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ARFOR 2 programme:

Evaluation, Monitoring, and Learning

Initial Report and Baseline

Executive Summary



ARFOR
CREU GWAITH - CEFNOGI'R IAITH

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Introduction

The three main objectives for our work researching and evaluating ARFOR 2 are:

1. To create a framework to monitor the work streams in the four counties
2. To evaluate the ARFOR programme's impact, its processes and the individual work streams
3. To conduct research to learn more about the connection between the Economy and Language and disseminate this learning more widely.

The Initial Report and Baseline set the context for the evaluation by providing a detailed exploration of the rationale, presenting background information which underpins the programme, exploring the delivery model and providing an Evaluation Framework (i.e. our plan for carrying out the evaluation and other research elements for the remainder of the period). The report also presents early findings and recommendations for improvements.

A partnership of four organisations is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation and learning element:

- Wavehill: a social and economic research company will take the lead on the monitoring and evaluation work.
- Academics from Aberystwyth University: experts in the relationship between economy and language will lead the 'Learning' element.
- Etic Lab: a research consultancy at the forefront of digital technologies will assist the data collection element to measure the programme's success.
- Schema: corporate communication experts will lead on the sharing learning element.

Our Initial Report is based on three key research activities:

- Scoping interviews with programme officers, delivery partners, and other key stakeholders.
- Desk research including a review of the programme's core documentation and statistical analysis to establish the baseline for the socio-economic-linguistic profile of the region.
- Academic research in the field of rural out-migration and return migration including a review of research literature and two workshops with experts.

Profile of the region

Our statistical analysis reviewed the linguistic, social and economic profile of the region in order to establish the baseline of the programme.

Language

Linguistically, data from the last three Censuses shows a worrying trend with a 13% reduction in the percentage who speak Welsh in the region, compared to a 14% reduction nationally. At a more local level, the trend is more worrying in Carmarthenshire which has seen a reduction of 21% while the situation is much better in Gwynedd and Anglesey (a reduction of 7% each).

On one level, it can be questioned why a specific programme is needed for this region considering that there is not much difference between the region's pattern and the national pattern. The main difference is that the decline in ARFOR means the loss of communities where the majority speak Welsh. Indeed, 8% of such communities were lost in the region between 2011 and 2021.

Migration patterns

For the purpose of describing out-migration trends in the ARFOR area we chose two areas which ARFOR people tend to out-migrate to them, namely to Cardiff and England.

There was a pattern of 'net' out-migration (i.e. more leaving than entering) to Cardiff until the most recent year. The constant level of out-migration to England is much higher than the figures to Cardiff, but at the same time the immigration figures are also much higher resulting in constant net immigration.

In analysing net migration statistics and the ability to speak Welsh, a negative relationship can be seen between progress in the language over the years and net out-migration trends to Cardiff and England. In other words, there is a correlation between fewer Welsh speakers and places where net out-migration takes place, i.e. the greater the net out-migration to Cardiff and England the lower the growth in language ability. This supports the rationale behind the programme (i.e. that reducing the levels of out-migration to Cardiff and England would have a positive effect on the Welsh language).

Economic and social factors

In assessing the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data, it becomes clear that although the ARFOR region has a low number of areas which fall under the category of most deprivation, the region performs much worse when looking at some of the individual domains such as access to services and housing.

Looking at the economic statistics, it shows that GVA per head and GDHI per head are slightly lower than the national level.

Overall, we see that job opportunities in the ARFOR area are proportional to the trend in Wales, but with more self-employed and more dependent on the public sector, while there is a higher proportion of micro businesses and fewer large businesses. Salary levels are also slightly lower than the national average. It is important to note that there is a lack of robustness in the data at county level. Nevertheless, it is suggested that economic opportunities within the region, the variety in opportunities available, and availability of services are worse than the national levels.

Young people's attitudes

Research carried out by academics such as Mike Woods and Patrick Utz from Aberystwyth University offers a picture of the attitudes of young people living in rural areas of Wales. The following are some of the main findings arising from the survey's overall (aggregate) data:

- 75% of young people enjoy living in rural Wales.
- Only 22% of young people agree that employment opportunities in their local area are good and 61% are concerned about being able to find a suitable job.
- 59% of young people are concerned about being able to afford to buy a house in their local area.
- Only 26% of young people agree that public services in their local area meet their needs.
- Only 27% of young people agree that social and cultural opportunities in their local area are good.
- 81% of young people think that they will need to move away from their local area for education, training or work.

