Welsh Language Standards

Annual Report 2020-2021

Contents

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Foreword

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is committed to the principle of the Welsh language standards and strives to comply with the standards as applied to us in what continues to be a difficult financial and resource limiting environment.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has had significant impact on our services during 2020-2021 with many of our workforce being redeployed to other service areas as part of the Council's response to the outbreak and to support our residents in these unprecedented times. We have had to make considerable changes to the way we have delivered our services, in some cases even suspending services, particularly during the first lockdown period.

With all that has taken place over the last year we are mindful that the Welsh language cannot be considered in isolation of the wider equality agenda and the impacts of the events that took place during 2020-2021 resonate with us all. Language and cultural awareness are key elements of the wider conversation that are taking place across society and the Welsh language and culture must be included in this. To this end we will work to ensure initiatives are developed, material is available and events are held (when restrictions are lifted) to help foster a better understanding and celebrating of our diverse communities.

We recognise that 2021-2022 will continue to be challenging not only with our response to the ongoing pandemic and in supporting our communities but also in using the lessons learnt over the last year to help shape our future.

Karen Jones
Chief Executive

Introduction

This Annual Report highlights our work in implementing the Welsh language standards as applied to the Council as well as identifying areas where more work is required.

2020-2021 was not a 'normal' year with services being affected, staff being redeployed and new ways of working becoming the norm as a consequence of the pandemic outbreak. However, we have been clear throughout this period that Welsh language services were to continue where possible – although there have been some instances where this was not possible most notably with health and safety notifications during the first lockdown period.

Even though challenging last year has also provided an opportunity to reassess our Welsh language provision for both residents and staff and a number of changes to our internal processes and procedures are being considered/put in place to help ensure we are in a better position to provide Welsh language services over the years to come.

Background and Current Situation

This annual report provides an overview of how as a Council we have implemented the Welsh language standards and provides information on specific areas: the number staff who are Welsh speakers and the language requirements of vacant post as required under the Welsh Language Measure (2011) and Welsh Language Standards (No1) Regulations 2015.

The standards which have been applied to the Council under section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 are contained in our compliance notice.

Accountability

The Council has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the standards, with the Chief Executive having overall responsibility for ensuring arrangements are in place to secure compliance. In addition, we

recognise that each member of staff has a role to play in the successful implementation of the standards.

Our governance arrangements require the Annual Report to be monitored by Cabinet, with Cabinet Scrutiny Committee undertaking an important role in ensuring progress on performance is being sustained.

The Equality and Community Cohesion Group supports the Chief Executive and elected Members and has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the standards. This group is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Equality and has a membership drawn from each directorate as well as representatives from local equality organisations.

The Welsh Language Officer Group (WLOG) supports the administration and implementation of the standards and helps with the early resolution of any issues that may occur, supports staff in the delivery of services in accordance with the duties placed on the Council as well as helping promote the language amongst staff.

All information and support materials relating to the implementation of the Welsh language standards are available on the intranet and can be accessed by staff. Awareness of the requirements of the standards is raised via Corporate Management Group, directorate management teams, team meetings as well as through the Council's internal publicity mechanisms, e.g. the online newsletter, 'In the Loop'.

Compliance

Welsh Language Commissioner Monitoring Report 2019-2020

In August 2020 we received the Welsh Language Commissioner's monitoring report for 2019-2020. The Council was part of a random sample of organisations which were assessed in 10 areas of activity: correspondence, telephone calls, forms, press releases, brochures and leaflets, corporate identity, webpages, social media, new and vacant posts and reception areas.

While our press releases, social media posts and examples of our corporate identity along with the vast majority of our webpages were fully available in Welsh there were significant areas where our performance was disappointing:

- Out of three pieces of Welsh correspondence received only two were answered in Welsh

- Only one out of three telephone calls were dealt with in their entirety in Welsh.

- Two out of three examples of brochures/leaflets etc., were fully in Welsh.

- Reception staff were not able to provide a Welsh language service even though a sign on display stated otherwise.

- Only one out of three forms were available fully in Welsh.

