



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Welsh Language Standards

Annual Report 2022-2023

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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.

Complying with the language standards continues to be challenging particularly with a limited number of Welsh speakers who are willing and able to use their language skills at work. While we recognise that not everyone wants to use their language skills at work there is also an element of underreporting and a lack of confidence amongst staff and this is something that we would like to understand more fully in conversation with staff over the coming year.

We have been encouraged by the progress made in a number of areas as highlighted by the Welsh Language Commissioner during the year and are working to ensure this progress is maintained and expanded on across all service areas.

Background

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 posts 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. During 2022/2023, this group was chaired by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice 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.

All information and support materials relating to the implementation of the Welsh language standards are available on NPT Connect (our 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 usual internal publicity mechanisms, e.g. Yammer communication channels, the online newsletter, 'In the Loop' and Sway communication.

Compliance and Promotion

Welsh Language Commissioner: compliance with Welsh language standards

In July 2022 we submitted evidence in support of our self-assessment of compliance across specific work areas, as requested by the Welsh Language Commissioner while the Commissioner's officers undertook desktop surveys. In February 2023 we met with the Commissioner's officer to discuss the outcome of the compliance monitoring exercise.

10 areas of activity were assessed: e-mail correspondence, telephone calls to the main telephone number, documents/forms, website, social media, job applications, receiving visitors at the organisations buildings, policy making, assessing the language requirements of new and vacant posts and promoting the Welsh language.

Our compliance was assessed as good in the majority of areas, particularly social media corporate accounts and responses to Welsh emails where our Welsh response rate was better than the English response rate.

Although the majority of the feedback received was positive, minor issues were raised in the following areas:

- Telephone calls – out of three telephone calls made only two were dealt with entirely in Welsh.
- Documents/forms – of the three documents surveyed, two English documents did not state that the document was also available in Welsh and there was an incomplete link on a Welsh form that went to an English document.
- Website – out of the 15 pages reviewed, seven had minor issues, where the pages were slightly different to the Welsh page or had a missing link/video.

- Advertising new and vacant posts – of the fifteen vacancies reviewed, one post did not comply with the standards as it didn't state that the applicant could indicate if they wanted the interview/assessment in Welsh. A further post stated Welsh was desirable but the supporting documents were only available in English.
- Policy on using Welsh internally – plans for this to be in place by September 2023.


Addressing these issues will be a key piece of work for the Welsh Language Officer Group over the coming months.

Welsh Rights Day (7 December 2022) - As in recent years, the publicity campaign was held on social media platforms and information for staff members in our weekly Sway update, Intranet news section and staff Yammer channel. Staff were also encouraged to add the Welsh Language Rights Day banner to their email signature

Bore da pawb! If anybody would like to include a banner on their e-mail signature for Welsh Language Rights Day on 7th December... you can add the following to your signature :-)







CYNGOR CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT
NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL


www.npt.gov.uk

CyngorCnPT
NeathPortTalbotCBC

CyngorCnPT
NPTCouncil

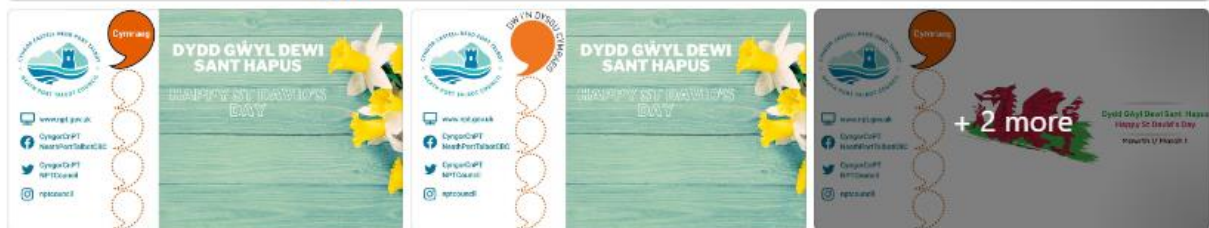
nptcouncil

DW I'N DYSGU CYMRAEG



Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Sant Hapus
Happy St David's Day

Mawrth 1/ March 1



Our Welsh language section on our website has been redesigned to ensure information relating to Welsh language standards, Welsh language promotion and opportunities to learn and use Welsh is easily accessible. This will continue to be updated and improved during 2023/2024

Corporate Plan 2022-227 - recover reset renew

Our Corporate Plan sets out our well-being objectives, priorities, vision and values as we recover from the pandemic and reset and renew with activities and policies to deliver sustainable improvements in services and in social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes.

