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Evaluation of Pori Drwy Stori Nursery (Oracy): Final Report

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Acknowledgements

List of abbreviations

ALN	Additional Learning Needs
BTC	BookTrust Cymru
EAL	English as an Additional Language
eFSM	eligibility for Free School Meals
FS	Foundation Stage
FPF	Foundation Phase Framework
FSM	Free School Meals
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LA	Local Authority
LLC	Language Literacy and Communication
LNF	Literacy and Numeracy Framework
PSD	Personal and Social Development
PDS	Pori Drwy Stori
PDSN	Pori Drwy Stori Nursery
PDSR	Pori Drwy Stori Reception
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy
SBR	Shared book reading
SDP	School Development Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
WAL	Welsh as an Additional Language

Contents

Table of tables

Table of figures

Executive summary

Pori Drwy Stori Nursery (PDSN) (Oracy) is a Foundation Phase bilingual programme designed to support oracy outcomes and parental engagement in learning for children aged 3-4 in Wales. The PDSN initiative focuses on supporting the development of oracy-related skills through sharing books and rhymes. The programme is also designed to support the development of a positive home-school link and encourage parents and carers to play an active role in their child's learning when they start school. This report is an evaluation on the delivery and impact of PDSN in schools and settings during the Spring and Summer terms of 2018-19.

PDSN focuses on two areas of oracy-related activity: sharing rhymes and sharing books. A bespoke set of resources, designed to be used across half a term, were developed for each activity area:

- Each child received a bilingual rhyme calendar to take home along with Welsh and English rhyme sheets to be used at home and in the school/setting. Two activity sheets were also included. Practitioners also received guidance with ideas on how to use the resource in schools and settings. This resource aimed to increase rhyme sharing activity between children and parents/ carers

- *'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr'* Each child received their own copies of two bilingual (Welsh and English) books. Supporting resources encouraged the use of the books at home and in the school/setting. This resource aimed to increase book sharing and talk related to book sharing between children and parents/ carers.

Research Approach

The evaluation sought to investigate the impact of the PDSN programme in relation to its three specific aims:

- To improve oracy-related outcomes for children;
- To increase parents'/carers' engagement with their child's learning, specifically in relation to activities which support oracy outcomes; and
- To increase practitioners' knowledge and understanding of, and practice relating to, how they can improve oracy outcomes for children, especially by engaging parents and carers.

The evaluation is based on a mixed-method research approach utilising both qualitative and quantitative data along with primary and secondary research. It has also focussed on gaining perspectives of all key stakeholder groups comprising parents and carers of children involved in the intervention; practitioners delivering the intervention; and personnel from LA and regional educational consortia.

Quantitative data was gathered by means of a survey of parents and carers and the collection of formal pupil oracy data provided by schools and settings. These data were also collected in a group of schools and settings that were not part of the programme in order to act as a comparison group. This allows for a more robust assessment of impacts that can be attributed to the PDSN programme.

Qualitative data was gathered through telephone and online interviews with practitioners who were involved in delivering the PDSN Programme. Following on from the telephone interviews, site visits were made to a small number of schools and settings. During these visits, further interviews were conducted with practitioners, parents were interviewed individually or in small groups and where local circumstances allowed, nursey pupils were observed using the PDSN resources and a member of the school/setting leadership team was interviewed.

Key findings

The evaluation has been tasked with four key research questions, as follows:

1. To what extent does the PDSN programme meet its stated aims and outcomes?
2. How is the programme delivered in practice and what factors contribute to impactful delivery?
3. To what extent does the programme support wider priorities and other initiatives in Wales?
4. How can the findings from this evaluation inform BookTrust's work more widely?

Below, we outline the key findings responding to each of these questions in turn, along with the sub-questions posed for the evaluation.

To what extent does the PDSN programme meet its stated aims and outcomes?

The evidence gathered from practitioners and parents/carers indicates that the PDSN programme exerts a modest, positive influence on a wide range of skills for children who participated in the programme.

Overall, there have been statistically significant improvements to children's oracy related outcomes during the programme period. There was also a small and positive effect size in relation to child oracy-related outcomes that may be attributed to the programme.

Analysis of the formal oracy outcomes revealed improvements during the programme period, most notably in children's expressive language. However, it is not possible within the framework of this evaluation to identify the extent to which these increases can be attributed solely to the programme.

Parents/carers who took part in focus groups felt that the PDSN resources had been useful in helping their child to develop speaking and listening skills along with increased interaction with children, supporting learning at home, involvement of siblings and enjoyment of reading.

Overall, the analysis was mixed with regards to improvements in parent/carer engagement in their children's learning. The first set of statements used in the parent /carer survey to explore parental engagement did not reveal improvements. However, other data from the survey does show positive impacts including that parents/carers read and talk about books more often following the intervention, along with reading books and sharing rhymes/songs in Welsh more often. Between 27% and 48% report that they do these things more since taking part in PDSN. Of those reporting they do these things more often, more than 90% attribute at least some of these increases to their involvement in PDSN.

Practitioners clearly believe there have been impacts in relation to parent/carer engagement and developing insight about the home learning environment:

- 75% of practitioners who took part in the telephone interviews reported that the PDSN programme had a positive impact on communication with the home.
- 67% said it created an opportunity to talk to parents/carers about the importance of speaking and listening with children.
- 42% said it provided them with additional feedback about the way parents/carers used books at home.
- 42% provided anecdotal evidence that the resource had encouraged parents who don't read regularly with their child, to share the books.

Practitioners also commented on how the PDSN resources had increased parental awareness of the importance of rhymes and books and stories for developing oracy. As a result of using the resources, practitioners felt there was a, "*better understanding of their value as resources for developing oracy skills,*" among parents.

Practitioners identified and developed new and increasingly effective ways of communicating with parents and carers and developing home school/setting links including using social media and organising workshops in some cases.

Practitioner comments display increased understanding of the role that rhymes, and song have in children's oracy development.

Practitioners who had used the Welsh texts reported impacts in relation to increasing the use of Welsh songs, rhymes and books with children through using the PDSN resources in Welsh and English medium schools.

What factors contribute to impact? Are there any contexts in which the programme is particularly successful/ has less impact?

There were greater improvements in **oracy-related outcomes** for children receiving resources up to March 2019 in comparison to those receiving them afterwards. Children receiving one of the two resources (typically '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*') made greater progress in oracy outcomes than those receiving both or none of the resources in that early period. However, the analysis also reveals a significantly higher increase in **parental engagement** among those receiving both resources up to March. In summary, the analysis of correlations between when the resources were received, and the outcomes generated reveal:

a) Receive one resource up to March = greater improvement in oracy-related outcomes

b) Receive both resources up to March = greater improvement in parent/carer engagement
c) Receive no resource up to March = less improvement on both measures

Further, those reporting that they often speak to practitioners about PDSN were statistically more likely to report increases in their parental engagement.

Practitioner responses suggest that settings who had not attended BTC information sessions or who had not received the Practitioner Guide were not confident in delivering the programme nor engaging with parents. Consequently, the programme was not viewed as positively by practitioners who had not received this support.

Are there areas where impact is stronger or weaker?

From the parent/carer data the greatest increase was in children's oracy-related skills and, children's ability to express themselves clearly when talking about books. This is followed by recognition of rhythm and rhyme[1], increased ability to talk and express themselves, and knowledge of different rhymes and/or songs.

Practitioner telephone interviews indicated that practitioners thought that the PDSN programme was beneficial in supporting oracy skills. Practitioners spoke of children's increased confidence, children demonstrating good listening skills by joining in and doing appropriate actions, children identifying the words that would come next in rhymes, and children modelling sharing the rhymes to other children.

Practitioners also commented on increased use of rhymes in classroom practice, improved parental engagement with schools/settings, parents more actively supporting their children, raised parental confidence to discuss the programme with practitioners, and an increase in focus on Welsh language rhymes and stories in some English medium schools.

On which children does the programme have the greatest impact?

The parent/carer survey data revealed that boys and children who were not from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (not eligible for FSM) made the most progress. The results about boys go against expected trends.

The results for children who are eFSM may be due to the programme reflecting existing trends rather than as a result of the programme itself. Some practitioner comments also contradicted this finding and suggested that children from lower income backgrounds and children who were not previously interested in books benefited from having free books provided. It must also be noted that the sample size for identifying the impact on children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds is very small.

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[1] Note: the measure on recognising rhythm and rhyme is drawn from the statement: "When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming" which is used in the Parent / Carer Survey.

Practitioners also noted specific improvements observed in EAL pupils and children with speech and language difficulties e.g. through increased confidence to join in with the rhymes.

How could the impact of the programme be improved in the future?

The impact of the programme could be improved by ensuring that practitioners fully understand the aims of the programme in regard of improving oracy outcomes.

Practitioners could also be encouraged to further develop new approaches to their practice based on the PDSN resources.

Do different settings face challenges in programme delivery? How could these challenges be mitigated?

Settings with high number of EAL parents faced challenges in explaining programme aims to parents and carers. It is important to ensure that all families feel included and can participate in their children's care and learning experiences in the setting. Interpreters were used to help overcome the language barriers and to explain to parents in some settings, and to establish engagement. The use of visuals in the form of pictures and photographs could help parents/carers to understand new information.

In a few settings the lack of IT resources in the home was mentioned as a barrier to using the supporting online resources. A possible mitigation could be to encourage IT access in public libraries or community centres where available.

In some schools and settings, practitioners commented that parents found the bilingual texts confusing. Parents could be further encouraged to use the PDSN website to help with understanding as the website contains Welsh language audio versions of the books.

There were challenges in some mixed age classes where some children became upset and felt left out as they were not eligible for the PDSN resources. All parents/carers in mixed aged classes in schools and settings need to be informed of eligibility criteria.

What support do settings need to deliver the programme effectively?

Practitioners are appreciative of the support offered by BTC to deliver the programme.

- Most schools and settings follow the PDSN guidance and like the flexibility within the programme.
- Practitioners reported that information sessions were useful in helping them to prepare for the programme; this meant that they were able to use the PDSN resources promptly when they were schools and settings.
- The majority of practitioners thought the BTC email support was good or very good.

How does variation in delivery affect the impact of the programme?

The parent/carer data suggests that when the resources were introduced separately and used over a longer period (e.g. half a term each), as recommended by BTC, there was a greater impact on oracy outcomes.

However, the parent/carer data also suggests that when both sets of resources were used over a shorter period, there were more likely to be reported increases in parental engagement. Combined, these findings suggest that to achieve the greatest impact in both areas (oracy and parental engagement), schools and settings should make sure that there is time to focus fully on each resource but also plan to use the resources over a concentrated period of time to maintain the momentum of parent/carer engagement.

There were no statistically significant differences in the impacts generated and no clear pattern of benefits based on whether the programme was introduced to families in person (meetings/drop off workshops) or not in person (letters, social media, school app).

There were no correlations between the level of parent/carer communication and the development of oracy-related outcomes. However, the data does show that the greater the level of communication, the greater the reported increases in parental engagement.

How can the findings from this evaluation inform BookTrust's work more widely?

PDSN is based on a core recommended structure which can be developed to suit the needs of different schools and settings. Practitioners emphasised the importance of programme flexibility, especially when supported by a recommended structure that built up over a period. Several practitioners said that as every institution is different and every cohort has differing needs, flexibility is vital e.g. *"you can fit it in around your timetable and families."*

The universal aspect of the programme was welcomed by many practitioners as all eligible children in a school/setting class were included. Children were enthusiastic about receiving the resources, and as all eligible children were given books to take home, the programme was more engaging. Practitioners felt that the free resources encouraged parents to spend time at home using them with children. In some locations, the resources inspired practitioners to reconsider how they introduced literacy and language in their curriculum.

A resource-based learning programme such as the PDSN programme is child-centred. Children are actively involved in using the resources at school/in the setting and at home. Resource-based learning is more impactful when planned and integrated into the school/setting curriculum and/or school development plan.

Reading for pleasure is influenced by reading and book sharing practices between practitioners and children, and children and parents/carers. Parents and practitioners commented on children's enjoyment of the PDSN programme books. Receiving books that they could take home and keep developed their interest, excitement and reading motivation.

The use of the PDSN resources improved children's confidence and increased the time spent reading in schools/settings.

Recommendations

Short term recommendations for 2019-20

- Explore options for alternative formats for information sessions in addition to face-to-face events e.g. online presentations or webinars, more flexible timings and more than one opportunity for practitioners to attend.
- Provide practitioners with a sample set of PDSN resources at the end of the information session.
- Provide additional guidance and/or online resources for teachers/practitioners to support parent/carer workshops which promote key oracy messages.
- Keep the personalised zip folder to hold the resources. Keep the format of the rhyme calendar to act as a prompt. Keep the activities and consider adding more or give suggestions for other learning activities.
- Provide a Welsh pronunciation guide with the Welsh resources for English medium schools.
- Encourage practitioners to organize workshops for parents as the initial introduction for the PDSN programme.

Longer term recommendations

- Provide more explicit advice to practitioners on how the resources can specifically support oracy outcomes for children. Provide more detailed guidance for practitioners on the importance of sharing books and the contribution that this can make to oracy skills so that they are more confident in sharing SBR messages with parents.
- Ensure all rhymes in the calendar have additional activity resources.
- Further explore the potential benefits of providing more guidance and ideas for curriculum planning and Areas of Learning based on the resources for practitioners.
- Provide more guidance for practitioners on planning increased reading for pleasure activities as a result of PDSN.
- Support practitioners to try new approaches to their practice in classrooms based on the PDSN resources, e.g. developing further resources based on the PDSN approach to extend rhymes and storytelling and SBR impact.
- Continue to use bilingual books and resources to support further engagement with the Welsh language.

Should the PDSN programme continue?

The evidence provided by practitioners is overwhelmingly favourable and appreciative of the PDSN programme. The vast majority of practitioners thought the resources were very suitable for children's interest and for home and school use. Although measuring oracy development and being able to attribute oracy development to one resource is challenging, a wide range

of skills are thought to develop through the programme. Children were reported to enjoy being able to take the books home and keep them. The activities were said to have been a good resource to help children realise that they can learn at home as well as at school. Being able to offer high quality resources in Welsh to children from non-Welsh speaking families was said to be another benefit. The programme is said to be accessible to parents and families and, according to one nursery practitioner, *"long may it continue, great resource, and enjoyed by all."*

There are also some positive, albeit modest, impacts found in the parent/carer survey and the vast majority of parents/carers reported they had used the resources and found them useful. The positive evidence of impact provided by practitioners and parents supports the view that this programme has significant value for those involved and thus should continue.

1 Introduction

Pori Drwy Stori Nursery (PDSN) (Oracy), is a Foundation Phase bilingual programme designed to support oracy outcomes and parental engagement in learning for children aged 3-4 in Wales. It is funded by the Welsh Government. The programme is intended to deliver upon three specific aims:

- to improve oracy-related outcomes for children;
- to increase parents'/carers' engagement with their child's learning, specifically in relation to activities which support oracy outcomes; and
- to increase practitioners' knowledge and understanding of, and practice relating to, how they can improve oracy outcomes for children, especially by engaging parents and carers.

The PDSN (Oracy) pilot programme was first piloted between October 2017 and February 2018 involving approximately 600 children in 19 schools and settings across Wales. The 2017-2018 pilot was evaluated by an external consultant, Mills (2018), with support from BookTrust Cymru.

PDSN is an extension of the Pori Drwy Stori Reception (PDSR) programme, which is available for every Reception child in Wales. Six resources (two per term) are sent directly to primary schools. PDSR inspires a love of books stories and rhymes and supports children to develop numeracy skills. The programme is designed to support parents/carers to play an active role in their child's learning and to help build a positive home-school link. The Nursery programme is designed to do the same.

This evaluation reports on the second phase of the extension to the PDSN programme.[2] The programme was rolled out to around 350 maintained and non-maintained nursery settings throughout Wales and was delivered to approximately 10,000 children aged 3-4, for use between January and May 2019. The PDSN (Oracy) programme focused on supporting the development of oracy-related skills through sharing books and rhymes. The programme was also designed to support the development of a positive home-school link and encourage parents and carers to play an active role in their child's learning when they start school.

The evaluation has been tasked with four key research questions, as follows:

1. To what extent does the PDSN programme meet its stated aims and outcomes?
2. How is the programme delivered in practice and what factors contribute to impactful delivery?
3. To what extent does the programme support wider priorities and other initiatives in Wales?
4. How can the findings from this evaluation inform BookTrust's work more widely?

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[2] The PDSN programme is funded by Welsh Government. This evaluation has been primarily funded by BookTrust with a small contribution from Welsh Government.

The findings from this report will be used to provide recommendations for how the PDSN programme resources could further increase impact and future delivery based on analysis of factors contributing to impact.

1.1   PDSN Resources

The bilingual resources that formed the PDSN programme were grouped into two sets: *'It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' and *'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr.'* Each child in the participating schools and settings received their own set of resources. The resources used in the PDSN programme are as follows:

Resource 1: *'It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm'*

- A plastic wallet with name sticker attached
- A rhyme calendar
- Five A5 English rhyme sheets
- Five A4 Welsh rhyme sheets
- Two activity sheets
- Five A3 English and five A3 Welsh rhyme posters for display in class/setting
- QR codes are provided on the posters and rhyme calendar to watch and listen to the rhymes on the PDSN website

Resource 2: *'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr'*

- Two bilingual rhyming books *'Ten Little Dinosaurs/Deg Deinosor Bach'* and *'Funny Bunnies Rain and Shine'/Cwning–od Glaw a Hindda'*
- Book Talk Leaflet
- Enjoying *'Funny Bunnies Rain and Shine'/Cwning–od Glaw a Hindda'* and *'Ten Little Dinosaurs/Deg Deinosor Bach'* together (two colourful sheets to help parents/carers enjoy reading with their child)
- Funny Bunnies and Finger Puppets Activates. Two activities related to the books
- Book Talk A3 Poster. An additional picture for children to talk about with their families
- Three feedback postcards to help develop and strengthen home-school/setting links
- QR codes on books to listen to the stories in Welsh on the PDSN website

Schools and settings were provided with both sets of resources and a Practitioner Guide.

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This evaluation is based on a mixed-method research approach utilising both qualitative and quantitative data along with primary and secondary research. It has also focussed on gaining the perspectives of all key stakeholder groups comprising of the parents and carers of children involved in the intervention; the teachers and practitioners delivering the intervention; and some representatives from an educational consortia level.

2.2 Impact evaluation

Whilst previous evaluations have sought to identify the impacts generated by PDSN and its sister programme PDSR, this is the first time a comparison group has been used. A comparison group gives us a better understanding of whether the outcomes can be attributed to the programme. This method can be described as an empirical impact evaluation[3] as it seeks to find out whether the programme has caused particular outcomes to occur by using the comparison group to estimate the counterfactual position i.e. what would have occurred without the intervention.

The study assesses the extent to which any observed change can be attributed to the intervention. It allows exploration of the 'programme effect' i.e. whether there has been a causal impact from the intervention over and above what could have occurred regardless of the intervention. Throughout the impact section of this report we refer to two sample groups:

- Intervention group i.e. the schools/settings and parents/carers who received the Pori resources; and
- Comparison group i.e. schools/settings and parents/carers who have not participated in the programme but have been recruited to support an assessment of the counterfactual position.

Additionally, formal oracy assessment data conducted by schools and nursery settings was collected from a small sample of schools/settings in both intervention and comparison groups to support parents/carers' self-reported findings. Naturally, the parent/carer surveys are based on their perception i.e. not objective data, thus the evaluation sought to use formal practitioner assessment data to strengthen the evidence base.

However, there are several limitations with the study design, notably the robustness of the oracy assessment data, the social desirability bias found in families' self-reported behaviours[4],

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[3] See HM Treasury 'The Magenta Book, Guidance for evaluation' definition, p.97

[4] Social desirability bias refers to the fact that in self-reports, people will often report inaccurately on sensitive topics in order to present themselves in the best possible light. Source: Fisher, R. J. (1993). *"Social desirability bias and the validity of indirect questioning"*. Journal of Consumer Research, 20, 303-315. However, this by no means is a universally accepted theory. Other research, for example, suggests that the tendency for social desirability bias can vary from country to country. See for example Bornstein et al., 2015. where it is argued that

the representativeness of the intervention group sample and the size of the comparison group sample. Accordingly, the impact assessment should be considered as an indication of the likely impact and programme effect rather than proof of it.

2.3 Research approach

2.3.1 Qualitative research

The evaluation team conducted a series of scoping interviews with eight representatives from regional consortia, Welsh Government and practitioners on the ground in order to gain initial perspectives on the need for the programme and how it fits into broader priorities. A comprehensive literature review was also conducted, focusing specifically on i) the importance of oracy and its links with children's educational development and attainment, ii) the socio-economic factors that influence the development of a child's early oracy and literacy skills, and iii) the role of parents and carers in supporting their children's early oracy and communication skills. This activity provided insights on the broader context the programme sits within and enables the study to directly address the third key research question posed for the evaluation: *'to what extent does the programme support wider priorities and other initiatives in Wales?'*

Two rounds of qualitative research activity also took place towards the latter part of the project. These included in-depth interviews with 52 practitioners (these were mostly conducted through telephone interviews but were supported by online responses) and a small number (5) of site visits to observe the programme activity and consult with practitioners and parents/carers. The first round of interviews and visits focussed more on delivery processes (i.e. the effectiveness of delivery) while the latter round focussed on impact.

2.3.2 Quantitative research

Several tools were developed to collect the quantitative data for this evaluation, and these are summarised below:

- A **School / Setting Factsheet** - a short online form to capture basic information about the school / setting and to request the sharing of formal oracy assessment data
- **Baseline and Follow-up Parent / Carer Survey** – a short survey to collect self-reported data from parents / carers on their level of engagement and their children's oracy-related outcomes
- **Baseline and Follow-up Oracy Data Entry Form** – a simple form to collect schools and settings' formal oracy assessment data

These tools were used to collect data from both the intervention and comparison groups.

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individualist societies are expected to feel weaker social pressures to conform and hence be less prone to profess socially desirable answers. This would suggest that the phenomenon is less likely to apply to people in the UK as much as it would elsewhere.

School/Setting Factsheet Design

The factsheet was designed as a very simple form and is composed of two sections. The first section is designed to collect some basic contextual information about the schools and settings. This includes the % of pupils that are eligible for free school meals, that don't speak English/Welsh as a first language and have special educational needs; their key priority as a school/setting; and how they planned to introduce the programme. The second section asked about their oracy assessments, whether this is measured, whether they use the Foundation Phase Profile[5] as the basis for measuring, and whether they would be willing to share the assessment data for the evaluation.

Parent/Carer Survey Design

The Parent/Carer survey was designed to be as simple as possible in order to maximise the response rate. It used closed questions throughout with an initial section in the baseline survey on child profile data (e.g. gender, eligibility for free school meals etc.) in order to allow an assessment of impact generated for different demographic groups. The second section in the baseline survey focussed on reading patterns, frequency of sharing rhymes/songs etc. The third section used a set of statements to determine the level of parent/carer engagement in their child's learning and secondly the children's oracy levels. Likert scales were used for each of these questions and the second and third sections were repeated in the follow-up survey in order to identify changes over time. The follow-up survey for the intervention group also contained a section on families' experience of PDSN and satisfaction with the resources.

The key survey element used to underpin much of the impact assessment revolves around the set of outcome statements (i.e. the third section described above). These were largely based on statements used in the pilot evaluation of PDSN conducted in 2017/18 in order to ensure consistency with the 17/18 findings. They were also designed to align with the specific outcome measures developed by BT (which partly link to the Foundation Phase Framework).

Oracy Data Entry Form Design

The main difficulty with obtaining oracy assessment is that it is not a statutory requirement for schools and settings to make these assessments for the age group engaged by this programme. Schools and settings decide whether they think it appropriate to conduct the assessments, when to do so and in what format. For the purposes for the evaluation, a data entry form based on the measures used in the Foundation Phase Profile was developed to support standardisation of the data. It focussed on those reporting in the School / Setting Factsheet that they measure the oracy and literacy levels of their nursery children (98% of respondents) and use the Foundation Phase Profile to do so (89% of respondents).

The Data Entry Form was distributed pre and post intervention and simply asked schools/settings to provide the level of each child for each outcome area used in the Foundation Phase Profile. It also asked schools/settings to state the month these assessments were undertaken.

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[5]The Foundation Phase Profile supports assessment of children's learning and development throughout their time in the Foundation Phase. See: Foundation Phase Profile Handbook (Welsh Government)

Initial distribution – Intervention Group

In January 2019, each school and setting within the Intervention Group received a letter introducing the evaluation and containing an electronic link to the School/Setting Factsheet, and a postcard for each child inviting parents/carers to complete the survey, with a unique access code and link (including QR code). BTC also distributed an email to all participating schools/settings to inform them of the evaluation and these materials.

Recruitment and Initial Distribution – Comparison Group

The comparison group was recruited in February 2019. Firstly, PDSN participants were cross-referenced by national datasets to identify all schools and nursery settings that were not participating in the programme. Each of these received an email from the evaluation team about participating in the research. Three key incentives were used:

1. Guarantee of a place in the 19-20 PDSN programme (if they wish to take part);
2. A free book for every 3-4-year-old child in their Nursery class;
3. An anonymised report based on the parent/carer surveys from the evaluator to provide insight into parent/carer behaviours.

Sixty-five schools and settings initially agreed to take part. Upon further follow-up, 43 comparison group schools and settings also took part and received the same materials sent to the Intervention Group.

School/Setting Factsheet and oracy assessment data

In total, 169 intervention group schools and settings completed the factsheet in January and February 2019 and 20 schools and settings provided their oracy assessment data accounting for 529 children. In July 2019, 12 schools and settings provided follow up data, accounting for 255 children.

