore the children's section of the booklet and circle the books he was interested in. It was thought that an equivalent, regularly received booklet for Welsh language books would help raise awareness of what was available, including books written originally in Welsh.

Years ago they used to have a little brochure thing which they sent out every month with dozens of books in there and you'd have a little slip and you'd tick a couple of

books; perhaps if there was a discount through the school as well, perhaps that would encourage it. (M, RCT, 3-7)

I give [The Book People booklet] to my son, and he sits there in the children section, he will go, I quite like that, and he will circle that. . . . So, if there was something like this available, it would mean that it was something that he could feel more responsible about in terms of identifying, even from the look of the covers that he fancied, and it would give me a better starting point. And it would mean that I would be more aware of new books as they were coming out as well. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Another idea to arise was for schools to periodically email out information on Welsh language books, for example featuring a different book each time, information on popular books in school or a 'top 10' list of recommendations each term, tailored for different age groups.

I think just promotion in general. Even sending out email, I know it is spamming but you can always opt out of the email, but say it would give you recommendations for books and just talk about books, Welsh language books. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

Building on the idea, there was also a suggestion for a regular email to parents highlighting original Welsh language authors who were proving popular with other children. It was noted how the children sometimes wanted to read what their peers were reading: if one child in a friendship group liked and talked about a particular book, its popularity would soon spread.

I am fixed on buying Julie Donaldson and Roald Dahl books because I don't know any better. But if it was kind of in my face, if I got an email every month telling me which Welsh authors were up and coming and popular, what everybody else wanted to read. Because kids want to be like the other kids. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Some thought that if the children became enthused with particular authors, they would return home to tell their parents about the books and urge them to make a purchase. Ideas included 'meet the author' sessions, the children writing to an author, more of a focus on original Welsh language titles for World Book Day or initiating a Welsh Book Day. One participant recalled a Welsh language author visiting her when she was at school. It made an impression to the extent that she now bought the author's books for her own children.

It's about authors coming into schools and enthusing the children, so they come and say, oh, I have heard about this! I have heard about that! . . . Like that writing [to authors] idea that there could be a central activity . . . so that they feel connected. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Whether a meet the author, or a story-telling thing, or a thing about that character at school, or a theme on book days, World Book Day, something to kind of sell a series of books to children where they can keep going back for more. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Not all participants were so interested in the author specifically. A small number of parents with younger children commented that they would prefer to find out about the stories rather than the author - the author was expected to become more important for older children's books.

Social media was suggested as a possible means of helping parents source Welsh language books including original Welsh language books. This could involve: posting links to Welsh language books websites on the school's Facebook page; sending out links via school email / Twitter; or perhaps children could do reviews on a YouTube channel. Some participants in one group reported how they currently received school emails about sport, childcare, arts and drama – so 'it would fit in with that really well' if they also received communications relating to Welsh language books. Participants in a couple of groups commented that they were unaware of any social media groups where parents could discuss children's books; but they were interested in the idea.

You'd definitely share it [on social media] as well wouldn't you? Around the parents that we know that would be interested as well, with only the click of a button you'd share it. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Further school related ideas included:

- Recommendations via the Bug Club that some children accessed via Hwb;
- A bookseller attending the school on a parents' evening so parents could browse while waiting for an appointment. Developing this idea, there was a suggestion that parents could be informed in advance that the bookseller would be there and be provided with information on the books that would be available;

I'd want them to let us know in advance if they were there so then we could be prepared when we are there, if they do Welsh books, we could actually buy some. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

- Ensuring parents are invited in to help choose books for their children on the day of a book fair visit so they can be more involved in the final decision-making on book choices. They may also spend a little more if there, according to a few participants in RCT, rather than relying on the child to make the choices alone;

They still come in and you can still buy the books but I wasn't invited in to pick the books and maybe if I was invited in it would have piqued my interest a bit more and I probably would have picked up a few more but obviously . . . you know 'here's £20, come back with a couple of books', you don't know what she's going to pick. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Away from school, some participants thought that it would be helpful to be able to find (more) Welsh language books in '**mainstream shops**' for example The Works, WHSmith, Home Bargains and B&M. Some also wanted to see books that were 'competitively priced'. There was one suggestion that Wales needed its own bookstore brand rather than 'a small section in Waterstones'. Book retailers could also do more to promote their Welsh language books in-store and make them 'more visible', according to a small number of participants. In

addition, one participant wanted to see more Welsh language magazines in newsagents, aimed at children and adults.

