

*TORFAEN  
COUNTY  
BOROUGH*



*BWRDEISTREF  
SIROL  
TORFAEN*

# **Welsh Language Standards: Action Plan**

January 2025



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework in order to place a duty on certain organisations to comply with the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015.

The 170 standards applicable to Torfaen County Borough Council are listed in the 'Welsh Language Standards Notice - Compliance 30.09.15'.

This document has been produced to provide a summary of the Council's work in compliance with the standards relating to Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards in accordance with Standards 157, 159, 163, 165 and 171. Its purpose is to make all employees, and the community as a whole, aware of the Council's commitment to the Welsh language and its compliance with the regulations.

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all existing and potential employees and all those in our communities who speak Welsh and wish to use it with us. The Council believes that equal opportunities matter, and they demand equal standing in all corporate strategies, ideologies and principles.

We aim to be a Council that values and respects all employees, all job applicants, customers, residents living in our area and visitors coming to the area. We believe that everyone living in and working in Torfaen has the right to use the Welsh language with us.

We will work to ensure that everyone in our communities is able to access our services and information through the medium of Welsh. We will consider people's different needs as we develop our services and practices and aim to ensure that our approach is inclusive of everyone.

We aim to establish a workplace culture that encourages those who can speak Welsh to work bilingually and promotes the use of Welsh in our organisation.

We recognise that we are better able to serve our communities if the diversity in our communities is reflected among our employees. We believe that our Council is enriched by people's differences and language skills and we will work to ensure that this message is communicated throughout Torfaen and reflected in our recruitment practices.

### 3. SERVICE DELIVERY STANDARDS

The Council is committed to introducing wide-ranging policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Service Delivery Standards. Service Delivery Standards are standards that require us to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh Language within the Council and to ensure we do not treat the Welsh Language any less favourably than the English language when dealing with the public.

The aim of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 is not to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality, it ensures that the work has positive effects on the Welsh language. As such, the Measure allows bodies to exercise this aim independently of the English language.

#### How we intend to comply.

##### Correspondence (Standard 1, 4, 5, 6, & 7)

All emails sent by the Council will include the following statement:

The Council welcomes correspondence in English and Welsh. All correspondence in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and will not lead to any delay.	Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn cael ei hateb yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd yn arwain at unrhyw oedi.
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A Correspondence Flow Chart - Welsh, English or Bilingual has been developed by the Council to address matters that involve compliance with correspondence standards. A copy is available to staff on the Welsh pages of the intranet.

Where service areas do not have internal capacity to provide written responses in Welsh, the Council invests in a Welsh service to ensure our compliance with these Standards.

##### Telephone Calls (Standard 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21 & 22)

All calls to the council will be answered with a bilingual greeting, Welsh first. Flashcards have been distributed to all officers (appendix 2) along with occasional training provided to service areas, and the new induction training process for new staff with Welsh Language Standards supporting our staff to comply with this.

The vast majority of telephone calls come through the Council's call centre, where a dedicated Welsh line addresses the Welsh calls. If the call centre is unable to answer the caller's query, calls will be transferred to the relevant department. Where an officer with Welsh language skills is not available, we will offer a callback option or an option to continue the call in English.

Staff who receive direct telephone calls are familiar with the procedure if the caller requires a Welsh language service. This means either transferring the call to a Welsh speaker within the department, transferring to the Welsh Department, taking the caller's details to call back or offering to continue the call in English.

The Council is aware of its duty to ensure that all initial queries presented to the organisation are dealt with in Welsh. This will be achieved through proactive recruitment practices and upskilling staff over the medium to long term.

When we publish our telephone number and or email address to encourage persons to contact us our design colleagues ensure the following message appears -

We welcome calls in Welsh	Rydym yn croesawu galwadau yn Gymraeg
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All translation requests are returned with a proactive message alerting the authors of the content of their responsibility to ensure this message appears in the document (see appendix 4).

Staff are made aware via corporate guidance of the need to ensure voice mail messages are bilingual.

Our corporate telephone number requires a clear Language choice, with an automatic message being played in all cases where a Welsh speaking consultant is not available to answer the call.

### **Closed Meetings (Standard 24, 24A, 26, 26A, 27, 27A, 27D, 29 & 29A)**

All council staff are responsible for implementing a proactive offer so that individuals can use Welsh during a meeting.

If 10% or more of the attendees wish to use Welsh, the organiser has a duty to arrange simultaneous translation for the meeting.

Guidance on successfully holding a bilingual meeting, and how to organise simultaneous translation services has been published on the council's intranet.

This procedure is also discussed during our corporate induction session for all new staff.

## Open Meetings (Standard 30, 31, 32, 33 & 34)

All council officers are aware of their responsibilities in arranging open meetings (no individual invitation). Guidance will be provided for staff on how to implement the proactive offer to those who wish to use Welsh as part of a public meeting.