Welsh plays a role in each of our wellbeing objectives; from Welsh medium education/a second language subject to being the bedrock of some of our communities; from a skill to be learned and taken full advantage of by both employers and employees to it being a very important part of our heritage and culture (which also contributes to the economy, supporting paid employment).

Wellbeing Objective 3 - Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations, explicitly refers to this latter sentiment where people treasure the Welsh language and are actively engaged with the rich sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area.

Service Delivery standards

Correspondence in Welsh – since the introduction of the Welsh only online language preference form appears to have significantly reduced the number of erroneous requests which were a feature of the bilingual online forms. To ensure the database is as accurate as possible a data cleansing exercise, originally scheduled to take place during 2022-2023, will be carried out by December 2023.

92 people have indicated they wish to receive correspondence from us in Welsh.



Council Meetings – Council meetings are held on a hybrid basis, with participants choosing whether they attend in person in the Council Chamber or if they sign in remotely. To facilitate the use of Welsh at council meetings it was anticipated that we'd use Zoom. However, with the activation of Microsoft Teams Welsh translation software, we have been able to offer simultaneous Welsh translation for all participants in Council meetings (whether they be in person or remotely) while being fully integrated with the Council's Public-I webcasting and hybrid audio visual equipment.

Policy Making Standards

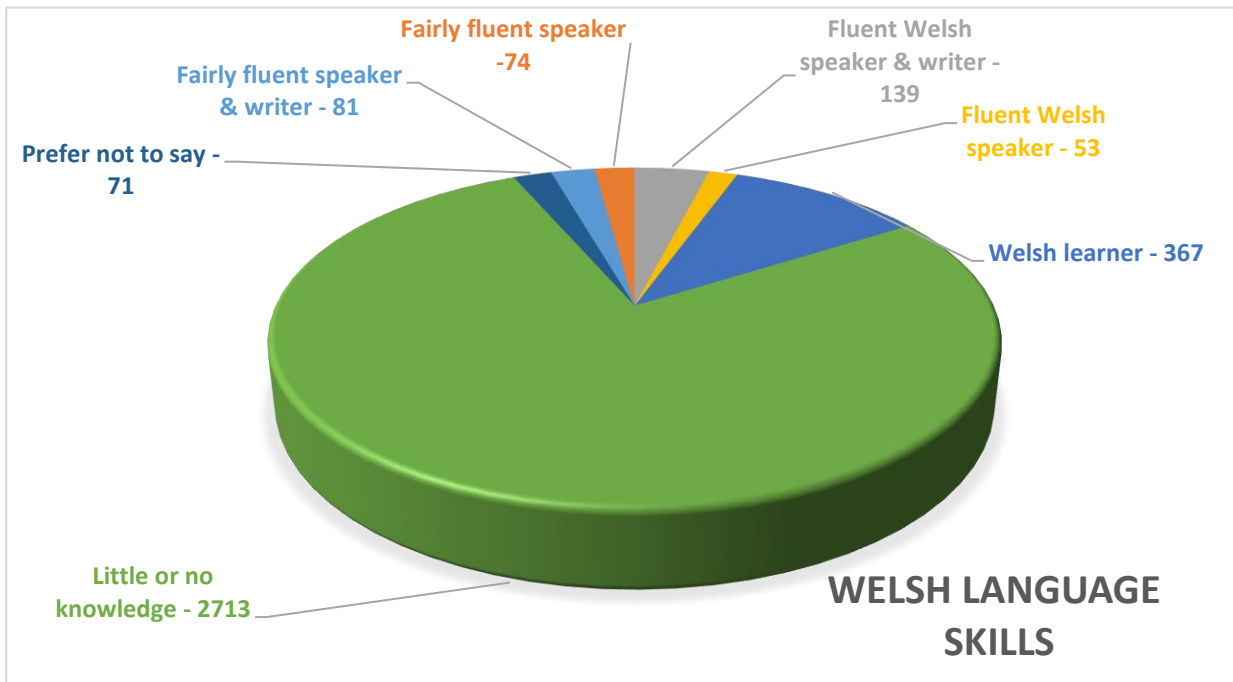
The requirements of the policy making standards are incorporated into the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) framework. The impact assessment process is undertaken for all new and revised policies /initiatives and so opportunities to use Welsh as well as not treating Welsh less favourably than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

Recommendations from the three Integrate Impact Assessment Audits undertaken in 2021-2022 have informed the IIA audit Action Plan which was agreed for implementation by Corporate Directors Group in March 2023.