The Commissioner considered that in three areas there was a 'suspicion of failure to comply with the relevant statutory requirements' and we were asked to respond:

- Telephone calls made in Welsh on our main telephone line - this issue was the subject of a complaint, CSG 650, received on 2 October 2019 and subsequently determined in August 2020 - a new process was introduced and disseminated to each member of the customer services team in October 2019 (reminders were issued again in October and November 2020).

- 1/3 of the forms surveyed were available in Welsh – following receipt of further details appropriate steps were being considered by the Welsh Language Officer Group, working closely with our Web Team and relevant services, and will be included in the work programme for immediate attention.

- Reception staff unable to deal with any of the Welsh enquiries in Welsh – 'as of the end of March 2020 our civic centres have been closed to the public and it is unlikely that this situation will change in the near future. When our civic centres do reopen to the public, it is likely that reception services will be provided differently, changes that were being considered prior to lockdown.'

The WLOG is currently looking at the compliance issues raised in the report, along with issues identified in our own monitoring activities, to determine how best to resolve them and ensure ongoing compliance.

General Compliance

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic 2020-2021 has been a year unlike any other, with services affected by changes in working practices, staff redeployment, along with the need to provide response and support for those residents who, along with staff, have found the whole year rather challenging and in many cases a frightening experience.

However throughout the year we have worked to ensure our Welsh language services are available – even if at reduced level in some instances. While the early part of the year was spent predominantly responding to the outbreak the latter part saw some activity:

Recruiting Welsh speakers in to key areas – our Communication and Digital Services Team recruited two Welsh speakers who are integral to our social media communications, publicity, TPP publicity services, etc.

Complaints - we received fewer complaints in relation to the Welsh language during the year (three in total). We revised and updated our Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy in line with the recommendations of the Public Sector Ombudsman for Wales. We took this opportunity to further clarify the process in relation to the requirements of the Welsh language standards**.**

Welsh Language Promotion Strategy - the second progress report was published but for a six month period only (October 2019 - March 2020) in order to realign the reporting period to that of other statutory reports. With the shortened reporting, which was compounded by the early stage of the pandemic, limited progress was able to be reported.

Welsh Rights Day (7 December 2020). Following the small scale celebration of the first Welsh Rights Day in 2019, we intended to celebrate the second Welsh Rights Day more widely. However, the ongoing situation meant that a smaller social media publicity campaign was undertaken

predominantly with a limited social media campaign, in our weekly Sway staff update and on our employee news section on the Intranet.
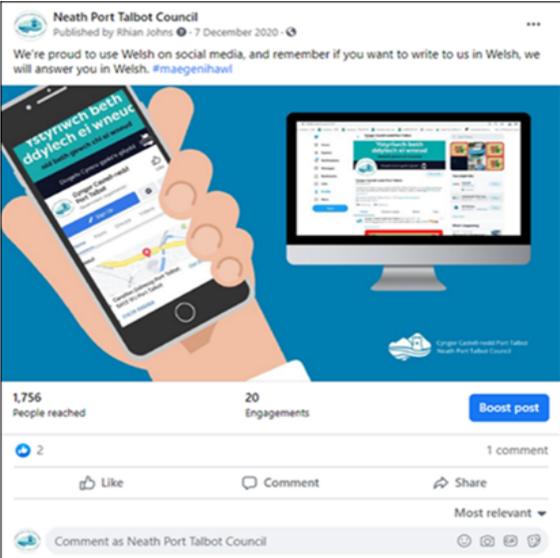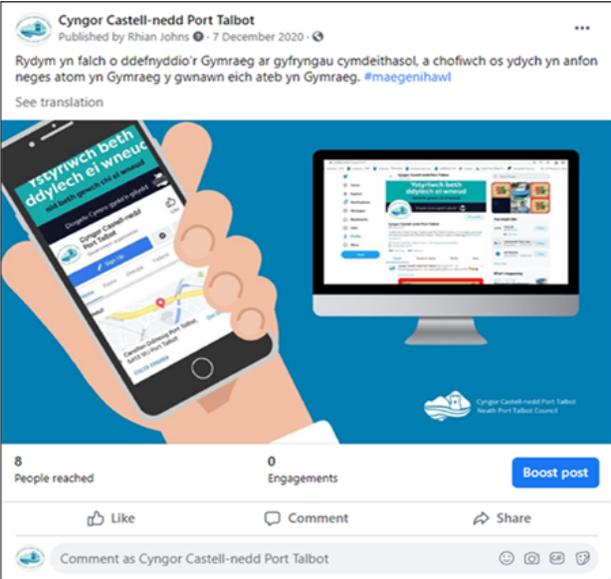
Service Delivery standards

