

# WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Cymraeg



This document is also available in Welsh



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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Welsh Language Standards were adopted in 2016 and the Council is required to comply with 171 Standards. The Standards ensure that the Council treats the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality and respects the rights of Welsh speakers.
- 1.2 The Council welcomed the introduction of the Standards and the opportunities to increase the provision of services through the medium of Welsh, as well as the rights they offer to both the public and our employees. We are proud of our Welsh heritage, culture and the Welsh language in Wrexham. The Council believes that respecting and meeting the language preferences of its customers is central to good and effective customer care. We provide services to the most vulnerable people in our community where accessing services in an individual's first language is especially important.
- 1.3 Council has made good progress in complying with the Standards and promotion of the Welsh language and culture in Wrexham. There are still areas for improvement especially around recruitment and workforce development and work in this area will continue in 2023/24. We have strengthened the links between the Welsh language and the Council Plan and continue to ensure that the Welsh language is mainstreamed throughout all of our priorities and policies.
- 1.4 Over the past year we have received a fewer complaints via the Welsh Language Commissioner which demonstrates that we are now more self-regulating but also striving to deliver more services in Welsh.
- 1.5 According to the results of the 2021 Census there has been a 0.7% reduction in the overall number of Welsh speakers compared with 2011, which is approximately 700 fewer Welsh speakers aged 3-15 in the county borough. Whilst this is of course disappointing, initial analysis also shows an encouraging increase in the numbers of Welsh speakers aged 16-44 in Wrexham, up 1.7% compared with 2011. This demographic is pivotal as it includes people leaving education to start work, those planning to raise a family and eventually apply for school places.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Welsh Language sits within the portfolio of the Lead Member for Environment and senior officer responsibility lies with the Chief Officer Governance and Customer with support from the Chief Officer for Social Care who is the Council's Welsh Language Champion on the Senior Leadership Team. Issues pertaining to the Welsh language will be referred to the Executive Board or the Customers, Performance, Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. The Council also has a Welsh language Member and Officer Group.
- 2.2 Operational responsibilities for the implementation of the Standards sit within the Governance and Customer department. The Head of Service - Digital maintains the strategic overview with the Welsh Language Strategic Officer, managed by the Complaints and Welsh Language Compliance Lead, having day to day responsibility for compliance with the Standards. This includes promoting and facilitating the Welsh language in the County Borough and the delivery of the targets and actions in the Council's Welsh language 5-year promotional strategy.
- 2.3 The Council is required to publish an annual report by 30 June as set out in Standards 158, 164 and 170 in order to report on progress against compliance with the Standards in the following areas - Service Delivery, Operational and Policy Making. A full copy of the Standards can be seen [here](#).
- 2.4 This report focuses on the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

## 3. Compliance with Service Delivery Standards

- 3.1 Following some successful recruitment campaigns we have appointed more Welsh speakers at our Contact Centre which is now able deliver more services to residents in Welsh. We also appointed two additional Welsh speakers at our arts markets and cultural hub Tŷ Pawb, increasing their team of Welsh speakers to 6.
- 3.2 To ensure that all employees are aware of the Service Delivery Standards, we regularly provide information to managers and staff on various aspects of the Standards in order to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities. All employees are required to ensure they are compliant with the Standards and to seek advice from the Welsh Language Strategic Officer if they are unsure on a particular matter. In 2023/24, the Council was the subject to a number of investigations conducted by the Welsh Language Commissioner. See Section 6.2 the complaints and investigation sections.
- 3.3 A departmental Welsh language Champions group operates within the Council. The aim of the group is to champion the Welsh language across the Council, promoting the use of Welsh by employees, share good practice within service areas and contribute to initiatives that seek to increase the use of Welsh. This group will also play a major role in the planning and delivery of the 2025 National Eisteddfod.

### **3.4 Welsh Language Swimming Lessons**

As a result of a collaboration between Wrexham Council, the Urdd and Freedom Leisure, we are now delivering swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh. We will continue to work with the Urdd and Freedom Leisure to expand this provision across other leisure facilities. Lessons are held at Waterworld leisure centre every Wednesday 17:15 – 17:45 and 17:45-18:15.

