



Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Welsh Language Standards Compliance

Prepared in accordance with the requirements of

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

June 2021



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1. Introduction

Torfaen County Borough Council strives to improve the quality and availability of services it provides through the medium of Welsh.

Throughout 2020/21, the team have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the requirements of the Standards across all council departments. The implementation of a new Corporate Induction Framework will ensure the importance of the regulatory requirements and ethical requirements of the Welsh language are part of every new employee's induction.

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 2020/21 financial year. We recognise that we have made steady progress but there are further improvements to be made to improving 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 Standards.

The 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 2021.

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 Public Services Support Unit 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)

Public Services Support Unit
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 2020/21 was Cllr David Yeowell

3. Compliance

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

Service Delivery Standards

Standards Group	Action Taken during 2020/21	Action to be taken during 2021/22
Standards 1 - 7 Correspondence sent and received	<p>Staff have been reminded of the requirements through the staff guidance.</p> <p>Monitor departmental procedures to ensure compliance</p>	<p>Issue further guidance following a complaint received by the Welsh language Commissioner</p> <p>Investigate the use of Welsh language email addresses used on correspondence</p>
Standards 8 - 22 Telephone calls made and received	<p>During the pandemic it has been difficult to monitor the corporate bilingual greeting when answering calls.</p> <p>Review recorded answerphone messages to ensure compliance</p> <p>During 2020/2021 the Council's main call centre received a total of 129,971 calls. 1.51% (1,975 calls) of these calls chose the Welsh language option</p>	Issue guidance on dealing with telephone enquiries in Welsh
Standards 24 – 36 Meetings with the Public	During the pandemic, all meetings have been via Microsoft Teams (Corporate requirement). Due to the restrictions within Teams (i.e. simultaneous translation) it has not been possible to conduct some meetings in Welsh	Continue to work with our Information Technology providers on an alternative solution, and/or monitor any upgrades to Microsoft Teams
Standards 37 - 51, 69 - 70 Other bilingual documents	Working closely with our Communications Team (who produce the majority of our publications) to ensure compliance with the standards	Promote the Welsh Language Commissioner's design guide as good practice.

Standards 52 – 60 Websites, Social Media and Apps, and Self-service Machines	The Welsh pages of the corporate website received 6,260 hits during 2020/21, in comparison to 2,265,272 hits on the English pages. The Council has ensured that any new content added to the Torfaen App is bilingual from the outset	Ensure that all Council owned websites are continually updated
Standards 61 – 63 Signs	Of the 7 new housing developments during 2020/21, 6 (86%) street names were approved with Welsh names. Existing nameplates are not translated.	Ensure that any new developments do not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language. Monitor the refurbishment of Council offices to ensure compliance
Standards 64 – 68 Reception Services	The reception areas are now part of the Public Service Support Unit directorate. During to the pandemic, a number of the reception areas have been closed to the public.	As restrictions lift, ensure that all reception areas remain compliant
Standards 71 – 75 Awarding Grants	Guidance issued on awarding grants	Monitor for compliance
Standards 76 – 80 Awarding Contracts	All procurement Invitations include Welsh language element scoring. Work being undertaken to look at contracts that are not part of the tendering process, but may still be subject to the Standards.	Continue to work with third party providers on Welsh language requirements
Standards 81 – 82 Promoting Welsh Language Services	Best practice guidance issued on promoting Welsh language services.	Update guidance on promoting services
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.	Ensure course that do not run due to low numbers, are offered alternatives.

	All courses are assessed in terms of attendee numbers and delivery.	
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 2020/21	Action to be taken during 2021/22
Standards 88 - 93	<p>The Council's integrated impact assessment, linked to the 7 national well-being goals, continues to be an effective tool.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Unit has oversight of each policy decision that requires an integrated Impact assessment prior to presenting to Elected Members</p>	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.

Standards Group	Action Taken during 2020/21	Action to be taken during 2021/22
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	10 (0.6%) employees have indicated that their preferred language of communication is Welsh	Increase the number of staff who complete their language skills assessment
Standards 120 – 125 Staff Intranet and IT Resources	The Council continues to licence all computers with the Cysgliad software	Work with Information Technology providers to install the Welsh 'language pack' on all computers Update 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 2020/2021, 14 employees attended 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.	Update all resources on the Welsh intranet pages

	The “Work Welsh” logo is available for staff to download on the intranet.	
Standards 136 - 140 Recruitment Process	Please see section on <i>Recruitment</i>	Sample testing of vacancies to ensure that Managers assess the language need of posts correctly. Issue guidance if necessary.
Standards 141 – 143 Internal Signage	Re-issue 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 2020/2021, 0 complaints were received. The following table shows the number of complaints received at each stage:

Stage 1	Stage 2	Welsh Language Commissioner
0	0	0

Stage 1

No complaints were received directly from the public.

