

**TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH**



**BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN**

Annual Report 2021 - 2022

Welsh Language Standards Compliance

Prepared in accordance with the requirements of

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

June 2022



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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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 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 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 2021/22 financial year. We are removing barriers that may prohibit the progress of Standards and will allow increased promotion and 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 2022.

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 2021/22 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 2021/22	Action to be taken during 2022/2023
Standards 1 - 7 Correspondence sent and received	<p>Guidance issued through the Staff Bulletin</p> <p>Corporate email address list has been sourced.</p>	<p>Monitor general correspondence with the public to ensure compliance.</p> <p>Further develop periodic guidance to staff through the Staff Bulletin</p> <p>Work with SRS to adopt the new email addresses</p>
Standards 8 - 22 Telephone calls made and received	<p>Guidance on dealing with telephone enquiries in Welsh has been issued</p> <p>Automated recorded messages have been made compliant with the relevant Standards</p> <p>In December 2021 the Council's telephone systems were upgraded. No data is available between April – November.</p> <p>From December 2021 to March 2022 the Council's main call centre received a total of 39,978 calls. 1.25% (499 calls) of these calls chose the Welsh language option.</p>	<p>Ensure members and staff are aware of the protocol when dealing with Welsh language calls.</p>
Standards 24 – 36 Meetings with the Public	<p>The Council has started returning to face-to-face meeting and simultaneous translation is provided where required.</p>	<p>Continue to work with our Information providers Technology to monitor any upgrades to Microsoft Teams</p>

Standards 37 - 51, 69 - 70 Other bilingual documents	Welsh Language Commissioner's design guide has been distributed to the relevant departments as good practice.	Ensure that the statutory sentence "Also available in Welsh/English" is included in all documents (including web-based documents)
Standards 52 – 60 Websites, Social Media and Apps, and Self-service Machines	The Welsh pages of the corporate website received 3,096 hits during 2021/22, in comparison to 2,315,074 hits on the English pages.	Monitor Council owned websites to ensure compliance
Standards 61 – 63 Signs	No new housing streets were named during 2021/2022	Monitor the refurbishment of Council offices to ensure compliance
Standards 64 – 68 Reception Services	Periodic visits during the year to ensure compliance.	As restrictions lift, ensure that all reception areas remain compliant Work with the recruitment team to ensure that all new posts are evaluated for Welsh language skills.
Standards 71 – 75 Awarding Grants	Work with Internal Audit to ensure that any monies awarded as part of a grant is compliant with the awarding grants Standards.	Monitor for compliance
Standards 76 – 80 Awarding Contracts	All procurement Invitations include Welsh language element scoring. The offer of Welsh language support to successful bidders.	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 publicized 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 2021/22	Action to be taken during 2022/2023
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.

Standards Group	Action taken during 2021/22	Action to be taken during 2022/23
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	9 (0.4%) employees have indicated that their preferred language of communication is Welsh	Campaign to increase the number of staff who complete the language skills assessment
Standards 120 – 125 Staff Intranet and IT Resources	The Welsh 'language pack' is installed on all new and replacement 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 2021/2022, 14 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>	Further explore the barriers restricting departments from advertising posts requiring language skills.with Human Resources and Senior Management.
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 2021/2022, 3 complaints were received. The following table shows the number of complaints received at each stage:

Stage 1	Stage 2	Welsh Language Commissioner
0	0	3

Stage 1

No complaints were received directly from the public.

Welsh Language Commissioner

There were 3 Investigations initiated by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

CS100 – Ongoing – Investigating failure to provide consultation on the Recycling Booking System in Welsh

CS100b – Ongoing – Investigation into a failure to respond to a Planning Application comment in Welsh and pages on the Planning Portal not available in Welsh

CS046 – Torfaen Leisure Trust website and booking systems must be compliant with the Welsh Language Standards. Raise awareness amongst staff on the requirement for third party service providers must adhere to Torfaen County Borough Council's Welsh Language Standards

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

Number of Welsh speakers by Department

	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Education Services	103	57	1	1	0	5	167
Resources Directorate	239	45	10	5	4	2	305
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services	679	6	0	1	3	1	690
Social Care & Housing	505	24	3	2	2	3	539
Transformation, Improvement and Communications	8	5	0	0	1	0	14
Public Services Support Unit	27	5	1	0	0	4	37
Shared Resource Service	177	25	5	0	2	1	210
Communities, Customer Service & Digital	80	14	3	1	0	3	101
Total	1818	181	23	10	12	19	2063

Percentage (%) of Welsh Speakers by Department

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Education Services		33.5	0.6	0.6	0.0	2.9	37.6
Resources Directorate		14.6	3.2	1.6	1.3	0.6	21.4
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services		0.9	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	1.6
Social Care & Housing		4.4	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.6	6.3
Transformation, Improvement and Communications		35.7	0.0	0.0	7.1	0.0	42.9
Public Services Support Unit		13.5	2.7	0.0	0.0	10.8	27.0
Shared Resource Service		11.9	2.4	0.0	1.0	0.5	15.7
Communities, Customer Service & Digital		13.7	2.9	1.0	0.0	2.9	20.6
Total		8.7	1.1	0.5	0.6	0.9	11.8

Preferred Language of Staff

	English	Welsh	
Education Services	120	2	
Resources Directorate	297	0	
Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services	137	2	
Social Care & Housing	161	0	
Transformation, Improvement and Communications	13	0	
Public Services Support Unit	28	4	
Shared Resource Service	149	0	
Communities, Customer Service & Digital	67	1	
Total	972	9	0.4%

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 2021/2022, 11 employees attended Welsh language training through the National Centre for Learning Welsh (delivered by Coleg Gwent).

11.8% of our workforce are able to speak Welsh (Levels 1-5)

3 members of staff studied Welsh through “Say Something in Welsh”, including our newly appointed Chief executive.

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 2021/22, invitations to training offered attendees a language choice. No requests were received for training through the medium of Welsh.

Recruitment

During 2021/22, **764** 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	31	4.06%
Desirable	28	3.66%
Need to be learnt	1	0.13%
No Welsh skills required	704	92.15%

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

Following discussions with the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Council is looking at how Welsh language services are managed with a view of removing barriers to 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. Due to the delay in releasing data on the 2021 Census by the Office for National Statistics, we have been unable to ascertain the level of success of the strategy, nor set a new target for increasing Welsh speakers for the follow-on Strategy. Public consultation of the draft follow-on strategy will be held during 2022/23.

Removing Barriers

During 2021/22 the Council worked through the Welsh Language Standard to increase capacity and remove barriers that may restrict departments from delivering Welsh Language services. The outcome of this review will be reported in the next Annual Report.

Signage Policy

The Council encourages property developers to use Welsh names on new streets within the borough. During 2021/22, no new street names were submitted through the planning process. The Council is committed to naming 50% of all new streets (within any financial year) in Welsh. The Council no longer translates existing street names following guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Use of Welsh at Meetings

Most meetings were held through Microsoft Teams, and the challenges of providing simultaneous translation through the Microsoft system 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 it is likely to be a later this year before this is available.

Our information technology provider continues to work with Microsoft to ensure that systems are updated immediately when new functionality becomes 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 (on-line) 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 viewing the concert on-line. 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 the Welsh language assessment. 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