For the comparison group, 27 schools and settings completed the factsheet in February and March and 11 of these provided oracy assessment data. Follow-up from the research team secured matched responses from five of these schools and settings, accounting for 197 pupils.

Parent/Carer Survey

Ten Kindle Fires were purchased (five each for the intervention and comparison groups) to boost parent/carer survey response rates through a prize-draw incentive. Unique codes were used to prevent others from participating in an attempt to gain one of the Kindle Fires, and to allow monitoring of response rates at an individual school/setting level. Using this monitoring process, follow-up emails were delivered to each school and setting detailing their specific response rate and asking for support to boost responses among parents/carers.

This distribution strategy yielded 1,210 responses from parent/carers in the intervention group and 171 in the comparison group. These were then validated through an assessment of the information provided including school/setting names and children's date of birth in order to confirm their eligibility. This process identified a final figure of 1,070 eligible respondents in the intervention group and a further 114 in the comparison group at the baseline stage.

At the end of the survey, each of these respondents were asked whether they would be willing to participate in the follow-up survey and, if so, asked to provide an email address. Each of the eligible respondents then received a follow-up survey link directly to that email address four months after completing the baseline survey. This yielded 430 matched responses to the baseline and follow-up survey in the intervention group, and 47 responses in the comparison group. It is not possible, however, to determine the representativeness of the 430 intervention group respondents in relation to the population as a whole. The sample is likely to have a bias towards parents/carers who are more engaged in their children's education and perhaps more familiar with the programme than the 10,000+ participating families as a whole.

Distribution timeline

The timeline is summarised in Table 2.2 below. For the parent/carer survey, a 4-month interval between completing the baseline and follow up survey was ensured for all respondents in the intervention and comparison groups. Whilst parents/carers in the comparison group started to complete the survey around a month later than those in the intervention group, the interval between completion of both surveys remained the same, thereby allowing a sufficiently robust comparison to be made.

It should also be noted that Table 2.2 below shows when the oracy data was shared with the evaluation team, it does not relate to when those assessments were made. The evaluation team controlled for the interval between both sets of assessment data in the intervention and comparison group during the data analysis stage (see below).

Table 2.1: Data collection timeline

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Intervention	School / Setting Factsheet	■	■					
	Parent / Carer Survey	■	■	■		■	■	■
	Oracy Data Collection		■	■				■
Comparison	School / Setting Factsheet		■	■				
	Parent / Carer Survey		■	■			■	■
	Oracy Data Collection			■	■			■

Parent Carer Survey Sampling & Comparability of the Study Groups

The approach undertaken for this study can be described as a quasi-experimental design i.e. designs that do not use explicit randomisation but address potential non-equivalence of the

intervention and comparison groups in other ways. In this instance, the study can be said to exploit natural randomness i.e. that the schools and settings recruited for the comparison group are unlikely to be fundamentally different to those supported by the intervention. Both intervention and comparison groups include schools and non-maintained settings in Wales and focus on the same age group (i.e. the 'rising 4s'). Thus, there is also likely to be natural randomness among the parents/carers and their children within both groups.

To validate this further, the profile of respondents to the intervention and comparison surveys were analysed at the baseline stage with a range of statistical tests (chi-square and t-tests). These were used to determine whether variances between the intervention and comparison groups are statistically significant. The purpose of exploring these differences is to identify potential factors that could influence outcomes independently of the intervention. It helps us explore the question 'are observed differences in outcomes between the two groups due to the intervention, or to 'noise' and other factors in the background?' This process was repeated to focus on the matched sample i.e. comparison between the 430 matched responses in the intervention group and 48 matched responses in the comparison group.

The analysis undertaken suggests that, overall, the intervention and comparison groups are comparable and thus provide a good basis for quasi-experimental trial undertaken in this study. There were no statistical differences found between the samples in terms of gender, languages spoken at home, family structure (i.e. the child's place amongst his/her siblings), eligibility for free school meals, the primary reader in the household and the volume of reading or reading frequency/patterns. However, excluding those reporting 'Don't know', a slightly higher proportion within the intervention group sample (14% vs 10%) reported their children are eligible for free school meals. Given that increases in oracy-related outcomes are less prevalent in this cohort (see Table 5.4), this sampling difference may slightly exaggerate the increases reported in the comparison group. Overall, however, the two samples under consideration are highly comparable. A more thorough examination of the comparability of the two study groups is shown in Appendix 2.

2.4   Data analysis

Parent/Carer Survey

The analysis from the parent/carer survey provides the main evidence base for determining the programme's impacts on children's oracy-related outcomes and parent/carer engagement in their children's learning. This means that findings are based no parent/carer perception and opinion.

The impact assessment for these outcomes are largely based on the 15 outcome statements included in the survey. These are categorised into two groups of domains – the first group of eight domains relating to children's oracy related outcomes, and a second group of seven domains relating to parental engagement. Within each of these groups, the domains are also

drawn together within a single composite variable[6] in order to generate a larger sample base and thus increase the robustness of the data[7].

A combination of statistical tests, including paired t-tests and ANOVA were used to determine whether any differences identified in the analysis are statistically significant. Further statistical tests were run, including Cohen's d[8] to calculate the effect size of the programme. Using these tests, a comparative analysis is presented of:

- the pre and post intervention data;
- differences in mean changes between the intervention and comparison groups;
- differences in mean changes between different demographic groups;
- differences in mean changes according to different forms of delivery.

Some of the groups analysed, such as the comparison group (47 respondents) and those eligible for free school meals (47 respondents), draw on comparatively small sample sizes. This acts as the main barrier in the analysis, although developing the single composite variable, as described above, allows a more robust assessment to be made. The sample sizes for all of these groups are shown in Appendix 2.

All data presented in this section have been rounded to the second decimal point.

Formal assessment data

A comparative analysis is also undertaken on the formal assessment data with consideration of the pre and post intervention and differences between the intervention and comparison groups.

The formal assessment data was collected so that the study is also informed by practitioners i.e. the experts in the field, rather than solely relying on parents and carers' perceptions. Whilst this has been useful to triangulate findings, it is important to note that the approach has been severely restricted due to differences in when and how the assessments are conducted. The timing in which schools and settings conducted these assessments varied substantially. As such, only a short number of direct matches could be made between the intervention and comparison to use as the basis for this analysis. Clearly, the interval between the pre and post intervention assessments needs to be consistent in order to make a valid comparison. With this in mind, two groups were identified for analysis having cross-referenced both datasets:

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[6] This was calculated by identifying the mean average across each domain on an aggregated level.

[7] The composite variable increases the robustness of the data by drawing on a higher volume of data in the statistical tests. For example, rather than drawing on 47 responses from the comparison group for each individual statement, the composite variable for the first group of eight domains (children's oracy related outcomes) draws on 376 responses from across the eight domains (i.e. 8x47 responses). This allows for more sensitive statistical testing.

[8] Cohen D = Mean Difference / Standard Deviation of Mean Difference.

- Group 1: schools and settings providing data with a **4-month** interval between assessments. This included two schools/settings in the intervention group (accounting for 36 children) and one in the comparison group (80 children).
- Group 2: schools and settings providing data with a **6-month** interval between assessments. This included three schools/settings in the intervention group (83 children) and two in the comparison group (78 children).

The small number of matched schools/settings (only one in the case of the 4-month data) does present real limitations to drawing conclusions based on the comparison group.

Practitioner interviews

The telephone interview data comprised of structured questions which required responses in multiple choice and open-ended response format. The data collected from the telephone interviews were thematically analysed, with codes created under each question used to summarise responses.

Limitations

There are several limitations with the study design, notably the robustness of the oracy assessment data, the social desirability bias found in families' self-reported behaviours[9], the representativeness of the intervention group sample and the size of the comparison group sample. Accordingly, the impact assessment should be considered as an indication of the likely impact and programme effect rather than proof of it.

Two groups of schools and settings were used for the analysis of formal oracy assessment data: those where there is a four-month gap between the first and second assessments, and those with a 6-month gap. This data was used data as evidence to support parents/carer's self-reported data, drawing on the assessment of professionals in the field. However, these results should be treated with caution given that the manner of the assessment varies from setting to setting and, as such, the analysis draws on a narrow sample base.

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[9] Social desirability bias refers to the fact that in self-reports, people will often report inaccurately on sensitive topics in order to present themselves in the best possible light. Source: Fisher, R. J. (1993). *"Social desirability bias and the validity of indirect questioning"*. Journal of Consumer Research, 20, 303-315. However, this by no means is a universally accepted theory. Other research, for example, suggests that the tendency for social desirability bias can vary from country to country. See for example Bornstein et al., 2015. where it is argued that individualist societies are expected to feel weaker social pressures to conform and hence be less prone to profess socially desirable answers. This would suggest that the phenomenon is less likely to apply to people in the UK as much as it would elsewhere.

3 Background and Rationale

Section summary

Scoping interviews
- Officials engaged in the scoping interviews believe that, *"there is a clear pattern of the standard of children oracy skills falling year on year."*
- Several interviewees speculated about the reasons for the apparent decline in oracy standards with references to the increase in use of digital devices coupled with increasingly limited opportunities for social interaction.
- Scoping responses to the PDSN programme were very positive with many reporting it complements the wider objectives in Wales, creates closer links with families, supports bilingualism and provides valuable resources (especially for non-maintained settings, who were felt to be less well-resourced).

Desk-based review
- The design of PDSN (Oracy) shows a match with the oracy strand within the LLC area of learning in the Foundation Phase.
- The PDSN (Oracy) activities support several other Foundation Phase outcomes in Wales.
- The PDSN (Oracy) activities can contribute to oracy skills assessments in Nursery/ Reception.
- PDSN (Oracy) supports the Welsh Government's aim of ensuring a million Welsh speakers.
- The educational benefits of the early oracy skills supported by the PDSN programme are consistent with the findings of several research studies.
- The importance of engaging parents and carers is vital for the development of early oracy skills and is clearly documented in the research literature and commented upon by scoping interview participants.
- Research shows there is a need to engage parents and carers from low socio-economic backgrounds in the PDSN programme activities, and to develop their understanding of the importance of reading and oracy activities in the home.
- The PDSN programme has the potential to increase practitioner knowledge about the importance of oracy.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the background and rationale for the current programme evaluation and draws on scoping interviews and desk-based research conducted at the outset of the evaluation during autumn 2018.

3.2 Scoping interviews

A series of eight telephone scoping interviews were held during autumn 2018. Participants included a WG official, an independent consultant, consortia FP advisors, an LA literacy

advisor, LA FP advisors and practitioners. These interviews were conducted to inform understanding of the programme, how it was delivered, and progress made during the 2017-8 Pilot.

3.2.1 Observations on oracy standards

Interview participants discussed evidence and perceptions of oracy skills among children in Wales when entering education; the importance of oracy skills as a predictor of later progress in literacy; and the perceived importance of oracy skills by practitioners, school or setting leads and parents and carers. The following observation is typical of the responses:

"It was becoming evident from my own observations and wider meetings I've attended, that there is a clear pattern of the standard of children oracy skills falling year on year. There's a growing concern that children on entry don't have as good oracy skills. Although it's just a perception, it is a view that is held by many people within the sector."

Several individuals commented on possible reasons for decline in oracy standards, including an increase in the numbers of young children using digital devices coupled with increasingly limited opportunities for social interaction. Individuals felt that children cannot do some of the things that they used to do and that some parents feel less confident in supporting oracy. These comments from an LA Literacy Advisor is typical:

"The pressure to ensure that children reach Outcome 6 in FS by year 2, therefore literacy skills are introduced too early, before oracy skills are mastered. Teachers feel that they need evidence in children's books, but it is not possible to provide evidence of oracy in books, therefore oracy activities are not timetabled."

The advisor's opinion about the impact of digital devices in the home on young children's oracy skills was also reflected by other interviewees:

"More and more children come from a background where speaking is diminished in the home due to the use of iPads, mobile phones etc. which has a detrimental effect on oracy and communication skills from a very early age."

3.2.2 The PDSN programme

Scoping responses to the PDSN (Oracy) programme were very positive. Interviewees commented that, "*nothing else is as effective,"* and, *"parents are inspired by the books."* The importance of developing a love of reading within the family was discussed. One interviewee commented on the importance of supporting the home-school/setting link, *"that is the key to its effectiveness, working together as a team to develop effectiveness."*

Interviewees noted that PDSN complements wider objectives in Wales e.g. supporting the LNF, the Foundation Phase Profile and Welsh Government campaigns such as 'Education Begins at Home' and 'Parenting – Give it Time'. They also commented positively on the programme's focus on parental engagement, developing a relationship between practitioners

and parents/carers, early years support, family learning and increasing practitioners' understanding of the home learning environment.

A consortia advisor believed that PDSN provides an opportunity for children and families to handle books as, *"for some children, it may be the first book that they will get their hands on."* The importance of the PDSN programme in complementing oracy development was emphasised by several interviewees. A WG official discussed the relevance of the FP and its oracy development elements to the PDSN programme and emphasised that, *"oracy is the key to successful language development."*

There were several comments on the importance of the bilingual aspects of the programme: The resources on the BookTrust website were also regarded as being very important in supporting the bilingual resources, *"to improve practitioner's confidence, to hear the pattern in the reading, also with English."* It was also noted that *"some parents may not be able to read Welsh, but they are able to discuss the pictures in English with their children."*

PDSN's importance for non-maintained settings, who are not funded in the same way as schools was also noted as the programme provided additional resources for such settings.

3.2.3 Existing support for parental engagement and oracy

Interviews suggested that most of the parental engagement activities would take place in a school or setting rather than at LA or consortia level. However, some LAs held training events to support schools and setting with parental engagement. These included 'train the trainers' style activities, using the FAITH Toolkit, supporting schools and settings to share good practice and using parental engagement to support ALN reforms.

Several interviewees talked about practitioner training to support oracy development. For example:

"A huge amount of training goes into the role of adults in settings in developing oracy skills. The adults are the greatest resource to improve oracy through good questioning and a literacy rich learning environment. We've done oracy specific training in the literacy team where the foundation team have taken up early language development training. A large element of that involves training on how to engage parents in their children's learning."

In one consortium there is a communication and intervention team available to all schools who hold training for practitioners around improving communication skills: *"Our role in the consortia is to work closely with that team. PDSN doesn't compete with that, it will complement it."*

An LA advisor commented that, *"a number of teachers do not have background knowledge on how to develop early oracy skills- a lack of oracy development training, possibly from ITT level onwards."* It was suggested that the PDSN programme would be able to contribute to closing this knowledge gap.

The comments and opinions above show that the PDSN programme is valued by advisors and practitioners for its contribution to developing practitioner knowledge about oracy. The PDSN programme is also valued by professionals for its potential to develop parental engagement with schools and settings.

3.2.4   Related initiatives in settings in Wales

Other PDSN programme related initiatives in schools, LAs and Consortia reported by scoping interview participants included:

- Chatterbox (engaging parents);
- Talk with partners (developing simple oracy within settings); and
- Show me, Tell me.

Interviewees cited personal/social development and oracy development being the main drivers behind these initiatives.

Welsh Government have also launched initiatives to support parental engagement in learning. These include the 'Education Begins at Home' campaign, the 'Parenting – Give It Time' initiative, and the 2018 'Take Time' campaign, which focused on encouraging parents and carers to take time to talk, listen and play with their children to support language development and communication skills.

3.3   Insights from the desk-based review

The desk based research evidence focused upon i) the importance of oracy and its links with children's educational development and attainment, ii) the socio-economic factors that influence the development of a child's early oracy and literacy skills, and iii) the role of parents and carers in supporting their children's early oracy and communication skills. A fuller version of the review is available in the 2019 Baseline Evaluation Framework Report.

3.3.1   Importance of oracy development

The PDSN programme recognises the importance of early oracy for learning and has been designed specifically to support children's early oracy development. An extensive research literature evidences the importance of a child's oracy skills. Through talk, children can organise their understanding of the world, Bruner (1985), Vygotsky (1978) reshape their understanding, Barnes (2008) and develop their reasoning skills, Mercer et al. (1999). Research has shown that the amount and quality of pre-school children's conversations in the home are good predictors of educational attainment in secondary school, Goswami & Bryant (2007), Hart & Riley (1995).

3.3.2 Supporting Parents and Carers to play an active role in children's learning

Government policy in the UK and Wales recognises the important role parents and carers play in supporting their child's language development, Sylva et al. (2004), Department for Education (2012), Welsh Government 2013). The PDSN programme materials and suggested activities have been designed to promote parental involvement in their children's oracy and literacy development and increase the links between the home, schools and settings for this purpose.

One of the PDSN programme's desired outcomes noted in the BTC Logic Model (Draft) is to increase children's enjoyment in looking at and sharing books and stories (at home and/or in their school/setting) and to increase children's enjoyment of sharing rhymes and songs. The PDSN resources encourage parents to engage in fun, shared book reading activities and related games and talk with their young children. Extensive research shows that homes in which shared book reading is common are associated with increased vocabulary for children, Farrant & Kubrick (2012), Fletcher et al. (2008), Karris & Braugart-Rieker (2005), Sénéchal & LaFevre (2002), Payne et al. (1994), Sharif et al. (2002) and with greater success in learning to read and later literacy, Deckner et al. (2006). Shared Book Reading can also stimulate more verbal interaction between child and parent, and therefore children's language development is likely to profit more from reading aloud than from toy play or other adult–child interactions, Wells (1983), Vivas (1996).

As stated, the programme was designed to support parents and carers to play an active role in their child's learning and to support the development of a positive home learning environment. These factors link to research about children facing socio-economic disadvantage. Much research has shown that children from socio-economically disadvantaged home backgrounds typically begin school with a poorer spoken language facility than those from more advantaged backgrounds, Zill & Resnick, (2006). While the language environment provided by the school is important for all children, it is particularly important for those from socio-economically disadvantaged homes, who do not have an extensive fund of resources outside school and may also be educationally vulnerable in a number of other ways, Snow et al. (1998).

The PDSN programme's activities of sharing rhymes and songs have been designed to support young children's development in their phonological awareness. The *Foundation Phase Profile*, Welsh Government (2017a) emphasizes the importance of phonological awareness which is assessed through songs, rhymes and word play and a child's early understanding of language patterns.

3.3.3 Supporting wider educational priorities in Wales

PDSN's programme aims and activities aligns closely to the aims and objectives of several Welsh Government current priorities. As part of the provision in nursery settings and classes, it could prove to be a useful tool in developing children's oracy and improving further the links between school and parents/carers. PDSN also reflects the philosophy of the new, developing curriculum and supports the pedagogical continuum of the future education system in Wales.

The PDSN programme fits with the principles and requirements of the *Foundation Phase Framework* and the *Statutory Guidance for the Welsh National Literacy and Numeracy Framework*. In its *Practitioner Guide*, BTC states that, *"The Pori Drwy Stori Nursery Programme can support a number of Foundation Phase Oracy outcomes,"* BookTrust Cymru (2018:7).

The *Foundation Phase Framework*, Welsh Government (2015a) is the current curriculum for children and pupils in nursery settings and schools, from nursery age until the end of Year 2 (from ages 3 to 7). It provides a framework for children's education in seven Areas of Learning, and progress is measured against Achievement Outcomes. The 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' Area of Learning is common to both Welsh-medium and English medium schools and settings. In schools and settings where English is the main medium of communication, the 'Welsh Language Development' is an additional area of learning. The Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning states as follows: *"In schools and settings where English is the main medium of communication, children's Welsh language skills should be progressively developed throughout the Foundation Phase by implementing the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning,"* Welsh Government (2015:36). The Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), Welsh Government (2014) complements the Foundation Phase Framework and provides statutory guidelines for the development of these basic skills and embedding literacy and numeracy into all subjects for learners aged 5 to 14.

3.3.4 Supporting wider priorities in Wales: early bilingual/multilingual development

As the PDSN programme resources are bilingual, there is an opportunity for these resources to be used to contribute towards children's early bilingual/ multilingual development. Mercer & Mannion (2018) report that in research that may have particular relevance for Welsh education, children who were bilingual in another Celtic language (Gaelic) were found to be better at explaining the meaning of words than monolinguals, Lauchlan, Parisi & Fadda (2013). Bilingual experience is likely to enable children to perceive more easily different ways that reality can be 'modelled' in language, and so see that the meanings of words are created, rather than given, Mercer & Mannion (2018).

Oracy development is the focus of an Estyn report (2013) on Welsh Language Development in the Foundation Phase in schools and settings where English is the main medium of communication. Several aspects which are relevant to the aims of PDSN programme are discussed in this report. According to Estyn's findings, in most of the English medium schools and settings, children knew a good variety of Welsh songs, which they sang regularly. Repeating songs helps to reinforce familiarity with words and phrases that can be used in other contexts. Estyn found that most children enjoy the patterns and rhythms of Welsh songs and rhymes and they often hum the tunes and sing the words at home or during play. This gives children frequent opportunities to use Welsh words and phrases. Some songs also provide children with access to more complex Welsh language phrases.

In primarily English medium nursery schools and settings, the bilingual PDSN resources can be used to support young children's acquisition of Welsh as their second or additional language in line with the Foundation Phase Curriculum in Wales. This will be investigated further in

parent surveys, interviews with practitioners and visits to English medium schools and settings. In Welsh-medium schools and settings, English is not formally introduced as part of the curriculum until the final term of Year 2 when children are 6-7 years old.

4 How PDSN was delivered in schools and settings

Section summary
- The majority of practitioners introduced the PDSN programme to parents and careers in advance of starting the programme.
- The majority of practitioners (76%) introduced two sets of resources to children and families separately.
- The majority of schools and settings introduced the resources to children in class or nursery before children took them home.
- 41% of practitioners used the programme daily, 12% most days, 44% weekly and 2% monthly.
- Practitioners maintained communication with parents and carers during the PDSN programme: at drop off and collection (73%); through social media (39%); feedback slips (22%); parents' meetings (12%); classroom community app (5%); and YouTube (2%).
- Practitioners felt that the resources were suitable and appropriate for children's interest and for home/school.
- 97% of practitioners felt that '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' *resources* were 'very good' or 'good.'
- 97% of practitioners thought that books provided were 'very good' or 'good.'
- The parent/carer feedback suggests that the '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' resources were widely used by participating families.
- 92% of practitioners reported that children had spoken to them about using the PDSN resources at home.
- The PDSN programme was used to support oracy outcomes, the LNF and Foundation Phase Areas of Learning including Mathematical Development, Personal and Social Development, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Welsh Language Development and Creative Development.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how PDSN is delivered in different types of settings. These settings include English medium and Welsh medium nursery classes in schools (maintained), and non-maintained English and Welsh medium settings who deliver provision for 3-4-year-old children. These include playgroups, cylch meithrin and day-care nurseries. In this chapter, we focus on the efficiency of provision, introduction of the programme in schools and settings, use of resources in the classroom and in homes, views on the suitability of resources, linguistic considerations, and BTC support to schools and settings. We consider whether different settings face challenges in programme delivery and, if so, how these challenges could be mitigated and what support settings need to deliver the programme effectively.

The evaluation of delivery in settings is largely based on practitioners' self-reported observations. These were collected by means of telephone interviews with 52 practitioners

(supported by online responses). These were followed by 5 site visits to observe the programme activity and consult with practitioners and parents/carers. It also draws on some delivery process related questions asked in the parent/carer survey.

4.2   Introducing the programme to families and children

The majority of practitioners reported that they had introduced the PDSN programme to parents and careers in advance of starting the programme. The most common method used was a letter that was sent home – 53% of the parents/carers surveyed stated they received the resources in this manner. Other methods included introducing in person through organising a special meeting such as a workshop for parents, when parents/carers collected children form the setting and during parents' evening. In total, 58% of practitioners indicated the resources were introduced in person through one of these three methods.

Figure 4.1: How parents/carers received information about the PDSN programme
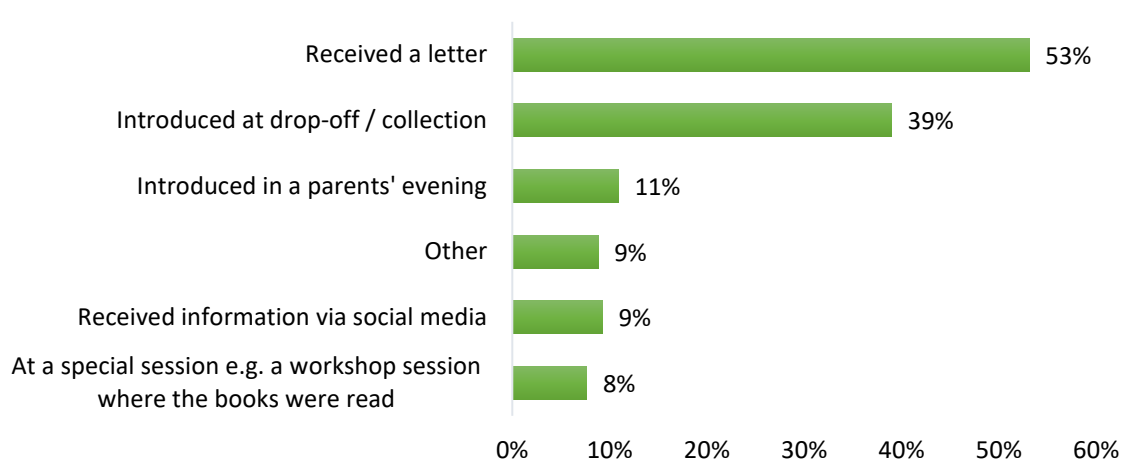
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=431)

A sample of comments from practitioners show that they tailored the methods to their setting or school circumstances, particularly in cases where there is a higher proportion of EAL families: *"we spoke individually to parents at the gate. Meetings don't work here there are so many different languages. We needed assistance to translate to Arabic and Bengali to explain to parents. We needed an awful lot of explanation. Only two parents returned the parent survey postcards -it's due to their lack of language*." In situations where parental language is limited, a variety of methods are required to secure engagement.   On the other hand, in some schools/settings, meetings were held with parents, for example as twilight sessions or coffee mornings, and they were useful to secure engagement. A few schools/settings reported that they did not hold meetings as their previous years' experience of meetings during the PDSN pilot was not very successful: *"I didn't hold a meeting this year as the response from parents wasn't very good last year. I've used Class Dojo to communicate with parents. I photographed all the materials and put them up there for parents. They've responded very well."*

A more detailed account of how a school with a significant number of EAL parents and children introduced the PDSN programme is provided in the case study vignette below. This account is included as an example of how a school attempted to engage parents/carers by arranging a

special meeting for parents of pre-school children, which was held with assistance from interpreters due to a significant number of EAL pupils attending the school. Parents responded positively, particularly through continued guidance and encouragement throughout the programme.