Well, like a lot of people I shop in places like Home Bargains and B&M and things like that where they've got competitive priced books and The Works where they've got fairly competitive priced books, and a lot of people pick up lots of books for Christmastime and things like that for children. (F, RCT, 3-7)

The Welsh books just aren't comparing in terms of pricing so they're much more of a limited purchase in comparison to the English books. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Living in Wales, you've got Waterstones but why isn't there a Welsh bookstore, a nationwide store? (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Further ideas participants suggested for helping parents to source Welsh language books included:

- Adding website addresses on the back of books to help parents source more (and age appropriate) books for their children;

I did discover quite a good bilingual books website through getting a bilingual book from the Aberystwyth shop a few years go. . . . It was on the back of the book and they do quite a few bilingual or purely Welsh. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

- Doing more to promote current websites for sourcing Welsh language books for children;
- Proactively identifying parents with limited Welsh language skills as parents who need to be supported so that they feel included and are actively encouraged to get involved in some way. At a broader level, participants in one group wondered if more could be done to help them feel part of the school culture. Some currently felt that they were on the fringes because of the perceived language barrier and therefore might be missing out on opportunities to discuss with other parents things like Welsh language books;

I think it is really important to engage the parents, especially the English-speaking parents and actually spreading information on where you can find these books and what the story is about. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

My kids do a little bit of singing in school and that's . . . I know it is big thing, it is a big part of their culture but I don't feel I'm part of that at all and I think if that was a bit more open, there'd be more opportunity to get into it. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

- Encouraging parents to be more involved with Welsh language books by raising the profile of 'Welsh story mornings' that sometimes took place in the local library. One participant for example had found out about it via a friend's Facebook post.

It's not very often we see those things whereas if we had a bit more notice or they were done a bit more regularly then perhaps more people would be attending if we were told about that through schools more often. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Focusing on promoting original Welsh language titles, linking books in with **popular Welsh language TV characters** or shows was another idea put forward by some participants. (Paw Patrol and Sam Tân were highlighted examples of popular books originating on TV.) However, some struggled to suggest a TV character from Welsh language TV programming which the children liked and which would lend itself to a series of books. In a similar vein, the suggestion was made that original characters could be created with a series of books, adventures and themes (e.g. Horrible Histories) which children could then 'grow to love'.

If there was something that captured their imagination which was Welsh original then I think it probably would take off but there's just sort of nothing at the moment really. There's nothing that my children anyway want to come home to and say 'I want to put that on Welsh television, I've got to set the recorder to watch that all the time'. (M, RCT, 3-7)

What I find is they don't really have stories that continue in a series, they are always like one-off stories. . . . There's not a character that's like going on lots of adventures. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

4.2 Choosing appropriate Welsh language books

A key suggestion among participants was for publishers or retailers to ensure that they provided a short **summary** of the book perhaps within the front or back covers. Relating to this need, there was also reference to wanting some kind of 'glossary' to support the reading process for parents. In one instance, a parent had texted a friend who was a fluent Welsh speaker for help with translation as Google translate had been unable to recognise a 'colloquial' term in a book.

Inside the book itself, have a little English rundown of what's going on and how it's going to unfold. And then you can make a better decision. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

If you look on the back of the book trying to read it, it's just Welsh and that's it. That would be nice to have just a brief couple of lines to tell you what it's about. (M, Wrexham, 7-11)

F: Perhaps an English something in the front cover or on the back just to say this is about this, this and this. With a glossary at the back. That would be really helpful. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Clear guidance was sometimes called for on front covers on the age suitability of books, perhaps supported inside with a brief synopsis of the book and a glossary, for parents with older aged children in this age group. One suggestion was to provide supporting information for parents online via a QR code. According to one another participant, her young children preferred books that rhymed and had rhythm so would like to see the style of content highlighted when purchasing books.

It would be easier if they put on the books Key Stage whatever . . . so then you could put that in and books for that stage would come up. . . . Save you having to look

through every book to see if it's suitable you'd know they were suitable. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

F: [We need to know] genre, age range. M: Is it a one off or a series? F: Is it bilingual? (Wrexham, 7-11)

If there was a parent's read-along guide, if they had one of the scan codes on the book that you could then just scan it and you've got the English translation available then, that could be one way of completely cutting out that second paper copy and having it there for the parent's guide to help the children. (F, RCT, 3-7)

When suggesting ideas, there was occasionally a sense of slight guilt voiced among parents at not having strong Welsh language skills (despite often trying to improve them); but it was still sometimes difficult to choose appropriate books and then support the child with their reading.

