

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Welsh Language Annual Report April 2024 – March 2025

**Prepared in accordance with the requirements of the
Welsh Language Commissioner.**



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

If you do require this document in a different format, e.g, large print, Braille, audio version, etc. please contact:

Email: pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Contents

Section	Title	Page No.
1	Introduction 1.1 Regulatory framework 1.2 Governance and accountability	
2	Meeting our Welsh Language Standards 2.1 Service delivery standards [1 - 87] 2.2 Policy making standards [88 – 97] 2.3 Operational standards [98 – 144] 2.4 Record keeping standards [147 – 154]	
3	Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27	
4	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/32	
5	Staff language skills	
6	Looking Forward	

1. Introduction

1.1 Regulatory framework

Blaenau Gwent Council is proud to present its ninth Welsh Language Standards Annual Report, offering insight into the Council's ongoing efforts to uphold and strengthen compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. This report highlights key developments, improvements, and initiatives undertaken over the past year to promote the Welsh language and its rich cultural heritage.

Prepared in accordance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#), this report covers the financial period from April 1st, 2024, to March 31st, 2025. The Measure establishes the legal framework for the use of the Welsh language in public service delivery. Under Standards 158, 164, and 170, all Local Authorities are required to publish an Annual Report demonstrating compliance with service delivery, policy-making, and operational standards.

This report serves as an evaluation of our commitment to fostering opportunities for the use of the Welsh language while ensuring that it is treated no less favourably than English. Through our continued efforts, we aim to support a bilingual environment that enables individuals to engage with the Council in the language of their choice.

1.2 Governance and accountability

Blaenau Gwent Council, as a public body, has a key role in helping to support and encourage the promotion of the Welsh language and is committed to meeting its Welsh Language Standards by being 'a fair, open, and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities' as outlined in our [Corporate Plan 2022/27](#).

The Corporate Plan 2022/27 recognises the Welsh language as being a key policy area which helps us deliver against our priorities which are centred on improving the well-being of local people and communities.

Implementing the standards

All staff play a vital role in ensuring the organisation meets Welsh Language Standards while actively promoting and supporting the use of the Welsh language.

The Policy & Partnerships Team provide advice, guidance, and professional support across the organisation to help the Council uphold its Welsh language commitments and statutory obligations.

During this reporting period, significant progress has been made in enhancing the Council's performance monitoring framework through business planning. Now, all directorates and service areas are required to submit quarterly updates detailing their compliance with Welsh Language Standards and the actions undertaken to support the objectives outlined in the [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27](#).

Political and Professional Leadership

Blaenau Gwent Council is in a process of change. In June 2024, both Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils agreed to share a Chief Executive. This arrangement is the first of its kind in Wales and highlights both council's ability to forward think and pioneer enhanced collaborative working. We continue to be part of the Gwent Marmot Region, and are currently working towards developing a Marmot Masterplan for Blaenau Gwent to become a region with the goal of addressing and lowering inequalities, by using the Marmot principles:

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention
- Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together
- Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes

The Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Resources continues to hold portfolio responsibility for the Welsh Language. The Welsh Language Annual Report is considered by Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet, and when appropriate the Council.

Each year the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report is presented to the Blaenau Gwent Leadership Team. The Leadership Team includes all the senior officers and is the decision-making body for the Council.

Internal Welsh Language Compliance Group

The Internal Welsh Language Compliance Group meets quarterly to review developments and address any compliance-related challenges concerning the council's Welsh language requirements, policies, and procedures. This includes identifying potential obstacles that may hinder the achievement of our goals outlined in the promotion strategy.

The group comprises officers from the following departments: Welsh and Equality Policy, Organisational Development, Customer Experience, and Communications.

Each meeting includes standing agenda items such as policy updates, internal monitoring, and the Welsh Language Forward Work Programme, which covers upcoming campaigns, events, and training opportunities. Officers within the group provide updates on specific topics, such as the number of roles advertised as Welsh essential and staff training completion rates. Additionally, discussions include developments in partner events and initiatives, alongside examples of best practices.