Practitioner perspective: Case study School 3 English medium Primary School, Newport. 112 pupils

The project started with a meeting for parents of all pre-school age children. They were shown the resources, given a questionnaire and shown the PDSN website. The programme was explained, and guidance given on how to work with their children – there were interpreters present to help those who did not speak English.

The practitioner said: "*Parents asked a lot of questions in that first meeting. However, with guidance and encouragement they responded positively, increasingly so over time. If a child missed a rhyme for any reason, many parents would ask for the missed copy.*"

Parents reacted very positively to the books and, "*really appreciate the fact that they can keep the books at home.*" The practitioner liked the idea of sending the books home to become the property of the family – particularly as the resources are of a high standard. The school has experimented with making its own videos of practitioners reciting/singing / reading and using those on the school's video display in the cloakroom area.

Most practitioners (76%) reported that they had introduced the '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' and '*Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr*' resources to children and families separately, as recommended by BTC. The majority of schools and settings reported that they also introduced the resources to children in class or nursery before they took them home.

Some felt that it was important to share the resources with children, "*so the children knew what they were doing, and they could teach their mums and dads.*" One practitioner commented on how she felt the resources contributed to parental engagement: "*I loved the engagement with parents because they had something quality to do with their children and the excitement the children showed every week waiting for their new packs.*" A number of practitioners emphasised the importance of introducing the rhymes in school or nursery first to increase use at home *("children are keen to share if they know the content,"),* and to enable children to use the resources themselves in circumstances where there is less parental support available to them (*"by presenting in school children who don't get as much support at home are able to go to the resource themselves"*). There were numerous examples of practitioner comments about children's enjoyment and excitement about taking the resources home.

Some schools and settings established a routine for introducing the rhymes to create consistency for parents/carers and children e.g. *"we started the rhyme on the Monday and sent it home on Thursday. Some parents commented that as soon as we changed the rhyme in nursery the next week the children only wanted to sing the new rhyme at home rather than the rhyme they had at home."* One English medium school used the English and Welsh

medium rhymes on alternative weeks to create a structure for the programme: "*I sent an English rhyme one week and a Welsh on the alternate - told parents that the children have heard the Welsh versions in class and asked them to use online resource to listen to the rhymes and used the PDFs.*"

Generally, the '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm'* resources were introduced to families first with 65% of parents/carers reporting they had received these up to March 2019. The '*Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr'* resource was typically received much later, with just 36% reporting they had received the resource up to March.

Figure 4.2: The month in which parents/carers received PDSN resources
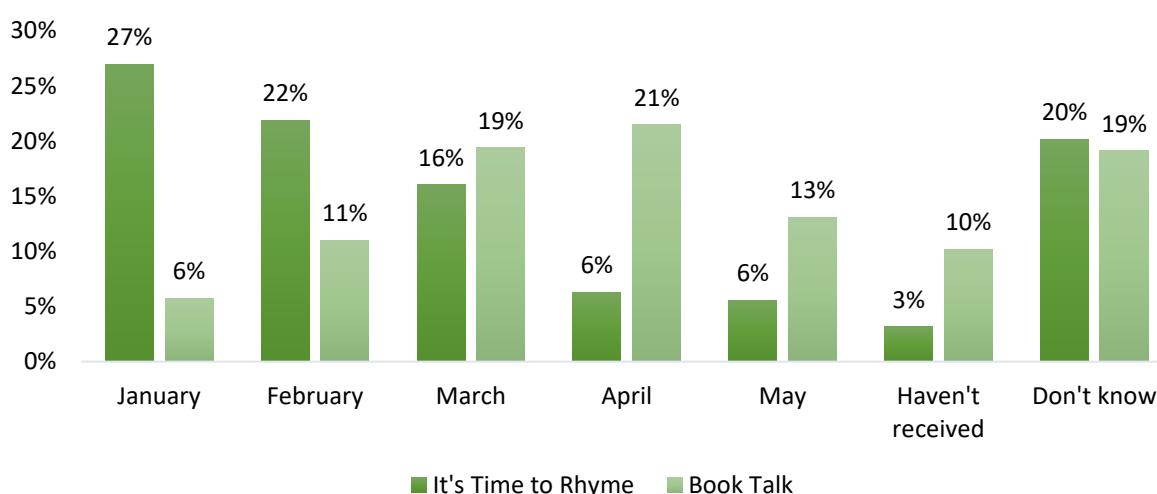
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=431)

4.3   Ongoing communication with families

Methods used by schools and settings to maintain communication with parents and carers during the PDSN programme as reported by practitioners included:

- at drop off and collection (73%)
- through social media (39%)
- feedback slips (22%)
- parent meetings (12%)
- classroom community app (5%); and
- YouTube (2%).

Other examples of methods used provided by practitioners included posters on noticeboards using the Class Dojo system and holding informal chats with parents and carers. Some practitioners mentioned that the plastic wallets had helped to maintain communication. One

school noted that they maintain communication through an open day which was well attended: "*there are activities throughout the week for children, and parents (and grannies, nanas and aunties) come in on Fridays to hear the rhymes. A large number of parents and families come.*"

Some practitioners spoke about the use of social media and to share information, to encourage feedback from parents and carers and used as a reminder system. Specific examples included encouraging parents to share feedback and photographs on Twitter and schools/settings tweeting to show parents what was happening in classrooms and nurseries. Social media was also used as a reminder to return materials to schools and settings.

There was, however, a mixed response when parents/carers were asked how often they had spoken to staff at the school or nursery about the programme (see Figure 4.3 below). The sample is almost equally split between those reporting they haven't discussed it at all or only once (47%) vs those who have discussed it a few times/often with school/nursery staff (53%). It is a positive development that repeated discussions between practitioners and parents are taking place, given that the respondents include parents/carers who do and do not attend school/setting drop off/pick up.

Perceived differences in levels of communication between practitioners and parents/carers could be explained by school drop off/collection undertaken by someone other than the parent who responded to the survey (e.g. carers, other relatives, or wraparound care staff) and schools/settings using social media and the feedback slips to maintain communication rather than spoken interaction.

Figure 4.3: Frequency in speaking to staff at the school or nursery about PDSN (parent/carer Survey)
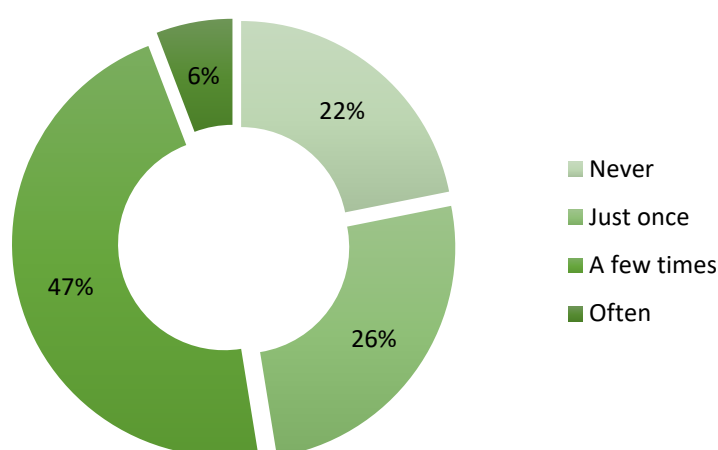
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=430)

We also tested the visibility of the programme and the way in which information about it had been disseminated. The data seems to suggest this has been a positive aspect of delivery, with

69% of parents/carers stating they had seen posters about the programme/resources displayed, while just under a third (29%) had received information through social media.

Figure 4.4: Programme visibility and information dissemination (parent /carer survey)
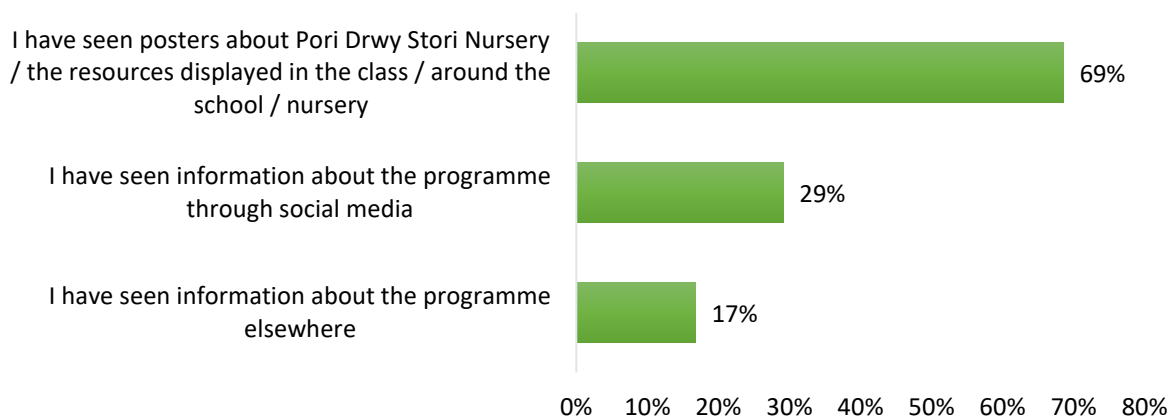
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=430)

4.4   Parent/carer engagement

The vast majority of practitioners (75%) interviewed felt that parents/carers had responded to the programme in the way that they wished e.g. attending meetings and returning feedback slips. Some practitioners view returning the slips as being significant indicator of engagement. Some practitioners stated that they were surprised by the positive responses from parents in their schools or settings, for example, *"a pleasant surprise to us as so many have made positive comments, definitely the majority."* Another practitioner commented that they had received, *"great response with feedback and homework."* Other practitioners remarked that families who are usually responsive were the ones who engaged best with the programme. In a school with a high proportion of EAL families, a practitioner commented that although parents had found the programme challenging, parents had engaged with it. The role of practitioners in establishing and maintaining engagement with parents/carers and encouraging participation is key to the programme's success and to children and their families getting the most from it.

Some practitioners noted that using the PDSN resources had positively affected parental engagement. Examples of this included parents being more willing to approach a teacher to discuss activities and books, parents being more willing to support their children, parents showing more confidence to discuss their child's progress, increased parental awareness that they were expected to do more at home, and increased parental awareness about standards to be met in nursery.

A large majority of practitioners (92%) reported that children had spoken to them about using the PDSN resources at home. This included comments about activities done with grandparents as well as parents. Some children brought the resources that they had created at home to school or settings. Parents used social media and classroom apps to show

practitioners how children were using the resources at home, *"parents have been posting videos on Class Dojo of the children singing the rhymes."* Children displayed knowledge of the rhymes and familiarity with the books that was gained through using the resources at home e.g. "*the children were able to come in and used the story books in our reading corner, they were able to retell the story simply and could say when and how they had used it at home."* Conversations with children also demonstrated that children were using the resources at home, *"conversations during 'family time' have shown that the children are enjoying engaging with the tasks that are sent home."* This feedback suggests that the programme was useful in developing family engagement in learning and oracy-related activities, and in supporting a positive home learning environment. It also suggests that the programme can enable practitioners to gain a greater understanding of children's home and family learning environments.

In general, practitioner comments show that many parents responded positively to the resources. In a number of schools/settings, the programme improved or developed parental engagement and fostered deeper parental understanding of nursery education practices. Practitioners also gained deeper knowledge of how children were using the resources at home through conversations with children, and their increased knowledge of rhymes and re-telling of the stories.

The programme appeared to support schools/settings whose family engagement work was less developed, to begin to develop their parental engagement approaches. It seems that parental engagement is a continual challenge in some schools/settings despite the efforts of the schools/settings and practitioners. Some practitioners felt that children still benefited from the programme and enjoyed the resources, even if parents/carers had not fully engaged with the programme.

4.5 Parent/carer responses to PDSN resources

The parent/carer survey also asked about parent/carer satisfaction with the resources. These findings are shown below.

'It's *Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*'
The survey data suggests that the resources have been widely used by participating families Only 4% stated that they had not used any of the resources with most of those coming from respondents indicating they had not yet received the resources. It is perhaps unsurprising that the online resources were used less widely as these were not directly supplied to families.

Figure 4.5: Use of 'It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm' resources
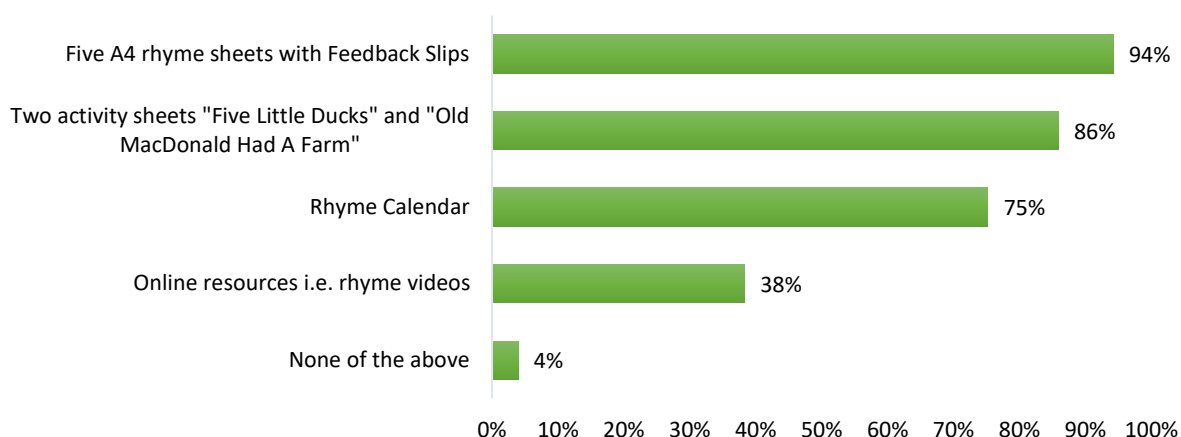
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=430)

Those who indicated they had used the resources were asked to rate their usefulness. As the chart below illustrates, the feedback is very positive for each resource with most citing each one as 'very useful' and 83% to 92% indicating at least some level of usefulness. The online resources were particularly well-received by those who used them. The Rhyme Calendar was least well-received, and yet that resource was rated as either 'useful' or 'very useful' by 83% of respondents.

Figure 4.6: Usefulness of each 'It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm' resource
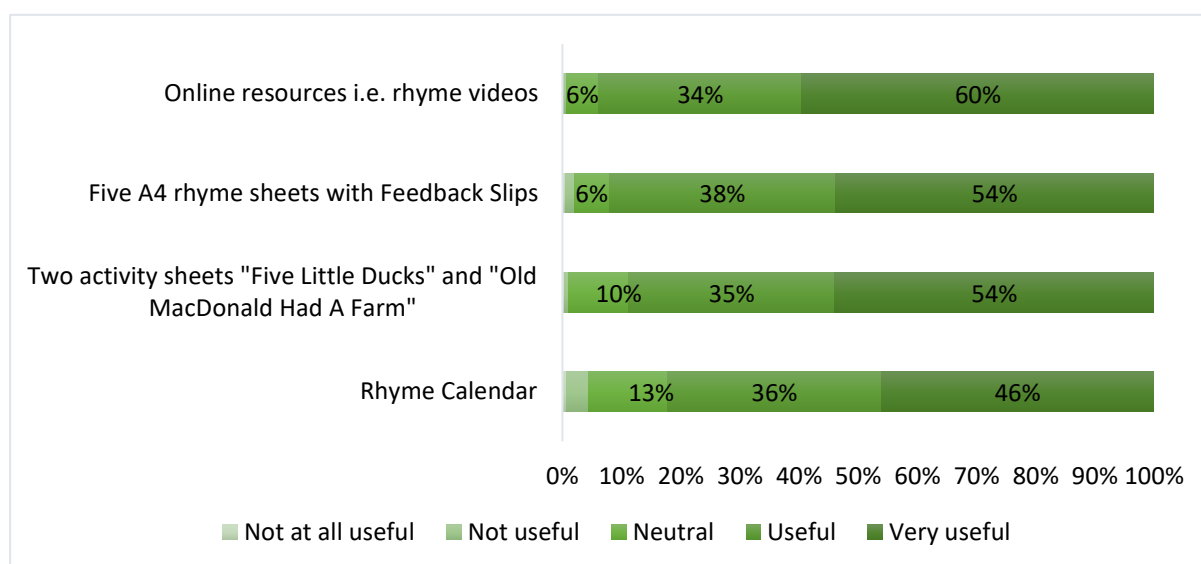
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=430)

'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr'

Fewer had used the 'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr' resources, likely to be because they hadn't yet been given to parents/carers by nurseries. However, based on the responses from those who had received the resources, there seems to be a greater variation in how the different

elements were used. The books are clearly the most used, while substantially fewer had used their accompanying resources, particularly the *Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr* leaflet.

Figure 4.7: Use of 'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr' resources
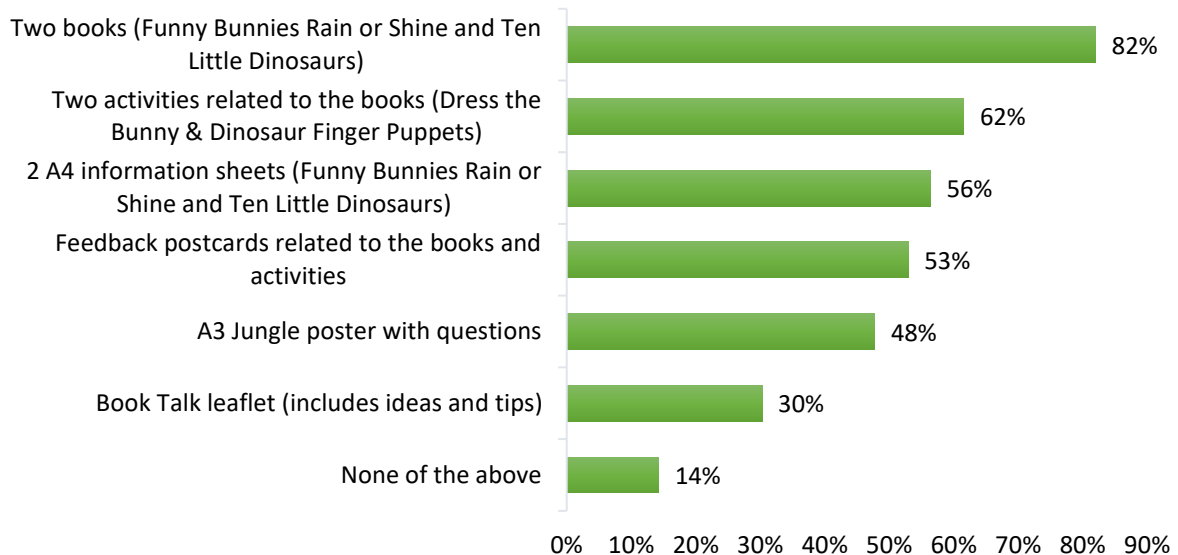
Source: Parent / Carer Follow-up Survey (n=430)

When the resources were used, they were again clearly very well received. The two books were particularly well received with 97% finding them useful/very useful including 75% selecting the most positive score. Additionally, although the leaflet was not used as much, it was the second most valued by those who did use it with 96% stating it was either useful or very useful.

Figure 4.8: Usefulness of each 'Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr' resource
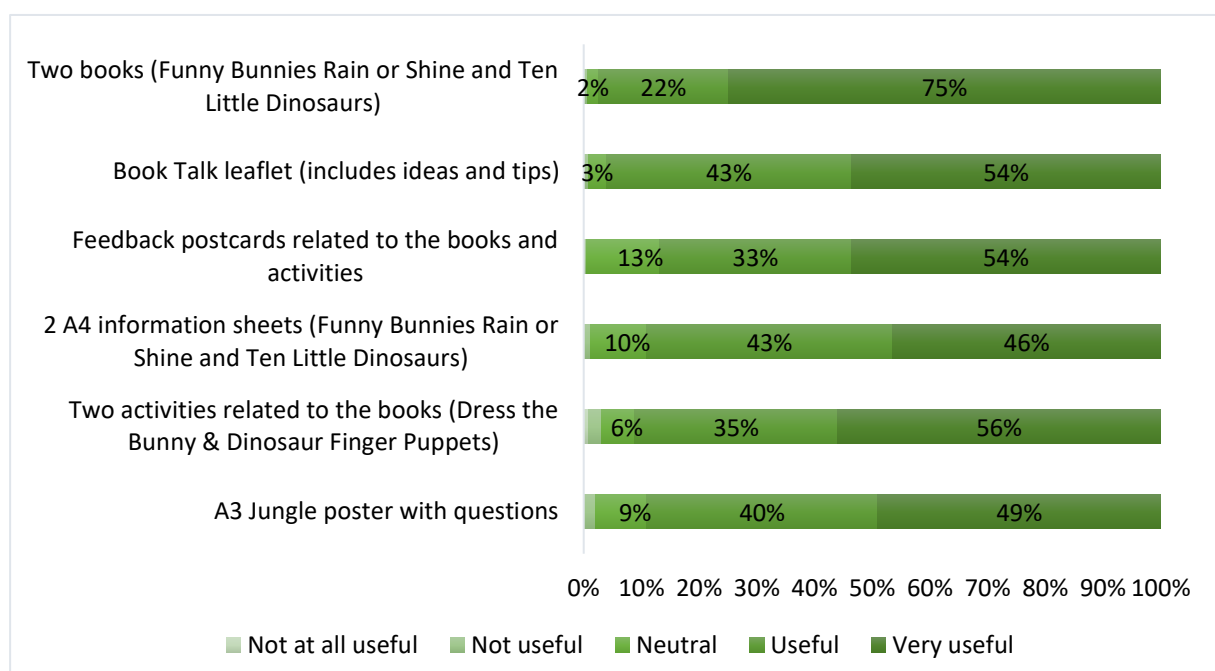
Overall perceptions of the programme

We then asked one final question about overall perception of the resources with the feedback presented in the chart below. Again, the results are very positive, with 96% agreeing they were clear and straightforward to use; 94% agreeing they were fun and interesting for their child; and 93% cited their child had enjoyed using the resources. Perhaps the most positive finding is that 65% indicated they had used the Welsh language resources to some extent.

Figure 4.9: Overall satisfaction with PDSN resources
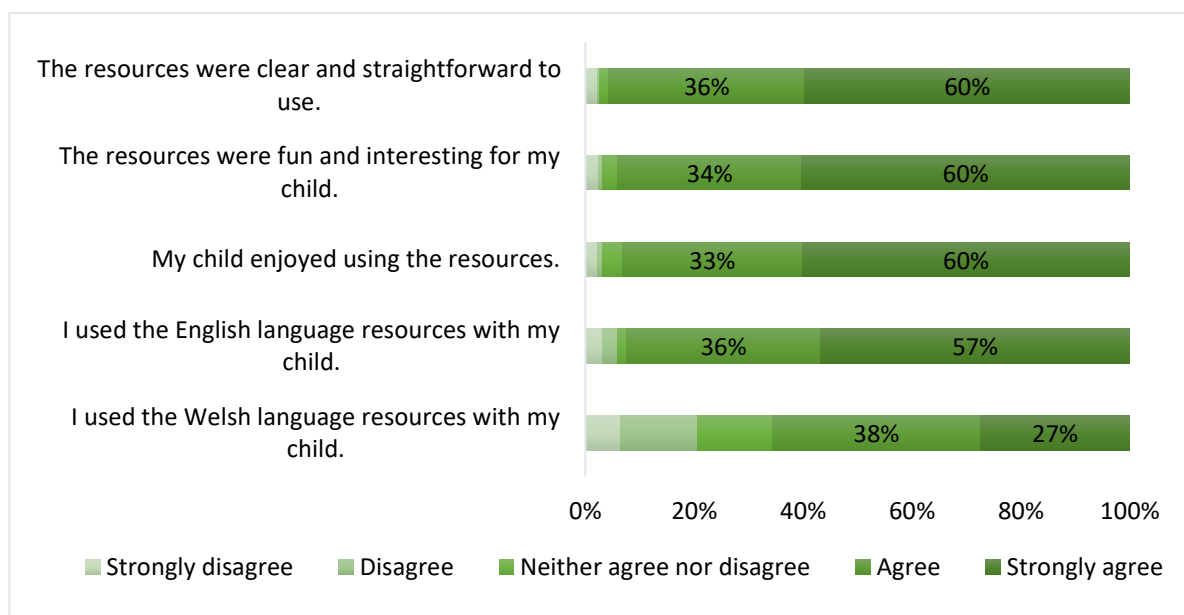
During site visits, the research team were able to conduct focus groups with parents and carers. Attendance was arranged by schools and settings. All parents and carers responded very positively to the resources and had led to improved contact with the schools/settings.

Below is a vignette from the visit to an English medium primary school. The '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' resources particularly appealed as they had generated enjoyment and increased parent/carer understanding of the importance of rhymes. Focus group members also felt that the project improved their engagement with the school.

Parent/Carer focus group: Case Study School 2 - Blaenau Gwent, English Medium Primary, 22 Nursery children.

