



Annual Report 2022 - 2023

Welsh Language Standards Compliance

Prepared in accordance with the requirements of

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

June 2023



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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1. Introduction

Torfaen County Borough Council strives to deliver quality services to its residents and visitors through the medium of Welsh.

Throughout 2022/23, the team have worked with Directorates to raise awareness and advise on the legal requirements of the Standards. The implementation of the new Corporate Induction Framework ensures that new employees are informed on the importance, implementation and ethical requirements of the Welsh language (Wales) Measure 2011.

A large amount of work has been undertaken with external organisations who provide services on behalf of the Council with the aim of improving the quality and availability of their Welsh services.

This report sets out our compliance with the Standards and submits the necessary data for the 2022/23 financial year. We are removing barriers that may prohibit the progress of Standards and will allow increased promotion and the recruitment of staff to deliver our Welsh-medium services.

This report was presented to full Council and ensures that Elected Members are fully aware of the corporate responsibilities and statutory obligations under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Council approved Annual Report will be published on the Council's corporate website (www.torfaen.gov.uk), under the Welsh Language section and available at local offices where the public have access, no later than 30 June 2023.

The current Welsh Language Commissioner, Mrs Efa Gruffudd Jones has been in the role since January 2023, taking over the role from the late Mr Aled Roberts.

2. Background

This Annual Report is produced under the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 and Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015. The legal framework requires Torfaen County Borough Council to report on five statutory areas.

Areas	Relevant Standard and/or Sub-section
Compliance	158, 164, 170
Complaints	147, 148, 149, 156, 158 (2), 162, 164 (2), 168 (a), 170 (2) (d)
Welsh Language Skills	170 (2) (a), 151
Welsh Language Training	170 (2) (b) (c), 152
Recruitment	170 (2) (ch), 154

The Councils' Welsh language standards are detailed within its Compliance Notice dated 30 September 2015. The Council is subject to 170 standards contained within the Compliance Notice. A copy of Torfaen County Borough Council Compliance Notice can be found [here](#)

The Partnership, Policy and Equalities Team, under the Adult and Communities Directorate currently have four members of staff working on corporate Welsh language delivery on behalf of the Council:

Welsh Language Officer
Welsh Translation Co-ordinator
Welsh Language Translators (x 2)

Adult & Communities Directorate
Partnership, Policy and Equalities Team
Civic Centre
Pontypool
Torfaen NP4 6YB

Telephone: (01495) 766096

The appointed Executive Member for Corporate Governance & Performance (including Welsh Language) for 2022/23 was Cllr Peter Jones

3. Compliance

Guidance and the Council's interpretation on the requirements of the Service Delivery Standards are published on the Council's staff intranet. The council will carry out their own mystery shopper exercise to ensure consistent compliance with the Standards.

Service Delivery Standards

Standards Group	Action taken during 2022/23	Action to be taken during 2023/2024
Standards 1 - 7 Correspondence sent and received	Guidance issued through the Staff Bulletin Corporate email addresses have been translated and will continue to work with SRS to adopt the new bilingual addresses	Monitor general correspondence with the public to ensure compliance.
Standards 8 - 22 Telephone calls made and received	The Council has tested the automated recorded messages and have been made compliant with the relevant Standards From April 2022 to March 2023 the Council's main call centre received a total of 91,622 calls. 1.48% (1352 calls) of these calls chose the Welsh language option.	Ensure members and staff are aware of the protocol when dealing with Welsh language calls.
Standards 24 – 36 Meetings with the Public	The advances by Microsoft in introducing simultaneous translation within Teams has ensured that all requests can be accommodated where required.	Continue to work with our directorates on the requirement to assess the language skills of their audiences.
Standards 37 - 51, 69 - 70 Other bilingual documents	All directorates have been informed on the Standards relating to producing public documents.	Monitor samples of documents to ensure compliance.
Standards 52 – 60 Websites, Social Media and Apps, and Self-service Machines	The Welsh pages of the corporate website received 3,933 hits during 2022/23, in comparison to 2,002,545 hits on the English pages.	Monitor Council owned websites to ensure compliance

Standards 61 – 63 Signs	Of the 2 new housing developments during 2022/23, 2 (100%) street names were approved with Welsh names. Existing nameplates are not translated.	Monitor the refurbishment of Council offices to ensure compliance
Standards 64 – 68 Reception Services	Periodic visits during the year to ensure compliance. The refurbishment of the Civic Centre reception area is underway.	Work with the recruitment team and managers to ensure that all new reception posts are evaluated with the appropriate as Welsh language skills. Ensure that the refurbishment complies with the Welsh Language Standards
Standards 71 – 75 Awarding Grants	Internal Audit will assess performance of any funding awarded as part of a grant in line with the awarding grants Standards.	Obtain statistics from Internal Audit & monitor compliance
Standards 76 – 80 Awarding Contracts	All procurement Invitations include Welsh language element scoring. All successful tenders are offered Welsh language support.	Continue to work with third party providers on Welsh language requirements
Standards 81 – 82 Promoting Welsh Language Services	Update guidance on promoting services	Monitor social media to ensure that Welsh language services are actively promoted.
Standard 83 Corporate Identity	The Council's corporate identity is bilingual.	Monitor for compliance

Standards 84 & 86 Educational Courses	Courses offered were advertised and a language choice offered. All courses are assessed in terms of attendee numbers and delivery.	Ensure that the assessment of courses are publicised on our website
Standard 87 Public Address Systems	Announcements made in all lifts within Council Offices are bilingual.	Monitor for compliance

Policy Making Standards

Guidance and the Council's interpretation on the requirements of the Policy Making Standards are published on the Council's staff intranet.