The Education Transformation Team – Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

The Education Transformation Team conducts monthly reviews and monitoring of the [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan](#) (WESP), delivering termly reports to the Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) and an annual report to the Welsh Government.

Additionally, WEF development and progress reports are submitted annually through the Council's political processes. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan also remains a key focus for both the 21st Century Schools Programme Board and the Admissions Forum.

2. Meeting the Welsh Language Standards

Since 2016, Blaenau Gwent Council has been legally required to comply with the [Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice](#) issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. All staff share the responsibility of ensuring that the Welsh language is considered and treated no less favourably than English.

While the integration of the Welsh language is embedded in the Council's daily operations, the following information highlights key examples of how compliance has been reinforced over the past year across service delivery, policy, and operational standards.

Welsh Language Compliance Group

In March 2023 a Core Group was formed to support the implementation of an action plan written in response to an investigation opened by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) into our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. Therefore, the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Compliance Group is a continuation of the core group, and the improvements made as a result of the investigation. The group meets to monitor the Council's working arrangements and ensure we continue to work in compliance with the Welsh language standards in the most effective and efficient manner across the organisation.

Key responsibilities of this Blaenau Gwent Welsh Language Compliance Group are to:

- Monitor the Council's compliance with the 5 areas of standards:
 - Service Delivery Standards
 - Policy Making Standards
 - Operational Standards
 - Promotion Standards
 - Record Keeping Standards
- Address any barriers that hinder compliance with the standards.
- Keep departments across the organisation informed on developments in relation to the Welsh language requirements be that internal, governmental or from the WLCO.

- Share good practice.
- Ensure members understand, share and participate in the work of the Welsh Language Forward Work Programme.

Welsh Guidance Sessions

Welsh language guidance sessions have been delivered throughout the year as part of the Welsh Language Forward Work Programme, reinforcing staff understanding of workplace compliance and language use. Led by our Welsh Language Support Officer, these sessions are available both in person and via Microsoft Teams, covering key topics such as:

- Overview of Welsh Language Standards
- Compliance Notice for Welsh Language Standards in Blaenau Gwent
- Welsh in the Workplace Policy
- Welsh Language Training Procedure
- Translation Protocols
- Telephone Communication Guidelines
- Statement for Correspondence
- Document Statement Requirements
- Use of Out-of-Office Templates
- Language Preference Form Implementation
- Language Interpretation in Teams Meetings

As part of the sessions the use of Welsh in the workplace is actively promoted to encourage greater participation among staff. By engaging with the sessions, employees gain invaluable linguistic skills, enhancing their ability to communicate confidently and effectively in Welsh. Not only does this contribute to compliance with Welsh language standards, but it also fosters a more inclusive and culturally rich working environment.

These sessions have provided essential foundational training, covering common greetings, everyday phrases, and service-specific terminology tailored to customer-facing roles. The scope of the training equips staff with essential linguistic skills for smooth professional communication, the sessions have been made accessible across all service areas, with additional tailored sessions offered upon request.

As a next step, an audit will be conducted to identify departments that have yet to receive training, ensuring maximum participation across the organisation. Additionally, a survey will be circulated among employees who have already completed the training to gather valuable insights into its impact, effectiveness, and areas for further refinement. These initiatives will help shape future learning opportunities and maximise the benefits of Welsh language training in the workplace.

2.3 Service Delivery Standards

Standards 8- 22: Telephone calls made and received by a body

Our contact centre staff have been engaging in regular practice sessions led by our Welsh Language Support Officer. These sessions focus on telephone procedures, key words, and essential phrases, ensuring staff maintain accuracy in both process and pronunciation. They also provide a valuable opportunity for staff to refine their greetings and address any questions they may have. The initiative has been met with enthusiasm, leading to a noticeable boost in staff confidence when handling calls on the Welsh language telephone line.

Standard 22: A body must ensure that any automated telephone systems that it has provides the complete automated service in Welsh

The Welsh Policy Officer is now responsible for recording all new automated telephone messages. This ensures consistency and full adherence to Welsh language requirements across the system, including voicemail services for schools within the area.