2020-2021 has been a challenging year for everyone, with shielding, lockdowns, reduced/reconfigured services, and staff working from home and/or in other roles all combining to make it a year to remember, or even forget.

Providing services generally has been a challenge and providing a Welsh language service has been even more difficult for some of our service

areas during this period. While the vast majority of staff were able to work from home those that were unable to do so, due to their own health conditions, caring responsibilities or because their work had significantly changed or had temporarily been suspended were invited to consider redeployment. Several hundred staff voluntarily agreed to temporary redeployment into other roles; including secondment to the Communications Team, Refuse and Recycling, Customer Services, NPT Safe and Well, Test Trace and Protect (TTP).

50 staff worked from home prior to lockdown

2000+ staff worked from home during first 4 weeks of lockdown

Although a decision was made early in the lockdown for all communications in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak to be in English only to provide information as quickly as possible (a decision made on the basis of health and safety as well as on the more practical issue of limited resources in such challenging times) over the summer we were able to reintroduce bilingual communications. With the recruitment of two Welsh speakers to the Communications Team during the autumn we have ensured there is ongoing capacity for all future communications

Towards the latter part of 2020-2021 we began a review of our compliance and promotion of the Welsh language, which will continue over the coming year, to help ensure we can provide a more effective and responsive service going forward and help celebrate the language and culture amongst staff and within our communities.

Correspondence in Welsh - there have been some instances where the request to receive correspondence in Welsh has been made in error and consequently the Welsh Language Officer Group has redesigned the request form, which will be live by summer 2021, to improve clarity as to its purpose.

> 77 people have indicated they wish to receive correspondence from us in Welsh.
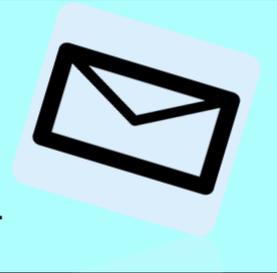
Council Meetings - during the pandemic and following the enactment of legislation to remove the requirement for Members to be seen and heard in formal meetings of the Council, we quickly resumed key meetings using Microsoft Teams. Unfortunately this platform is not able to support bilingual meetings and consequently all Council meetings will be moved to Zoom, which does have this capability, during 2021-2022.

Policy Making standards

The requirements of the policy making standards are incorporated into the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) framework. The impact assessment process is undertaken for all new and revised policies /initiatives and so opportunities to use Welsh as well as not treating Welsh less favourably than English are considered each time.

Comprehensive guidance on the IIA process is available for all staff on the intranet. In addition training has previously been provided for those staff responsible for undertaking IIAs as part of their responsibilities. Further training sessions are being considered for 2021-2022.

A review of the IIA framework was to be undertaken during 2020-2021 to ensure that it was embedded into practice but due to the pandemic outbreak it will now be undertaken during 2021-2022.

Operational standards

While policies relating to staff employment have been produced in Welsh and are available on our intranet to date no member of staff has wished to receive information regarding their employment in Welsh.

Documents to help and support staff in providing a Welsh language service to residents and visitors to Neath Port Talbot are available on our intranet. However, over the last year it has been apparent that this information page requires review to take into account lessons learnt from outcomes of complaints, improved guidance on compliance as well as promotional material, with the Welsh Language Officer Group the driving force behind leading the review.

The number of staff who identified as having Welsh language skills during 2020-2021 remained relatively low.