- Only 18% of young people anticipate that they will continue living in their local area over the next five years; 42% expect to move outside Wales in this period.

Given the objectives of the ARFOR programme, it is significant that a detailed analysis of the survey's results suggests that language is a factor which may shape young people's attitudes towards the idea of living in the more rural areas of Wales. However, it is noted that most respondents who were first-language Welsh speakers think they will need to move from their local area to find employment, education or somewhere to live.

The programme's aim

The clear aim of the ARFOR programme is to address the linguistic and economic challenges facing the region where the Welsh language is declining and where opportunities are scarce. This challenge of a decline in the number of Welsh speakers and the loss of Welsh strongholds is at the root of the whole programme. Central to the programme's rationale are two main assumptions. Firstly, it is presumed that this decline is mainly due to migration patterns (there is evidence to show that this is a factor). Secondly, it is presumed that these migrations are driven by a lack of economic opportunities (again there is some evidence to support this, but the picture is slightly more complex).

The purpose of the programme is to develop 'economic' methods to create more and better jobs in Welsh strongholds, thereby supporting the continuation of the Welsh language. But perhaps what is not clear enough in the programme's literature is that this is a pilot to trial operating methods in

order to learn from different interventions which can link economic development with the viability of the Welsh language. To achieve this, it is important to position the programme within the wider policy framework of the Welsh Government, the region and the local authorities.

Theory of change

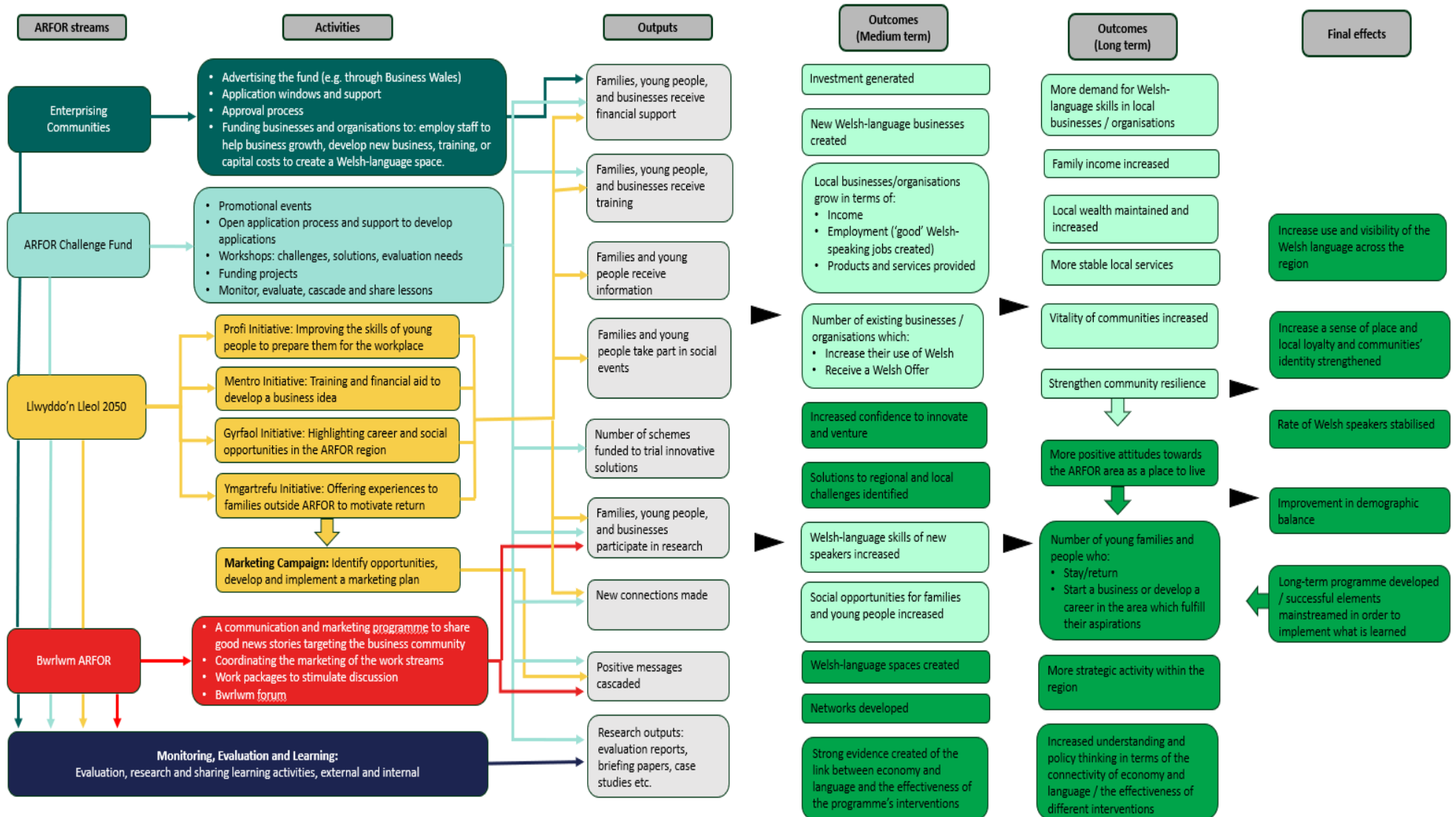
Our interpretation of ARFOR 2's Theory of Change can be seen on the next page.

