

Blaenau Gwent Council
Welsh Language Standards
Annual Report for 2021-22

Contents

Section

1. Introduction

This report is the seventh Welsh Language Standards Annual Report produced under the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The report considers 4 key areas (complaints; Welsh language skills; Welsh language training; and recruitment) and provides an overview of how we have met our relevant requirements as set out in the table below:

Areas	Relevant Standard and/or sub-section
<p><u>Complaints</u></p> <p>The report details the number of complaints we have received during the year in relation to our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.</p>	147, 148, 156, 158(2), 162, 164(2), 168(a), 170 (2), (d)
<p><u>Welsh Language Skills</u></p> <p>The report outlines the number of employees who have Welsh language skills between 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022</p>	170(2)(a), 151

2. Background and current situation

This report has been produced in-line with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out the legal framework regarding the use of the Welsh language in the delivery of public services.

Checks were made to ensure any courses being delivered by us or those commissioned by Third Parties are offered and promoted as being made available in Welsh.

The Council launched a new Integrated Impact Assessment (screening template and full assessment) in August 2021 which requests any new policy or policy decision considers and deals with the effect that decision will have on the Welsh language and on the opportunities to use it. Therefore, strengthen our arrangements for commissioning or undertaking research.

Organisational Development began taking steps to review our recruitment processes to ensure they are compliant with the Welsh Language Standards as well as consideration of proactive ways the Council can encourage, enable, and support the increased use of Welsh language skills via future workforce campaigns, as well as encouraging, enabling, and supporting the increased use of Welsh language skills across our existing workforce (e.g., promotion of statutory Welsh language training and supplementary courses for Welsh language speakers etc.)

Other notable areas of work included:

The Policy & Partnerships Team, under their commitment to support Children and

programme to provide opportunities to young people to gain direct skills and experience within the public sector. The placements included a Welsh Language Trainee Officer, in recognition of the value of bilingualism and using Welsh language skills in the workplace. The opportunity was used to support the Council in meeting its Welsh language requirements, but also used to scope creative ways to encourage the use of Welsh in the workplace. The placement was extremely successful and resulted in the young person securing fixed term employment within the Electoral Registration Team.

has been reviewed ensuring the content is up to date and provides sufficient information on how to meet our Welsh language requirements within the workplace. The guidance simplifies our Welsh language procedures making it easier for staff to implement effectively. The primary changes made were in relation to our simultaneous translation procedures and how they have been adapted to meet online working requirements in-line
-19
pandemic. For example, under standards 4.3 and 4.4 we included more details on how to use and book a simultaneous translator using online platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

The format and con

encourage a more proactive approach to using the Welsh language. The guidance

includes audio files of key words and phrases to be used in a simultaneous translator using online Welsh language resources.

slowly recited version to emphasise key sounds and pronunciation; the phrase spoken at a normal pace. These slides are included as part of our training sessions for staff members with public facing roles.

available to staff on the intranet. Staff have provided feedback on this being beneficial to supporting learning and increasing confidence levels in using Welsh more effectively and are used to reinforce and refresh learning, alongside use of the audio files as well as other Welsh language training resources which are promoted.

We send regular communications and reminders to all staff regarding our Welsh language requirements and promote and encourage everyone to utilise the resources available to them as part of a rolling campaign to promote and encourage the use of Welsh in the workplace. For example, different standards are featured in our internal Well-being Wednesday staff newsletter as well as promotion of our informal Hoffi Coffi sessions for staff wanting to use and improve their existing Welsh language skills as well as provide fun ways to increase social interaction opportunities. The sessions are

Meeting our service delivery standards

Welsh Language Guidance for Staff

A range of short, practical, and easy to follow guides have been produced and feature on

These guides assist staff to effectively implement our service delivery standards, operational standards and policy making standards. For example, the guides include information and advice on how staff should answer the telephone bilingually, using bilingual out of office templates, basic greetings, correspondence disclaimers and guidance on how to obtain translation. These working documents are reviewed and updated periodically.

Our [Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice](#), along with a synopsis guide for staff for upholding them is made available on our staff intranet. This intranet page continues to be promoted via Corporate Communication and our Wider Corporate Leadership Team and is also reviewed and updated periodically.

Meeting our policy making standards

The Council has a duty to comply with a number of policy making standards. For example, the Council has implemented a new Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which is used to support policy and service development, procedures, and functions, and proposed financial efficiency saving proposals etc. The IIA process ensures there is appropriate consideration of the Welsh language in terms of _____ as well as _____ impacts and opportunities for mitigation in line with our Welsh language requirements.