Fairly fluent speaker & writer - 77

Fairly fluent speaker - 76

Fluent Welsh speaker & writer - 126

Prefer not to say - 66

Fluent Welsh speaker - 48

Welsl

Little or no knowledge - 2763

WELSH L

SK

146 Welsh speakers on our employee directory
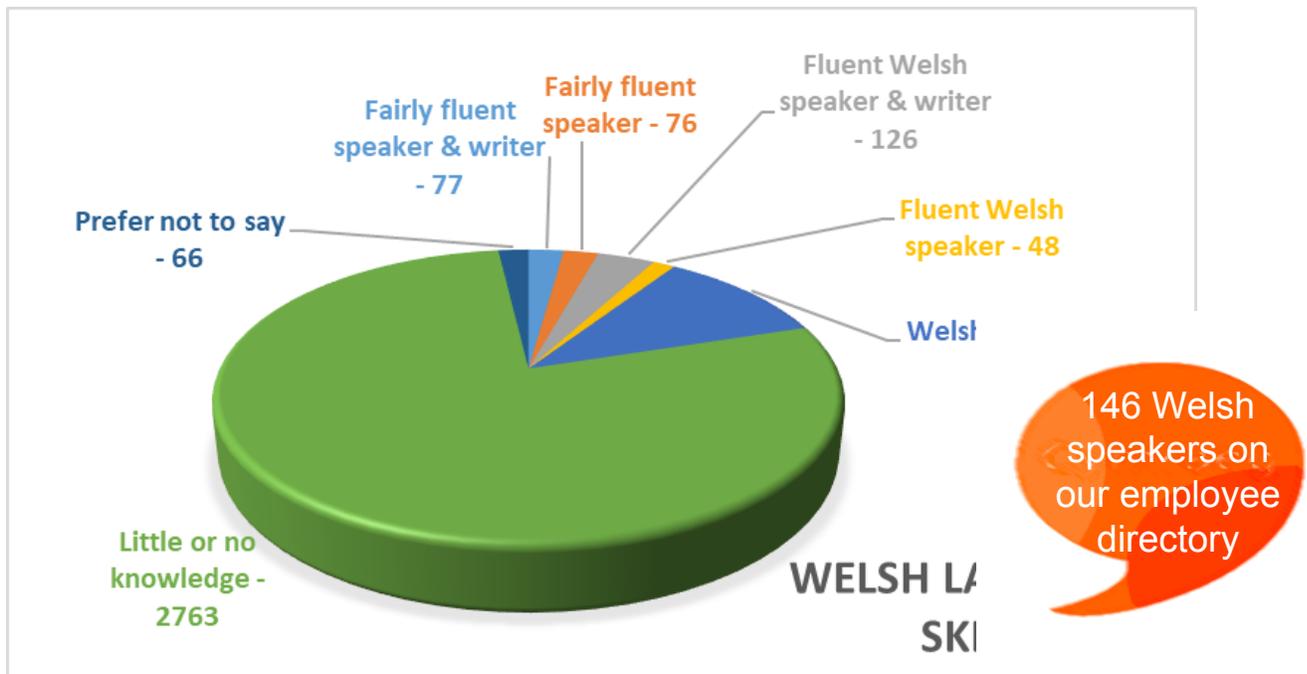
The number who are willing/able to use their language skills as part of their work has increased from 126 in 2019-2020: our employee directory lists those who are willing to use their language skills and is available to all staff via our intranet.

Information, help and support on using and complying with the Welsh language standards is available to all staff via the Performance Hub Welsh

language page on the Intranet. As it has been some time since the page was developed it is timely for a review to be undertaken to ensure the page remains a suitable resource with the inclusion of updated guidelines, information and promotional material.

In order to ensure language skills are assessed consistently across service areas a new language assessment framework is being introduced as part of the implementation of a new HR/Payroll system. The framework will enable staff to assess their language skills, and then update their HR records, in line with widely recognised criteria. Anecdotally staff underestimate their skill level and so it is hoped that this new process will help boost confidence and hopefully encourage staff to use their Welsh language skills in work. The assessment process will also help managers have a better understanding of the language skills within their service areas when considering workforce planning/recruitment.

