

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin



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MEITHRIN

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin is the leading Welsh 'early years' specialists that aims to give every pre-school child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years experiences through the medium of Welsh. Sian Owen describes its work.

"Every child has the right to the best possible start in life. When a child has special needs, it is vital that these needs are correctly identified as early as possible. It is equally important that effective early intervention is available for the child, together with emotional and practical support for the parents" (Welsh Assembly Government:2004)

SENCO

In order to ensure early intervention one member of staff in each "cylch meithrin" playgroup is responsible for ensuring that the needs of these children are met. This person is often referred to, as the "SENCO"-Special Educational Needs Coordinator. (In accordance with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales: Welsh Assembly Government 2002).

These individuals will work closely with their local 'Referral

Scheme for Children with Additional Needs'. Historically these Referral Schemes were established with funding from the All Wales Strategy (1983) for children with learning disabilities. Today the schemes receive additional funding from Cymorth, Social Services, Health Authorities, Education Authorities, BBC Children in Need and other local and national grant giving trusts. This has now created a wider remit, ensuring that children with any additional needs receive the required support to participate fully in their local 'cylch meithrin'-playgroup e.g children with physical disabilities, behavioral difficulties, sensory impairment etc.

Referrals

These Schemes are either managed by Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Mudiad in partnership with other agencies or by the Wales PPA. They operate an open referral system

i.e. a parent can contact the Coordinator directly if they have concerns about their child's development or alternatively the 'cylch's SENCO can make a referral with the parents permission. Individual professionals within the local community can also make a referral e.g. Health Visitor, Speech and Language Therapist, Pediatricians etc. which ensures a consistent cross agency approach to meet the needs of the individual child. Each 'Scheme for Children with Additional Needs' employs a Coordinator who has the responsibility for liaising with the child, family; the local playgroup and the other statutory agencies involved. The level of support offered to the family, child and group will depend on individual needs and circumstances but can include:

- Funding for an extra assistant
- Provision of transport to and from the group



- Equipment
- Payment of fees
- Training

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin is committed to the principle of inclusion. A child with additional needs is no different from any other child-“they are a child first” (Children’s Act 1989)

Law yn Llaw

One such referral scheme is “Law yn Llaw” and Meir Williams the Co-ordinator explains the work of the scheme which operates in Merthyr; Rhondda Cynon Taf and Caerffili.

On receipt of a referral an acknowledgement letter is sent to the parent/s and a home visit is arranged within 10 days. The purpose of the visit is to discuss the child’s needs and identify the most suitable playgroups. Playgroup visit/s are then

arranged with the child and parent/s meeting with the play leader and support worker, facilitated by the Co-ordinator. With the parents/carers approval, a start date is agreed and the referrer receives notification with details of the placement.

Advice

The Portage Advisor provides a valuable contribution; offering advice and guidance on preparing a play plan for the child, ensuring continuity both within the home and playgroup setting. Physio-therapists also make a contribution by ensuring that the correct moving and handling procedures are followed by playgroup staff for children with a physical disability. Speech and Language Therapists and Educational Psychologists also liaise closely between the family and the ‘Cylch Meithrin’-playgroup. To

ensure that the service ‘Law yn Llaw’ offers continues to meet the child’s needs; monitoring visits are arranged by the Co-ordinator each term.

Funding

The playgroup can provide one to one support for a child, if required which is funded and monitored by the scheme. In addition the scheme can fund licensed taxis and costs are met up to five miles per session for families who have no other means of transport. Also play group fees are paid by the scheme if families are in receipt of Income Support provided they are not in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. “Law yn Llaw” maintains successful partnerships with:-

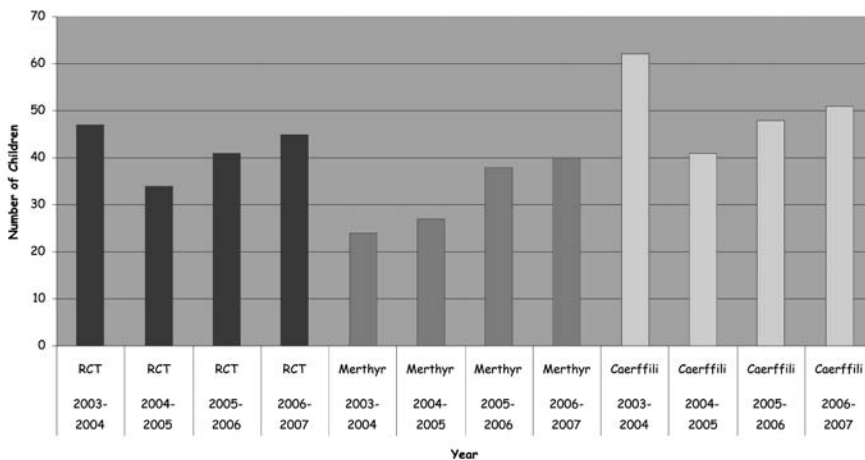
- Children’s Services
- Wales PPA
- Portage Home Advisory Team
- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Physio-therapists
- Community Health Services
- SNAP Cymru

The following graph shows the number of children supported by the scheme over the last few years.

These children show consistent improvements in concentration; social skills; gross and fine motor skill; confidence; speech and language skills; mobility and independence. The following comments from

Llais

Children Accessed Playgroup



parents/carers; play group leaders and monitoring officers testify to these improvements:-

“very little experience of mixing with other children and poor social skills. The playgroup has played an important role in our child’s development”

“built his confidence. Has become more independent and learned to share and take turn”

“has benefited in everyway possible”

“communication has improved”

“my child has benefited in every way. Ysgol Feithrin was a positive experience for him and us a family”.

“is enjoying all aspects of the playgroup – encouraged to wear his hearing aid – to help with his progress in speech and language”

“not as clingy as she was – not fully independent – speech unclear but is making effort when prompted”

“is now standing unsupported – speech has improved – interacting with peers a happy child with a good sense of humour”

With assured realistic funding, families can look forward to a continuing high quality service for their children in their pre-school years.

The Referral Scheme Coordinators, across Wales, meet regularly to receive on-going training and share good practice supported by Sian Owen Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin’s Director for Inclusion who also arranges training for the Cylchoedd staff on all issues regarding inclusion.

If you would like further information regarding the service in your area contact Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin free on 08000 11 22 33; email: post@mym.co.uk or contact Sian Owen directly at: Swyddfa Gogledd Ddwyrain Cymru; Uned B/Unit B; Pentref Busnes Ial/ Yale Business Village; Ellice Way; Wercsam LL13 7YL. Tel: 07814192294