Standards Group	Action taken during 2022/23	Action to be taken during 2023/2024
Standards 88 - 93	The Council's integrated impact assessment, linked to the 7 national well-being goals, continues to be an effective tool. The Welsh Language Unit has oversight of each policy decision that requires an integrated Impact assessment prior to presenting to Elected Members	Continue to support the policy approval process

Operational Standards

Guidance and the Council's interpretation for staff on the requirements of the Operational Standards are published on the Council's intranet. The council will carry out their own mystery shopper exercise to ensure consistent compliance with the Standards.

Standards Group	Action taken during 2022/23	Action to be taken during 2023/24
Standards 99 – 104 Employment Documents	All electronic HR documents are bilingual. Automated system for arranging leave / absences, expenses and appraisal for staff, continues to be in English only.	Monitor to ensure compliance
Standards 105 – 111 Human Resources Policies	All Council HR policies are provided in Welsh on the staff intranet (SWOOP).	Monitor to ensure compliance
Standards 112 – 119 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures	7 (0.4% of those who have completed their preferred language) employees have indicated their preferred language of communication is Welsh	Increase the number of staff who complete the language skills assessment (iFOR)
Standards 120 – 125 Staff Intranet and IT Resources	The Welsh 'language pack' is installed on all new and replacement computers	Review all resources on the Welsh intranet pages
Standard 127 Staff Language Skills	Please see section on <i>Welsh language skills</i> .	Increase the number of staff who complete their language skills assessment
Standards 128 – 133 Staff Training	Please see section on <i>Welsh language skills</i> . No staff attended HR training offered in Welsh During 2022/2023, 11 employees undertook Welsh language training.	Continue to promote learning Welsh as a valuable skill.

Standards 134 – 135 Wording and Logo for Staff Email Signatures	All staff are reminded, via line managers, to have a bilingual email signature in line with corporate standards. The “Work Welsh” logo is available for staff to download on the intranet.	Update all resources on the Welsh intranet pages
Standards 136 - 140 Recruitment Process	Please see section on <i>Recruitment</i>	Present a report on the barriers restricting departments from advertising posts requiring language skills to the Senior Management Team.
Standards 141 – 143 Internal Signage	Re-issued guidance on new and replacement signs.	Monitor the refurbishment of Council offices to ensure compliance
Standard 144 Workplace announcements	Announcements made in all lifts within Council offices are bilingual.	Continue to monitor

Complaints

All complaints received from residents through the medium of Welsh or relate to a failure to comply with the Welsh language Service Delivery Standards are dealt with in line with the Council's corporate complaints policy. Complaints are categorised in three stages

- **Stage 1** - Informal resolution to a complaint within 10 working days
- **Stage 2** - Escalated Stage 1 complaint or a complaint that involves more than one service area. Complaints are formally investigated and responded to within 20 working days.
- **Public Services Ombudsman / Welsh Language Commissioner** - Escalated Stage 2 complaint which may undertake an independent review on the complainant's behalf. The Ombudsman would expect the complainant to have exhausted the Council's complaints process prior to contact, except in exceptional circumstances. Under section 71 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, the Welsh Language Commissioner is able to accept complaints sent directly to the Commissioner's office and investigate on their behalf, if a complaint is deemed valid.

During 2022/2023, 4 complaints were received. The following table shows the number of complaints received at each stage:

Stage 1	Stage 2	Welsh Language Commissioner
1	0	3

Stage 1

COR22/S1/005 – Complaint from a member of the public on the 22/05/2023

No cross-promotion on the Council's social media accounts accounts from English to Welsh and vice-versa

Welsh Language Commissioner

There were 3 Investigations initiated by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

CS1070 - Complaint from a member of the public on 17/10/2022

The English language appears first, before the Welsh text, in a weekly newsletter from the Council - 'Torfaen Weekly News Bulletin'.

CS1121 - Complaint from a member of the public on 03/03/2023

Parent will have to remove her daughter from education within the Welsh medium into an English-speaking school as there is one closer to her address and within a suitable and safer walking route.

CS1130 - Ongoing - Complaint from a member of the public on 27/03/2023

English only cycle path sign located on the junction of Ty Coch Way and Hollybush Way in Cwmbran.

Welsh language skills

For many years the Council has collected data on the language skills of its staff. Until March 2016, this information was collected within the Equalities Monitoring Form. The Human Resources employee portal (iFOR) captures, records and reports on the language skills of staff, within the learning and development module, where staff are able to update their skills as necessary. Here is the most recent data held on staff Welsh language Skills.