The parents and grandparents in the focus group responded very positively to the PDSN programme. The programme was introduced to them in a Parents' Evening organised by the class teacher. The meeting was described as '*really good, they were brilliant.*" The parent /carer response to the project itself was very positive, "*brilliant project, we really enjoyed it. Loved it.*" Group members were used to using rhymes at home. However, they felt that the PDS programme had emphasised the importance of rhymes to them. "*Rhymes and nursery rhymes, you do that anyway. But when they come as homework from school, they are more important, more status.*" They also reported that children were enjoying using the resources at home, "*a 4-year-old asking for homework! Nothing they didn't like.*" When asked about the books, parents and grandparents admitted that they found that difficult, "*Bilingual books were a bit challenging but good on numbers and colours.*" However, they had realised the importance of voice when reading to children: "*Pori Drwy Stori has shown that it is important to change voices etc. when reading books.*" Group members had also noticed a difference in contact with the school as a result of the programme, with the teacher explaining and keeping contact, "*involvement has been very important.*"

4.6 Use of PDSN within the curriculum and in classrooms

Practitioners reported that the main methods of using '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' and '*Deg Dinosor Bach/Ten Little Dinosaurs*' and '*Cwningod-od Glaw a Hindda/ Funny Bunnies Rain or Shine*' in class included:

- Circle Time (20%);
- Displayed Rhyme Sheets in class (17%);
- Created rhyme-based activities (15%);
- Shared in class (15%);
- Practiced rhymes at school before taking them home (12%);
- As a planning focus (12%).

41% of practitioners reported that they used the programme daily, 12% most days, 44% weekly and 2% monthly. According to practitioners, the vast majority of children (98%) liked the PDSN resources. The resources provided were perceived to be suitable and appropriate for children's interest and use at home and in school. Most respondents thought that the rhyme sheets '*It's Time to Rhyme/ Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' were Very Good (56%) or Good (41%) (Adequate 2%). Most respondents thought that the books '*Ten Little Dinosaurs/ Deg Deinosor Bach*' and '*Funny Bunnies Rain or Shine/ Cwning-od Glaw a Hindda*' were Very Good (73%) or Good (24%) (Adequate 2%). Examples of practitioner comments on the books include: "*they are very inviting for children*", "*lovely clear books with great illustrations*", and "*they been the favourite story in the book corner and at story time.*" Children responded to the PDSN bilingual books and the majority (66%) used/read both languages. A small number of schools and settings commented on language issues which included the level of difficulty

of the Welsh rhymes and the Welsh text in the bilingual books in English medium schools. A few schools said that due to children's low levels of English in their location, the language level of '*Ten Little Dinosaurs/Deg Dinosor Bach'* was challenging for them.

In more detailed open-ended responses, several practitioners provided examples of how the resources were used in practice in classrooms. Examples of linking the rhymes to the wider curriculum were, Mathematical counting*, "recognizing numbers, ordering numbers",* Personal and social Education, *"how to eat healthily",* Knowledge and Understanding of the World *"looking at the rhymes' meaning",* and Welsh Language Development *"a general introduction to Welsh".*

In some settings, practitioners used the '*Book Time/Sôn am Lyfr'* resources as a class activity, e.g. "w*e read the books to the children during story time and gave them access to them to during library time,"* but in another example of practice children were given the books to take home before using them in class, *"with the story books we left them for the children to have the first read with their parents."* The practitioner still planned to use the books in the classroom, but wanted to, *"leave a week before looking at the stories with the children."* A number of practitioners stated that the books were used in the classroom library or reading corner along with other books, for children to look at them as they wished.

Practitioners also discussed the use of the additional PDSN resources in classrooms. These included displaying the posters to engage children in additional talk, e.g. *"[we] put the big poster up during library time so that the children could look and talk about the pictures,"* and displaying the rhymes and rhyme sheets in the classroom. Some practitioners used the online rhyme videos in schools/settings with children and explained to children how to use the QR codes.

The following case study vignette is based on a teaching session observed by the research team. The session was held through the medium of Welsh and focused on the Welsh medium resources. The session focused on sharing and singing some of the PDSN rhymes. The adults led a session where children joined in singing some of the rhymes and performed accompanying actions. The session included oral interactions between children and adults e.g. children were asked to recall the sequence of events in the rhymes and asked to choose which parts of rhymes to sing next.

The researcher was also able to speak to a small number of children about the books that they had received during the PDSN programme. Their responses indicated that they were familiar with the rhymes and the '*Book Talk/Sôn am Lyfr*' books.

Case Study School 1 - Ceredigion, Welsh Medium Primary School, 28 Nursery pupils.

28 children followed the PDSN programme at this school. 8 pupils come from homes where both parents are Welsh Speaking, 6 come from bilingual Welsh –English homes, and 14 come from English speaking homes. 4 pupils had been identified as having oracy related needs. 2 received school support and 2 received intensive support.

The practitioner reported that the oracy baseline is very low at the school and reported that the gap between stronger and weaker pupils is increasing. She commented that most children respond in single word responses, there are few or no simple complete sentences. She also reported that a number of children have weak social skills and a failure to communicate clearly.

The main priority of the SDP in the school was to develop children's oral skills from the outset. The baseline was very low in both languages. Welsh was a new language for the majority. The PDSN programme was included as a resource in the School Development Plan.

In the observed session, there were 4 adults (1 teacher and 3 classroom assistants) and 28 children who had followed the PDSN programme present. Children sat on the mat with the adults. Children recalled the rhymes from memory and presented the '*Pum Hwyaden Fach'* activities following guidance from the teacher. Five children held the puppets that were used with the '*Pum Hwyaden Fach'* rhyme. Children sang and responded to instructions, they counted up and down, counted the ducks and responded enthusiastically. They also sang '*Dewch am Dro i Fferm Dadcu.*' Adults led the activity and supported the children. The leader questioned, "*Beth sy'n digwydd nesaf? (What happens next?) Sawl hwyaden sy na nawr? (How many ducks are there now)? Pa anifail hoffech chi nesa? (Which animal would you like next?)*" and responded to children's choices and encouraged children when needed. Some assistants supported individual children with SEN and one assistant provided visual cues for the activities. Adults supported the singing and led when needed. The PDSN rhyme calendar was on display and resources such as puppets and books.

The researcher spoke to three children at the end of the activity. When asked about their favourite rhyme children stated that it was '*Dewch am Dro i Fferm Dadcu.'* When shown the books and asked about them it became apparent that the favourite book was *Deg Dinosor Bach/Ten Little Dinosaurs.'* Children opened the book and excitedly showed the pictures to the researcher. They knew the story's content thoroughly and repeated the sentences in Welsh. The teacher said there was sound evidence that the children are very familiar with the stories and rhymes.

The school selected the theme Y Fferm/The Farm to link to the books and rhymes and linked this to wider learning, covering the six Foundation Phase Areas of Learning. This work targeted oracy and number skills. There was evidence of the theme including posters and pictures on the walls of the learning area. The children were singing the rhymes, counting and talking about the books. The rhymes were very useful to reinforce language patterns and to introduce new vocabulary and to reinforce numbering.

The second case study vignette is drawn from a classroom observation held in an English medium primary school. The session was conducted in English and focused mainly on singing the English rhymes, but also included one Welsh rhyme. The PDSN website was used as a teaching aid, along with another CD. The researcher attempted to speak to children but reported that there was little linguistic interaction - this may be due to unfamiliarity with the researcher rather than lack of language. However, the children indicated that they were familiar with the books.

Case Study School 4 - Conwy, English Medium Primary School, 33 Nursery Pupils.

4 adults were present in the session (two children had 1:1 support). Most children in the class came from English speaking homes; one child had a Welsh speaking parent and three children came from EAL backgrounds.

The children sang nursery rhymes, using a combination of PDSN website videos on a large screen, a CD of various nursery rhymes, and requests from the children. The teacher led the session, taking the children through some preselected nursery rhymes, either from the PDSN website, or from a CD. The teacher sang, performed the actions, and encouraged the children to participate. Rhymes observed: *'Teddy bear', 'One, two, three banana' 'Heno heno,' 'Five Little Ducks' a*nd then from the CD – *'I've got a spring in my toes'***,** then special request '*One, Two, Buckle my Shoe*.' To finish the session, children counted to ten in Welsh. One child was taken out of the classroom as he was disrupting the others (he had ALN and was uncomfortable with the activity). Most of the children made some effort to join in. Sometimes they sang whilst seated, other times they were instructed to stand in order to carry out the actions. It was noticeable that when the CD was playing for one song, it had upbeat background music, and the children joined in. When the teacher was scrolling down the website, the children called out their favourite – *'One, Two, Buckle my Shoe'* was the favourite rhyme chosen. All classroom assistants joined in the activity enthusiastically, and helped the children to join in.

Although most of the children were happy to come to the researcher, there was little language involved. When the researcher held up the '*Ten Little Dinosaurs Book*,' there was the biggest response with 4-5 of the children saying, "*I've got that*." When the researcher opened the book and started counting in Welsh, the children made some effort to join in, they clearly understood what was happening, but there was little formation of words. When the researcher said 'deg' one child said – "d*eg, that means ten*." When the researcher asked, '*do you like this book*?' the children nodded/made some noise to indicate an affirmative answer. One child didn't engage at all when spoken to.

The teacher explained that their practice was to keep story time and singing time informal, and use it as an opportunity to share books and enjoy singing without worrying too much about how it linked to Areas of Learning. However, the PDSN resources were linked to the class theme, which was farm animals.

4.6.1 Using PDSN to support oracy outcomes

A majority of schools and settings used PDSN resources to specifically support oracy outcomes (Yes 58%; No 30%; Not sure 13%). The resources were used by schools and to improve language skills, and to integrate various classroom activities. Examples of use included how to hold a book, understanding that text has a meaning, to strengthen rhyming, to encourage enjoyment of stories, songs and rhymes, being able to follow stories, songs and rhymes. Some practitioners said that they used the resources as a support for observation in the FP. Others used the resources to target specific groups of pupils e.g. *"to improve the oracy and reading in boys."* A number of practitioners commented that improving oracy or literacy was part of the School Development Plan and PDSN contributed to these aims, *"part of the School Development Plan is to improve literacy so this initiative will go towards that."* Other practitioners linked PDSN to FP outcomes and other programmes used for monitoring oracy targets such as 'WellComm': *"we looked at the FP programme and focused on phonological awareness and expressive use of language."* A specific example of use to support literacy included, "[*using] the books and rhymes as a focus for all planning. We are monitoring oracy levels as part of our project using the Foundation Phase Profile."* However, some practitioners had not used the resources to specifically support oracy outcomes, which suggests that further guidance or more explicit guidance on this aspect needs to be considered for BTC information sessions/guidance for practitioners.

A majority of schools and settings used PDSN resources to specifically support oracy outcomes (Yes 58%; No 30%; Not sure 13%). Specific oracy outcomes mentioned included strengthening rhyming; encouraging enjoyment of stories, songs and rhymes; and being able to follow stories, songs and rhymes. Some practitioners said that they used the resources as a support for observation in the FP. Others used the resources to target specific groups of pupils, including boys.

A number of practitioners commented that improving oracy or literacy was part of the School Development Plan and PDSN contributed to these aims: *"part of the School Development Plan is to improve literacy so this initiative will go towards that."* Some schools/ settings linked PDSN to FP outcomes (specifically phonological awareness and expressive use of language), used the books and rhymes as a focus for their planning and/ or used the programme to support FPP monitoring of oracy outcomes; other used other programmes for monitoring oracy targets (e.g. WellComm). However, some practitioners had not used the resources to specifically support oracy outcomes, which suggests that further guidance or more explicit guidance on this aspect needs to be considered for BTC information sessions/guidance for practitioners.

4.6.2 Using PDSN to support other areas of learning

90% of practitioners reported using PDSN to support Foundation Phase Areas of Learning and the LNF, in addition to as well as oracy outcomes. Examples included: numeracy (e.g. *"it supports mathematical development through counting. It made us think we could target more maths through rhymes"),* literacy (e.g. *"annog y plant i wneud defnydd o lyfrau a siarad am gynnwys y llyfrau/encouraged children to make use of books and talk about the book content";* Creative Development, ("*Creadigol, e.e. deinosoriaid. Hefyd, symud a chelf ac ati. /creative*

e.g. dinosaurs. Also, movement and art and so on)." Practitioners also described using the programme to support cross-curricular planning e.g. *"I made them useful for all areas of the planning. Maths, outdoors and everywhere, even in the baby room as the themes were integrated throughout. I went really holistic."* Whilst the majority of practitioners used the programme to explicitly support oracy outcomes, it's clear that many also saw opportunities for supporting wider FP outcomes, including but not limited to Language, Literacy and Communication.

The use of PDSN programme in curriculum planning was also discussed during site visits to schools and settings. Below, we provide two accounts of how the PDSN programme was integrated into schools' planning process. In the first case study, the practitioner provides a perspective on how the PDSN programme became part of their weekly planning process and integrated into Areas of Learning and the School Development Plan.

Practitioner Perspective: Case study School 3 - Newport, English medium primary, 112 pupils.

PDSN was very much at the centre of the weekly planning process. Skills from each Area of Learning were identified each week, and the resources of PDSN were mapped out in relation to those. There was an activity in each Area of Learning that stemmed directly from the PDSN resources. Displays were prepared for each rhyme and story, based on the children's activities. The practitioner said the programme was very good indeed and said: *"Brilliant! It was great to provide for the needs of 112 children with resources of good quality. This allowed us to plan effectively."*

Links with the home and parents, and the development of oracy were whole school priorities, and part of the School Development Plan. Workshops in these areas were provided throughout the school, and PDSN enabled practitioners to do develop these links in nursery.

The practitioner said that as a result of using PDSN: *"we now spend more time considering what activities we can encourage from rhymes, songs and stories and we have prepared more resources as a result e.g. simple board games for children to play based on a story or a song."*

'Deg Deinosor Bach/ Ten Little Dinosaurs' was a huge success in the school – many pupils wanted to read it again and again. The practitioner said the books were good for encouraging parents to interact more with their children. There was no problem with the bilingual nature of the books in the school. *"It is a good idea as it develops awareness of the Welsh language from an early age. The kids are teaching us Welsh."*

The next case study focuses on how PDSN became the class topic and was integrated into the school curriculum. Although oracy was not a focus of the SDP, according to the practitioner, family engagement was included and therefore the use of PDSN programme contributed to providing evidence and support to achieve this target.

Practitioner Case Study School 2 - Blaenau Gwent, English medium Primary School, 22 nursery pupils.

In this school, PDSN became the topic for the term. Each week, the nursery class focussed on the rhyme for the week: e.g. the teddy bear lead to situational language and outside play. Many topics were covered e.g. spiders, dinosaurs, baking, designing and so on. The researcher saw records of PDSN activities through iPad and the school Twitter account. The school invited parents/ carers to an assembly where children were given books, wrapped as a present with a bow and then they sang the songs. The practitioner said that it was a: *"really good experience for the children and for the families. They got the books as gifts and were given certificates. It was good for status and well-being. All the children had at least one family representative at the assembly."*

The curriculum in the nursery class was linked to the rhymes. For example: ducks in the maths area, nature and knowledge and understanding in the outdoors, lots of early mark making opportunities. The PDSN rhymes were displayed in the cloakrooms so children would see them when they went to wash their hands. The rhymes were also outside on the walls.

Oracy was a high focus in the school but it was not a focus of the School Development Plan. However, family engagement was included in the SDP, "*so Pori is one of the evidences for achievement.*"

The practitioner noted that rhymes were already important in the school and timetabled in all Foundation Phase classes. However, as a result of using PDSN, "*it's become more settled in the Foundation Phase, giving rhyme and story status again.*"

The schools visited were not Pioneer Schools and were in the initial stages of familiarization with the draft guidance for the new curriculum for Wales. Looking ahead to the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales some practitioners thought that PDSN would fit well, as it was perceived that the curriculum would be more creative and active.

4.6.3 Using PDSN Welsh and English texts

All practitioners who took part in the telephone interviews were asked whether they used the English and Welsh versions of the PDSN resources. 45% of practitioners said that they used both English and Welsh versions, 19% had used the Welsh rhymes and books, 11% had used the English rhymes and books, used the Welsh and English rhymes and English book, 8% used

the English rhymes and Welsh and English books, 4% used the Welsh rhymes and Welsh books.

Several Welsh medium settings commented that they used the Welsh texts only, as they are designated Welsh medium schools and need to support the development of Welsh language skills with nursery children. A practitioner in a Welsh medium school in an English-speaking area stated that any resource that helps to develop children's Welsh language was welcome, *"anything we can do to improve Welsh language skills is good."* Practitioners also encouraged parents to use the PDSN website as a resource to assist with singing the Welsh language resources at home with their child. A practitioner in a Welsh medium school emphasised the importance of having bilingual materials to send home with the children as most of their families were not Welsh speaking.

In some English medium schools and settings, the bilingual resources prompted practitioners to consider how to increase the use of Welsh within settings: *"it highlighted the need to make us think about how we should engage more with Welsh and make Welsh more interesting in the nursery. As a result, we are having conversations about it…we have decided to use a Welsh rhyme every half term from now on."* Another practitioner said that their attempts to use both the Welsh and English texts with children had raised their confidence, *"We did give it a go. We did a bit of both. It has raised confidence and [we] feel happier about giving Welsh a go."*

However, some English medium schools said that they found the Welsh texts too difficult. For example, a practitioner said they were, "*reading English only, parents found Welsh too hard for them."* Another remarked that they, *"tried to use the Welsh but some rhymes were too difficult. We always put both English and Welsh rhymes in the children's pouches*." In these cases, the resources were a means of raising practitioners' and parents' awareness of bilingual reading resources. The resources also seem to have encouraged practitioners in several English medium settings to consider how they are able to introduce more Welsh language content, including rhymes, into curriculum planning.

In response to a question about use of children's responses to the bilingual books, 63% of practitioners said that that children were using both languages. 40% of the practitioners reported that parents have reacted positively to bilingual resources. 53% had provided advice to parents on using the resources. Examples of encouragement and providing advice included, that parents should just attempt to use the Welsh texts, e.g. *"have a go and not get too worked up about it,"* suggesting that parents ask their child if they know what the Welsh word is for the picture they are showing them and referring parents and carers to use the PDSN resources online to assist with pronunciation and understanding. In some settings, advice was provided in during the introduction evening, *e.g. "gave them tips e.g. looking for key words."* In general, the approach seems to have been to encourage non-Welsh speaking parents to attempt to use the Welsh texts at home but not to become worried about them.

4.7 Support from BookTrust Cymru

The majority of practitioners were grateful and appreciative of the support provided to schools and settings from BTC:

- The email information from BTC is deemed by the majority of practitioners to be effective (Very Good 41%; Good 46%; Adequate 12%).
- A majority of practitioners attended one of BTC's information sessions for practitioners using the PDSN resources (Yes 68%; No 32%).
- Most practitioners have used the Practitioner Guide (Yes 80%; No 20%).
- All practitioners who had used the Practitioner Guide thought it was useful (Yes 100%).

More detailed open-ended comments regarding the support provided included appreciative comments on the email support provided by BTC, such as, *"emails responded to incredibly promptly. All questions and queries have been answered effectively.*" Information sessions were also valued by practitioners e.g. *"the information sessions meant being able to see the resources prior to the beginning of the programme"* and *"allowed us to plan."* The Practitioner Guide, *"was useful as not everyone here could attend the information session."* The guide was of assistance for planning the curriculum*, "it helped me map out how I would teach the rhymes, books and what to give out and when."*

A few issues raised regarding support were as follows:

- A small number of practitioners reported that they were not informed of the information sessions.
- One school felt that they should have sight of research tools sent to parents beforehand.

Practitioners made a few suggestions as to how the support could be further developed. These included more guidance, "*about using it throughout the nursery and more ideas for parents."* Comments indicated that some practitioners would welcome further guidance on extending the use of the resources, but without prescriptiveness. Others commented on the importance of flexibility, *"flexibility is needed but examples of good practice could be highlighted."* Regarding the resources, there were a small number of practitioner comments about, *"fewer bits of paper,"* and, *"making the activity resources themselves more robust."*

4.8 Challenges faced in delivering the programme

It is clear from comments made by practitioners who took part in the telephone interviews that the PDSN programme was highly welcomed and valued. The comments from practitioners' perspectives indicate that the programme was delivered successfully in most schools and settings. However, during the practitioner telephone interviews and site visit, some challenges in implementing the programme were raised. These were: difficulties with parental engagement in some locations, child eligibility, difficulties with resource distribution, the robustness of resources and not being able to attend training for the programme.

Parental engagement
Several practitioners remarked that engaging parents was difficult in their school/setting. This seemed to be an ongoing challenge for some schools/settings and was not necessarily specific to the PDSN programme. In one setting, the practitioner said that there was not much contact

with parents due to wrap-around care issues and lack of response to school communication, *"they don't respond well to letters, and because of the child either going to wrap-around care from here, or coming here from wrap-around care, we don't see as much of the parents."* Other comments focused on lack of parental response, *("very little response from parents…it took lots and lots of encouragement for them to take part")* and a lack of interest in the programme from parents, ("n*ot much interest at all, very disappointed with the lack of parent involvement").* Some practitioners remarked that parents were reluctant to take part as they, *"see it as too much like homework,"* for them in addition to homework for their children.

The resources

Although most practitioners (over 70%) thought the resources were good and suitable for home and school/setting use, a few comments about improving the resources were made. In particular, there were comments about the robustness of resources, e.g. "*Just make sure that the resources are more robust, and big enough to be used at home,"* and that, *"cardboard is needed rather than paper. The materials are not robust enough, they break too easily."* Although the majority of practitioners indicated that the book resources were suitable for all children there were a couple of comments that '*Deg Deinoso*r *Bach/Ten Little Dinosaurs'* was more appealing to boys e.g. "*the boys go for the dinosaurs. The girls are not drawn to them."*

Ineligible children in the nursey group

Although most practitioners reported that they did not encounter difficulties with children being ineligible to receive the resources in the nursery class, some instances were noted where ineligibility was a problem. Mixed age classes, "*meant some children got resources and others didn't. We did create some ourselves, but they weren't of the same standard."* In a few settings parents were dissatisfied that some children received the resources and others did not, within the same class. A practitioner expressed her feeling that it was not easy to distribute resources to some children only within a nursery class: *"my personal feeling is that the programme needs to be offered to every child in the Cylch. The rhymes, songs and activities were all suitable for two and a half and three-year-old children and we included them in the presentation of resources during the session."*

Difficulties in accessing training for the programme

Most practitioners (68%) attended a BTC information session and appreciated the opportunity to see and discuss the resources and to share with other practitioners. However, some stated that they were not informed of the sessions, e.g. "*we didn't know anything about the session. Found out about it later on."* Another reason for not being able to attend was, "*due to lack of bank staff/cover."* Practitioners who had not attended felt less confident about delivering the programme, and some noted a specific lack of confidence in delivering to families.

Difficulties with resource distribution

A few settings reported that they encountered difficulties in receiving the resources and they were not able to use the resources fully, "*We didn't use the reading books because of the very long delay in receiving the Pori Drwy Stori resources."* Another practitioner reported that the delay in receiving resources had caused uncertainty with delivering the programme, *"because of the delay in receiving our resources, I wasn't sure if we were behind in our programme rollout."* One school reported that they did not receive any '*Book Time/Sôn am Lyfr'* resources*.*

5 Impact Assessment

Section summary

Development in children's oracy-related outcomes
- Overall, there have been statistically significant improvements to oracy related outcomes during the programme period.
- There was a small and positive effect in relation to child oracy-related outcomes that may be attributed to the programme, although these are statistically insignificant.
- Children receiving one of the two resources (typically *'It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm'*) made greater progress than those receiving both or none of the resources in that early period. Children who received both the resources before March seemed to make greater progress than those receiving them afterwards.
- Children eligible for free school meals made less progress than those who are not. However, it is not possible to identify the extent to which any increases (or lack of) for any particular group can be attributed to the programme.
- Parents/carers who took part in focus groups felt that the PDSN resources had been useful in helping their child to develop speaking and listening skills along with increased interaction with children, supporting learning at home, involvement of siblings and enjoyment of reading.

Parent/Carer engagement in child learning
- Overall, the analysis was mixed with the first set of statements used in the parent/carer survey to test parental engagement showing no improvements. However, statistically significant improvements were found through other measures including parents/carers reading the same book over and over again with their child.
- The parent/carer survey also suggested that parents/carers read and talk about books more often following the intervention, along with reading books and sharing rhymes/ songs in Welsh more often.
- There was a significantly higher increase in parental engagement among those receiving both resources before March (i.e. in the spring term). This difference suggests that the programme has had a positive impact on parental engagement in their children's learning.
- Parents/carers reporting that they often speak to practitioners about PDSN were statistically more likely to report increases in their parental engagement.
- Parents/carers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to report that their engagement in their child's learning has improved.
- Many practitioners believed that there had been impacts in relation to parent/carer engagement and thought that parents had responded positively and engaged well with the programme. However, there were also comments regarding difficulties in this area.
- Practitioners identified and developed new and increasingly effective ways of communicating with parents and carers and developing home school/setting links. Methods included use of a classroom communication app and dedicated Twitter and Facebook class accounts to share information and feedback, including photos and short videos, from the school/setting to parents/carers and from home to the school/setting.

Practitioners' ability to improve oracy outcomes for children

- Practitioner comments display increased understanding of the role that rhymes and song have in children's oracy development.
- Some practitioners who had used the Welsh texts reported impacts in relation to increasing the use of Welsh songs, rhymes and books with children through using the PDSN resources.