Using a template developed by 'Deddf', an Awarding Grants Policy was produced and implemented in May 2022.

Operational standards

The number of staff who identified as having Welsh language skills during 2022-2023 remained relatively low overall. However, there was a small increase in the number of staff identifying as fluent speakers and writers (139 compared to 137 during 2021-2022) although the number of Welsh learners decreased by 3.



Welsh speaking employee directory - 126 members of staff were identified on our employee directory as willing/able to use their language skills as part of their work.

It had been anticipated that the introduction of a framework to assist in the language skill self assessment (and so potentially boost the numbers in the directory) would have been introduced during 2022-2023. Unfortunately this has been delayed to ensure it can be informed by the latest advice from the Commissioner which is anticipated in early summer 2023.


Information, and support material - guidance and other support material on using and complying with the Welsh language standards is available to all staff via Welsh language pages on NPT Connect. During the year the Welsh Language Officer Group has overseen work to promote the language amongst staff as well as helping ensure advice and support on compliance is updated.

To assist with this staff Yammer communication channels were established.

New Staff Yammer Communication Channels

In October 2022, two brand new staff Yammer Communication Channels were developed. The Welsh Language Standards & Guidance Yammer Channel provides information on the Welsh Language Standards with signposting to guidance and information documents, to enable staff to comply with the standards in their day to day work. The channel was also used to highlight important cultural events such as St Dwynwen's Day, St David's Day and Welsh Language Rights Day.

Breaking News - new staff yammer channel



The screenshot shows a Yammer post with a blue header and a dark blue background. The header contains the text 'Welsh Language Standards & Guidance' and a 'Join' button. The main content area features a collage of icons related to education and technology, including a graduation cap, a smartphone, a laptop, and a speech bubble with the word 'Cymraeg'. Below the collage, there is a paragraph of text and a 'Join' button.

A brand new staff yammer channel is being launched next week. The Welsh Language Standards and Guidance channel will provide you with lots of information that you need to know about the Welsh Language Standards. Over the coming months, we will highlight different topics, to help you to comply with the standards in your day to day work and signpost you to guidance and support documents. All staff with access to Office 365 will automatically be added to the channel from 5th October. Remember guidance and support documents can still be found on the [Welsh Language page](#) of the staff intranet.

A further Yammer channel specifically for Welsh speakers and learners will be launched mid-October, providing a place to chat to learner colleagues, ask for help with simple translations or perhaps link up with a Welsh speaking 'buddy' to have more conversation practice? You'll be able to join this channel from 13th October

.... watch this space !

Following the launch of the Welsh Language Standards & Guidance channel a second channel was launched; the Welsh Speaker and Learner channel is a place for Welsh speakers and learners to share hints and tips, promote local Welsh language social events and share details of further training/confidence building opportunities.

A brand new Staff Yammer Channel has been launched...



The Welsh speakers and learners channel is a place to chat to learner colleagues, ask for help with simple translations or perhaps link up with a Welsh speaking 'buddy' to have more conversation practice? It is also the place to find out about any local Welsh Language events!

If you are one of our colleagues who has an email address ending with @npt.gov.uk email you can access Yammer, so can join this channel NOW!

In February 2023, staff were asked for their opinion on the Yammer channels and the ease of accessing Welsh language guidance and information. Just over 87% of respondents were aware of the availability of Welsh language guidance and of the respondents who had used the guidance 91% found the required information easily and useful for their role. To assist those staff who were unaware of the availability of the Welsh language guidance, an explanatory video will be produced and published. 2023.

Training

Peer led Welsh language sessions continue to be held by the Welsh speaking Development Officer for colleagues in the Flying Start and Early Years Childcare Team to raise their basic Welsh speaking ability.