The table below shows each service area and the level of fluency using the ALTE scales for speaking Welsh.

0 = No Welsh Language Skills

5 = Proficient

Number of Welsh speakers by Department

	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Communities & Digital	158	13	5	2	0	5	183
Economy & Environment	731	6	0	1	3	1	742
Education	109	53	1	1	0	5	169
Resources Directorate	235	43	10	5	4	2	299
Social Care & Housing	438	21	3	2	2	2	468
Shared Resource Service	177	24	5	0	1	1	208
Grand Total	1848	160	24	11	10	16	2069

Percentage (%) of Welsh Speakers by Department

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Communities & Digital		1.8	7.1	1.1	0.0	2.7	13.7
Economy & Environment		0.8	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	1.5
Education		31.4	0.6	0.6	0.0	3.0	35.5
Resources Directorate		14.4	3.3	1.7	1.3	0.7	21.4
Social Care & Housing		4.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	6.4
Shared Resource Service		11.5	2.4	0.0	0.5	0.5	14.9
Grand Total		7.7	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.8	10.7

Preferred Language of Staff

	English	Welsh	
Communities & Digital	94	3	
Economy & Environment	136	2	
Education	118	2	
Resources Directorate	272	0	
Social Care & Housing	144	0	
Shared Resource Service	136	0	
Total	900	7	0.40%

Welsh language training

The Council run a number of Welsh Language training courses, aimed at increasing the capacity of Welsh speakers within the organisation and raise the confidence of staff who are reluctant to use their Welsh skills. All courses are centrally funded.

During 2022/2023, 9 employees attended Welsh language training through the National Centre for Learning Welsh (delivered by Coleg Gwent).

10.7% of our workforce are able to speak Welsh (Levels 1-5)

2 members of staff studied Welsh through “Say Something in Welsh”. An on-line audio course.

Standard 128, requires the Council to provide training in Welsh for staff in the following areas, if they are provided in English:

- Recruitment and interviewing;
- Performance management;
- Complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- Induction;
- Dealing with the public; and
- Health and safety.

Some training within these areas was provided during 2022/23, invitations to training offered attendees a language choice. No requests were received for training through the medium of Welsh.

Recruitment

During 2022/23, **857** new or vacant Torfaen County Borough Council posts were advertised

The number of post that were categorised as requiring Welsh language skills were as follows:

Category	Number of posts categorised	Percentage of posts categorised
Essential	29	3.38%
Desirable	6	0.70%
Need to be learnt	2	0.23%
No Welsh skills required	820	95.68%

As part of the recruitment process, and a requirement of Standard 136, each post advertised must be assessed for their Welsh language skills.

The review of how Welsh language services are managed has ended and a report has been submitted to the Council's senior management team to consider. The recommendations will remove barriers and enable a greater number of posts to be advertised with Welsh language skills.

4. Conclusion

5 Year Promotion Strategy

The Council's 5-year strategy came to an end in March 2022. The percentage of Welsh speakers has dropped by 1.6% to 8.24% (7,366 residents). Due to the delay in releasing detailed ward data on the 2021 Census, by the Office for National Statistics, we have been delayed in consulting on the Strategy for 2023 -2027. Public consultation on the follow-on strategy will be held during 2023.

Creating More Welsh Speakers

A specialist centre was opened towards the end of 2022/23 for children who want to transfer from English-medium to Welsh medium primary school education. The Carreg Lam unit (meaning "Stepping Stone") is based at Ysgol Panteg in Griffithstown and offers 12 places for pupils in Years 2 to 6 to receive an intensive 12-week language programme to improve their Welsh and aide the transition.

Removing Barriers

During 2022/23 work on increasing capacity and remove barriers that may restrict departments from delivering Welsh Language services continued. The progress has been partly hampered by the national shortage of Welsh language translators. The Council aims to work with Colleges and Universities in the wider region and our Welsh medium Comprehensive in Torfaen, to identify training opportunities for budding translators.

The Use of Welsh at Meetings

Most meetings were held through Microsoft Teams, and the challenges of providing simultaneous translation through the Microsoft system. With the release of an update to enable dual audio streaming, the opportunities for officers to offer simultaneous translation has significantly increased.

A recent recruitment of a qualified simultaneous translator to the team, has meant that we are able to offer an improved service to our customers, elected members and colleagues.

Cultural Events

To celebrate St Davids Day, in partnership with Menter Iaith Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen a Mynwy, the council contributed to the 'Torf-hwyl' festival. With live performances, stalls, games throughout the day, interspersed with activities for different age groups, and information on learning Welsh. The event even had skateboard lessons through the medium of Welsh! The 'Torf-hwyl' Facebook page can be found [here](#).

Policy Development

The Welsh Language Unit continues to be part of the Intergrated Well Being Assessment on policy decisions. All change activity that will impact upon council policy or the way services are provided to residents / local groups / businesses requires an Intergrated Impact Assessment which includes a Welsh language assessment. Prior to any report being presented to Members, the report is scrutinised to ensure that positive and negative impacts have been considered in line with the Welsh language Standards