5.1   Introduction

This chapter considers the key research question posed for this evaluation, i.e. *'To what extent does the PDSN programme meet its stated aims and outcomes?* It does so by exploring the extent to which the programme achieved its goals for its three key aims, namely:

Specific aim 1: To improve oracy-related outcomes for children.

Specific aim 2: To increase parents'/ carers' engagement with their child's learning, specifically in relation to activities which support oracy outcomes.

Specific aim 3: To increase practitioners' knowledge and understanding of, and practice relating to, how they can improve oracy outcomes for children, especially by engaging parents and carers.

These three aims are considered in turn as sub-sections to this chapter. We also consider some of the sub-questions posed for this evaluation. Specifically, we consider whether there are particular delivery contexts in which impacts are greater, and whether the programme is generating greater impacts for particular groups of children and families.

It should be noted that the parent/carer survey data and the practitioner telephone interview response data differ on a number of aspects. In general, a more positive response to PDSN programme impact was reported by practitioners than parents/carers. The reasons for this may include practitioners' professional views and observations based on impacts on particular cohorts of children and their families rather than parents'/carers' views of their own individual children. Practitioners would probably not have very detailed knowledge of the frequency of individual children's use of the resources with their families at home. Parent/career responses are based on experiences observation on their own personal engagement/lack of engagement with a school/setting and observations on their child's use of the resources and perceptions of oracy related skill development at home. Many parents may be unaware of the FP curriculum and, without professional insight, less able to gauge impact of using the PDSN resources on their child's oracy skill development. Further, there may be some ceiling effects relating to the outcome statements as parents/carers gave very positive ratings for these outcomes before the programme, leaving little room for improvement.

5.2 Development in children's oracy-related outcomes

5.2.1 Parent/Carer perspectives – core statement measures

The assessment of impact in relation to children's oracy-related outcomes is largely based on parents and carers' self-reported observations (other methods include formal practitioner assessments as well as detailed feedback from a sample of practitioners). Eight statements were used to determine children's development along with a composite variable (see Section 2.4 of the methodology for further information about the composite variable). These statements are designed to align with the specific outcome measures developed for PDSN (see details of the design process in the Methodology section) and include indicators such as enjoyment in sharing rhymes, songs, books, progression in conversational skills etc.

A two-step approach is taken in assessing programme impact in relation to children's oracy-related outcomes. Firstly, we consider whether there has been an observed change within the intervention group from pre to post intervention and whether that change is statistically significant.[10] Secondly, we identify the programme effect by identifying whether any observed change is greater within the intervention group to changes found within the comparison group, and whether those differences are statistically significant.

Observed change

Table 5.1 below shows each statement measure in the left-hand column; the mean score provided by parents/carers pre and post intervention in the second and third columns; the observed change in the fourth column; and whether this observed change is statistically significant (SS). In the fifth column, green indicates a level of statistical significance; amber indicates a change of 0.05 or more but is not statistically significant, red indicates a lack of change i.e. below 0.05.

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[10] Results are deemed statistically significant when we can say with 95% confidence any differences are not down to chance.

Table 5.1: Children's oracy-related outcomes – core statement measures, changes from pre to post intervention

Statement	Pre	Post	Change	SS
My child enjoys sharing rhymes and/or songs	6.57	6.50	-0.06	
My child knows a lot of different rhymes and/or songs	6.30	6.43	0.13	
My child finds it easy to join in with rhymes and/or songs	6.19	6.26	0.07	
When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming	6.04	6.26	0.22	
My child enjoys sharing books with me	6.65	6.67	0.02	
My child asks me to read books to him/ her	6.69	6.63	-0.06	
When we talk about books, my child can express him/herself clearly	6.07	6.32	0.25	
My child takes part in discussions with other children/adults	5.88	6.07	0.19	
Child oracy-related outcomes - composite variable	**6.30**	**6.39**	**0.09**	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

The data reveals a statistically significant increase over time in consideration of the composite score (i.e. taking all these oracy-related statements together) and four of the eight statements show statistically significant increases. The greatest increase is found in children's ability to express themselves clearly when talking about books (+0.25), followed by recognition of rhythm and rhyme (+0.22), increased ability to take part in discussions with other children/adults (+0.19), and knowledge of different rhymes and/or songs (+0.13). No significant increases were found in children's enjoyment of sharing rhymes, songs and books; their ability to join in rhymes/songs; or their likelihood to ask parents/carers to read to them.

A key finding here is that overall, there have been statistically significant improvements to oracy related outcomes during the programme period. Drawing together observations across the eight domains within a composite variable, outcomes improved overall by 0.09.

The modest change recorded for several of these measures is indicative of the high baseline scores provided by parents/carers. As illustrated by Table 5.1, a mean score of between 5.88 and 6.69 out of 7 was recorded pre-intervention for each of these measures.

Programme effect
Upon identifying the observed change, we then look at the extent to which this change can be attributed to the intervention (i.e. the programme effect (PE)) by comparing the observed change in the intervention and comparison groups.

Table 5.2 below shows the change in mean scores from pre to post intervention within the intervention and comparison groups (see second and third columns), the difference between the observed change in both groups (i.e. the PE) in the fourth column, and whether the PE is statistically significant (see fifth column).

Table 5.2: Children's oracy-related outcomes – core statement measures, comparison in mean changes between intervention and comparison groups

Statement	Intervention	Comparison	PE	SS
My child enjoys sharing rhymes and/or songs	-0.06	-0.17	0.11	
My child knows a lot of different rhymes and/or songs	0.13	-0.09	0.21	
My child finds it easy to join in with rhymes and/or songs	0.07	-0.18	0.25	
When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming	0.22	-0.18	0.40	
My child enjoys sharing books with me	0.02	0.09	-0.07	
My child asks me to read books to him/ her	-0.06	0.41	-0.47	
When we talk about books, my child can express him/herself clearly	0.25	0.13	0.12	
My child takes part in discussions with other children/adults	0.19	0.17	0.02	
Child oracy-related outcomes - composite variable	**0.09**	**0.02**	**0.07**	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430, Comparison: n=47)

A positive PE (i.e. where the increase in the intervention group has exceeded that in the comparison group) was found in six of the eight statement measures along with the composite variable. It is interesting to note that all four statements relating to rhymes show a positive PE, suggesting the programme may be particularly successful in encouraging rhyme sharing activity.

Drawing together the eight domains within a single composite variable, there was a small and positive effect size. Using a statistical test Cohen's d, which draws on the standardised difference between the two means, finds the effect to be 0.07. This is small, and these observations are statistically not significant. Nevertheless, the broader pattern in the data in which there are greater increases in the intervention group according to most measures suggests that the programme may be having an impact on children's oracy-related outcomes.

Two differences between the observed change in the intervention and comparison groups were statistically significant. Firstly, the data reveals that on the measure of children's recognition of rhythm and rhyme, there has been a significant increase over time over and above what would have occurred regardless of the intervention (see Figure 5.1 over page).

Figure 5.1: Mean average for intervention and comparison groups pre and post intervention for the measure 'When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming'
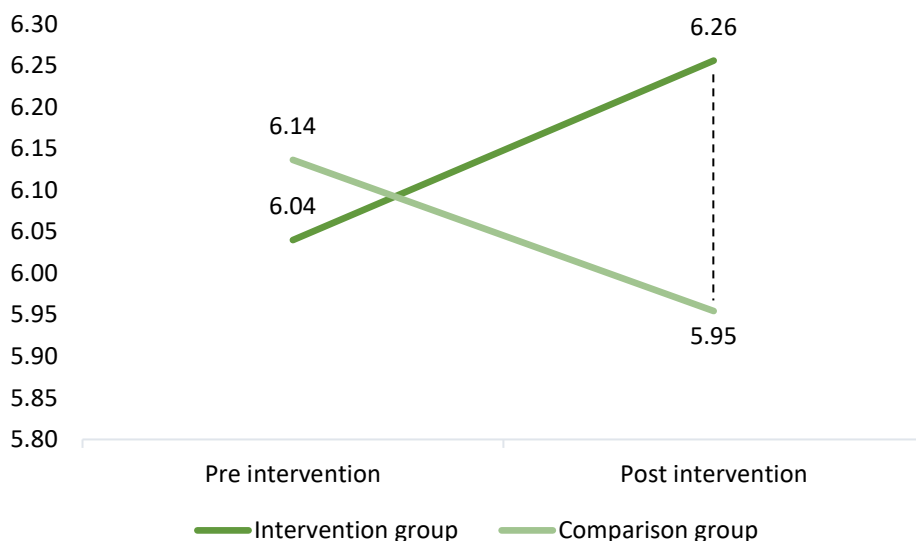
Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430, Comparison: n=47)

The second significant result relates to the children's likelihood of asking parents/carers to read to them. In this case, the data shows a decrease of 0.06 which is 0.47 below the increase found in the comparison group. There could be several reasons for this. Firstly, parents/carers in the intervention group provided a very high baseline score for this measure (6.69 average on a 7-point scale) and higher than found in the comparison group (6.46). This of course means that there is less room for improvement in the intervention group, thus exaggerating the difference between them. Secondly, the decrease in children asking parents/carers to read to them could possibly be explained by the children engaged in more independent learning, or that, as a result of these resources, parents/carers are more likely to offer reading to their children without being asked.

Variation in delivery

The analysis also considers whether these impacts on children's oracy-related outcomes vary according to differences in how the programme was delivered in different schools and settings. The programme model allows for a certain amount of flexibility for schools/settings, within a recommended programme structure, allowing for an assessment of whether certain practices are more effective than others and have a bearing on the impacts generated.

Firstly, we look at when the two sets of resources were sent to families and explore three cohorts: families who received both sets of resources up to the end of March 2019; those who received one set (typically 'It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm') up to March 2019; and those who hadn't received any resource up to March 2019. The mean changes for each of these groups are shown in Table 5.3 over page, along with the final column to the right indicating the P-value and whether differences between each group are statistically significant.

Table 5.3: Children's oracy-related outcomes – comparison of mean changes from pre to post intervention according to when the resources were received

Statement	Both up to March	One up to March	None up to March	SS (P-value)
My child enjoys sharing rhymes and/or songs	-0.13	0.10	-0.05	0.07
My child knows a lot of different rhymes and/or songs	0.07	0.27	-0.01	0.08
My child finds it easy to join in with rhymes and/or songs	0.12	0.22	-0.12	0.05
When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming	0.18	0.30	0.17	0.63
My child enjoys sharing books with me	0.02	0.05	-0.16	0.11
My child asks me to read books to him/ her	-0.05	-0.05	-0.24	0.23
When we talk about books, my child can express him/herself clearly	0.15	0.36	0.13	0.19
My child takes part in discussions with other children/adults	0.35	0.24	0.13	0.52
Child oracy-related outcomes - composite variable	**0.09**	**0.19**	**-0.01**	**0.00**

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Table 5.3 suggests that, according to parent/carer feedback, there is a greater impact on oracy outcomes when children have more time to use each resource. For example, given that most schools/settings used the rhyme resources first, we would assume that those who have only used one resource up to March have used the rhyme resources and may well have used it over a longer period of time. The table shows stronger outcomes for the statements related to rhyme for this group. The composite for all child oracy-related outcome statements show an increase for those receiving one or two resources up to March 2019 (by 0.19 and 0.09 respectively), whilst those receiving none of these resources reported a decrease (-0.01).

Only one of the individual measures was statistically significant at a P-value of <5% where children who had received the one resource (typically '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*') or, to a lesser extent, both resources up to March 2019 were more likely to find it easy to join in with rhymes and/or songs. The composite variable is also statistically significant and shows this same pattern.

The data shows that on almost every outcome measure those who had received just the one resource (typically '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*') had made greater progress than those receiving both, but in particular they made stronger progress on the outcomes relating to rhyme. Given that those receiving none of the resources in the initial months reported less impact, the data also adds further weight to the suggestion that the intervention has generated positive oracy-related outcomes for children. Finally, the data suggests that introducing the resources separately and with enough time to focus on each one separately, as recommended by BTC, generates greater oracy-related outcomes.

Secondly, we looked at whether the way in which the programme was introduced to families had a bearing on the impacts generated. We looked at two methods of introduction: in-person (either at a parents' meeting, at drop-off/collection, or at a special workshop session), and those receiving them not in person (through a letter, social media or a school app). However,

the analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the impacts generated for these two cohorts and there was no clear pattern of one group benefitting more than the other.

Finally, we looked at correlations between the level of parent/carer communication about PDSN with practitioners and the impacts generated. Once again, no clear patterns emerged from this analysis. These findings show that the way the resources are introduced to parents/carers or are subsequently communicated have no identifiable impacts on children's oracy development outcomes.

Variation for different pupils

The final analysis exercise for the core parent/carer oracy-related outcomes considered whether the data revealed any groups of pupils making more progress over the programme period than others. However, it is important to stress that the comparison sample is not large enough to explore how outcomes vary according to different pupils and this analysis therefore only considers subsamples within the intervention group. As such, while this analysis shows the development of different cohorts over the programme period, it does not show the programme effect as no comparison group sample is available.

We focussed on two key characteristics which the baseline survey data had revealed to be particularly interesting[11], namely gender and eligibility for free school meals (FSM). FSM is used as a proxy to determine whether children from more disadvantaged backgrounds benefit less or more than those from less disadvantaged backgrounds. Table 5.4 below shows that on each measure, there has been a larger increase in oracy-related outcomes for children who are non-FSM (i.e. those who are more affluent).

Table 5.4: Children's oracy-related outcomes – comparison of mean changes from pre to post intervention according to children's FSM status

Statement	FSM	Not FSM	SS
My child enjoys sharing rhymes and/or songs	-0.06	-0.04	
My child knows a lot of different rhymes and/or songs	0.00	0.16	
My child finds it easy to join in with rhymes and/or songs	0.07	0.11	
When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming	0.07	0.29	
My child enjoys sharing books with me	-0.02	0.02	
My child asks me to read books to him/ her	-0.15	-0.07	
When we talk about books, my child can express him/herself clearly	0.13	0.26	
My child takes part in discussions with other children/adults	0.04	0.18	
Child oracy-related outcomes - composite variable	**-0.01**	**0.11**	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

At an individual statement level, none of these differences are statistically significant owing to the small sample size of the FSM group (47 responses). However, creating a larger sample

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[11] The baseline survey responses were presented in the interim findings report in June 2019 and revealed that children's oracy-related outcomes at the baseline stage did vary according to gender and eligibility for free school meals.

size by combining these statements in the composite variable does reveal a statistically significant difference. The data shows that, overall, children from more disadvantaged backgrounds benefit less than their more affluent peers. In particular, a +0.29 change is recorded for children from more affluent backgrounds on the measure of being able to predict/complete rhyming when sharing rhymes. This can be compared with a +0.07 change for the more disadvantaged group of pupils.

At the baseline stage, parents/carers were reporting higher oracy-related outcomes for females and these gender differences were statistically significant. However, Table 5.5 suggests that males have generally developed more over this period (although the composite variable is not statistically significant). This differs to the expected trends where other research has demonstrated that girls are expected to develop more at this age. For example, a report by Estyn in 2008 that looked at baseline assessments on entry to school revealed that girls' average language skills are higher than boys in up to 90% of primary schools[12].This may therefore suggest the programme is having a greater effect on boys and in closing that gender gap.

One of the individual outcome statements is statistically significant, where there has been a significantly higher increase in boys taking part in discussions with other children/adults over girls (+0.34 vs +0.06). Additionally, whilst not statistically significant, higher increases are recorded for boys across five of the eight measures.

Table 5.5: Children's oracy-related outcomes – comparison of mean changes from pre to post intervention according to children's gender

Statement	Male	Female	SS
My child enjoys sharing rhymes and/or songs	-0.09	-0.04	
My child knows a lot of different rhymes and/or songs	0.21	0.05	
My child finds it easy to join in with rhymes and/or songs	0.12	0.04	
When we share rhymes, my child can predict or complete the rhyming	0.23	0.21	
My child enjoys sharing books with me	0.00	0.03	
My child asks me to read books to him/ her	-0.08	-0.05	
When we talk about books, my child can express him/herself clearly	0.30	0.21	
My child takes part in discussions with other children/adults	0.34	0.06	
Child oracy-related outcomes - composite variable	0.13	0.06	

5.2.2 Parent / Carer perspectives – Other outcome measures

Finally, in addition to these statements asked pre and post intervention, parents and carers in the intervention group were also asked the following in the follow-up survey:

Since taking part in PDSN, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5)

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[12] Estyn, *Closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in schools*, March 2008.

Three of the statements related to children's oracy-related outcomes. The data reveals that around half of respondents Strongly agree or Agree with each of these statements relating to improvements in confidence, listening and speaking skills, while most of the others are not sure. Very few (between 6% and 9%) disagree. Looking at the net positive score (i.e. subtracting the proportion who disagreed from those who agreed), provides the following net agreement:

- 46% agree 'My child's confidence has improved'
- 44% agree 'My child's speaking skills have improved'
- 42% agree 'My child's confidence has improved'

Figure 5.2: Since taking part in PDSN, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
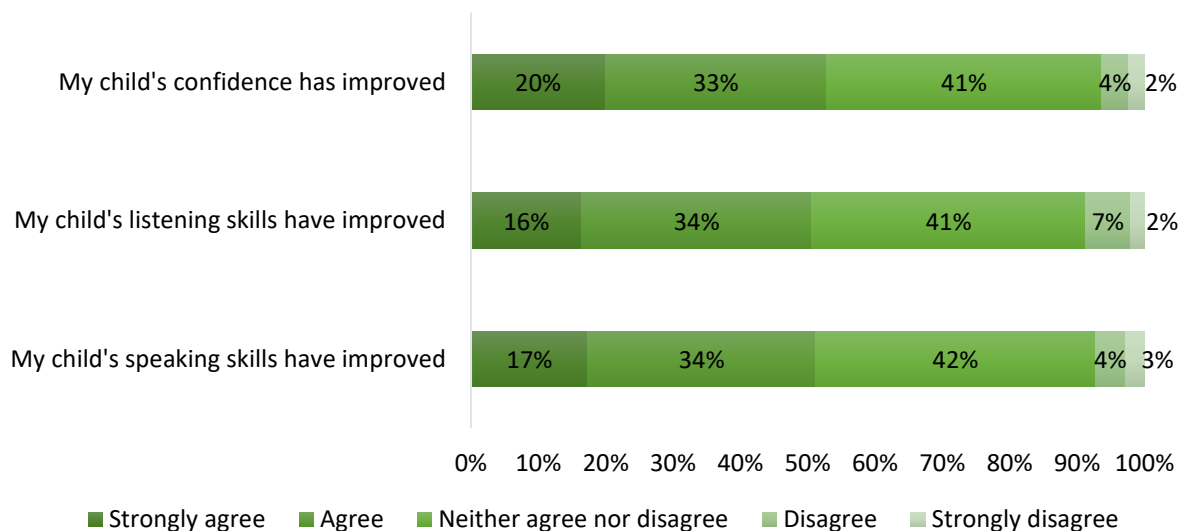
Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

5.2.3   Formal assessment data

It was hoped that the evaluation would be able to draw on formal assessment data to further support findings on children's oracy-related outcomes and the role played by PDSN. However, whilst the data clearly shows that children have progressed over the programme period, it was not possible to determine the extent to which the programme contributed towards these improvements. This is because the variation in the manner in which the formal assessments were undertaken along with the sample size made it difficult to compare results for the intervention and comparison groups. A full outline of the analysis and findings is shown in Appendix 1.

5.2.4   Parent/Carer perspectives – Qualitative feedback

Parent/carer perspectives were obtained via focus group meetings conducted as part of site visits to schools and settings. Participation in the focus groups was arranged by schools and settings. The settings varied their practices when engaging parents with the programme. Parents who participated in the focus groups felt that the PDSN resources had been useful in

helping children to develop speaking and listening skills, and particularly in developing Welsh language confidence in children from English speaking families. Examples of oracy skills mentioned by parents included singing and talking, ("we e*njoyed singing and talking about the rhymes*"), and increased confidence ("*my child is more* co*nfident in asking questions"). T*he resource was also deemed to be a, "*great help in pronunciation, especially the Welsh words.*" The books were also praised for stimulating talk between parents and children, "*I think having new resources helped us, it's nice to have new books, and activities already there for you.*"

Parents did not refer to children's specific oracy difficulties, apart from one parent who mentioned that her daughter had been discharged from the SALT register. In a group discussion setting there understandably may well be a reluctance to refer to oracy difficulties.

Comments on the bilingual aspects of the books included welcoming the bilingual format e.g. "*I liked that the format was bilingual, it gives you a choice. I didn't really read it in Welsh but we loved the books. I guess we could pick out words to say in Welsh, but we just chatted about the weather in Welsh.*" However, some found the Welsh vocabulary challenging as explained by the comment, "*the Welsh was really difficult though, and I really struggled to say the words and understand them.*"

5.2.5   Practitioner perspectives

Practitioner perspectives were gathered by means of telephone interviews and site visits to schools and settings.   Several practitioners said that children's oracy development was included in School Development Plan. Other schools and settings had not linked the resource specifically to the SDP and FP curriculum and used the resources informally.

Several practitioners commented that it was difficult to say what specific impact PDSN had on children's oracy as it was difficult to attribute improvements to one programme, as they also used other resources to promote oracy. The programme was said to be very useful for increasing oracy outcomes but difficult to evaluate impact on learning because learning rhymes and listening to stories were often already a normal part of everyday activities. However, although rhyme time and stories were already included in many FP classes, using the PDSN resources meant that rhymes and stories became more embedded in the Foundation Phase, "*giving rhyme and story status again.*" They also supported practitioners to review and reassess their practice, for example, "*the main difference is to focus on one rhyme for a week. We sung it every morning and other times during the day. The repetition helped those children who are reluctant to speak, they were singing. It's the familiarity and confidence.*"

Practitioners referred to several positive impacts they thought the programme had on children's oracy skills. These included being able to form simple sentences, *("the majority of children are able to string simple sentences together by now"),* improvement in concentration skills *("concentration skills are improving")*, working in a group to sing the rhymes ("*co-operation in singing the rhymes*"), improvements in attention and engagement in sound and word play (*"children engage in sound and word play and listen with growing attention and concentration").* Other oracy skill development attributed by practitioners to the PDSN programme include improvement in recalling and expression (*"children are able to retell an*

event or an experience in simple terms"), and improvement in social skills *("they take part in activities alongside others").* Using the PDSN resource also meant that, *"children have a greater repertoire of nursery rhymes that they are familiar with,"* thus developing phonemic awareness, vocabulary and pronunciation.

The following case study vignette is based on a site visit and summarises the impact PDSN had on children's skills in an English medium primary school and what the programme has added to the school's practice. Improving children's oracy skills and home school links were included in the SDP. As a result, the practitioner clearly felt that using the PDSN resources had strengthened children's skills, parental interaction and the quality of practitioner planning. The practitioner's words are presented here as they illustrate how she feels the programme fits with existing practice and has supported reviewing, reassessing and linking to existing practice, but also developing it further.

Practitioner Perspective: Case Study School 3. Primary School Newport. 112 nursery pupils
"Links with the home and parents, and the development of oracy are whole school priorities, and part of the School Development Plan. Workshops in these areas are provided throughout the school, and PDS enables us to do that in nursery. Children are enthusiastic about the rhymes and the books and respond very positively to them. They interact well with practitioners and parents in response to the stimuli provided by the resources. They are truly excited by the books – there is a video of pupils opening the Dinosaur package for the first time, and it shows clearly how excited they are – [saying] "This is my favourite book!" before turning the pages. This book 'Ten Little Dinosaurs/ Deg Dinosor Bach' proved exceptionally popular, and the practitioners took advantage of that to plan more activities, a mini project guided by the children's interest. Children are now happier to talk about stories, and join in singing activities. This approach is what we favour as a school, but it is enhanced significantly by the quality of the resources. It would require a significant effort to prepare these activities without them. We now spend more time considering what activities we can encourage from rhymes, songs and stories and we have prepared more resources as a result e.g. simple board games for children to play based on a story or a song."

5.3   Parent / Carer engagement in child learning

The impact assessment of the programme's second key aim, i.e. to increase parents'/carers' engagement with their child's learning (specifically in relation to activities which support oracy outcomes) also largely draws on parents and carers' self-reported feedback. Additionally, it also considers the qualitative feedback provided by practitioners to determine their perception of parents/carers' engagement in their children's learning and whether there are closer ties with the schools/settings as a result of this programme.

5.3.1 Parent/Carer perspectives – core statement measures

Seven core statement measures were used at the baseline and follow-up survey as the basis for assessing any increase in parents/carers' engagement in their children's learning. Once again these were designed to align with the specific outcome measures developed for PDSN

(see details of the design process in the Methodology section). They include indicators such as confidence, attitudes and perceived benefits of sharing rhymes and songs and reading to their children, along with general perspectives on engagement in their children's learning and communication with their child's school/setting.

The same impact assessment outlined for the core statements is repeated here. It starts by identifying the observed changes before considering the programme effect and whether the impact generated varies by different delivery contexts or for different groups of pupils.

Observed change

Two of the seven measures showed statistically significant changes over the intervention period (see Table 5.6 below) with a significant increase in parents/carers reading the same book over and over again with their child (+0.17), which is considered good practice. However, there has also been a significant decrease in parents'/carers' perceptions of there being good communication with their child's school/nursery setting (-0.15).

Overall, the main finding here is that there has been very little change across the outcome statements in relation to parents and carers' perceptions of their engagement in their children's learning. Indeed, the composite variable shows a decrease of 0.01 which is not statistically significant.