Standards 52-57: A body's websites and on-line services

A body must ensure that the pages of its websites and on-line services are available and are fully functional in Welsh and that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language on those pages and services

Throughout this reporting period, our Organisational Development Team has been dedicated to integrating a new recruitment portal into the Blaenau Gwent website. In line with Welsh language standards, the Welsh Language Policy Officer and Support Officer have been actively involved in testing to ensure that the Welsh language functionality is fully

operational and afforded equal treatment to the English content. Beyond compliance monitoring during development, the portal has also enhanced our recruitment process by eliminating the need for additional forms for applications submitted in Welsh, providing a smoother experience for Welsh-speaking applicants.

Standard 81: A body must promote and advertise any Welsh language service that it provides and do so in Welsh.

We remain committed to encouraging residents to engage with our services in Welsh, building on the success of last year's Whichever way... campaign:



As part of our ongoing efforts to improve compliance with the Welsh language standards, a key focus has been enhancing our Welsh language telephone services. To strengthen confidence in delivering these services, several of our contact centre and community hub staff have been attending weekly tutor-led Welsh language classes through *Dysgu Cymraeg/Learn Welsh Scheme*.

While the volume of calls received in Welsh remains relatively low in our area, we are proactively promoting the use of the Welsh telephone line. Whether fluent or learning, residents and staff alike are encouraged to take advantage of this service. This initiative is reflected in our latest communications, including [the video](#) [y fideo](#) highlighting the steps we've taken to enhance service delivery.



4 We aim to meet the needs of our Welsh speaking residents in the most efficient way.

Why not try making your next call to us in Welsh?



4 We aim to meet the needs of our Welsh speaking residents in the most efficient way.

Our contact centre staff are still learning and would appreciate the opportunity to practice.



4 Anelwn i gwrdd ag anghenion ein trigolion Cymraeg eu hiaith yn y modd mwyaf effeithlon

Beth am wneud eich galwad nesaf i ni yn Gymraeg?



4 Anelwn i gwrdd ag anghenion ein trigolion Cymraeg eu hiaith yn y modd mwyaf effeithlon

Mae staff ein canolfan gyswllt yn dal i ddysgu a byddent yn gwerthfawrogi'r cyfle i ymarfer.



Additionally, we have been working to grow engagement with the Blaenau Gwent Welsh language social media page. By expanding its reach, we aim to establish a direct communication and consultation channel with Welsh-speaking residents in the future. Promotional materials, such as the poster below, have been shared both internally and externally, and our Welsh Language Support Officer continues to drive engagement through word-of-mouth outreach.



2.2 Policy Making Standards

Translation Policy Review

During this reporting period, the translation policy has been updated, which has included a thorough review of external translation providers. The review has ensured that all providers maintain the necessary credentials and that their contact and cost information remain up to date. In contrast to several neighbouring authorities Blaenau Gwent Council relies solely on external Welsh language translators.

As part of the policy review, a decision was made to work solely with providers accredited by Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru (the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters). This choice was based on the association's rigorous standards, requiring members to demonstrate professional competence by successfully passing its examination process—the sole pathway to membership and is endorsed by the Welsh Government.

2.4 Operational Standards

Training

Standard 130: A body must provide opportunities during working hours

- for its employees to receive basic Welsh language lessons, and
- for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

Standard 131: A body must provide opportunities for employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge, to develop their language skills.

Standard 132: A body must provide employees with training in the following areas:

- Awareness of the Welsh language.
- An understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards.
- An understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.

Dysgu Cymraeg | Learn Welsh

We encourage all staff to engage in Welsh language training through our provider, Dysgu Cymraeg, whether by completing self-study online modules or participating in tutor-led courses.



dysgucymraeg.cymru
learnwelsh.cymru

During this reporting period, one online Welsh class has progressed to Entry Level 2, while 11 new staff members have successfully completed online self-study modules.

Upcoming courses, along with the statutory modules provided by Dysgu Cymraeg, are regularly promoted via staff newsletters and managers' briefings.