Adverts for public meetings will include the following message -

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os ydych chi'n dymuno gwneud hynny
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Simultaneous translation services or Welsh speaking officers will attend the meetings where a response has been received. If the meeting is held bilingually, then the following announcement will be issued at the beginning of the meeting.

You are welcome to use Welsh at this meeting as simultaneous translation has been provided	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod hwn am fod gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd wedi ei drefnu
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All invitations are sent bilingually, in accordance with the correspondence standards.

## Public Events (Standard 35 & 36)

All advertisements of the Council or any other organization subject to the language standards, and any published material will be routinely available bilingually. An organiser is responsible for ensuring that any external material is available in Welsh, excluding commercial providers; voluntary organisations; and independent providers.

We also prioritise officers with Welsh language skills when deciding who attends public events to ensure that a Welsh language service is available.

**Publicity, Marketing Materials and the Council's General Documents  
(Standard 37, 38, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48 & 49)**

All documents published by Torfaen Council, including advertising material, licenses, certificates, brochures, information leaflets and rules are published in Welsh. We produce bilingual documents where possible to ensure the Welsh is available in the same document. If this is not possible, we issue separate Welsh and English documents and ensure that the statement below is clearly displayed on both versions

This document is available in Welsh.	Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
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**Agendas and Minutes (Standard 41)**

Agendas and minutes for all Council committee meetings will be made available in Welsh on our website. Democratic Services work closely with Welsh Language Services to ensure these standards are fully implemented.

Reports and other documents attached to the agenda will not be distributed in Welsh in accordance with the standards.

**Press Releases (Standard 46)**

All press releases are published on the Council's website. No press release is released unless both Welsh and English versions are released simultaneously.

**Forms (Standard 50, 50A, 50B & 51)**

All forms, to include online forms, will be published bilingually where possible. For documents with separate Welsh and English versions, we will ensure that these form display the following message -

This document is available in Welsh.	Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
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Online forms will offer a proactive language choice at the start of the form.

**Websites, Apps and Online Services (Standard 52, 55, 56 & 57)**

All information published on our corporate website (torfaen.gov.uk), along with its menus are available in Welsh. The E-Services Manager will ensure that all pages of the website are available in both languages. Wider staff are reminded of their responsibility to prepare and publish documents that appear on the web in Welsh.

The Council has a number of websites, which provide information to the

public. As we revise and develop these websites, the content will be published in Welsh. Due to technological problems, outdated systems etc., this can take time, but I would like to assure our users that the goal is to have fully bilingual systems.

All departments, as they commission external partners to provide an online service, as part of our Procurement Services, now include details of the relevant standards as part of the tender document, ensuring that new services are available bilingually from the outset in accordance with the standards.

Each page refers, via a language choice link, to the exact page in English or Welsh. Old systems, which do not have the software to implement this, will note on their page the message below containing a link to the equivalent page.

This web page is also available in Welsh	Mae'r dudalen we hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg
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### **Social Media (Standard 58 & 59)**

Individual officers will be responsible for complying with the standards and ensuring that messages are bilingual either on one or two accounts (separately in Welsh and English).

We will police social media from time to time, and offer assistance to improve compliance where necessary. Corporate guidelines are available to staff on the Council's intranet.

### **Self Service Machines (Standard 60)**

Council staff have ensured that where possible self-service machines, such as our payment machines in the Civic Centre are available in Welsh and include a language choice option for users, at the start of the process.

### **Signage and Notices (Standards 61, 62, 63, 69 & 70)**

Both the Council's Design and Highways departments have received training on the requirements of the Standards. Each new sign that is authorised has a Welsh version which has been checked by our translation department to ensure the Welsh spellings are correct and that the Welsh appears first.



All notices published by our legal and public health departments are now bilingual (Welsh first) or Welsh and English will appear separately.

### **Reception Services (Standard 64, 65, 65A, 66, 67 & 68)**

All reception staff are aware of the need to greet and provide reception services in Welsh. Our induction sessions and our staff guide emphasise the importance of the language and the language choice of our users. All current employees have received training which ensures that staff have the necessary skills to deal with inquiries in Welsh.

Proactive recruitment procedures, over the medium to long term, will ensure that the Council has the ability to provide a bilingual service.

All reception areas have a 'You are welcome to speak to us in Welsh' sign and all those with Welsh language skills wear a lanyard or badge indicating this.

### **Awarding Grants (Standard 71, 72, 72A, 74, & 75)**

All grant applications will include the following -

You are welcome to submit your application in English or in Welsh, each application Will be treated equally	Mae croeso i chi gyflwyno'ch cais yn Saesneg neu yn Gymraeg, Bydd pob cais yn cael ei drin yn gyfartal
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Any grant documentation or correspondence, including the interview process, will be sent in the individual's language of choice, and in accordance with our Correspondence Flow Chart - Welsh, English or Bilingual (appendix 1).