We continue to work to enhance the number of Welsh speaking staff and many took the opportunity during the year to undertake Welsh language e-learning courses: 258 staff (243 from our Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate) completed e-learning Welsh language courses during the year.

126 staff completed Welcome/ Welcome Back language courses.

68 Teachers completed the Dysgu Cymraeg - E-Learning - Teachers Part 1 (Welsh Course) with 58 also completing Part 2
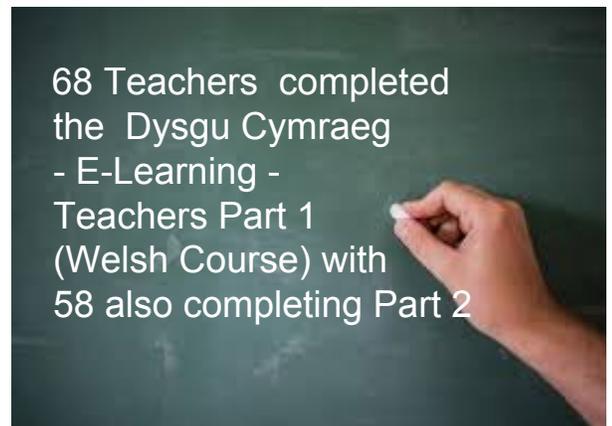
Specific Legislative Requirements

Vacant Posts - Welsh language skill requirements

Category	Number of posts	Percentage of posts
Essential	2	1 %

Desirable	83	28 %
Need to learn Welsh	Nil	nil
No Welsh skills required	206	71%

Language Skills of staff

Directorate/Service	Welsh Language Skills							
	Fairly fluent speaker & writer	Fairly fluent speaker	Fluent speaker & writer	Fluent speaker	Welsh Learner	Little or no knowledge	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Officers	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	5
Chief Executive's Office								
Human & Orgnaisational Development	2	3	6	1	11	73	1	97
Legal & Democratic Services	5	2	5	1	17	63	0	93
Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning								
Participation	13	7	20	5	56	436	31	568
Transformation	5	2	13	9	35	174	9	247
Finance and Corporate Services								
Digital Sevices	4	1	1	0	7	93	2	108
Financial Services	3	4	1	0	10	138	1	157
Environment								
Engineering & Transport	4	3	5	2	11	108	0	133
Planning & Public Protection	3	7	13	1	59	149	3	235
Property & Regeneration	0	5	3	2	12	117	3	142
South Wales Trunk Road Agency	1	5	8	5	16	168	1	204
Streetcare Services	9	11	14	7	33	416	10	533
Social Services Health and Housing								
Adult Services	15	11	12	9	46	448	4	505
Business Services	0	3	2	3	8	85	0	101
Children & Young People Services	13	11	22	3	61	293	1	404
Grand Total	**77**	**76**	**126**	**48**	**383**	**2763**	**66**	**3539**

Complaints

A total of three complaints were received during 2020-2021; two via the Welsh Language Commissioner and one direct to the Council

CSG727 - Coronavirus letter and Safe and Well leaflet in English only. The investigation of the complaint was nearing its conclusion when a cyber-attack in early December 2020 on the Welsh Language Commissioner's systems necessitated a suspension in all activity. The outcome of the investigation is still awaited.

CS026 - Posters, recycling/garden refuse bags and signage on recycling vehicles – 'disadvantaging the Welsh language'. Although all text/signage is bilingual in all instances the complainant considers that its position 'disadvantages the Welsh language'. The investigation is ongoing.

The complaint received direct to the Council:

The complaint received direct to the Council was in relation to the Immbulance and service area social media accounts which is being dealt with under the Council's own complaints process.

Immbulance – the initial press release for the Immbulance (issued by Swansea Bay University Health Board) featured the vehicle without bilingual decals. However, this was rectified prior to its deployment on 25 February 2021 and the vehicle with fully bilingual decals were featured in subsequent press releases.

Social media accounts - the complaint focussed on the lack of/reduced/delayed Welsh content on department social media accounts. We recognise there are issues with departmental social media accounts and have been working with the Welsh Language Commissioner to develop and implement actions to overcome them, for example by recruiting Welsh speakers into the Communication and Digital Services Team to provide additional support; updating the process for new social media accounts to ensure accounts will be run bilingually; amending our internal practices and guides to help officers

with Welsh posts, although the outbreak of the pandemic has affected progress on these matters.