All staff are encouraged to partake in some level of Welsh language training via our training provider [Dysgu Cymraeg](#).

Welsh Language Training Opportunity and Support.

Do you have some Welsh language skills? Did you learn Welsh at school and would like some confidence boosting to help use it more?

Have you been learning but would like an extra boost to get you to the next level, for work and to use socially?



Starting in September we have a FREE tutor led, Entry course available to all staff.

This course covers Standard 130 and therefore allows it to be run as part of your work duties and will give you the extra skills and confidence to be able to answer calls and deal with clients bilingually.

A quote from one of our Welsh speaking staff that has been offering support to some of your learners, Owain Thomson:

"I try to start every interaction online with some Welsh words, so people know I speak the language, and I've enjoyed the opportunity to talk to learners and suggest Welsh songs and podcasts to show the informal side of learning a new language."

"Apart from that, I would always support increasing opportunities to meet other learners and speakers in order to speak Welsh and celebrate the culture."

Rydw i'n trio dechrau pob rhyngweithiad ar lein gyda rhyw faint o eiriau Gymraeg fel bod pobl yn gwybod dwi'n siarad yr iaith, a 'dwi wedi mwynhau cael cyfle i siarad â dysgwyr ac awgrymu caneuon a podlediadau Gymraeg er mwyn dangos yr ochor llau ffurfiol o ddysgu iaith Newydd.

Heb law am hynni, byddai wastad yn cefnogi cynyddu cyfleoedd i gwrdd â dysgwyr a siaradwyr eraill er mwyn siarad Cymraeg a dathlu'r diwylliant.

Our Welsh Language Officer will also be on hand to offer any additional support needed.

Please contact our Welsh language officer for more information on how to register your interest or for any Welsh language related requests:

Vikki.alexander@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Support Sessions for Staff

Our Welsh Language Support Officer is dedicated to assisting learners and staff interested in the Welsh language. With a strong commitment to language support, they ensure that all individuals engaged in learning are aware of their availability to address inquiries, provide guidance, and recommend effective ways to engage with the language.

Monthly support sessions are conducted, alternating between online and in-person formats. These sessions are accessible to staff of all proficiency levels, offering a structured yet welcoming environment for the development of linguistic skills.



Ymarfer eich Gymraeg

Sesiwn cinio

Ystafell Hot Mills yn y
Swyddfeydd Cyffredinol

12.00 - 2.00yp
29ain o Orffennaf

Croeso i siaradwyr
Cymraeg, dysgwyr ar rai
sydd a diddordeb.



- Ymunwch a ni am y cyfle i ymarfer eich Gymraeg
- I wella eich sgiliau trwy sgwrsio gyda siaradwyr a dysgwyr Cymraeg arall.
- Dewch ach cinio a fwynhewch sgwrs anfurfiol.
- Mae Cymraeg i bawb sdim ots pa lefel, am fwy o wybodaeth: vikki.alexander@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

DOES DIM ANGEN BWCIO

Cymraeg

FFYNIANT BRO



Practice your Welsh

Lunchtime session

Hot Mills room in the
General Offices

12.00-2.00pm
29th July

Open to Welsh speakers,
learners and those
interested to learn.



- Join us for an opportunity to practice the Welsh you have learnt.
- Improve your skills by chatting to other learners and fluent speakers.
- Bring your lunch and enjoy an informal chat.
- Welsh is for everyone no matter your skill level for more information contact: vikki.alexander@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

NO NEED TO BOOK

Cymraeg

PONASO BY LEVELLING UP

Wider Corporate Leadership Team Briefing Session

As part of the Welsh Policy Team's initiative to enhance the everyday use of Welsh in the workplace, a strong emphasis was placed on leadership setting the example. A briefing session was delivered to the Wider Corporate Leadership Team, aiming to encourage managers to weave Welsh into their daily interactions. This included using common Welsh phrases, opening and closing meetings in Welsh, ensuring staff adhere to Welsh compliance guidance, and considering participation in Dysgu

Cymraeg training. The goal is to create a more linguistically inclusive workplace and inspire greater commitment to bilingual engagement.