The graphic presents the main ARFOR 2 activities grouped into work streams, and it shows the causal chain between the activities and the outputs. The Llwyddo'n Lleol stream shows the four different 'initiatives' and how they were used to feed the marketing campaign, the main purpose of the work stream. It also shows how all the work streams feed the monitoring, evaluation and learning element, this being the main purpose of the whole programme, according to a number of stakeholders.

Overall, the outputs are expected to lead to a series of medium- and long-term outcomes. Beyond the direct outcomes for businesses and individuals, there are two main outcomes which are more strategic:

1. The piloting effect – generate learning which can increase understanding and policy thinking and, as a result, develop a long-term programme / mainstream successful elements
2. The marketing effect – using programme 'content' to promote the opportunities available when living in the region in order to change attitudes and encourage more to stay / return.

Rationale Model for ARFOR 2 work streams



Theory of Change for the ARFOR 2 programme

Rationale				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion of people who can speak Welsh in the ARFOR area has fallen significantly over the last decades. It is assumed that one of the main causes is a lack of economic opportunities to keep Welsh speakers (families and young people in particular) to stay in the area, as well as a lack of social opportunities. At the same time, it is recognised that no strong evidence exists to confirm this. ARFOR's purpose is to (primarily) trial economic interventions to increase the resilience of the language in its strongholds by reversing the loss of young Welsh speakers from the area and, possibly more importantly, to learn more about the connection between economy and language. 				
Inputs and Resources				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £11 million from the Welsh Government, input from ARFOR Board and experience, structure and delivery model from ARFOR 1 The input of other stakeholders as part of the engagement groups and the expertise of the delivery partners 				
Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (Medium Term)	Outcomes (Long Term)	Final effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management procedures, coordination, and sharing of good practice Introduce the work streams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Enterprising Communities ➢ Llwyddo'n Lleol ➢ Challenge Fund ➢ Bwrlwm ARFOR ➢ Monitoring, evaluation and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families, young people, and businesses receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ financial support ➢ training ➢ information ➢ social events Schemes to pilot innovative solutions Families, young people, and businesses take part in research New connections are made Positive messages cascaded Research outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment generated New Welsh-speaking businesses created Existing businesses are expanded and good jobs for Welsh speakers created Businesses / organisations increase their use of the Welsh language Increased confidence to innovate and venture Solutions to regional and local challenges identified Welsh-language skills of new speakers increased Social opportunities for families and young people increased Welsh-language spaces created Networks developed Strong evidence created about the link between economy / language and the effectiveness of the interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for Welsh-language skills in local businesses / organisations Increase in family income and local wealth More stable local services Increase in the vitality of communities Strengthen community resilience More positive attitudes towards the ARFOR area as a place to live in More staying / returning to the area Increased strategic activity in the region Increased policy thinking about economy / language connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use and visibility of the Welsh language Increase a sense of place and local loyalty Stabilise the rate of Welsh speakers Improvement in demographic balance Develop a long-term programme / mainstream successful elements