## **4. Compliance with Policy Making Standards**

### **4.1 Neath Port Talbot v Welsh Language Commissioner**

A recent case between the Welsh Language Commissioner and Neath Port Talbot Council found that the council had not 'conscientiously considered' the impact and indirect impacts of a policy decision. The commissioner also ruled that the council had not given the public the opportunity during the consultation to suggest how the council could amend or change the policy to limit any negative impacts or to have a positive impact on the Welsh language. The council appealed the decision via the Welsh Language Tribunal however the tribunal upheld the commissioner's decision. The Welsh language strategic officer and Senior PIPS Officer attended a seminar hosted by Welsh Language Commissioner in November 2023 to discuss this case and its implications. On review, it was evident that Wrexham council were falling short of fully complying with these standards.

### **4.2 E-Learning Module - Bilingual Services – Guidance for Managers and Team Leaders**

A new e-learning module has been developed 'Bilingual Services – Guidance for Managers and Team Leaders' which includes guidance on how to comply with the policy making standards together with an example of a recent impact assessment. The module is mandatory for all managers and team leader within the council including Chief Officers.

### **4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment Tool**

Following a meeting with the senior compliance officer for the Welsh Language Commissioner, Performance Improvement and Partnership Manager and the Welsh Language Strategic Officer, we revised and strengthened the Welsh language section of the new integrated impact assessment to ensure that it meets the requirement of the Welsh standards. The form requires the user to upload their impact assessment and to provide further details e.g. any mitigating measures. Welsh language impact assessments will be periodically monitored by the Welsh Language Strategic Officer.

## 5. Compliance with Operational Standard

- 5.1 The Council has created a dedicated site on its intranet that outlines guidance regarding the Standards, what is expected of employees in operating the Standards, FAQs, the rights of Welsh speakers and opportunities for learning Welsh. A replacement staff intranet platform was launched in 2021 and we revised all of the guidance for staff before migrating the content to the new platform to ensure that it is current and easy to navigate.
- 5.2 The Welsh speaker's network within the council hosts a 'Paned a Sgwrs' group at Tŷ Pawb every three weeks. Its aim is to give staff who a learning Welsh the opportunity to practice it, gain confidence and to hear spoken informal Welsh. It is also important that Welsh speakers and learners within the council know each other to increase opportunities to practice Welsh in a friendly, supportive environment.
- 5.3 The Cysgliad software package has been provided for all Welsh speakers and Welsh learners in the Council who have requested it. This can also be installed directly by the user via the 'Software Centre' on their PC and laptops. This includes two apps 'Cysill' which checks grammar and spellings and Cysgeir which is a digital English – Welsh dictionary.
- 5.4 Resources to support Welsh learners and speakers are available on the staff intranet and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain current and useful.
- 5.5 Instructions on how to set up the 'laith Gwaith' on e-mail signature has been provided and all auto-signatures are now bilingual. All staff job titles are bilingual as are all 'out of office' messages. The Welsh language officer reviewed the auto responses from all of our published email addresses and contacted any that were not compliant with the standards which were corrected promptly.
- 5.6 Recorded examples of phone messages are available on the staff intranet for use on staff mobile device or answer machines.
- 5.7 The HR team have improved the Welsh language assessment section of the vacancy management form. This has led to more posts being advertised 'Welsh Essential' and those where Welsh must be learnt to an agreed level. Applicants to our apprentice and trainee schemes are asked if they would like to start learning Welsh as part of the pre-employment questions at their interviews.
- 5.8 The language skills of employees can be seen in the Performance Monitoring section, [Appendix 1 below](#).

## 6. Complaints

- 6.1 During 2023/24 the Council received 0 complaints from members of the public.
- 6.2 The Council has been the subject of 4 investigations that have been instigated by the Deputy Commissioner in response to complaints made directly to her about alleged non-compliance on the Council's part with regard to its Welsh language Standards. These investigations have been conducted under section 71 of the Welsh Language Measure (2011) Act and are summarised below.

Ref	Received	Complaint subject	Complaint	Department	Outcome	Action
CS1114	28/04/2023	Meetings	Lack of official Welsh – English interpreter at a meeting	Governance & Customer	Upheld	Revised guidance to staff around hosting meetings with Welsh speakers and also amended the staff e-learning module
CS1168	03/07/2023	Website Portal	Council Tax online payment system – addresses in English only	Finance & ICT	Upheld	Wrexham County Borough Council must make arrangements to ensure that Welsh forms of addresses appear in its online payments facility on its website, so that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English.
CS1185	08/08/2023	Documents	Non domestic rates demands non-compliant templates and imported unique information in English only	Finance & ICT	Upheld	The Council must modify its templates for correspondence relating to non-domestic tax notices to ensure that it complies fully with the standards.  The Council must ensure that arrangements with the software company responsible for the tax bills are sufficient to ensure compliance with the standards from now on.