As the complainant remained dissatisfied with the response provided under Stage 1 of the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy the complainant has been advised that a Stage 2 formal investigation can be requested; however, no such request has been received to date.

Complaints still awaiting decision:

CSG 594 - Home to School Transport Policy – the use of Welsh during a public consultation. Finalisation of the checklist for use when planning and attending events has been delayed due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic and the Council's subsequent response as well as due to the cyber-attack experienced by the Welsh Language Commissioner. However, this work will be prioritised for completion by the end of the calendar year.

CSG 650 – Telephone call to the general telephone number. The complaint referred to the use of English on a Welsh language telephone call and similar issues when connected to a service area. The investigation determined that the Council had failed to comply with the relevant standard and an enforcement action to remind staff of the requirements of greeting callers appropriately was imposed. Confirmation that the enforcement action had been undertaken was unable to be sent due to the cyber-attack experienced by the Welsh Language Commissioner and so remains outstanding.

Have your Say

Enquiries or feedback on this report are welcomed via:

Email: policy@npt.gov.uk
Post: Chief Executive, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 1PJ

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Measures

Translations	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total cost of translations (where able to be identified)	£52,598	£49,573	£43,072
Number of requests for translation received by the translation unit	1086	716	662

The data relates to the number and cost of translations undertaken by the Translation Unit. This is not an accurate record as translations are undertaken by other providers whenever necessary, the cost of which is absorbed into publication costs or the general budget for the service. The outbreak of the pandemic and its subsequent impact on services during 2020-2021 is likely to have impacted on the number of translations being requested.

Telephone Calls	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Number of staff with fluent/fairly fluent language skills identified in the employee directory	148	126	146
Average time to answer telephone calls – English	22 seconds	52 seconds	43 seconds
Average time to answer telephone calls - Welsh	20 seconds	45 seconds	51 seconds

As it was necessary for One Stop Shop staff to work from home as a consequence of the pandemic two Welsh speakers were redeployed into the Contact Centre team thereby increasing the capacity of the team in dealing with Welsh calls. However, the complement of staff reduced over the period as a Welsh speaking member of staff took up another position within the Council.

Social Media	31.03.19	31.03.20	31.03.21
Twitter Followers - English corporate account	12,957	14,381	15,799
Followers - Welsh corporate account	227	306	368
Facebook English corporate account	8,321	10,878	15,882
Welsh corporate account	37	71	103

NPT News e-newsletter	31.03.19	31.03.20	31.03.21
No of subscribers to Welsh e-newsletter	7	11	17
No of subscribers to English e-newsletter	403	1221	1922
No of subscribers to bilingual e-newsletter	14	24	33

Website	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total number of hits on website	2,981,002	3,576,298	3,980,097
Hits on Welsh webpages	29,758	34,045	23,423

Language Skills	2018-2019*	2019-2020*	2020-2021
Fairly fluent speaker & writer	90	83	77
Fairly fluent speaker	65	69	76
Fluent Welsh speaker & writer	119	102	126
Fluent Welsh speaker	53	49	48
Welsh learner	342	347	383

* Data for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 was incorrectly reported previously (the number of school staff with Welsh language skills was included in error) and the table has been amended to provide a more accurate reflection of language skills across the Council.

A reduction in numbers over the three reporting periods can be attributed to a number of factors, including staff retiring or taking up positions outside of the Council; early retirement/voluntary redundancy; staff reassessing their language skills and updating their records via the employee portal.

2020-2021 provided an opportunity for many to undertake e-learning Welsh language courses with some training records being updated as a consequence.

Vacant Posts	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Welsh language skills were desirable	189	146	83
Welsh language skills were essential	29	36	2
Welsh language skills were not necessary	487	390	206
Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post	0	1	0

Complaints	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Number of complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner	4	7	2
Number of complaints where Welsh Language Commissioner determined no investigation necessary	2	5	-