### **Awarding Contracts (Standard 76, 77, 77A, 79 & 80)**

The Council's Procurement Unit tendering arrangements have been updated to reflect the new requirements. The Invitation to Tender document is published bilingually on the Etender Wales website (which is also bilingual) and includes the following -

Tenders must be completed in English or Welsh. Tenders submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than tenders submitted in English.	Rhaid cwblhau tendrau yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg. Ni fydd tendrau a gyflwynir yn Gymraeg yn cael eu trin yn llai ffafriol na thendrau a gyflwynir yn Saesneg.
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The website also sends out messages to inform individuals that a new document has been uploaded. This message along with the letter inviting people to interviews are bilingual. The letter includes the following -

The interview can be conducted in Welsh. Should you wish for it to be conducted in Welsh please inform us by xx/xx/xxxx.	Gellir cynnal y cyfweiliad yn Gymraeg. Os hoffech iddo gael ei gynnal yn Gymraeg, rhowch wybod i ni erbyn xx / xx / xxxx.
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The Council will arrange/facilitate a simultaneous translation service.

Officers are required to assess the tenders to ensure that the following are relevant or not:

- Does the subject of the invitation to tender for a contract suggest that it should be published in Welsh, or
- Does the anticipated audience, and their expectations, suggest that the invitation should be issued in Welsh.

The Head of Procurement is responsible for ensuring that any invitation to tender complies with the standards.

### **Promoting Welsh Language Services (Standard 81 & 82)**

All services areas are individually tasked with promoting their unique Welsh Language services and the Council utilises Welsh Language Rights day to promote these services to our community via our website and social media platforms.

### **Corporate Identity (Standard 83)**

The Council's corporate identity meets the standards. Any new or existing branding that already exists and is owned by the organisation will be updated to ensure that the Welsh and English languages are part of the same logo

### **Courses Provided by the Council (Standard 84 & 86)**

The Community Education Service implement a proactive offer as people register and use the data to assess whether or not the course needs to be provided in Welsh. Also, this enables us to assess the current level of Welsh Language provision, our objectives to promote the Welsh Language and the geographical and demographic nature of the area.

#### **4. POLICY MAKING STANDARDS**

The Council is committed to introducing wide-ranging procedures to ensure compliance with the Policy Making Standards. These are standards that require us to ensure that we consider how the policy decision might have a positive effect, or how the decision could increase the positive effects, on the opportunities available for a person to use the Welsh language and on the principle of treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language when formulating a new policy or reviewing or revising an existing policy.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011's aim is not to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality, it ensures that the work has positive effects on the Welsh language. As such, the Measure allows bodies to exercise this aim independently of the English language.

##### **How we intend to comply.**

##### **Formulating a New Policy, Reviewing or Revising an existing Policy (Standard 90, 91 & 92)**

The Council will ensure that in formulating a new policy, or reviewing or revising an existing policy, it conducts a Welsh Language Impact Assessment in order to consider how the policy decision could be formulated to increase positive effects on the Welsh Language, persons opportunities to use it, treating it no less favourably than the English language and how negative effects may be decreased.

The Council, as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Impact Assessment, helps managers complete a meaningful assessment that will seek to increase the positive effects on the Welsh language and support the robust decision-making procedures of the Council.

Part of this procedure is the scrutiny carried out by relevant officers at the beginning of the process which is included in the assessment to gather a wide range of views from people with wide experience in a number of Council services. And the Welsh unit is part of the scrutiny process.

##### **Consultation on Policy Decisions (Standard 91, 92 & 93)**

The Council has compiled a list which is available for consultations so that our officers can ensure that all consultations have the input of the Welsh community and comply with relevant standards.

In addition to the public opinion, it is necessary to note how the Council has considered the potential impact of the policy decision on the Welsh language as part of the consultation document (this will be produced as part of the impact assessment process) taking into account the responses of people taking part in the consultation in relation to the impact on the Welsh language.

This is done by asking specific questions on these matters.

### **Grants Policy (Standard 94)**

The Council will produce a policy on awarding grants in line with the requirements of Standard 94.

### **Conducting Research to Formulate a Policy Decision (Standard 95, 96 & 97)**

As part of the research being undertaken to assist policy decisions (usually in the form of opinion polls with networks and the public), the Council will include questions on how to formulate the policy decision to increase positive effects on the Welsh language and the opportunities people have to use the Welsh language, ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language and how the negative impact can be minimised.

## **5. OPERATIONAL STANDARDS**

The Council is committed to introducing wide-ranging procedures to ensure compliance with the Operational Standards.