There is a fully inclusive training programme for all staff, provided by our local Welsh for Adults Centre and the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Courses include an 'Introduction to Learning Welsh', 'Croeso Cymraeg Gwaith' (Work Welsh Welcome) Gloywi Iaith (Improving Your Written Welsh). Courses are advertised on our internal staff communications Yammer pages including a page exclusively for Welsh speakers and learners and on our Intranet 'NPT Connect' page where we have a dedicated area for Welsh Language training. Information is also circulated

by e-mail and published in our annual Training Programme. This year we have published our training programme electronically using Book Creator and it can be viewed using this link,
https://read.bookcreator.com/DcX1g6fVoYWXnNpfsqOgpPRK4I63/aNMS1ljuSa6IG3_sZSglDQ

In 2022-23 we enrolled 40 staff on various Welsh language courses. We currently have 67 staff enrolled and at various stages of completion while 21 staff have fully completed courses including 2 who completed the Full Entry level 120 hour course.

Overall the online Welsh courses provided by the National Centre for Learning Welsh are the preferred option taken by staff. Feedback received from learners indicates this is because the online courses can be completed at the learners own pace and in the learners own time. Learning online is self-directed which means it can fit around a work life balance. Other feedback received from learners on the online Welsh courses included that although it had a great deal of benefits and they were very good courses, conversational opportunities and natural settings being available to speak Welsh with others was lacking and it was felt these things would strengthen the learning process.

Social work students seconded and hosted by the Council are instructed to complete the 'Welsh Language Awareness in Neath Port Talbot' eLearning to raise awareness of the use of the Welsh language across Neath Port Talbot and in delivering the 'Active Offer'. Social Work Students and Practice Educators also receive training on Welsh Context as part of their Practice Learning Opportunities.

Newly qualified social workers entering their second year of practice are required to undertake a consolidation programme which is available in both Welsh and English. The 'Porth Agored' partnership, of which the Council is a partner, is responsible for the writing, development and implementation of the consolidation programme and works in conjunction with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Our Learning, Training and Development Team have several publications, including phrasebooks, course books, dictionaries and light reading, available for loan to supplement and complement language training courses.

Our corporate induction includes information on Welsh language resources and encourages managers to discuss and make new employees aware of the Welsh language standards and Welsh language awareness. Other sections of the induction including set up of bilingual signatures, answering the telephone bilingually etc. is also covered.

During the year, 231 members of staff completed the Welsh Language Awareness e-learning module. The course gives an overview of the history of the Welsh language and covers the local authority's requirements under the Welsh Language Standards.

Promotion Standards

It was agreed at Cabinet on 19 October 2022 to re-establish the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group in order to develop the second Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028. An evaluation of the initial strategy had been undertaken and formed part of the Task and Finish Group's considerations during the development of the revised Strategy.

A four week period of public consultation was carried out between 17 April and 15 May, feedback from which will inform the final version of the strategy, with an anticipated publication date of July 2023.

An annual report for the period 2022-2023 will be produced in autumn 2023.

Specific Legislative Requirements

Vacant Posts for 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Welsh language skill requirements	No of posts	% of posts
Essential	29	3%
Desirable	150	17%
Need to learn Welsh	5	0.5%
No Welsh skills required	712	79.5%

Language Skills of Staff

Directorate/Service	Fairly Fluent Speaker & Writer	Fairly Fluent Speaker	Fluent Speaker and Writer	Fluent Speaker	Welsh Learner	Little or no knowledge	Prefer Not To Say	Total
Chief Officers					1	3		4
Chief Executive's Office								
Digital Services	3				7	74	1	85
Financial Services	3	4	3		9	138		157
Legal & Democratic Services	4	2	5	1	15	57		84
People & Organisational Development	2	4	7	1	11	94	1	120
Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning								
Early Years Inclusion & Partnerships	5	3	7	2	35	95	5	152
Education Development	7	3	18	4	29	135	6	202
Leisure Tourism Heritage & Culture	1	1	6	1	12	95		116
Support Services & Transformation	10	3	22	10	22	357	26	450
Environment								
Engineering & Transport	2	3	4	2	12	102	2	127
Planning & Public Protection	4	5	1	1	28	80	2	121
Property & Regeneration		6	3	2	11	115	3	140
South Wales Trunk Road Agency	3	5	7	6	19	152	1	193
Streetcare Services	10	11	17	7	32	382	9	468
Social Service Health and Housing								
Adult Services	16	11	18	9	49	421	9	533
Business Services		3	4	3	9	91	3	113
Children & Young People Services	11	7	15	4	55	257	3	352
Housing & Communities		3	2		11	65		81
Total	81	74	139	53	367	2713	71	3498