Table 5.6: Parent/Carer engagement in child learning – core statement measures, changes from pre to post intervention

Statement	Pre	Post	Change	SS
I feel confident sharing rhymes and/or songs with my child	6.50	6.54	0.04	🟥
I think that sharing rhymes and/or songs will help my child to speak and listen well	6.52	6.54	0.02	🟥
I feel confident reading stories out loud with my child	6.72	6.69	-0.03	🟥
I often read the same book over and over again with my child	6.01	6.17	0.17	🟩
I think that reading with my child will help their communication skills	6.71	6.72	0.00	🟥
There is good communication between myself and my child's school / nursery setting	6.12	5.97	-0.15	🟩
I feel involved in my child's learning	6.11	6.02	-0.09	🟧
Parent / Carer engagement - composite variable	6.38	6.37	-0.01	🟥

Parent/Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Programme effect

Similar findings were received from the comparison group and, as such, the data reveals that none of the changes identified above can be attributed to the intervention to a statistically significant degree (see Table 5.7 below).

Table 5.7: Parent/Carer engagement in child learning – core statement measures, comparison in mean changes between intervention and comparison groups

Statement	Intervention	Comparison	PE	SS
I feel confident sharing rhymes and/or songs with my child	0.04	0.00	0.04	
I think that sharing rhymes and/or songs will help my child to speak and listen well	0.02	-0.04	0.06	
I feel confident reading stories out loud with my child	-0.03	0.09	-0.11	
I often read the same book over and over again with my child	0.17	0.19	-0.03	
I think that reading with my child will help their communication skills	0.00	-0.02	0.02	
There is good communication between myself and my child's school / nursery setting	-0.15	-0.04	-0.11	
I feel involved in my child's learning	-0.09	-0.35	0.26	
Parent / Carer engagement - composite variable	**-0.01**	**-0.02**	**0.01**	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430, Comparison: n=47)

It is important once again to note that this lack of change may relate to a number of methodological factors including the sensitivity of the constructs including in the survey data (i.e. whether the outcome statements are appropriate measures to identify impact), potential presence of social desirability bias surrounding parental attitudes towards parenting behaviours, changes in practice over the course of a term in schools/settings. Further, survey findings present a mixed picture in relation to programme impact on parental engagement. Whilst data from these core measures do not show improvements, findings from other measures (see 5.3.2) and practitioner feedback do suggest positive impacts.

Variation in delivery

We again consider whether impacts have been more profound in certain delivery contexts, firstly by looking at when the resources were received (see Table 5.8 below). Generally, the data suggests that participants receiving both resources early on (i.e. up to March 2019) are more likely to report increases linked to parental engagement than those who hadn't received any resources or just the one resource (typically '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*'). When combining the statements in the composite variable, the analysis reveals a significantly higher increase in parental engagement among those receiving both resources up to March.

Table 5.8: Parent/Carer engagement in child learning – comparison of mean changes from pre to post intervention according to when the resources were received

Statement	Both up to March	One up to March	None up to March	SS (P-value)
I feel confident sharing rhymes and/or songs with my child	0.10	0.06	-0.12	0.32
I think that sharing rhymes and/or songs will help my child to speak and listen well	0.13	0.11	-0.13	0.17
I feel confident reading stories out loud with my child	0.00	-0.07	-0.16	0.35
I often read the same book over and over again with my child	0.27	-0.04	0.29	0.11
I think that reading with my child will help their communication skills	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.95
There is good communication between myself and my child's school / nursery setting	-0.06	-0.10	-0.21	0.71
I feel involved in my child's learning	0.07	-0.14	-0.13	0.27
Parent / Carer engagement - composite variable	0.07	-0.08	0.02	0.03

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Contrary to earlier findings where there were no statistically significant PE (see Table 5.10), the fact that the group of participants who have received both resources from the beginning (so presumably received a greater intensity of support) appear to have experienced greater benefits suggest that the programme has had a positive impact on parental engagement in their children's learning. Thus, whilst the PE analysis suggests there has not been an impact from the programme on parental engagement, further examination of the data suggests differently. These findings also suggest that where both resources are used in one term there is more momentum and more opportunities for engagement. This more intense approach may therefore be increasing parental engagement.

We also tested whether these data varied according to how the programme was introduced to parents/carers along with the level of communication with parents/carers about the programme.

The first test reveals that there are no statistically significant differences with regards to changes in parents'/carers' engagement according to whether the resources were introduced to them in person or more indirectly.

The second test, on level of communication about the programme, does reveal some statistically significant results (see Table 5.9 below). Those reporting that they often speak to practitioners about PDSN were statistically more likely to report increases in their parental engagement. This primarily includes increases in overall communication with the school/ nursery setting (i.e. not just about PDSN) and they were more likely to say they felt involved in their child's learning.

Table 5.9: Parent/Carer engagement in child learning – comparison of mean changes from pre to post intervention according to the frequency of communication with practitioners about PDSN

Statement	Often	A few times	Just once	Never	SS (P-value)
I feel confident sharing rhymes and/or songs with my child	0.00	0.08	-0.02	-0.01	0.76
I think that sharing rhymes and/or songs will help my child to speak and listen well	0.24	0.12	-0.10	-0.08	0.14
I feel confident reading stories out loud with my child	-0.12	0.02	-0.08	-0.05	0.64
I often read the same book over and over again with my child	0.75	0.11	0.09	0.20	0.16
I think that reading with my child will help their communication skills	0.04	0.07	-0.04	-0.12	0.22
There is good communication between myself and my child's school / nursery setting	0.04	-0.01	-0.15	-0.51	0.01
I feel involved in my child's learning	0.24	0.07	-0.29	-0.30	0.01
Parent / Carer engagement - composite variable	0.27	0.13	0.01	0.07	p<.001

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

More generally, those reporting high levels of communication about PDSN were more likely to report increases, even if not to a degree that can be determined as statistically significant. The distribution of average mean scores for the second statement (see Table 5.9) suggests that the greater the level of communication, the greater the impact on behaviour and understanding of the importance of rhymes and songs. The distribution of scores for statement 6 (communication with school/setting) may suggest that PDSN is an important tool to encourage greater communication. In the next statement, there is clear correlation between communication with school/setting in relation to PDSN and feeling involved in their child's learning, possibly suggesting that PDSN can be a useful tool in supporting parents/ carers to feel engaged.

The most notable difference for those who often speak to practitioners about PDSN was a +0.75 increase in parents/carers reading the same book repeatedly with their child. This can be compared to an increase of just 0.11 to 0.2 for the other cohorts. Crucially, the composite variable does show a statistically significant increase. The data does therefore suggest that the level of communication with practitioners about PDSN affects what the programme achieves for certain outcomes.

Variation for different pupils

Finally, the data also suggests that the potential impact of PDSN on parental engagement varies to some extent according to the family's level of deprivation. Using eligibility for free school meals as a proxy, the data shows that parents of children that are eligible are less likely to report that their engagement in their child's learning has improved. Although none of the individual statements show statistically significant differences on their own, the overall composite variable does show a significant difference. This is likely to specifically relate to families' communication with their child's school/setting and their overall involvement in their child's learning (the FSM cohort decreased by 0.38 on both measures). More analysis

would be needed to identify whether this is in line with expected trends in levels of parental engagement in learning or specific to this programme.

Table 5.10: Parent/Carer engagement in child learning – comparison of mean changes from pre to post intervention according to FSM

Statement	FSM	Not FSM	SS
I feel confident sharing rhymes and/or songs with my child	-0.13	0.05	
I think that sharing rhymes and/or songs will help my child to speak and listen well	-0.23	0.06	
I feel confident reading stories out loud with my child	-0.13	-0.03	
I often read the same book over and over again with my child	0.17	0.10	
I think that reading with my child will help their communication skills	-0.09	-0.01	
There is good communication between myself and my child's school / nursery setting	-0.38	-0.14	
I feel involved in my child's learning	-0.38	-0.05	
Parent / Carer engagement - composite variable	-0.16	0.00	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

No significant differences were found between boys and girls in terms of parents / carers' engagement in their learning.

5.3.2 Parent/Carer perspectives – Other outcome measures

In addition to the core statements considered above, parents and carers were asked further questions about their engagement in their children's learning. These were again asked at both baseline and follow-up in order to identify changes during the intervention.

Learning activities and reading patterns

Parents/carers were asked how many days per week they engage in various learning activities with their children, including reading, sharing rhymes/songs etc. (see Table 5.11 below). The data shows that on most measures there have been significant increases over the intervention period (see Table 5.11 below). Parents/carers provided a high baseline score for reading a book for fun where it was reported they read to their child 5.83 days per week on average. However, despite such a high baseline average, the data reveals a significantly greater propensity to read for fun with their children following the programme.

The most notable increases, however, are in practices that were not widely used pre-intervention, most significantly the extent to which parents/carers talk about books with their children (this saw an increase of 1.34 days per week). Additionally, there is a significant increase in the extent to which parents/carers read to their children in Welsh (up 1.32 days per week on average) and share Welsh rhymes/songs (up 0.48).

Table 5.11: In the last month, on average, how many days per week have you done the following with your child?

Measure	Pre	Post	Change	SS
Read a book for fun	5.83	6.00	0.16	
Used a tablet or computer	4.15	4.04	-0.11	
Shared a rhyme and/or song	5.07	5.63	0.56	
Talked about books	0.52	1.85	1.34	
Read a book in Welsh	1.08	2.39	1.32	
Shared a rhyme and/or song in Welsh	3.17	3.65	0.48	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Respondents were then asked whether they believe they undertake these activities more or less since taking part in PDSN and secondly, for those answering 'more', to what extent this is as a result of their participation in the programme.

The first chart confirms findings outlined in Table 5.11 above, where more say they do these activities more often than less often for every activity apart from using a tablet or computer, where there appears to have been a decrease since taking part in PDSN. This decrease might be explained by parents/carers focussing on these other activities after participating in the programme. Alternatively, it might be affected by social desirability bias i.e. where parents/carers think it is something they shouldn't be doing as often.

As with Table 5.11, some of the main increases are those who undertake activities in Welsh and talk about books. However, the main perceived increase is in those who say they share rhymes/songs more often, suggesting parents/carers perceive this to be an area where PDSN has had greatest impact.

Figure 5.3: Do you think that you do these things more, less or the same since taking part in PDSN?
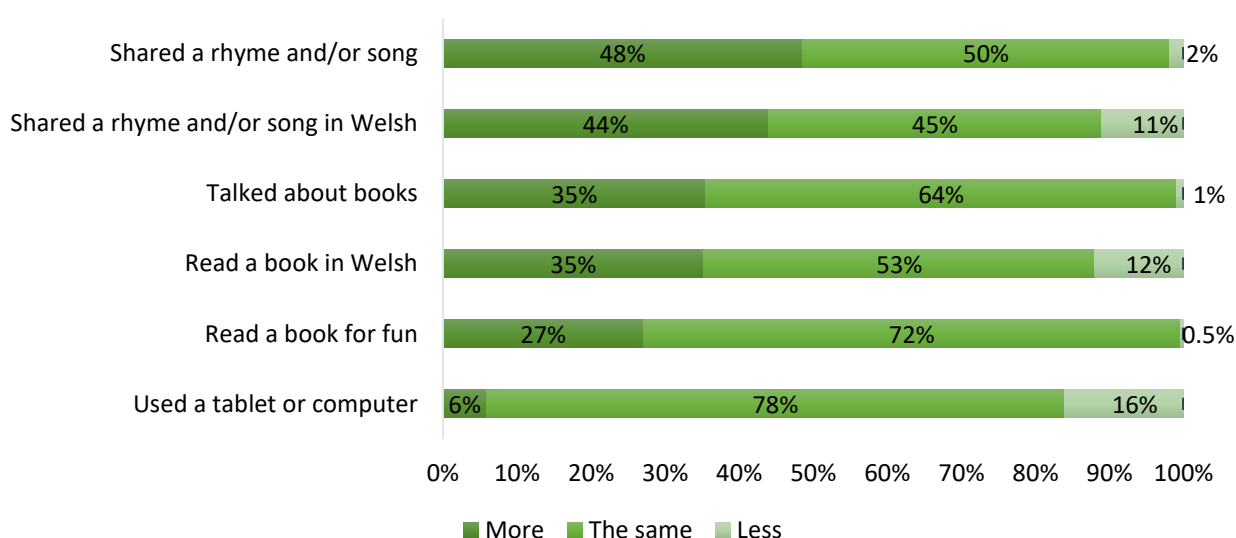
Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Where respondents say there has been an increase, there is a relatively even split among those saying they do these things more often because of PDSN to a 'great' extent, to a 'fair' extent, and to 'some' extent. More than 90% do attribute at least some of these increases to PDSN on every measure apart from using a tablet or computer (which is not one of the activities that the programme seeks to increase). The Welsh related activities appear to be particularly attributed to PDSN, with around 73% attributing sharing rhymes/song in Welsh more often to a great or fair extent to PDSN and 69% reporting the same for reading a book in Welsh more often.

Figure 5.4: To what extent do you do these things more because of PDSN?
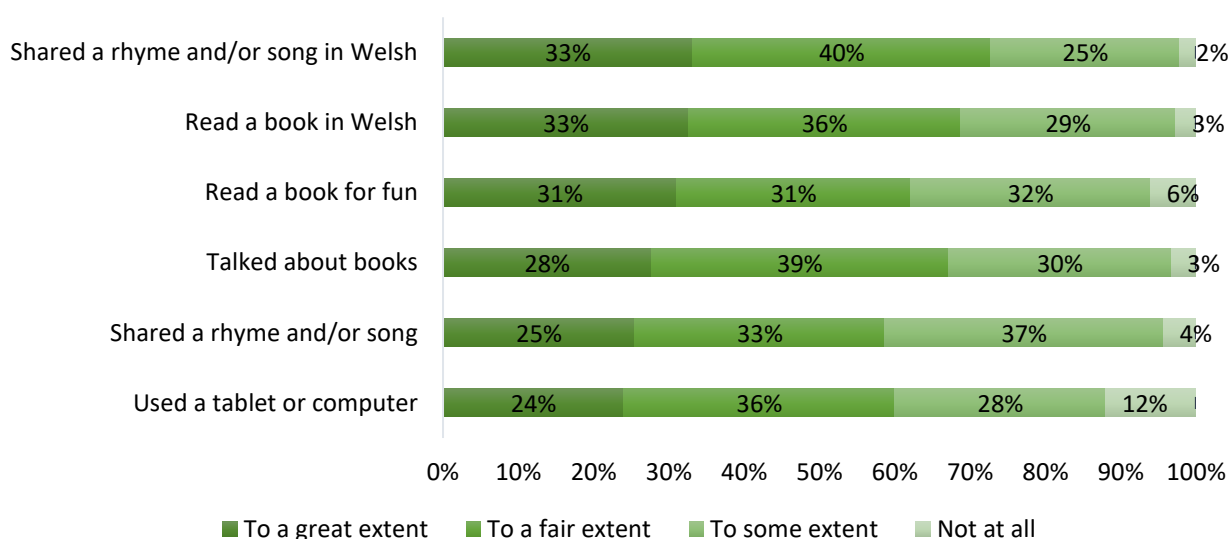
Parent / Carer Survey – respondents reporting they undertake activities more often since taking part in PDSN (Intervention: n=25-208)

The comparison group sample were asked about the same learning activities pre and post intervention in order to further explore the additionality of the increases. Table 5.12 below shows greater increases in the intervention group for four of the six activities. Although tests show these differences are statistically insignificant, the broader pattern in this analysis along with the previous charts suggests that the programme is positively impacting parents/cares' frequency of engagement in learning activities with their children.

Table 5.12: Comparison in mean changes from pre to post intervention between the intervention and comparison groups: 'In the last month, on average, how many days per week have you done the following with your child?'

Measure	Intervention	Comparison	TE	SS
Read a book for fun	0.16	0.06	0.10	
Used a tablet or computer	-0.12	0.04	-0.17	
Shared a rhyme and/or song	0.06	0.06	0.00	
Talked about books	0.55	0.57	-0.02	
Read a book in Welsh	1.33	0.98	0.35	
Shared a rhyme and/or song in Welsh	1.31	1.23	0.08	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Data presented in Table 5.13 further suggests that PDSN has positively affected parents/ carers practices and attitudes in engaging in their children's learning. Most notably, an average score of 4.24/5 was given to reading for enjoyment with their child(ren) since taking part in PDSN.

Table 5.13: Children's oracy-related outcomes – mean agreement with follow-up survey statements in intervention and comparison groups: 'Since taking part in PDSN, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?' (Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neither agree nor disagree=3, Agree=4, Strongly agree=5)

Statement	Intervention
I read more with my child(ren)	3.34
I enjoy reading with my child(ren)	4.24
Share rhymes and songs more with my child(ren)	3.92

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Finally, respondents were asked about the way they read to their children and whether they undertake best practice activities such as asking questions, point out pictures and encouraging their child to read some of the story. They were asked this at baseline and follow-up to assess whether there are any increases. The data shows on each measure there is a slight increase, most notably where children are encouraged to tell bits of the story which is the only significant increase of the three.

Table 5.14: To what extent do you do the following when reading together with your child? (0=Never, 1=Sometimes, 2-Frequently, 3=Always)

Measure	Pre	Post	Change	SS
Talk about / ask them questions about the story and characters	2.30	2.36	0.07	
Point out/talk about the pictures	2.59	2.60	0.00	
Encourage them to read/ tell bits of the story	2.12	2.26	0.14	

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430)

Parent/Carer motivation

In addition to asking about reading patterns, parents and carers were also asked about the reasons they choose to read to their children. This draws from research conducted by Wendy S. Grolnick[13] on parents' motivation where four statements are used, two that are 'autonomous' reasons - both intrinsic (because it is fun) and identified (because I think it is important), and two that are non-autonomous – either introjected (because I would feel guilty if I didn't) and external (because I am supposed to). Grolnick's research found that the more autonomous motivation for involvement positively related to mothers' levels of involvement and positive affect when involved. The data reveals that the motivating factors among PDSN parents/carers have largely remained the same.

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[13] Wendy S. Grolnick, 'Mothers' motivation for involvement in their children's schooling: mechanisms and outcomes', 9 August 2014. Springer Science + Business Media New York.

Table 5.15: To what extent do the following statements explain why you share books, stories and rhymes with your child? (1=Not at all true, 24=Very true)

	Pre	Post	Change
Intervention			
Because I am supposed to	2.00	1.96	-0.04
Because I would feel guilty if I didn't	2.23	2.20	-0.03
Because I think it is important	3.92	3.89	-0.03
Because it is fun / enjoyable	3.91	3.88	-0.03
Comparison			
Because I am supposed to	2.17	2.02	-0.15
Because I would feel guilty if I didn't	2.26	2.24	-0.01
Because I think it is important	3.87	3.98	0.11
Because it is fun / enjoyable	3.85	3.89	0.04

Parent / Carer Survey (Intervention: n=430, Comparison: n=47)

Parents who participated in focus groups also commented on the way the PDSN resources affected the way that they used books and read with their child. A comment on the use of rhymes emphasized how rhymes were given more importance by parents, "*it's good to bring back nursery rhymes, we don't do enough with them*" and because the resources came from the school more importance was attached to them, "*rhymes and nursery rhymes, you do that anyway. But when they come as homework from school, they are more important, more status.*" Parents were also appreciative of the new books and activities given to children, "I *think having new resources helped us, it's nice to have new books, and activities already there for you. The questions were really good and got us talking.*"

A small number of parents who took part in focus groups also referred to their children's enjoyment of the rhymes, books and resource pack e.g. "*my son loved singing the nursery rhymes, he did the activities with me predominantly, but sometimes [with] dad at bedtime*." Another parent mentioned how the books appealed to the child and that they encouraged talk between them: "m*y daughter LOVES dinosaurs and really liked that book, more than the other actually. I generally read the story to her, but we had a chat around the book*." Other parent/carer comments included increased interaction at home with children, for example, "*we definitely do more with my child as a result of Pori Drwy Stori.*" The resources also reminded parents that using rhymes and books with children generate fun: "*I think it just reminds us to have fun with books and nursery rhymes and not just to say them or read them.*" A parent said that the resources had encouraged sibling involvement with young children: "*my teenager even joined in the fun, there isn't much interaction between them normally, but some of these activities got her involved which was great.*"

5.3.3 Practitioner perspectives on parental engagement with child learning – Qualitative feedback

During telephone interviews and site visits, practitioners were asked about their perceptions on how parents engaged with the programme. These comments are based on professional perceptions regarding interactions with particular cohorts of nursery aged children's parents /carers rather than on individual parent/carer engagement and may account for some of the differences in perspectives between the parent/carer survey data and the practitioner

responses. 75% of practitioners who took part in the telephone interviews reported that the PDSN programme had a positive impact on communication with the home. 67% said it created an opportunity to talk to parents/carers about the importance of speaking and listening with children. 42% said it provided them with additional feedback about the way parents/carers used books at home. 42% said it provide anecdotal evidence that the resource had encouraged parents who don't read regularly with their child to share the books.

Some of the positive responses perceived by practitioners included that parents found the resources easy to use and that they enjoyed using them, parents returned feedback slips (particularly for the rhyme resources), the resources encouraged parents who did not read at home with children to read at home previously to do so, and were therefore making, "*a very positive contribution*" to developing reading practices at home. In some schools/settings, practitioners felt that the use of Twitter with parents encouraged greater participation, "*parents also saw what others were doing and this encouraged them to engage in activities.*" It was also felt that, "*free resources to those who may not be able to afford it or those who do not read to their children,*" created benefits for children from the programme and, "*generally children of lower income benefited*". It is worth noting that this view of the impact on children from lower income backgrounds contradicts the results of the parent/carer survey.

Although many practitioners thought that parents had responded positively and engaged well with the programme, there were also some comments regarding difficulties with engagement and obtaining feedback from parents. These included comments that there was evidence of increased engagement from some, but not all families. Some practitioners reported that there was a need to constantly remind parents to return feedback slips. Another practitioner commented that although some parents were using the resources, "*trueni na fyddai mwy o rieni yn defnyddio'r adnoddau i bwrpas /It's a pity that more parents don't make use of the resource as intended".* From these comments it seems that practitioners felt that they were able to engage some/many parents/carers with the programme to varying degrees, but there were instances where engagement proved to be difficult, despite their efforts.

44% of practitioners who took part in the telephone interview said that they used the PDSN resources to share messages about book sharing with parents/carers. The messages included the importance of sharing stories and supporting parents/ carers to understand how they can help children's language and oracy development. Examples of messages included. "*the importance of sharing stories to build a variety of skills from language development to wellbeing.*" Some practitioners used the resources during initial meetings with parents to explain: "*the importance of the development of early reading and oracy skills … and advised the parents how to share the books … [including]…as bedtime reading.*" However, as more than half of practitioners interviewed had not used the resources as an opportunity to share messages about book reading, it is possible that some schools and settings would benefit from more specific guidance and support in this area.

Practitioners also commented on how the PDSN resource had increased parental awareness of the importance of rhymes and books and stories for developing oracy. Some practitioners felt there was a, "*better understanding of their value as resources for developing oracy skills,*" as a result of taking part in the programme. Practitioners also reported that parents were reading more to their children at home and building on the learning in school through the

programme, *"we use stories and nursery rhymes a lot anyway, but it's just good to build that link with home, and give us extra resources to be able to do that."* In a number of schools and settings, PDSN impacted practitioners' perceptions of "*how important it is to hold workshops on a more regular basis to introduce rhymes and activities at home*." However, holding meetings and workshops for the PDSN programme was a practice reported by less than 50% of practitioners interviewed.

5.4 Increase in practitioners' ability to improve oracy outcomes for children

The assessment of impact of the programme's third aim of increasing practitioners' ability to improve oracy outcomes for children is based on 52 telephone interviews with practitioners (with online support) and site visits to 5 schools and settings. A member of the research team also attended a practitioner feedback session which reported on a Consortia-led professional development programme which supported teachers to design and deliver action research projects based on the PDSN programme to improve oracy progress for boys.

5.4.1 Practitioner understanding of the role that rhymes and song have in oracy development

Practitioner comments display understanding of the role that rhymes and song have in children's oracy development. Practitioners reported that as a result of using the PDSN resources, children were more confident in their knowledge and recalling of rhymes and they were more confident in performing rhymes. Examples of activities used to promote oracy development included rhyme repetition ("*llawer o ailadrodd y rhigymau wedi helpu i ddatblygu hyder a geirfa/ lots of rhyme repetition has helped to improve confidence and vocabulary"),* rhyming games *("they love the rhymes and now think of other words that rhyme"),* and building children's confidence to sing independently.

Practitioner comments show that the '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*' resources were extensively used in classrooms, including as the basis for focused activities for learning, opportunities to perform the rhymes and as the focus of displays. In classrooms, *"displays were prepared for each rhyme and story, based on the children's activities,"* and, *"focused activities for learning and performing the rhymes,"* were created. In some cases, this built on existing practice regarding rhymes e.g. "*we've always done a lot of rhyming,*" but in others the programme inspired new approaches to using rhymes and songs with children e.g. "w*e've decided to incorporate a song or rhyme along with a story every week. One rhyme will be in Welsh every half term."*

5.4.2 Increasing the use of rhyme and song sharing

Examples of opportunities created by practitioners for increased rhyme and song sharing activity in schools and settings included singing, listening, responding and reading together during circle time, and completing activities in class based on rhymes. This was seen in both English and Welsh medium provision. Some practitioners looked at the Foundation Phase

Profile and Framework and chose to use the PDSN programme to focus on phonological awareness and expressive use of language.

Schools/ settings also used the rhymes for assessment purposes. One practitioner explained how the PDSN rhymes were mapped to oracy targets in a commercial speech and language toolkit designed to identify children needing speech and language support. Another nursery specifically used the rhymes with a focus group of children and were able to evidence the progress made: "*we had a focus group with children who were on Level 2 of the WellComm programme and that's very low. We had some children who weren't speaking but some of them were them were singing the rhyme and that's a big step forward although it might not sound like a lot.*" Another nursery described using the See-Saw app (an app that allows teachers to build a digital portfolio for pupils) to record oracy outcome evidence.