F: I know a lot of it is down to us not learning the Welsh language, but it is hard. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

It was suggested that support for parents of older children in the 3-11 age bracket could include comprehension help. Areas to discuss with the child could be provided or else signposting to a website for a 'bit of a reconnaissance beforehand' on a book's story. Otherwise, parents could feel that they were unable to support their children very effectively with reading in Welsh.

Even if they predominantly did their reading on their own, it would mean that you could kind of still engage with them. Even if you had an overview of there were two characters and one was good and one was bad. You could sort of say, which character did you like? It would give you some chance to have a talk about it really. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

As they get bigger it doesn't have the English on the other side, and then, every so often, I have to stop, 'wait a sec, what does that word mean?', and I think it's harder as they get older [others agree]. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

I feel I can't support my eight year old when he's reading as well I could when he was younger, because I haven't a clue what he's talking about. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

According to some participants, English or bilingual **recommendations** could be printed at the back of a book on further titles the parent and child could explore. This process could include a QR code with a link to similar stories the children may enjoy, more information about the author and a translation or summary of the book. In addition, a bilingual summary or opening page of another book by the same author could be provided at the back of the book.

Thinking about how parents might encounter recommendations, there was a suggestion for more online reviews and highlighting of other titles consumers may have bought; or

recommendations placed on bookshelves in bookshops suggesting similar titles consumers may wish to consider. Some participants thought that Facebook groups could be created for parents to share reviews or ask questions; or perhaps book clubs could be developed (online or offline).

I find that in Waterstone's when you go in there and there's a little ticket at the front, and it says there's somebody that actually works in the shop that's read it and recommended it, and you do get them on the Welsh books as well sometimes. So again, I would go on that review. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

If I could have a bit of information on someone who has rated the book or even said it was quite useful or it was presented in a really nice way, that would help me really. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

What about sort of little book clubs then, either for the kids or for adults, because this has been a really useful discussion hasn't it, for the eight of us, we've learned a lot. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

Some participants thought that bookshops, supermarkets, online retailers and libraries could also be encouraged to do more to promote Welsh-medium authors. For example, book retailers could link original Welsh language recommendations to popular English titles. In addition to raising awareness, it was felt that recommendations would then help parents to identify appropriate books for the children. In the Valleys, a few participants were aware of a local author but had never seen any of his books in local shops.

I'd like to see them sold in like Tesco's and Asda's because I buy everything in Tesco's and Asda's if I'm there. So if they were on the shelf . . . (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

'If you've read this one by David Walliams, you'll like this one by the Welsh [author]' . . . 'Oh, that should be the right thing I think!'; and then you just have to build up an impression that way. But we wouldn't know unless they start doing those comparisons. (M, Cardiff, 7-11)

However, there was occasional uncertainty over how trustworthy online reviews or ratings could be. For example, one participant recalled purchasing a series of English language books based on an accompanying online review but was subsequently disappointed with the books.

5. Younger children and bilingual books

5.1 Views on different ways of presenting English language content in Welsh language books

As reported earlier in this document, choosing books was sometimes seen as relatively less of a problem with younger children (especially those aged 0-2) as pictures were often considered as important to the child as the text. They attracted the children but also helped the parent to understand what was happening in the story.

I can put it together if I see the pictures and the phrases type of thing. (M, RCT, 3-7)

[My wife] found somebody who was selling a load of Welsh books on Facebook and she thought they look quite simple. This was when our daughter was about three and so she just wanted something with bright colours and pictures. Something that was quite easy for her to understand. (M, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

At the end of the focus groups, participants were shown a number of examples of different ways books treated bilingualism for younger readers. On the whole, they agreed that bilingual books with the English in smaller font size and less prominent on the page helped the child to focus on the Welsh while enabling the parent to follow the story in English. The examples shown in the groups of Deg Plentyn Bychan, with its small font size in English, was widely liked. Similarly, some participants appreciated the way the English was printed in a smaller font in a David Walliams book they were shown. Some also liked how it emphasised in bold specific words in Welsh and English so parents could see exactly what certain Welsh words meant.