Ref	Received	Complaint subject	Complaint	Department	Outcome	Action
CS1195	05/10/2023	Website – Portal	School Admissions Portal – English words on Welsh version. Parent 'document download area' in English only	Education and Early intervention	Pending	

### 6.3 Enforcement Actions

Following investigations undertaken by the Welsh Language Commissioner the Council receives enforcement notices where complaints are upheld. These enforcement actions sometimes require the Council to revise or introduce new processes and procedures to avoid repeated failure to comply. As a result of this we have introduced a number of positive measures e.g. Mandatory e-learning training modules for all staff:

- 'The Welsh Language Standards - Guidance for achieving a bilingual service' online.
- 'Handling Welsh Language Calls'- For all staff who answer telephone calls to the public
- 'Welsh Language Awareness' - All staff and elected members.

These modules will soon be made available to our contracted partners who deliver any customer service based function to our residents or visitors.

A further module has been launched – Bilingual Services – Guidance for Managers and Team Leaders which is a mandatory module for all team leaders and managers. This provides guidance on matters such as; Procurement, workforce planning and policy decisions.

We continue to work closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner and her officers to ensure that we are interpreting the Standards correctly when delivering services to the public.



## 7. Training and Recruitment

- 7.1 We continue to experience problems appointing Welsh speakers to front facing roles. Despite our best efforts to increase visibility of our vacancies, some managers receive very few applications from suitable Welsh speakers. The Welsh language officer along with representatives from Welsh language county forum have formed a 'Welsh Recruitment' sub group to work in partnership across Flintshire and Wrexham to raise awareness of these opportunities. The council's press and marketing team trialled some paid adverts on Welsh language job sites, LinkedIn and Indeed.com which has been successful in increasing the number of applicants, this will continue subject to available budget.
- 7.2 In the past year we have seen a positive increase in the numbers of staff learning Welsh at Coleg Cambria and via the online 'Work Welsh courses. As detailed in the Welsh Language Promotional Strategy 2022-2027, all staff and elected members will aim to achieve a minimum of level 1 by 2027 therefore we expect that the numbers will dramatically increase and our hope is that more staff continue to learn to higher levels thereafter.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	ACTUAL PERFORMANCE
The number and % of staff who have received training in the Welsh language to a specific level of compliance.	<p><b>During 2023/24</b></p> <p>17 members of staff studying Welsh via Coleg Cambria which equates to 0.54% of the non-teaching workforce</p>
The number and % of staff receiving Welsh language awareness training.	<p><b>During 2023/24</b></p> <p><b>520</b> members of staff completed the 'Welsh Language Awareness' module which equated to 16.48% of the workforce.</p> <p>Total number of staff to complete the module to date is <b>2393</b> which is 75.86% of the workforce.</p>
The number of new and vacant posts advertised during the year which were categorised as posts were	<p>Welsh language skills were essential - <b>46</b></p> <p>Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post - <b>9</b></p> <p>Welsh language skills were desirable - <b>364</b></p> <p>Welsh language skills were not necessary - <b>364</b></p>
The number and % of staff in the organisation's service who can speak Welsh (i) By department (ii) According to grade or post (iii) Per workplace	See <a href="#">Appendix 1</a> (below) for more detail

## 8. Successes and Future Actions

### 8.1 Welsh Education in Wrexham

An event was held on the 19th of January at Tŷ Pawb to promote and celebrate Welsh medium education in Wrexham. The Welsh medium cluster of schools and the Welsh Latecomers Service had worked together to produce a [promotional film](#) that was launched at this event and a new website was launched to help promote and support Welsh medium offer in Wrexham. The website, developed by the Welsh Latecomers Service, has been conceived in collaboration with the WESP forum stakeholders in order to ensure that the site acts as a one-stop portal for families wanting to learn more about Welsh medium education and Welsh opportunities in Wrexham. The event then led to an open afternoon of events and information stalls for the public to enjoy and learn more about the Welsh medium offer.

8.2 With the exciting prospect of hosting the National Eisteddfod in 2025 this gives us a fantastic opportunity to promote the language and culture to our residents and visitors in the run up and over the event itself. We want the whole community to be part of the celebrations and this will be a one of the running themes in the planning and delivery of this national event. The Welsh Language Strategic Officer for the council sits on both the internal project group and the local executive committee for the Eisteddfod.