Welsh Language Commissioner

No Investigations were carried out by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

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 Council has developed the Human Resources employee portal (iFOR) to capture, record and report 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

Department	Number of staff with Welsh language skills	Number of staff without Welsh language skills	Percentage of staff with Welsh language skills
Whole Organisation	Total = 251 Level 1 = 183 Level 2 = 26 Level 3 = 10 Level 4 = 12 Level 5 = 20	Total = 1496 Level 0	Total = 14% Level 1 = 10% Level 2 = 1% Level 3 = 1% Level 4 = 1% Level 5 = 1%
Education Services	Total = 71 Level 1 = 62 Level 2 = 2 Level 3 = 1 Level 4 = 0 Level 5 = 6	Total = 92 Level 0	Total = 44% Level 1 = 38% Level 2 = 1% Level 3 = 1% Level 4 = 0% Level 5 = 4%
Resources Directorate	Total = 33 Level 1 = 19 Level 2 = 6 Level 3 = 2 Level 4 = 3 Level 5 = 3	Total = 159 Level 0	Total = 17% Level 1 = 10% Level 2 = 3% Level 3 = 1% Level 4 = 2% Level 5 = 2%
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services	Total = 37 Level 1 = 25 Level 2 = 3 Level 3 = 2 Level 4 = 4 Level 5 = 3	Total = 490 Level 0	Total = 7% Level 1 = 5% Level 2 = 1% Level 3 = 0% Level 4 = 1% Level 5 = 1%
Social Care & Housing	Total = 33 Level 1 = 21 Level 2 = 4 Level 3 = 2 Level 4 = 3 Level 5 = 3	Total = 459 Level 0	Total = 7% Level 1 = 4% Level 2 = 1% Level 3 = 0% Level 4 = 1% Level 5 = 1%

Chief Executives	Total = 35 Level 1 = 25 Level 2 = 5 Level 3 = 3 Level 4 = 1 Level 5 = 1	Total = 100 Level 0	Total = 26% Level 1 = 19% Level 2 = 4% Level 3 = 2% Level 4 = 1% Level 5 = 1%
Shared Resource Service	Total = 31 Level 1 = 25 Level 2 = 5 Level 3 = 0 Level 4 = 1 Level 5 = 0	Total = 172 Level 0	Total = 15% Level 1 = 12% Level 2 = 2% Level 3 = 0% Level 4 = 0% Level 5 = 0%
Public Service Support Unit	Total = 11 Level 1 = 6 Level 2 = 1 Level 3 = 0 Level 4 = 0 Level 5 = 4	Total = 18 Level 0	Total = 38% Level 1 = 21% Level 2 = 3% Level 3 = 0% Level 4 = 0% Level 5 = 14%

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 2020/2021, 14 employees attended Welsh language training

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 2020/21, invitations to training offered attendees a language choice. No requests were received for training through the medium of Welsh.

Recruitment

During 2020/21, **334** 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	12	3.59 %
Desirable	3	0.90 %
Need to be learnt	0	0 %
No Welsh skills required	319	95.51 %

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

4. Conclusion

COVID-19

2020/21 was an exceptional year, where council resources were reconfigured to help with managing the pandemic and prioritise vital services to the most vulnerable, while continuing to deliver our day to day services, albeit in different ways.

The Welsh Government regulations has meant that promoting the language has been restricted to on-line content only, whereas events, normally used to showcase the Welsh language has not been possible and therefore having a negative impact on increasing the profile of the language at a local level.

Despite the restrictions, the council has managed to ensure that services, in Welsh, were offered and delivered where needed.

Signage Policy

The Council encourages property developers to use Welsh names on new streets within the borough.

During 2020/21, 7 new street names were submitted through the planning process. 6 (85.7 %) were approved with Welsh names. This exceeds the 50% agreed with the Welsh Language Commissioner and is mainly due to promotion by the planning department.

The Council no longer translates existing street names following guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Use of Welsh at Meetings

All meetings were held through Microsoft Teams, and the challenges of providing simultaneous translation has become more apparent. Due, to security concerns, the Council and with advice from its information technology provider have opted to use the secure Microsoft Teams platform.

The platform currently does not offer multiple audio streams which is required for simultaneous translation to work seamlessly. Microsoft are working on a solution, but is likely to be a while before this is available.

Cultural Events

To celebrate St Davids Day the council, in partnership with Menter Iaith Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen a Mynwy were able to offer a live online festival called 'Torf-hwyl'. A number of artists performed live throughout the day, interspersed with activities for different age groups, and information on learning Welsh. The Event was a huge success with residents of Torfaen and beyond tuning in. The 'Torf-hwyl' Facebook page can be found [here](#).

Policy Development

The Welsh Language Unit is now 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 the Welsh language. Prior to any report being presented to Members, the report is read to ensure that positive and negative impacts have been considered in line with the Welsh language Standards