[Recalling a book at home] it's something about like a snake, the Welsh words were like all wriggly and she'd have to follow it but the English was just plain text at the bottom just for me to read, so she knew not to read that bit and she just followed the bold print. It stood out more for her. (F, RCT, 3-7)

[Deg Plentyn] It's spaced out quite well, and it's emphasising sort of key Welsh words, the English is smaller font and set right out of the way as well. . . . There's space for the text as it's slightly away from the pictures on most of the pages so it's not all condensed. . . . It feels soft, that kind of, . . . it's not imposing. (M, RCT, 3-7)

In slight contrast, a number of participants commenting on the Pip y Pengwin Bach book liked how this format did not have a translation on each page but instead provided English content at the back of the book. It was expected by these participants to be less distracting for the child and resulted in clear, uncluttered pages. The ability to be able to listen to the book via a website (highlighted with a 'sticker' effect) was considered useful although some doubted they would take these steps in reality. The book also contained topic areas to discuss with the child which was appreciated.

[Pip y Pengwin.] Again, it has got the English translation on the back as well so you can actually follow it, . . . look on the back and check it which is good. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

We don't talk Welsh at home. So, all those additional active words and that, he is not as confident perhaps as other children. I think if I could have something like this to be able to develop my own skills but be asking him questions in Welsh at home, he might talk a bit more about it, express himself. (F, Wrexham, 7-11)

However, a small number thought it might be slightly disruptive to have to flip backwards and forwards to check the meaning of the Welsh. Exploring the format further, the fact that the inside cover could be opened out while the child read was liked by some, when considered further.

Despite appreciating bilingual books, pronunciation of Welsh words was still regarded a challenge by some. These participants did not want to pronounce words incorrectly to the child or feel uncertain about the pronunciation the child was using. Adding to this point, it was found on occasion that alliteration in children's books could be difficult to comprehend, for example in *The Gruffalo* and *Room on the Broom*. As a result, the example contained in the book *First Welsh Words* (shown in the group) was often liked for its emphasis on how to pronounce words as well providing the translation.

F: Oh, this bit is good. It says the pronunciation as well. F: Oh Wow! F: That's good! . . . That is a great idea. Never seen that before. . . . Think I'll take that one home with me! (South Gwynedd, 3-7)

Even reading Welsh books that I'm reading to my children I'm really confused sometimes by the language and the words, and then if I try and translate it in English it doesn't make sense at all. (F, RCT, 3-7)

My son is bringing his own reading books home now so I can sort of get the gist of the story but I struggle sometimes with the pronunciations. (F, RCT, 3-7)

Consequently, some participants requested help with pronouncing words in the story. It could be contained at the back of book, they suggested, for example with a 'pronunciation key' for books aimed at younger children.

I don't want to read the words wrong, or he says it in a certain way and goes 'oh, hang on, I don't think it's like that'. . . . I don't know whether it would be a note at the back of the book sort of, how to sound out words correctly. (F, RCT, 3-7)

One parent explained how she tried to avoid buying bilingual books for her four and five year old having spoken with a teacher about what was best for their Welsh. This approach made it difficult for her to 'build what the story and book is about' with supported reading.

For slightly older children, the suggestion was made in one group for books to contain translations in the back of any new or potentially more challenging phrases within the story.

Further ideas put forward reflected those made above in section 4.2 (e.g. a glossary or accessing supporting information in English via a QR code / online).

When prompted on the subject, participants tended to feel that bilingual books should attempt to reflect the rhyme and meter of the original. After all, as some concluded, 'the books are for children, they're not for us'. This was particularly considered the case for books aimed at younger children where translation precision was deemed relatively less important than the 'fun factor'.

I think [rhyme and meter] is important, more than anything, less that, for me, I understand it, and more that they enjoy it. Therefore, I personally would say that I prefer it to have a flow and a fun factor. (F, South Gwynedd, 3-7)

I think for the children it is more important that it flows and that it is rhythmic than it is for us to be able to translate it exactly. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

Relating specifically to Wcw magazine, some parents initially could not grasp its format with the pull-out English language support section. One participant with no Welsh language skills admitted she had no idea what the magazine was about and had not noticed that the insert was in English. A number commented, for example, that the print would be too small for the children to read. The content was believed by one parent to be too difficult for her five year old to read independently and that she would prefer to have bilingual content on the page. Countering this point, however, another parent thought that the absence of English on the page would encourage the child and parent to focus more on attempting to understand the Welsh ('a good tool for an adult').