### 8.3 HWB Cymraeg @ Focus Wales 2023 – May 04

The event was again a huge success delivering a host of activities for children, Welsh lessons during the day followed by new and established Welsh language and international acts into the night. Creating more opportunities for residents to use Welsh socially is an important step to normalising its daily use and to improve the perception of Wrexham as a thriving Welsh speaking destination. Equally important is that the children in our Welsh medium and English medium schools get to use their Welsh outside of the classroom, however much they have.

This year the HWB Cymraeg attracted positive media coverage from Radio Wales, Radio Cymru and S4C with live interviews from outside the Tipi, Tŷ Pawb for Welsh TV show 'Heno'

### 8.4 St David's Day 2024/ Dydd Gŵyl Dewi 2024

In partnership with Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrexham we held a well-attended St David's day with a huge parade through the City centre led by Band Cambria and performances from Andy Hickie, local choirs, singers, bands and dance groups. The event was a huge success with hundreds more children and residents taking part than ever before. This year's event was extra special with a visit from five residents of Patagonia who were being followed by a film crew documenting their visit to Wrexham. This will feature on season 3 of the Welcome to Wrexham documentary.

## 8.5 Dydd Miwsig Cymru / Welsh Language Music Day

In partnership with Welsh Government, Focus Wales and Ty Pawb we held two days of Welsh language a bilingual music to celebrate Dydd miwsig Cymru. This featured some of the best Welsh acts and new up and coming artists. This event is now considered as the main DMC event in North wales and goes from strength to strength each year.



## 8.6 Welsh in the Workplace: Ysgol Bryn Alyn; Wed 6th March 2024

In partnership with Careers Wales, Wrexham council and major local employers, the speed-networking event saw individual groups of year 10 pupils spend 10-minute sessions with each employer, and quiz them on details such as their day-to-day work, how much they use Welsh during their working day and the sort of skills and qualifications needed to fulfil their role.

The pupils attending have the chance to speak with staff from organisations including:

- Scottish Power Energy Networks
- Principality Building Society
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
- Welsh Water
- DFS4 /Big Ideas Wales role model
- Wrexham County Borough Council
- Excell Supply
- Coleg Cambria
- Menter Iaith
- The Presbyterian Church

These events are now annual and are an important step towards creating a bilingual workforce for the future.

# Appendix 1

## Employee Welsh Language Skills Monitoring

### Introduction

We have three categories for which data is gathered as part of our Welsh Language skills equality monitoring:

- 1) Listening/Speaking
- 2) Reading/Understanding
- 3) Writing

In each of these categories employees are requested to assess/record their own level of Welsh language proficiency based on the following criteria:

Level 0 - Not at all/Entry

Level 1 - A little/Foundation

Level 2 - Intermediate/Some

Level 3 - Advanced/Moderate

Level 4 - Full Proficient

Level 5 - Full Proficient (Technical)

This information is provided by employees at recruitment stage, when an employee updates their personal record or (for some departments) during the employees' personal development review.

This data is based on employees of the Council (excluding school based education employees) as at **31/03/2023**

**EMPLOYEES WITH WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN 1 OR MORE CATEGORIES - 2023/24**

Grade	No. of Emps.	Level 1 +	%	Level 3 +	%
G02 - G06	1636	139	8.5%	20	1.2%
G07 - G10	1157	223	19.3%	43	3.7%
G11 - G16	199	55	27.6%	18	9.0%
Soulbury, Youth and Centrally employed Teachers	155	29	18.7%	6	3.9%
Chief Officers / Executive	7	2	28.6%	0	0.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,154</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2.8%</b>

**EMPLOYEES WITH WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN 1 OR MORE CATEGORIES - 2023/24**

Department	No. of Emps.	Level 1 +	%	Level 3 +	%
Chief Executive Services	87	27	31.0%	7	8.0%
Economy and Planning	221	47	21.3%	11	5.0%
Education and Early Intervention Service	375	78	20.8%	16	4.3%
Environment and Technical Services	427	21	4.9%	4	0.9%
Finance	173	40	23.1%	5	2.9%
Governance and Customer Services	95	28	29.5%	7	7.4%
Housing	960	84	8.8%	20	2.1%
Social Care Services	816	123	15.1%	17	2.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,154</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2.8%</b>