These Standards deal with the use of the Welsh language within organisations. For example, ensuring that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language with regards to employment, recruitment, welfare and training matters and ensuring that every officer has the opportunity to learn Welsh and use it.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011's aim is not to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality, it ensures that the work has positive effects on the Welsh language. As such, the Measure allows bodies to exercise this aim independently of the English language.

### **How we intend to comply.**

#### **Internal Policy - Using the Welsh Language (Standard 98)**

Welsh Language Services advise the Council on how best to ensure it promotes the use of the Welsh Language internally. Initiatives include our Welsh Culture Campaigns, Welsh Lessons and software roll out.

#### **Recruitment (Standards 99, 136, 136A, 137, 137A, 137B, 139, 140 & 153)**

Torfaen Council is working towards a goal of recruiting the number of Welsh speakers in our organisation to reflect the language skills in the community, ensuring that the skills are available in all service areas.

### **Recording Language Preference (Standard 100, 101, 102, 103)**

All staff records include details of language preference. This was recorded during the appointment process or gathered retrospectively for existing staff employed by the Council, through a campaign on our staff bulletin. Following a planned upgrade plan in 2021, our HR system will include all this information, and all managers will have access to the system. All documentation relating to training, performance or career planning needs are published in Welsh to enable individuals to use their preferred language.

### **Corporate Documents (Standard 104)**

The Council will work to revise its systems for recording holidays, absences and hours in the long term, as the current system does not allow us to operate in Welsh

### **HR Policies (Standard 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111)**

All Council Policies are available in Welsh via our intranet.

### **Complaints, Disciplinary & Investigations (Standard 112, 112A, 114, 115, 116, 116A, 118 & 119)**

HR Council Policies dealing with staff complaints or the disciplinary process have all been updated to reflect the requirements of the standards. This ensures managers and staff are aware of the rights of Welsh speaking staff to receive information and complete the process in Welsh if they so wish to do so. Our standard template letters regarding these issues also include a proactive offer for individuals to use the Welsh language at any formal meetings.

### **IT Resources (Standard 120)**

All staff members receive Cysill, Cysgeir, and To bach on any devices, regardless of their language choice.

The Council is also committed to having a Microsoft language pack installed on all machines.

### **The Intranet (SWOOP) (Standard 122, 124, 125)**

A Welsh homepage on the intranet containing items relating to the Welsh language is available in Welsh.

### **Language Skills of our Workforce (Standard 127)**

The language skills of our employees are gathered during the recruitment process. All current employees are required to complete a self-evaluation form and record it on our HR system, along with language choice. This information is available to managers and the Welsh unit to monitor provision

### **Training (Standard 128, 129, 130, 131, 132 & 133)**

Corporate training is being developed in Welsh as an online offer. If the training is provided face to face then the registration form will include a proactive offer to receive the training in Welsh.

The Council works closely with Learning Welsh Gwent to provide Welsh lessons for staff, including lessons that address issues relevant to them at work. Welsh language training is funded by the Council. We encourage staff to join existing community groups to ensure that there are enough learners for the course to be sustainable.

### **Email Signatures, Out of Office Messages & Work Welsh Logo (Standard 134 & 135)**

As part of the induction process, staff address the corporate Standards, which include producing bilingual e-mail signatures and out-of-office messages, and include a 'Work Welsh' logo where appropriate.

### **Workplace Signage (Standards 141, 142 & 143)**

Staff are reminded via induction training and guidance on the intranet, of the need to ensure all workplace signage is made available in Welsh.

## 6. OVERSEEING, PROMOTING AND FACILITATING

A Welsh language liaison group oversees Welsh language issues including strategic developments; it discusses reports from relevant departments on Welsh language issues and makes recommendations for improvement and monitoring in all Council departments.

There is a responsibility for assessing the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan, by monitoring the Council's progress as it seeks to meet the Welsh Language Standards.

The Council invests in an effective Welsh Language Unit which includes 4 members of staff (2020/2021).

The Unit works to support all of the Council's services by doing the following:

- providing advice and support to all services in relation to their duties under the Standards.
- translating documents for the public and human resources
- identifying potential areas of non-compliance
- providing advice to all service areas on how best to respond to formal and informal complaints.
- report on developments to the Welsh Language Co-ordination Group on Welsh language issues
- maintaining a presence on the Language Forum - working with Welsh language organisations in the community.
- investigating all alleged failures to comply received from the Welsh Language Commissioner and facilitating contact on behalf of the Council.
- Provide advice on the development of Welsh language impact assessments and attend departmental meetings to discuss.
- lead on community culture campaigns and internal promotion

## 7. CONCLUSION

If you need to discuss any statement in this policy you are welcome to contact us:

Welsh Language Services Unit

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