The Council approved and promoted a new Policy on Awarding Grants which provides a framework, alongside guidance, for ensuring Welsh is not treated less favourably and its use is encouraged. This was developed as part of a regional piece of work with other neighbouring local authority areas to ensure consistency in practice in terms of applying the standards.

A new Corporate Welsh Language Standards Communications Campaign has been developed which will provide reminders to staff of our requirements and the practical ways in which they can support them and signposting them to further help, and guidance made available on our intranet. Such as Welsh Language Standards 91-93 on undertaking Consultations.

Meeting our promotion standards

The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

Standard 145 requires Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to produce a strategy detailing how it will promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language over the next five years.

The aims of the

Blaenau Gwent

-medium Education is as follows:

‘To build upon the strong progress made to date, by creating a sustainable education system which enhances provision, uptake, and use of the Welsh language; creating skilled and empowered citizens who are proud to live and work both within and outside of Wales’.

The strategic aim of which will be to create:

‘A community who embrace the Welsh language and culture with confidence and pride’.

We will seek to achieve our vision by promoting, developing, and enhancing Welsh-medium education provision and services. We will do so by working closely with the Welsh in Education Forum, along with other key strategic partners including Welsh Government, and other Local Authorities. Our strategic objectives include:

To raise the profile of Welsh medium Education, along with the benefits of being bi-lingual.

Outcome 3

More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another.

Outcome 4

More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh.

Outcome 5

More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.

Outcome 6

An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) (in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018).

Outcome 7

Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

To achieve our vision and objectives, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is committed to working towards the ambitious Welsh Government target, to increase the Year 1 cohort taught via the medium of Welsh to 75 pupils. When compared with the 2019/20 baseline data used by Welsh Government, this would equate to 10% (an increase of 6 percentage points increase) of the total Year 1 cohort being taught via the medium of Welsh by 2032.

The Education Transformation team implemented an engagement plan to ensure that, key stakeholders and partners, effectively contributed to and informed development of the 10-year plan. This included:

- Developing and regularly reviewing a stakeholder map and engagement plan
- Undertaking reflection sessions with WEF members and key partners, with the aim of reviewing the development and implementation of the BG WESP (2017-2020) including an appraisal of: outcomes, achievements, targets, barriers, challenges, progression opportunities, partners, and data
- Establishing a sub-group of the WEF to agree a timeline and approach to

- subject to a report to the Executive Committee in the autumn-term 2020. The consultation process was initiated in December 2020, concluding in January 2021.

The consultation process determined that there was widespread support for the proposal among consultees, with over 93% of respondents in favour of the new school development, citing the positive impact that the proposal is likely to have upon the Welsh Language, education, employment, the local community, and the economy. In summary, during the 42-day consultation period the Council received:

8 email response; and,
190 survey responses.

The responses can be broken down as follows:

In line with the delivery of the project the Council worked closely with neighbouring authorities to compare models of immersion provision, identify, and address any gaps, whilst also gauging and developing best practice. In addition, the project has contributed to the development of the communication and promotion plan working in partnership with the BG WEF, in turn supporting implementation of the new provision in line with the BG WESP.

The resources have been developed and piloted to support WM pupils at the school, whose language acquisition has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chart 1: Speak Welsh

**Ability to
speak Welsh**

Chart 3: Write Welsh

Ability to write Welsh	Number of Staff
Fluently	29 (1%)
Moderately	100 (4%)
Quite Well	19 (1%)
A Little	242 (10%)
No ability	1344 (55%)
No response	748 (30%)
Total	2,464

Chart 4: Read Welsh

Ability to read Welsh	Number of Staff
Fluently	33 (1%)
Moderately	118 (5%)
Quite Well	25 (1%)
A Little	255 (10%)
No ability	1328 (54%)
No response	723 (29%)
Total	2,464

The above graphs show that the figures regarding ability are very similar across speaking, understanding, writing, and reading skill areas. The percentage of staff that declare they is 1% while the percentage

Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate and Contract Type

The following graphs and tables reflect the total number of Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate and Contract Type across the organisation.

A total of 34 staff declare fluency which is a decrease of 10 staff (22%) in comparison to 2020-21.

The Education Directorate has the most fluent Welsh Speakers (27), and there is 1 member of staff who declares fluency in the Corporate Services Directorate which is a

In response to our Annual Welsh Language Monitoring Visit 2021-22, Organisational Development are reviewing all its recruitment processes to ensure compliance and to increase and retain Welsh language skills across the workforce.

4. Conclusions and recommendations/actions

Blaenau Gwent Council will continue to respond positively to the Welsh