Some practitioners also described how they had developed additional resources as a result of using the PDSN programme. For example, one practitioner reported that the PDSN programme has inspired the school to consider: "*creating a 6-week package ourselves based on our themes. I hope to create a CD/similar of songs, capitalising on the talents of school staff and pupils. The focus would be on improving oracy by using simple rhymes/songs.*"

The examples show that in addition to using the resources as the basis of learning activities in classroom, the programme has also supported practitioners to develop assessment practices and to develop their own resources inspired by their experiences of the PDSN programme.

5.4.3   Increasing the use of books and shared reading

Practitioners provided examples of activities planned or developed to increase the use of books and shared reading. They included planning and linking the resources to the Foundation Phase Framework, such as using books and rhymes as a focus for all planning and allocating more time to reading with the children or referring to books when talking about particular themes. More attention was given to storytelling and using visual aids with book*s.* Children's enjoyment of books and reading was observed by practitioners: "*the children seem to enjoy spending more time in the reading corner, some of the older children seem to be singing more rhymes and telling their own stories in class when using the reading corner.*"

Some practitioners emphasised their views that the programme benefitted children who did not have many books at home e.g. "*the children [who] don't have colourful books at home have benefited greatly.*" One school/setting specifically noted the improvement in children's listening skills: "*I have a class of super story listeners! I took the two groups to the local library today to listen to the librarian reading stories to them.*" Another school noted improvements in children's knowledge of how books 'work' and engagement in book-reading role play, "*many children often turn to the two books and 'read' the content by imitating the parents/adults.*"

The examples provided show a planned increase in using books and storytelling in schools/ settings as a result of using PDSN resources. Practitioners also noted an improvement in children's listening skills and engagement with books.

5.4.4 Communicating with parents and carers and developing home/school links

Several practitioner comments show that they thought they were developing new and increasingly effective ways of communicating with parents and carers and developing home school/setting links. These included further developing or extending established methods by tailoring them to the requirements of the PDSN programme, as well as using new approaches. In one conversation, a practitioner admitted that developing parental engagement was a new but positive experience: "*I think that the engagement with parents aspect of it is new to us though, and definitely something to build on. It creates more work to an extent, as we are having to send constant reminders, and keep writing lists of children who haven't returned their file for the next resource, but I think overall it's a really good thing*." This was reflective of several schools/ settings, who were using the programme to introduce more structured parent/carer engagement.

A number of practitioners reported using social media to maintain communication with parents and carers throughout the PDSN programme. Methods included use of Class Dojo (a classroom communication app used to share reports between parents and teachers), as well as dedicated class Twitter and Facebook class accounts that enabled two-way sharing of information, photos and activities between practitioners and parents and carers. For some schools/settings, these were new activities, but in others using Dojo/ social media in this way represented new way of using these tools to support parental engagement.

Several practitioners mentioned the importance of organizing workshops for parents: "*workshops with parents need to be done more often to draw more attention to the value of learning rhymes and how useful they are as a resource to develop oracy skills.*" Other benefits of holding a workshop for parents/carers included that they allow practitioners to convey information and programme aims to parents in short amount of time, and that they enable practitioners to demonstrate and model how to use the resources. Practitioners also spoke of how feedback and discussion between practitioners and parents/carers in workshops increased parents' and carers' understanding of the aims of the programme.

Practitioners described other changes that they perceived in parent/carer behaviour resulting from the programme. Some claimed that parents had been encouraged through PDSN to use the number rhymes, "*anywhere and anytime.*" The resource pack was described as, "*very helpful to catch the parents' attention and to strengthen the activities at home*." One practitioner commented that whilst it was normal for a child to take a book home weekly, "*this was given more attention by the parents during the 6 weeks of the project.*" Practitioners also used the programme as a basis for further discussion on how they could build on the engagement created through the project e.g. "*we discuss now where we can add to this and continue the enthusiasm initiated through the project*."

The following case study vignette provides a perspective on how a practitioner in an English medium setting viewed the impact of the PDSN on developing home-setting links.

Practitioner perspective Setting 1, English Medium Nursery, Powys, 22 nursery pupils

The practitioner felt that more attention needed to be drawn to the value of learning rhymes and how useful they are as a resource to develop oracy skills. There was constant use of rhymes in the Nursery but not so much at home. There was already a lot of contact with parents every day but PDSN was valuable as a tool to enable discussion with parents. As a result of using the rhymes there was a, *"better understanding of their value as resources for developing oracy skills"* among parents.

The programme also supported the setting to understand more about what was happening at home. Children brought in examples of what they had done at home. Examples of comments were, *"that is my favourite story,"* and, *"Mummy reads it to me in bed."* Some children already mentioned how the books had become their favourite bedtime stories. There was evidence in class – children knew the content of the stories, knew the names of the dinosaurs, they also shared some activities.

The practitioner also said that parents had been reading more to their children at home as a result of the programme and PDSN had impacted upon how parents and carers were engaged.

The case study shows how the programme enabled the setting to increase the quality of engagement with parents and carers to focus learning and increase their understanding of the relevance of rhyme for developing oracy skills. It also demonstrates how the programme supported the setting to gain insight about the activities children had done at home and about the home learning environment.

5.4.5 Impact of using PDSN Welsh and English texts

Practitioners who used the Welsh texts described methods they had used to increase the use of Welsh songs, rhymes and books with children through using the PDSN resources, as well as the related impacts.

In some English medium schools, increasing the use of Welsh was part of the School Development Plan. A practitioner remarked that PDSN provided very useful resources to help parents understand that increasing the use of Welsh was an important priority. Other approaches used in English medium schools and settings were using the resources to listen to the Welsh stories in class as they were not able listen to the stories in Welsh at home e.g. *"the children are able to listen to the Welsh story, they were not able to read it in Welsh due to there being little Welsh language at home."* Another practitioner explained that they used the Welsh books, *"to create our own class book."*

In Welsh medium schools and settings, practitioners commented that the resources had contributed to an increase in children's confidence in using Welsh, particularly children who came from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds: *"mae'r rhaglen wedi helpu'r plant fagu hyder yn yr iaith /the programme has helped children to be more confident using the language"*. One practitioner in a Welsh medium primary school commented that as a result of the programme there was good oracy progress in the nursery class, *"yn enwedig y rhai sydd yn dod o gefndir di-Gymraeg /especially the ones who come from a non-Welsh speaking background."* The bilingual nature of the programme was felt to be beneficial for both children and parents/carers.

The bilingual resources were therefore beneficial in supporting practitioners to convey the importance of bilingualism to parents/carers and to increase their understanding of the role of Welsh in the curriculum; increasing opportunities for children to listen to Welsh stories; and using the resources as a springboard for other activities. This was particularly evident for children from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds, in both Welsh and English medium schools.

6   Conclusions

6.1   Introduction

This chapter is structured around the four overreaching evaluation questions set out for the evaluation. It is clear from the analysis presented that PDSN is highly valued by practitioners in particular, and by parents/carers. The evidence gathered from practitioners and parents/carers indicates that the PDSN programme exerts positive influence on a wide range of skills for children who participated in the programme. There was a very positive response from practitioners as seen in the following comments from practitioners:

"We have found the Pori Drwy Stori programme to be a fantastic basis for us to offer a wealth of learning experiences and would love for the programme to continue." (Nursery school teacher)

"Pori Drwy Stori really concentrated our language skills for the whole of the nursery and all children. It made us consider how we are doing literacy and language. Just at the right time before they start school - just after Christmas is a good time. The whole setting was involved in all aspects of the language programme." (Nursery setting practitioner)

6.2   Research Question 1: To what extent does the PDSN programme meet its stated aims and outcomes?

What factors contribute to impact?

In terms of creating impact, 75% of practitioners interviewed confirmed that parents/carers had responded to the programme in the way that they wished and mentioned matters such as attending meetings and returning feedback slips. The majority of practitioners reported that the resources had been used to create or strengthen links with parents/carers, although this was not supported to the same extent by responses in the parent/carer survey.

Practitioners in schools/settings who organized initial workshops or meetings with parents to introduce the programme, created opportunities for parents to deepen their understanding of the aims of the programme and raise awareness. Many practitioners believed that there had been impacts in relation to parent/carer engagement through using the PDSN programme and thought that parents had responded positively and engaged well with the programme.

Practitioners identified and developed new and increasingly effective and impactful ways of communicating with parents and carers and developing home school/setting links. Methods included use of a classroom communication app and dedicated Twitter and Facebook class accounts to share information and feedback, including photos and short videos, from the school/setting to parents/carers and from home to the school/setting.

Practitioner comments display increased understanding of the role that rhymes and song have in children's oracy development as a result of using the PDSN resources.

Parents/carers who took part in focus groups felt that the PDSN resources had been useful in helping their child to develop speaking and listening skills along with increased interaction with children, supporting learning at home, involvement of siblings and enjoyment of reading.

Practitioners who had used the Welsh texts reported impacts in relation to increasing the use of Welsh songs, rhymes and books with children through using the PDSN resources in Welsh and English.

Are there areas where impact is stronger or weaker?

Analysis of the formal oracy assessment data clearly shows that practitioners have identified significant increases in children's oracy outcomes during the programme period, most notably in children's expressive language.

Parents/carers who took part in focus groups felt that the PDSN resources had been useful in helping their child to develop speaking and listening skills along with increased interaction between parent/child, supporting learning at home, involvement of siblings and enjoyment of reading.

From the parent/carer data, the greatest increase was in children's ability to express themselves clearly when talking about books, followed by recognition of rhythm and rhyme, increased ability to talk and express themselves and knowledge of different rhymes and/or songs. No statistically significant increases were found in children's enjoyment of sharing rhymes, songs and books; their ability to join in rhymes/songs; or their likelihood to ask parents/carers to read to them.

Practitioner telephone interviews indicated that practitioners thought that the PDSN programme was beneficial in supporting oracy skills. In particular, practitioners reported children's increased confidence in speaking/listening, improved responses to questions relating to stories, improvement in vocabulary and improvement in social skills. Children knew more rhymes and songs than before and enjoyed sharing rhymes and stories more than before and there was an increased use of rhymes in classroom practice. There was a lower response to enjoying talking about books more than before, including talking about the pictures.

Practitioners also commented on improved parental engagement with schools/settings, some parents more actively supporting their children and an improvement in parents' confidence to discuss their progress with their children.

Are there any contexts in which the programme is particularly successful/ has less impact?

There were greater improvements in **oracy-related outcomes** for children receiving resources up to March 2019 in comparison to those receiving them afterwards. Children receiving one of the two resources (typically '*It's Time to Rhyme/Mae'n Amser Rhigwm*') made greater progress in oracy outcomes than those receiving both or none of the resources in that early period. However, the analysis also reveals a significantly higher increase in **parental**

engagement among those receiving both resources up to March. In summary, the analysis of correlations between when the resources were received, and the outcomes generated reveal:

   a) Receive one resource up to March = greater improvement in oracy-related outcomes
   b) Receive both resources up to March = greater improvement in parent/carer engagement
   c) Receive no resource up to March = less improvement on both measures.

Further, those parents/carers reporting that they often speak to practitioners about PDSN were statistically more likely to report increases in their parental engagement.

Practitioner responses suggest that settings who had not attended BTC information sessions or who had not received the Practitioner Guide were not confident in delivering the programme or engaging with parents. Consequently, the programme was not viewed as positively.

The majority of practitioners reported that they had introduced the PDSN programme to parents and careers in advance of starting the programme with children. This created parental awareness and engagement. The evaluation found no significant trends in the approach to programme delivery between schools and settings.

On which children does the programme have the greatest impact?

The parent/carer survey suggests that the programme had most impact on boys and children who were not from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, some practitioner comments suggested that children from lower income backgrounds and children who were not previously interested in books benefited from receiving the programme resources.

Practitioners noted specific improvements observed in EAL pupils and children with speech and language difficulties e.g. through increased confidence to join in with the rhymes.

Practitioners in some settings also noted that children from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds improved Welsh language oracy skills.

How could the impact of the programme be improved in the future?

The impact of the programme could be improved by ensuing that practitioners fully understand the aims of the programme regarding improving oracy outcomes in particular. 58% of practitioners reported that they were using the resource to specifically support oracy outcomes, whereas 30% of practitioners interviewed stated that they were not using the programme to specifically support oracy outcomes (12 % were not sure).

Practitioners could be further encouraged to try new approaches to their practice based on the PDSN resources. Many practitioners said they had tried new approaches to parental engagement and others expressed their intention to develop this further to increase impact.

A very small number of schools/settings reported a delay in receiving their resource. All schools and settings should receive the resources on time so that delay does not impact on programme delivery.

It appears that schools and settings who incorporated the PDSN programme into the SDP to raise oracy standards or develop parental engagement made a more considered, planned approach to using the resources and creating programme impact than those who did not. The same is true of schools/settings who mapped the use of PDSN resources to FP outcomes.

6.3   Research Question 2: How is the programme delivered in practice and what factors contribute to impactful delivery?

How is the programme delivered in different types of settings?

Most schools and settings introduced the resources in class before sending them home with children. Most schools/settings with multiple nursery classes delivered the resources in the same way and avoided variation. Communication methods with parents during the programme are varied and included 'in person' (meetings/workshops/at drop off and collection) and 'not in person' (letters/social media/classroom apps). Using a variety of methods assists to create impactful engagement.

A small majority of schools and settings used the PDSN resources to specifically support oracy outcomes. However, others did not, and stated that they used the programme to improve broader cross curricular learning, as an additional classroom resource, to include parents and to improve Welsh.

Less than half of practitioners used the resources to communicate and share any messages about book sharing with parents/carers. Messages that were shared included: the importance of reading, effective story sharing, how reading builds other skills and when to read. Slightly over half the practitioners gave parents advice on using the bilingual resources. The advice included using the online resources on the BookTrust website and encouraging parents to, "*give it a go.*"

Do different settings face challenges in programme delivery? How could these challenges be mitigated?

Settings with high numbers of EAL parents faced challenges in explaining PDSN programme aims to parents and carers. It is important to ensure that all families feel included and can participate in their children's care and learning experiences in the setting. Interpreters were used to help overcome the language barriers and to explain to parents in some settings, and to establish engagement. The use of visuals in the form of pictures and photographs could help parents/carers to understand new information.

In a few settings, the lack of IT resources in the home was mentioned as a barrier to using the supporting online resources. These difficulties were mentioned by practitioners working in schools and settings in deprived areas. A possible mitigation could be to encourage IT access in public libraries or community centres, where available.

In general, the response to the Welsh language resources from English-medium schools/ settings was positive and many English medium schools and settings made genuine efforts to use the bilingual resources. However, there was some feedback that the Welsh rhymes were challenging and that parents found the bilingual texts confusing. Parents could be further encouraged to use the PDSN website to help with understanding as the website contains Welsh language audio versions of the books.

There were challenges in a small number of mixed age classes when younger children became upset and felt left out as they were not eligible for the resources. All parents/carers in mixed aged classes in schools and settings need to be informed of eligibility criteria.

In a few schools and settings, practitioners reported that they received very little response from parents. A variety of communication methods could be used to encourage parents to participate.

What support do settings need to deliver the programme effectively? (E.g. training, guidance)

Practitioners are appreciative of the support offered by BTC to deliver the programme. Most schools and settings follow PDSN programme guidance and like the flexibility of the programme within the recommended structure.

Practitioners reported that the training and information sessions provided by BTC were useful to introduce the PDSN programme and support them to plan so that they could use the resources straight away when they arrived in schools and settings. Practitioners felt that the sessions provided a good opportunity to hear from others who had already used the programme, and that it was useful to see and interact with the resources before starting the programme. A majority of practitioners thought the BTC email support was good or very good. A few practitioners did not attend training sessions as they did not know about them and this appears to have led to their having less confidence in programme delivery.

The majority of practitioners thought the BTC email support was good or very good.

How does variation in delivery affect the impact of the programme?

The data suggests that introducing the resources separately with enough time to focus on each one as recommended by BTC generates stronger outcomes than introducing both resources around the same time.

Based on the results of the parent/carer survey, there were no statistically significant differences in the impacts generated and no clear pattern of benefits based on how the

programme was introduced to families i.e. whether in person (meetings, drop off, workshops) or not in person (letters, social media, school app). However, it was important that the programme was actively introduced.

There were no correlations between the level of parent/carer communication and the development of oracy-related outcomes. However, the data does show that the greater the level of communication with the school/settings, the greater the reported increases in parental engagement.

Variation for different pupils

The parent/carer data indicated that, overall, children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefited less than their more affluent peers on some oracy–related outcomes. At the evaluation baseline stage, parents/carers were reporting higher oracy related outcomes for females. However, the data at the post intervention stage suggest, generally, that males have developed more during the intervention period. The data suggest that boys benefit more from the programme in relation to their oracy related outcomes.

6.4 Research Question 3: To what extent does the programme support wider priorities and other initiatives in Wales?

To what extent does the programme support relevant existing priorities and requirements in Wales?

The PDSN programme contributes to the Language, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning by supporting experiences of a rich language environment, providing opportunities for children to develop their confidence, and supporting children to develop skills to express themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations. The PDSN programme meets the Foundation Phase requirement to provide children with opportunities to choose different types of reading materials including books (2015: 21). There is a similar clear fit between the aims and activities of PDSN and the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) which states that, *"the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is a key priority"* (Welsh Government, 2016: 9)

Practitioner interviews showed that PDSN resources were used to support other Areas of Learning and other areas of the Foundation Phase and the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In a number of schools and settings, practitioners developed and planned FP curriculum classroom themes based on the PDSN programme.

More than half the practitioners interviewed used the PSDN programme to support the Mathematical Development Area of Learning. The programme was also used to support the Knowledge and Understanding of the World and Creative Development Areas of Learning.

To what extent does the programme support other oracy-related activity in schools and settings?

In some schools/settings practitioners mapped the PDSN resources to FP oracy outcomes to support observation and assessment.

The PDSN programme provided opportunities to develop Welsh language skills. The FP Framework states that children's Welsh language skills should be progressively developed throughout the FP by implementing the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning in schools where English is the main language of instruction.

Practitioners in some settings commented that the resource has been particularly beneficial for children who are learning Welsh at school but speak English (or other languages home) as they displayed an improvement in Welsh oracy skills. Some practitioners reported that PDSN highlighted the need to make them think about how they should engage more with Welsh and make Welsh more interesting in settings. Attempting to use the Welsh resources had raised confidence in practitioners' abilities to attempt using Welsh themselves.

The majority of practitioners reported that they were using both English and Welsh rhymes and the bilingual texts in the books in classrooms. Some Welsh medium settings made use of only the Welsh medium rhymes and texts in the school, as their aim was to develop children's Welsh language knowledge and skills in accordance with the Welsh-medium curriculum.

How could BookTrust increase understanding of the relationship between reading for pleasure and oracy development for stakeholders and beneficiaries?

BTC could provide more guidance on the relationship between reading for pleasure and oracy development for practitioners:

- Less than half of practitioners used the resources to communicate and share any messages about book sharing with parents/carers. Messages that were shared included: the importance of reading, effective story sharing, how reading builds skills and when to read.
- Less than half of practitioners were planning to increase reading for pleasure activities as a result of PDSN.

6.5 Research Question 4: How can the findings from this evaluation inform BookTrust's work more widely?

The PDSN programme is based on a core recommended structure which can be developed to suit the needs of different schools and settings. Practitioners emphasised the importance of programme flexibility, especially when supported by a recommended structure that built up over a period of time. Several practitioners said that as every institution is different and every cohort has differing needs, flexibility is vital e.g. *"you can fit it in around your timetable and families."*

A resource-based learning programme such as the PDSN programme is child-centred. Children can be actively involved in using the resources at school/in the setting and at home. Resource-based learning is more impactful when planned and integrated into the school/setting curriculum and/or school development plan.

The universal aspect of the programme meant that all eligible children in a school/setting class are included. Practitioners reported that some children would not have the opportunity to own high quality colourful books without the PDSN programme. Children were enthusiastic about receiving the resources, and as all eligible children were given books to take home, the programme was more engaging. Practitioners felt that the free resources encouraged parents to spend time using them at home with children. In some schools/settings the programme inspired practitioners to reconsider how they introduced literacy and language in their curriculum.

Reading for pleasure is influenced by reading and book sharing practices between practitioners and children, and children and parents/carers. Parents and practitioners commented on children's enjoyment of the PDSN programme books. Receiving books that they could take home and keep developed their interest, excitement and reading motivation. The use of the PDSN resources improved children's confidence and increased the time spent reading in schools/settings.

6.6   Short term recommendations for 2019-20

Based on the findings of the evaluation the short-term recommendations for PDSN are as follows:
- Ensure eligible schools and settings are aware of programme registration procedures.
- Some non-maintained settings reported problems with attending information sessions due to staffing levels. In addition to face to events, online presentations or webinars could be considered. More flexible times or more than one slot for information sessions could be considered.
- Provide practitioners with a sample pack of resources at training/information sessions.
- Ensure that all schools and settings receive resources on time (this was an issue in a very small number of schools/settings but did impact programme delivery).
- Provide additional guidance for practitioners to support parent/carer workshops with promoting key messages around oracy. A large minority of schools (42%) and settings were not using the resources to specifically support oracy outcomes.
- As recommend in the 2017-18 Pilot Evaluation, keep the personalised zip folder to hold the resources. Keep the format of the rhyme calendar to act as a prompt. Keep the activities and consider adding more or give suggestions for other playful activities.
- Provide a Welsh pronunciation guide with the Welsh resources for English medium schools
- Prepare a sample resource for practitioners following the training session.
- Encourage practitioners to organize workshops for parents as the initial introduction for the PDSN programme.

6.7 Longer term recommendations

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the longer term recommendations for PDSN are as follows:

- Ensure all rhyme in the resource pack have activities resources such as the *Five Little Ducks* and *Old Macdonald* activities.
- Continue to use bilingual books and resources to support further engagement with the Welsh language.
- Provide more explicit advice to practitioners on how the programme can specifically support oracy outcomes for children. Provide more detailed guidance for practitioners on the importance of SBR so that they are more confident in these messages with parents/carers, including the connections between shared book reading and oracy outcomes. Provide more guidance for practitioners on planning increased reading for pleasure activities as a result of PDSN.
- Further explore the potential benefits of providing more guidance and ideas for curriculum planning and Areas of Learning based on the resources for practitioners.
- Support practitioners to try new classroom approaches based on the PDSN programme e.g. developing further resources based on the PDSN approach to extend rhymes and storytelling and the impact of sharing books.
- Provide examples of good practice. The following examples are based on feedback from practitioners:

Engaging parents

- Introduce the programme to parents before starting it with children. Use various communication strategies.
- Make parents feel included. Explain clearly to parents/carers what their role in the programme is when sending resources home and what level of support is available from school/setting.
- Distribute the PDSN resources to families separately as recommended by BTC.
- Transfer of knowledge and understanding about the programme should be a two-way process: from school to home and from home to school. Encourage parents to speak to practitioners about their use of PDSN resources at home.
- Target parent/carer engagement with parents of children that are eligible for FSM to support engagement.
- Maintain communication with parents throughout the programme (e.g. in person at drop off/collection or via social media). Encourage use of social media to inform, as a reminder system, to encourage and support.
- Encourage parents/carers in English medium schools to use the Welsh resources at home. Encourage families to involve other family members (e.g. siblings, grandparents) when using rhymes, activities and stories with children at home. Encourage use of resources on the PSDN website as further support for parents.

- Incorporate the PDSN programme into School Development Plan.
- Emphasise the opportunities to map the PDSN programme to FP outcomes as stated in the Practitioner Guide, and other programmes used for monitoring oracy targets.
- Plan curriculum themes around the PDSN resources to extend impact. Plan classroom activities linked to the rhymes and books.
- Introduce the rhymes and books to children in school/setting before taking the resources home. Reinforce and share rhymes with children at various times during the school /nursery day. Provide opportunities to sing and perform the rhymes in classroom.
- Read the books to and with children in the classroom rather than just sending them home.
- Display rhyme posters at child eye level in schools/settings and display the books in the class library/reading corner.

Future research
- If formal assessment data is to be used in future evaluations, there needs to be greater effort to get the buy-in of schools and settings at the outset to increase its robustness.

6.8   Should the PDSN programme continue?

The evidence provided by practitioners is overwhelmingly favourable and appreciative of the PDSN programme. The vast majority of practitioners thought the resources were very suitable for children's interest and for home and school use. Although measuring oracy development and being able to attribute oracy development to one programme is challenging, this evaluation suggests that the programme supports the development of a wide range of oracy, literacy and broader, cross curricular skills.

The fact that the programme is based on high quality resources is a strong contributing factor to its success. Children were reported to enjoy being able to take the books home and keep them. The activities were said to have been a good resource to help children realise that they can learn at home as well as at school. Being able to offer high quality resources in Welsh to children from non-Welsh speaking families was also beneficial. The programme is said to be accessible to parents and families and, according to one nursery teacher, *"long may it continue, great resource, and enjoyed by all."*

There are also some positive, albeit modest, impacts found in the parent/carer survey and the vast majority of parents/carers reported they had used the resources and found them useful. The positive evidence of impact provided by practitioners and parents supports the view that this programme has significant value for those involved and thus should continue.

6.9 Recommendations for possible further evaluation

- The PDSN programme focuses on children aged 3-4 and on supporting their oracy-related skills. A second research option would be to compare the literacy, language and oracy skills at reception level for children who were engaged through the project with a comparator group of children who were not engaged the project. This comparison would help to determine the extent to which the project has contributed to stronger literacy, language and oracy skills.