My five year old definitely couldn't read that. So, I think that is not so helpful for the age group it's aimed at. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

As a Welsh learner, it is quite helpful having Welsh, the English translation that is away so you try your best to translate it yourself. (F, Cardiff, 7-11)

In a few cases, participants had subscribed to the magazine. One parent had found the English language insert useful and appreciated that it was separate so that the child could focus on the Welsh. A couple of other parents, however, had found that their children 'didn't really read it': a participant recalled how she had become frustrated with the format of the English language insert which was sometimes lost or ripped. The small font size was not thought to help with ease of use either.

Regardless of its approach to bilingualism, the Twm Tomato format tended to be a little confusing for parents with the text written upside down at the top of the pages.

6. Conclusions

Based on this qualitative research, parents with limited or little Welsh language skills were drawn to choosing popular children's books translated from English into Welsh. In addition to being popular with the children, this choice helped to minimise the steps required to decide on what books would be age appropriate and enjoyable to read. This familiarity also helped them to support their children.

Even so, the research found that it was still sometimes a struggle to identify appropriate titles for their children; and that they would appreciate more support in this respect. Parents with older children in particular highlighted how they would welcome this kind of help. As the children's Welsh language skills developed, some parents found the level of Welsh spoken to be moving beyond their own skills – so help in choosing books and with supporting their children's reading became ever more important. They tended to feel that these needs were not fully met.

A short summary in English, which could be in different formats, would help parents to decide whether it was worth paying that bit extra for a book that will be good value and enjoyable for the child. More recommendations would help to reinforce this decision. These points become more important the older the child is. However, it is still key to some to be able to inspect a book in order to evaluate its illustrations, volume of text and whether it is bilingual.

The research indicates that there is an appetite among these parents to be able to share sources, recommendations and reviews with other parents. This desire was illustrated by comments some made on how useful they had found the focus group discussions.

The groups also appeared to act as a catalyst to some to be more proactive with seeking out Welsh language books and, on occasion, to be more engaged with their children's reading at home. Social media (e.g. Facebook) would provide a familiar platform on which to create and promote group pages for these parents. Targeting parents with limited or little Welsh language skills would help them to feel more included in the Welsh-medium environment as well. Some did not feel that they were fully part of the school setting and circles, for example.

In terms of sourcing Welsh language books, online was a common starting point when proactively looking for books. Those in South Gwynedd felt on the whole that there were sufficient options to encounter Welsh language books, especially on the high street, although making the right choice was not necessarily so straightforward.

Elsewhere, and more so in Wrexham and RCT, participants did not feel so well catered for, unless looking online. Even then awareness of websites that sold Welsh language books was often limited. This may in part reflect the more reactive approach to buying Welsh language books some described.

This situation in turn suggests there may be room to improve the promotion of websites that sell Welsh language books, with regular nudges to these parents on the importance of

supporting effectively children's Welsh reading at home – and what this looks like. Continued promotion of and linking in with Welsh Government's 'Education begins at home' initiative could act as a channel in this respect. A section on the Welsh language and Welsh books could be created within the group pages as well. (At the time of writing, its Facebook page is promoting the Tric a Chlic app to help with Welsh language pronunciation.) Given their widespread use, libraries might also be a useful channel for promoting more widely Welsh language books, purchasing sources and Welsh language authors.

Awareness of and engagement with original Welsh language books was low among these parents. It was not so much the case that they were actively choosing to avoid buying these books, but that they had not previously given it any thought. The research findings indicate that there is an interest in discovering original Welsh language authors and / or books; and a degree of guilt in some instances that such books were not considered. There is potential with communications and marketing to tap into the value associated with original Welsh language books, for example helping children to connect with Welsh culture and developing their Welsh language skills with content that flows, exposes them to idioms and so on.

While not conclusive, there is a suggestion from the research that what parents perceive to be original Welsh language books, brought home from school, give the impression of slightly dated and less engaging content. This may be an area to explore further.

Although parents may be the purchasers of Welsh language books for their children, instances were described in these research discussions where children reportedly decided which books to choose with only minimal parental input. Children therefore need to be enthused with original Welsh language titles in the first place given the influence they can have on the purchasing process. Influencers among peers at school could play an active role in this respect.

Finally, it is worth noting that some parents were learners as well and viewed reading with their children as a chance to improve their own skills. This insight could be explored further in the context of Welsh Government's ambition for one million Welsh speakers by 2050. One of its aims, for example, is to provide 'support - we need sound foundations for the language to grow. We want the building blocks, from dictionaries to digital tools, to be developed to help people live their lives through the medium of Welsh, and a varied and relevant Welsh language media'.