Assumptions	Barriers	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of economic opportunity is one of the main factors behind young people’s out-migration patterns; therefore better opportunities for good jobs would help to convince them to stay or return to their indigenous communities • People who have (or are about to) out-emigrate in fact want to live in the area or are willing to be persuaded to do so • The Welsh language’s position and the nature of the challenges facing the language are consistent across ARFOR and that relatively uniform interventions will be equally effective in the linguistic, economic and social contexts of the four counties • The support (e.g. business grants) is going to create Welsh-language jobs • The support reaches the target audience (i.e. people who were about to leave / not intending to return) • The marketing campaign appeals to the target audience • The support adds value to existing services • The intervention is sufficient to produce the outcomes (e.g. create a new business) • The schemes being piloted are suitable, produce useful learning, and that the best are mainstreamed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale proves to be incorrect • The scale of the intervention (in terms of resource and time) is too limited to produce the type of learning and effect hoped for • The interventions duplicate existing services, or duplicate between work streams • The resource is not targeted effectively or to the most appropriate people / organisations • Weakness of research / data collection means robust evidence is not created • Ambiguity in the programme’s processes i.e. in terms of what is meant by Welsh spaces, good jobs, the target audience etc. leads to losing sight of what is being attempted • Lack of engagement with different stakeholders prevents innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of design elements which distinguishes the programme from other projects and include elements which are more bespoke to the purpose of ARFOR • Ensuring a clear link between the activities and the planned outcomes through the use of the principles and special conditions • Processes and training to help participants collect useful data • Close collaboration with external stakeholders and academics in order to design and target the support more effectively • Flexibility to tailor the interventions to local needs • Attract new perspectives by engaging with stakeholders from different backgrounds.

The Theory of Change is used to create the Evaluation Framework which will inform the next stages of the evaluation..

Early findings and recommendations

Whilst we have not yet started the research fieldwork with ARFOR 2 participants yet, and therefore cannot make an assessment on the performance of the programme's delivery, we can present some early findings about aspects such as the programme's rationale and design following our detailed review of the documentation, wider research, and interviews with key officers and partners.

The programme's rationale

We believe that the rationale for the programme is based on a solid foundation. It is based on the indisputable fact that there is a clear decline in the percentage of Welsh speakers in the language's strongholds. Responding to that challenge is the essence of the ARFOR 2 programme, focusing on the assumptions that the out-migration of young people is largely responsible for the decline seen and that the main reason for out-migration is a lack of job opportunities.

There is fairly strong evidence to support the first assumption. Our statistical analysis shows that there is a correlation between fewer Welsh speakers and places where net out-emigration occurs. Furthermore, we see in the findings of the 'Young People in Rural Wales' survey that the vast majority of Welsh speakers say they expect to have to move from their local area for education, training or work. This also supports the second of the assumptions. At the same time, it is important to note that the majority of the survey respondents also referred to other factors, such as concerns about being able to afford to buy a house in their local area and the inability of local social opportunities and public services to meet their needs.

Another basic assumption at the heart of the programme is that those who have out-migrated (or are about to leave) want to live in the area or are willing to be persuaded to do so. In this case, the wider research again supports this to some extent. The research suggests that a group of young people (approximately half of the young people in rural Wales according to the research) can be described as 'Intending Leavers' (i.e. they are keen to out-migrate regardless of the economic and social opportunities), but that a similar percentage (slightly less) are described as 'Potential Stayers' (i.e. a group that would prefer to stay and live in their local area if the circumstances are acceptable). There is also a third group, 'Likely Stayers' who wish to continue living in their local area throughout their lives and these represent around 10% of the people in the study.

Recommendation 1: This methodology can be used to identify which group describes the programme's participants and if the model can be used to target the main audience of interest, namely the 'Potential Stayers'.

Recommendation 2: Looking to the long-term, the research suggests that two different types of intervention or focus are needed: one for the 'potential stayers' in order to solve some of the challenges they face, and the other for 'intending leavers' to try to change attitudes about the region and its image.