- Developing practitioners' knowledge, understanding and practice relating to improving oracy outcomes for children by engaging parents and carers is one of the aims of the PDSN programme. The indications from practitioner responses is that their experience may lead to the development of further activities and stronger links over time including, for example, planning increased engagement of parents/ carers in literacy and oracy activities and in other areas of learning. A telephone /online survey could be completed approximately six-months following the end of the programme to explore the legacy at a setting level and assess the extent to which the programme has led to sustained improvements in the home-school link.

- Another research option would be evidencing the impact of PDSN on lower income families /higher numbers of children from FSM backgrounds by identifying schools/settings where support is working well and exploring what constitutes good practice.

- Consider the validity and reliability of the key outcome statements used in the parent /carer survey and whether they are appropriate considering a possible tendency to encourage social desirability bias.

- Provide greater support/resource to recruit a larger comparison group in order to provide greater scope for analysis of the programme effect and particularly whether differences in impacts for different types of pupils can be attributed to the programme. A similar volume of matched responses to the intervention group (430 responses) would be desirable.

- Consider recruiting a sample of parents/carers to participate in a longer-term assessment of the impact of the PDSN programme to assess the extent to which the learning and knowledge gained by parents during the project has led to sustained changes in parents/carers' engagement with their child's learning. The focus would be specifically on activities which support oracy outcomes (e.g. maintaining a positive home learning environment, rhyme sharing and shared book reading and other literacy activities in the home and outside the home).

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Appendix 1: Formal assessment data

Two groups of schools and settings were used for the analysis of formal oracy assessment data: those where there is a four-month gap between the first and second assessments, and those with a 6-month gap. We use this data as evidence to support parents/carer's self-reported data, drawing in the assessment of professionals in the field. However, these results should be treated with caution given that the manner of the assessment varies from setting to setting and, as such, the analysis draws on a narrow sample base.

Observed Change

Firstly, we consider whether there is an increase within the intervention group over the intervention period. Table 5.7 below clearly shows that there has been an increase, most notably in children's expressive language (+1.07 for the 6-month group and +0.65 for the 4-month group). The analysis also reveals that each of these observed changes are statistically significant.

Table A1.1: Children's oracy-related outcomes – changes from pre to post intervention (formal assessment data)

		Pre	Post	Change	SS
6-month group	Oracy - Listening and understanding	3.93	4.70	0.78	
	Oracy - Phonological awareness	3.73	4.64	0.91	
	Oracy - Expressive language	3.53	4.60	1.07	
	Reading - Understanding reading materials	4.06	4.81	0.75	
4-month group	Oracy - Listening and understanding	3.56	3.94	0.38	
	Oracy - Phonological awareness	3.33	3.73	0.39	
	Oracy - Expressive language	3.19	3.85	0.65	
	Reading - Understanding reading materials	3.31	3.79	0.48	

Formal assessment data (Intervention: 4-month group: n=36, 6-month group: n=83)

Programme effect

We then compare these observed changes with those reported in the comparison group in order to identify the PE. However, this assessment is fraught with difficulties, primarily because both groups started from such a different baseline position (see Appendix 2). The comparison group started from a much lower baseline position and as such the observed changes have been far greater, as revealed by Table 5.8 below. The small sample size used for these groups also make it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. If formal assessment data is to be used in future evaluations, there needs to be greater effort to get the buy-in of schools and settings at the outset to increase its robustness.

One potentially interesting finding from these data, however, is that expressive language was reported as the main increase in the intervention group, but among the lowest increases in the comparison group, suggesting that the intervention is particularly impactful in this regard.

Table A1.2: Children's oracy-related outcomes – comparison in mean changes between intervention and comparison groups

		Intervention	Comparison	PE	SS
6-month group	Oracy - Listening and understanding	0.78	1.93	-1.16	
	Oracy - Phonological awareness	0.90	1.86	-0.95	
	Oracy - Expressive language	1.10	1.93	-0.84	
	Reading - Understanding reading materials	0.77	1.99	-1.22	
4-month group	Oracy - Listening and understanding	0.36	1.23	-0.87	
	Oracy - Phonological awareness	0.36	0.50	-0.14	
	Oracy - Expressive language	0.64	0.71	-0.07	
	Reading - Understanding reading materials	0.45	0.97	-0.52	

Formal assessment data (Intervention: 4-month group: n=36, 6-month group: n=83); (Comparison: 4-month group: n=81, 6-month group: n=78)

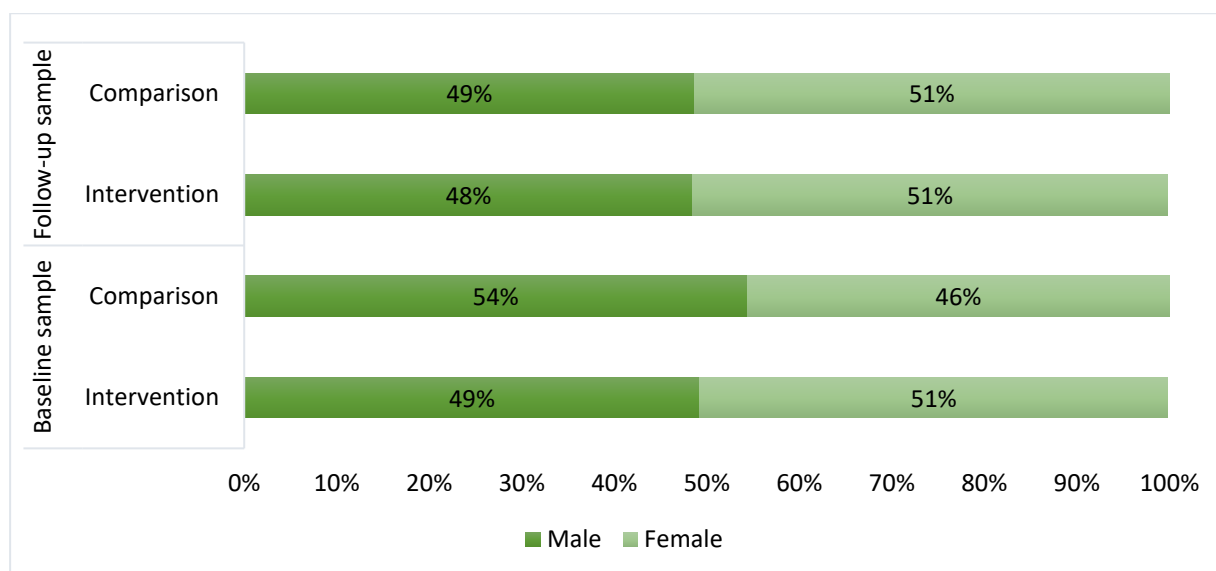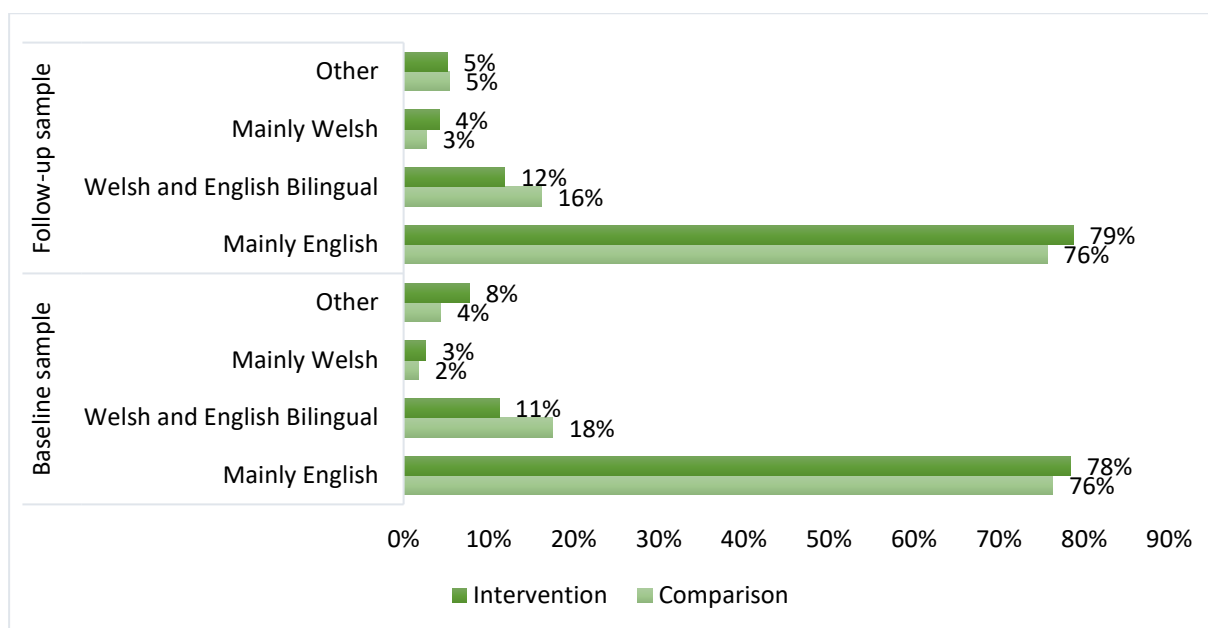# Appendix 2: Data tables and charts – Parent/Carer Survey

Figure A2.1: Gender

Table A2.1: Gender

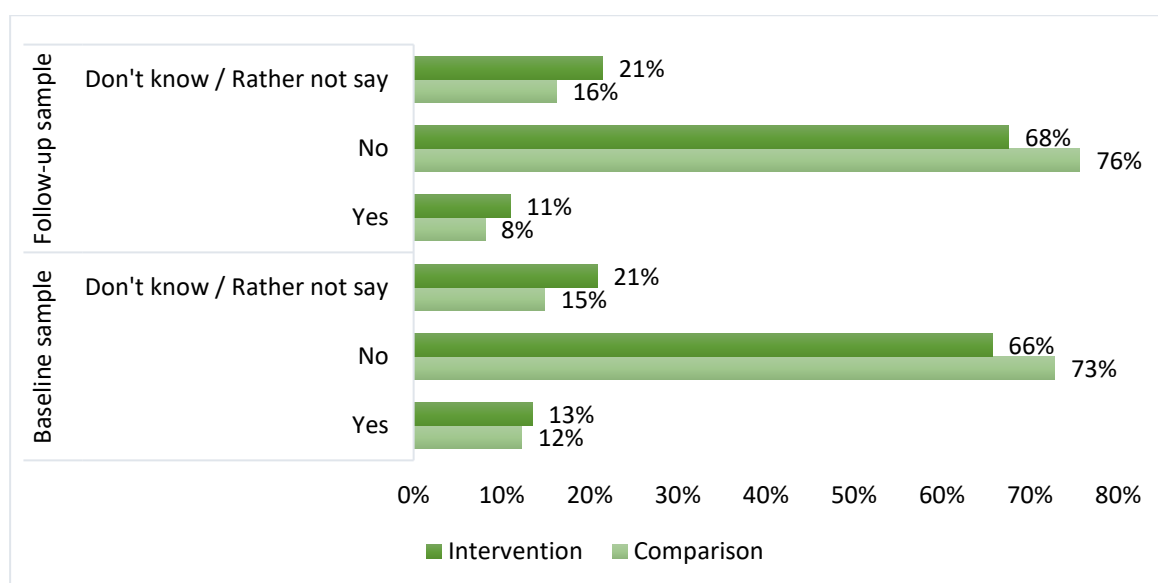|		**Male**	**Female**
Baseline sample	Intervention	527	541
	Comparison	62	52
Follow-up sample	Intervention	208	220
	Comparison	18	19

Figure A2.2: Languages spoken at home

Figure A2.3: Family structure – order of siblings
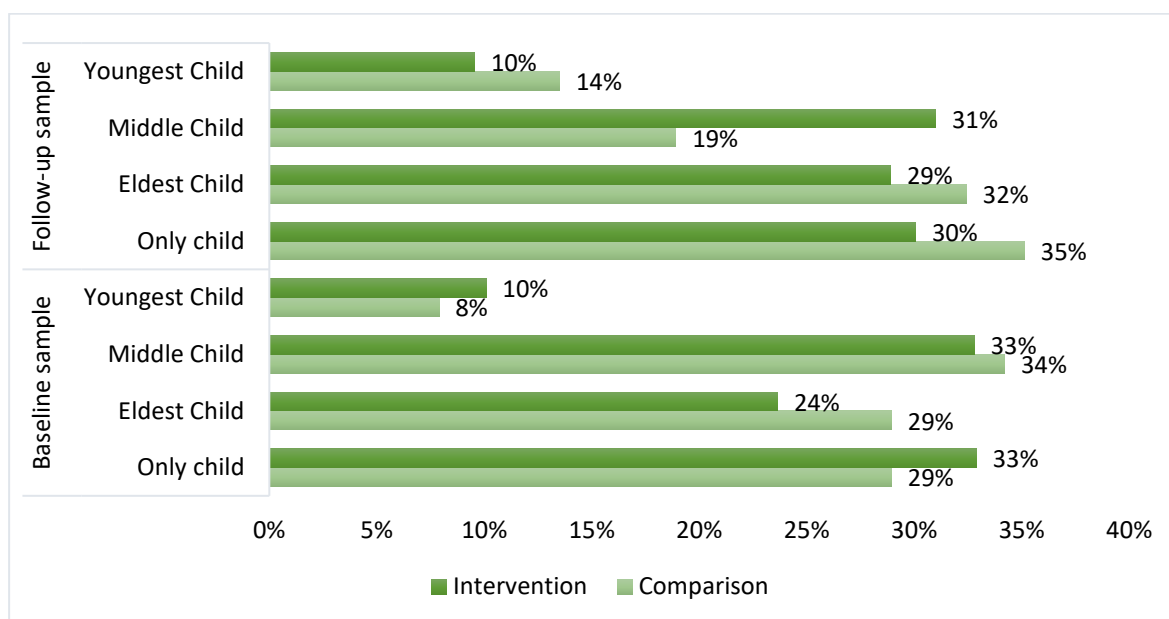
Figure A2.4: Is your child eligible for free school meals?

Figure A2.5: Is your child eligible for free school meals? (excluding 'Don't know / Rather not say')
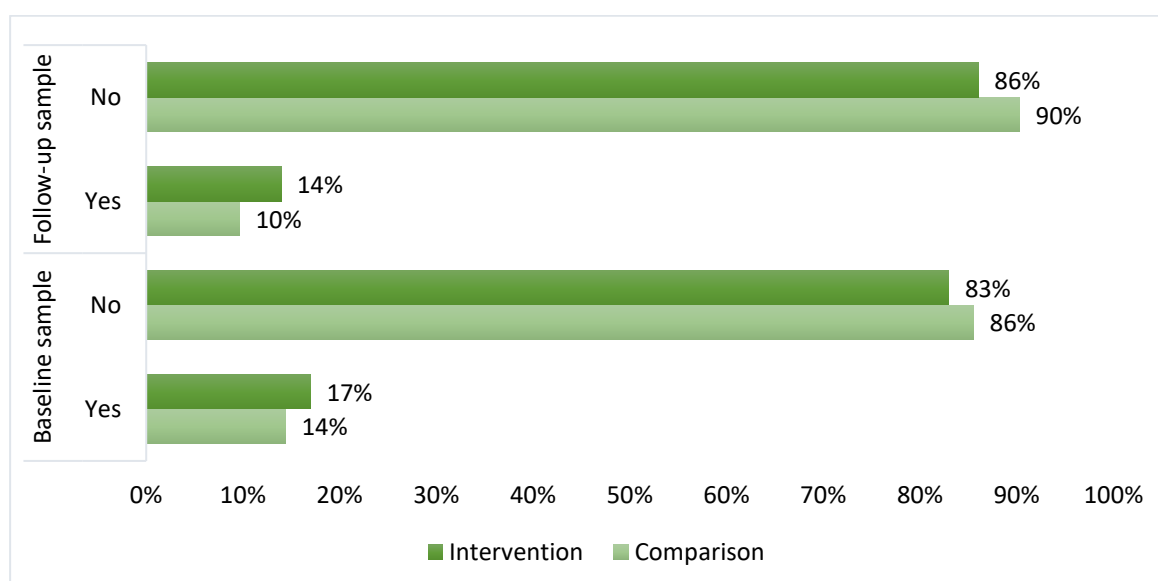
Table A2.2: Eligibility for free school meals

	Baseline sample			Follow-up sample		
	Yes	No	Don't know / Rather not say	Yes	No	Don't know / Rather not say
Intervention	144	703	223	47	290	92
Comparison	14	83	17	3	28	6

Figure A2.6: Reading patterns with child

Table A2.3: Reading frequency with child – average number of days per week

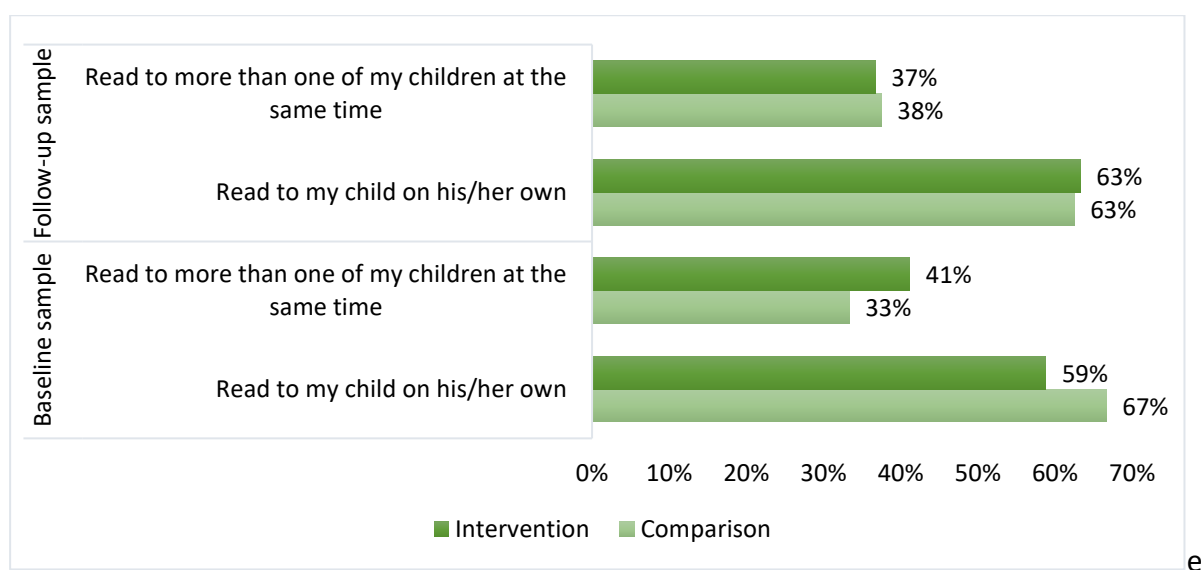| Statements	Baseline sample		Follow-up sample	
	Intervention	Comparison	Intervention	Comparison
Read a book for fun	5.54	5.67	5.83	6.19
Used a tablet or computer	4.35	4.02	4.14	3.81
Shared a rhyme and/or song	5.55	5.37	5.57	5.57
Talked about books	4.85	4.87	5.06	5.27
Read a book in Welsh	0.54	0.81	0.61	0.97
Shared a rhyme and/or song in Welsh	1.15	1.64	1.27	1.66

Table A2.4: When did you first receive the PDSN resources? (coded responses, intervention only)

	No.	%
Didn't receive anything up to March	77	22%
One up to March	141	40%
Both up to March	132	38%

Table A2.5: How was the programme introduced to you? (coded responses, intervention only)

	No.	%
In person	248	59%
Not in person	169	41%

Table A2.6: How often have you spoken to staff at the school or nursery about PDSN? (intervention only)

	No.	%
A few times	201	47%
Just once	110	26%
Never	94	22%
Often	25	6%

Appendix 3 The Theory of Change

A Theory of Change for the PDSN programme was developed at the outset of this evaluation. A Theory of Change is probably best described as a roadmap that sets out the things that need to happen to achieve the intended final outcome and address the need (and rationale) for intervention (i.e. programme, scheme or project). It is also a method of identifying the assumptions that are being made within the identified 'causal chain,' barriers that need to be overcome and the enablers — things that need to be in place for the theory to work. The Theory of Change for the PDSN programme built on a comprehensive logic model that had already been developed by BTC.

The theory outlined the assumptions underpinning the programme, showing the key enablers (i.e. the things that should be present for the programme to be a success) and the main barriers and risks. These three categories are listed below along with commentary on how they were implemented and encountered during the delivery of the PDSN programme.

Assumptions

Having five consecutive terms of PDSN is good for children's development	The programme was introduced over three half terms. The majority started the programme in January or February. The programme feeds into PDS Reception.
Having high-quality resources makes a difference to children's development	Some practitioners commented that the quality of resources was important and increased their appeal to children; this was particularly beneficial to children from low income backgrounds. The resources were described as appealing, colourful, and of high quality.
That all children will benefit from PDSN	Examples of benefits included enjoyment, all eligible children taking part and receiving the same resources and at home, children's increased confidence and joining in.
That parental engagement affects children's educational outcomes	Number of comments from parents and practitioners that parents felt more involved in children's learning.
That parental engagement varies between home settings	Evidence from practitioners that parental engagement varied from setting to setting.
Practitioners have time to introduce to families	Practitioners sent letters, used social media, organised parents/carers meetings or spoke to parents individually.
The resources will be used in settings and at home	Evidence from practitioners and parents/carers that the resources were used in settings and in homes

The training provided will lead to planning around how the resources are used in settings and introduced to parents / carers	Many practitioners who attended the training reported that they planned how to use the programme and how they introduced the programme to parents/carers.
The children find the stories and rhymes 'fun'	Many comments about children enjoying the rhymes and books.
Communication from BTC to settings and from settings to families are picked up and followed	Evidence that practitioners used BTC communication to send to families.
The resources are distributed to eligible children i.e. those in their final two terms in nursey	Comments indicate that eligible children received the resources.
The rhymes and other resources are age appropriate	98% of practitioners thought that the resources were suitable and appropriate.
Children having ownership of books helps with engagement	Comments that children were happy and loved the books.

Enablers

Endorsement and support from LA/ Consortia	Very positive comments from LA/Consortia officers in scoping interviews. Input to arranging information sessions. Action research projects in one consortium. Practitioner responses to the research were positive overall, with examples of increased parental engagement.
Creating excitement around the resources e.g. reading the book in a special place for the first time, develop fun activities to fit around the resources	Used in 'circle time,' linked to curriculum areas and areas of learning. Used for curriculum theme planning.
Creating a 'group enthusiasm' leading to families positively influencing each other – in particular, encouraging engagement from the harder to reach	Some settings held meetings to introduce the resources to families. Schools with high EAL parent backgrounds used interpreters to encourage engagement.
Practitioners plan how to introduce resources to families e.g. arrange a session to read resources with families together	Meetings/workshops were held in some locations to introduce to families.
Settings use multiple channels of communication with families e.g. classroom apps, social media, newsletters, face-to-face.	Methods for communication included letters, social media, face to face meetings.

The resources are of high quality in both English and Welsh with colourful illustration, fun and humour so that families find them engaging	Practitioners reported that initial feedback from parents and carers was very positive.
The resources are clear and straightforward to use, particularly for EAL families	Settings with EAL families reported the need for interpreters to explain the programme to families.
That learning is embedded within the settings e.g. through an SDP or by sharing learning throughout the setting / foundation phase	Examples of programme incorporated into SDP in some settings.
The programme is given status and attention within the settings i.e. from the leadership teams too	SMT members participated in telephone interviews in some settings. Programme included in whole school planning through SDP.

Barriers and risks

BTC and WG have different expectations for the implementation of the programme	Support for the programme expressed by WG official in scoping interview.
The settings do not appreciate the bilingual element of the programme i.e. Welsh or English medium settings do not believe the resources caters for their language medium	Most practitioners who took part in interviews had used some elements of Welsh and English resources. Some English settings found the level of Welsh too difficult. Some Welsh medium settings used the Welsh texts only.
Non-Welsh speaking practitioners lack the confidence to use the Welsh elements	A significant number of practitioners reported that they had attempted to use elements of the Welsh resource but some found it challenging.
The settings are overwhelmed by the resources and find them too difficult to administer.	A small number of practitioners commented that there was too much paperwork.
The settings do not like the contents of the resources e.g. the selection of rhymes	97% of practitioners thought the rhyme sheets and books were very good or good.
The settings do not apply learning from training or fail to attend training and don't follow the guidance, thus leading to poor planning for the use of resources in settings and/or poor introduction of resources to families	68 % of practitioners attended the information sessions, 71% practitioners used the practitioner guide, 15% did not know about the practitioner guide.
Parents/carers do not value being assisted to better understand what they should be doing with their children in relation to sharing books, rhymes and songs	Parent/carer reposes in focus groups show appreciation of the PDSN resources.

Children do not enjoy the books and rhymes	98 % of practitioners reported that children liked the resources.
Parents/carers/other family members lack the time to use resources with their children or lack the will to do so	Some practitioner comments regarding lack of parental engagement/lack of time at home, but other practitioners said there was evidence of using the resources in the home.
Children who do not use the resource at home don't feel included in PDSN within the classroom	No evidence of eligible children not feeling included in the classroom in practitioner comments.
To the evaluation	
PDSN does not appeal to enough settings thus leading to low sign-up and a failure to meet aims and outcomes and failure to adequately test the programme concept	PDSN programme appealed to schools and settings. Over 350 schools and settings signed up to the programme
The intended outcomes of the programme, particularly oracy development, are difficult to measure and the evaluation fails to demonstrate impact	Difficult to attribute oracy development improvements to one programme but PDSN is seen as a good programme, very valuable and useful.
The evaluation shows that there is no significant difference in the oracy development of engaged children and those in comparison settings.	The programme delivered modest and statistically significant improvements in relation to oracy related outcomes.