Complaints

Only one complaint was received during 2022-2023 via the Welsh Language Commissioner and there were no complaints made directly to the Council.

CS1007 – The complaint was in relation to paperwork received containing voting instructions for the local elections, it was alleged that the paperwork contained errors and was difficult to understand. The Commissioner determined that Neath Port Talbot Council is not responsible for the paperwork included in the postal vote package. The paperwork (which includes prescribed text) is issued by the Returning Officer who is not part of the Council and consequently not subject to the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, therefore no investigation was possible.

Details of the complaint has been passed to the Returning Officer for information/consideration.

The following complaints were determined during 2022-2023:

CS114 - Consultation regarding the closure of three English medium schools to create a new school for around 700 children in Pontardawe. The complaint alleges that the Council did not include a Welsh Language Impact Assessment during the first part of the consultation process. It also refers to the Impact Assessment commissioned by the Welsh Government that was not available to the public, and therefore no opportunity was available to comment on that assessment. The Commissioner found that the Council had failed to comply with standard 91 as the consultation document did not adequately consider the potential impacts of the policy decision on opportunities to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably.

The Council has appealed to the Welsh Language Tribunal - a hearing date is awaited.

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

Social media:



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Measures

Translations	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Total cost of translations (where able to be identified)	£43,072	£39,573	£46,701
Number of requests for translation received by the translation unit	662	815	N/A

Telephone Calls	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of staff with fluent/fairly fluent language skills identified in the employee directory	146	146*	125
Average time to answer telephone calls – English	43 seconds	44 seconds	65 seconds
Average time to answer telephone calls – Welsh	51 seconds	57 seconds	81 seconds

There has been an increase in the time take to answer calls in both languages. This has been due to a combination of factors including issues with the telephony systems to resource issues in particular service areas which in turn have impacted on the contact centre (though some of these are being/have been resolved).

The increase in the time taken to answer calls in Welsh is due to a number of issues including an increase in administrative duties, the reopening of civic centres, long term sickness, and training for new Welsh speaking staff. In addition to answering telephones, customer services also provide reception duties on a rota basis; this reduces the availability of Welsh speaking staff to answer telephone calls. Having identified the need for further Welsh speakers to provide customer services a Welsh speaker has since been employed. We continue to explore ways of increasing this capacity.

Since February 2023 performance has started to improve.

Social Media	31.03.21	31.03.22	31.3.23
Twitter (Followers)			
English corporate account	15,799	16,584	17,107
Welsh corporate account	368	431	476
Facebook			
English corporate account	15,882	17,704	21,273
Welsh corporate account	103	141	236

NPT News e-newsletter - Number of subscribers	31.03.21	31.03.22	31.3.23
Welsh e-newsletter	17	17	20
English e-newsletter	1,922	2,186	2,480
bilingual e-newsletter	33	48	63

Website	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Total number of hits on website	3,980,097	4,009,274	5,188,512
Hits on Welsh webpages	23,423	29,177	25,674

Language Skills	2020-2021	2021- 2022	2022-2023
Fairly fluent speaker & writer	77	79	81
Fairly fluent speaker	76	80	74
Fluent Welsh speaker & writer	126	137	139
Fluent Welsh speaker	48	50	53
Welsh learner	383	400	367

Vacant Posts - language skills	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Desirable	83	181	150
Essential	2	8	29
No Welsh skills required	206	438	712
Need to learn Welsh	0	0	5

Complaints	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022- 2023
Number of complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner	2	6	1
Number of complaints where the Welsh Language Commissioner determined no investigation necessary	-	2	1
Number of complaints where the Welsh Language Commissioner determined there was no failure to comply with the standards *	-	3	-
Details of the complaint can be found in the section on complaints above.			