When considering return migration, it was noted that people's motivations were mainly related to social considerations (e.g. being close to circles of friends), practical, family (e.g. help raising children) and personal (e.g. being close to a partner), with economic factors a secondary consideration for these.

Recommendation 3: The research suggests that economic interventions are more appropriate for the out-migration rather than return migration challenge. This should be an important consideration for policy making and planning for future interventions.

Programme design and strategic fit

Although economic factors are an important part of the wider picture which motivates out-migration, the general conclusion of the research was that out-migration among young people is a phenomenon driven by a range of different intersecting factors. This means that we should be wary of discussing out-migration, or developing policy interventions which try to respond to it, with the assumption that it is possible to focus on one or two key factors.

Recommendation 4: Whilst there are grounds for specific intervention focusing on one element which drives out-migration (namely economic factors), it is important to ensure that this is delivered alongside services to meet other needs (such as housing, social factors etc.). Incorporating the special condition to take account of the housing challenge is a good step in that direction.

The special conditions, together with the operating principles and other elements of the programme's design, are evidence of a more sophisticated and refined programme compared to the programme's first iteration. A more bespoke and holistic programme, which also targets social elements, can be seen in the design of the second iteration which responds to the research evidence and in its difference to other programmes such as Business Wales and Career Wales

More generally it is noted that the programme adds value due to the dual, equal focus on economy and language. Stakeholders believe that this is not the case for other programmes, while the focus on research and piloting also differentiates it from other programmes. The programme works closely with other services, partly to avoid duplication. Despite this, we feel that some elements of the programme's activities include too much overlap and, possibly, duplication of mainstream services such as Careers Wales.

Recommendation 5: Close collaboration with other services should continue to avoid duplication as much as possible and identify opportunities to mainstream elements, e.g., the Business Wales offer can target their entrepreneurship scheme in a similar way to ARFOR in the region.

Recommendation 6: Careful consideration should be given as to whether a sufficiently strong case can be made for each activity in terms of added value.

Another risk when looking at the work streams is that there is too much overlap / duplication between them within the programme, and an even more serious risk of undermining each other's activities. The main example of this is the risk of duplication between the marketing campaigns of Llwyddo'n Lleol and Bwrlwm ARFOR.

Recommendation 7: Consideration should be given as to whether the lines to differentiate the different marketing campaigns within ARFOR are clear enough, and that the use of different brands and messages within the programme does not undermine what they are trying to achieve.

It was clear from the documentation and the scoping interviews that there is acknowledgment that learning is the programme's main aim, rather than short-term outcomes for a relatively small number of individuals and businesses. However, there is a gap between that recognition and the main aim, and the four strategic objectives identified in the Action Plan.

Recommendation 8: The strategic objectives and the main aim should be reconsidered, and more emphasis should perhaps be placed on what was communicated during the scoping interviews, i.e. that the programme is a pilot and therefore the main aim is to produce research findings and lessons which can guide interventions for future years.

In addition, for the data collected to provide useful evidence, it will be necessary to ensure that the data collection and storage methods are robust enough (recognising that the purpose is not to carry out scientific research to the highest standard).

Recommendation 9: It will be necessary to review the data captured and ensure that the processes are robust enough for the data to be useful for a wider research purpose.

Although ARFOR's second iteration has increased in its sophistication, it is possible that this needs to be taken a step further. For example, experts in the field argue that it is necessary to be careful not to treat those who stay or return as general categories and that models on life trajectories should be used to understand the migration decisions of different individuals.

Recommendation 10: In general, when thinking about developing interventions in the future which try to respond to rural out-migration, it is necessary to be aware of these trends and address lessons from the research presented.

There are also other examples where the programme would benefit from further refinement such as having a better definition for 'Welsh-language spaces' and having a clear definition of the target audience. In this regard, consideration should be given as to whether the programme is for out-migrants or return migrants and are different types of interventions required for the different groups? Similarly, how open is the programme for different levels of Welsh fluency, or for Welsh speakers from outside the region who are considering migration, but have never lived in the region before? Likewise, in terms of

businesses, should specific sectors be targeted which are likely to lead to a better economic impact for the area?

Recommendation 11: Consideration should be given to agreeing a consistent definition for 'Welsh-language spaces'.

Recommendation 12: A clear definition of the target audience should be created and how this varies in terms of different work streams and activities.

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