Leading by Example
Welsh Language Support Session
Wider Corporate Leadership Team
24th of October 2024

Do your team....

- ☒ know where to find Welsh language guidance?
- ☒ have bilingual signatures?
- ☒ use the bilingual out of office messages?
- ☒ keep their itrent skills assessment up to date?

Opening Meetings

English	Cymraeg
Good Morning	Bore Da
Good Afternoon	Prynhawn Da
Everyone	Pawb
Welcome	Croeso
Ladies and Gentlemen	Boneddigion a Boneddigesau

thinqi

English	Cymraeg
Today	Braf cwrdd â chi gyd heddiw
me....	Mae'n bleser gen i fod yma
s	Mae'n bleser gen i groesawu....
elcome	Diolch i chi i gyd am ymuno â ni
	Diolch am y croeso gynnes

Work with Elected Members

Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees have been encouraged to open and close meetings bilingually and demonstrate the practical use of Welsh in official settings.

Thinqi

In conjunction with surrounding authorities Blaenau Gwent Council has adopted a new training portal Thinqi,

thinqi

The online training portal provides enhanced monitoring of training uptake, ensuring staff stay engaged with required modules. Automatic reminders are sent to all employees, prompting them to complete and revisit training as needed. The Welsh Language Awareness Module is a key part of the 'Essential Learning' curriculum for

all staff. Below is a chart summarising the number of employees who have completed the module to date.

Directorate	Number of Staff
Corporate Services	217
Education	305
Regeneration & Community Services	347
Social Services	317
Total	1186 (40% of all staff)

Jobs Advertised

Standard 136 If a body assesses the requirements for a new or vacant post, it must assess the need for Welsh language skills, and categorise it as a post where one or more of the following apply:

- **Welsh language skills are essential**
- **Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post**
- **Welsh language skills are desirable**
- **Welsh language skills are not necessary.**

During this reporting period a total of 285 job adverts were published, with 284 noting Welsh skills as desirable and 1 with Welsh skills having been assessed as essential. The low number demonstrates the need for the Policy Team to further review the Recruitment Authorisation Form, to ensure the Welsh language resilience checks are being completed correctly by managers when reviewing new job roles language skills.

2.5 Record keeping standards [147 – 154]

Standard 147: A body must keep a record, in relation to each financial year, of the number of complaints it receives relating to its compliance with the standards.

Library Services Complaint - CS1271

During this reporting period, the council received one complaint from a member of the public concerning Welsh language provision and compliance with Welsh language standards. The complaint related to access to a Welsh language service at Tredegar Library. As Blaenau Gwent libraries are managed by the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) on behalf of the council, they are required to adhere to the Code of Practice for The Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

On 24th June 2024, the Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) notified the council of the complaint. The library confirmed that Welsh language support is available and that a bilingual staff member is employed. However, as the issue was not raised at the time, staff were unable to address it. After review, WLCO decided against a formal investigation, but staff were reminded of their Welsh language responsibilities, with additional support provided.

On 22nd August 2024, a Plaid Cymru Member of the Senedd raised the matter with the Council Leader. In response, the council and ALT committed to strengthening Welsh language provisions by prioritising bilingual recruitment and enhancing compliance measures within the management agreement.

The council offered the complainant the option to formally engage via its complaints process, but no further action was taken. Efforts continue to improve Welsh language service delivery through staff training and structured support.

Aneurin Leisure Trust Compliance Investigation - CS1170

The Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) launched the CS1170 investigation in June 2024 after receiving a public complaint in July 2023 regarding Aneurin Leisure Trust's (the Trust) limited use of the Welsh language across its:

- Websites
- Social media
- Signage at Parc Bryn Bach

In response to the complaint and subsequent draft findings, the Council clarified that it was not responsible for any of the Trust's four websites or social media accounts. The Council explained that the Trust operates as a charitable organisation with various functions under its charitable status or trading arm, independent of Council governance.

To address concerns raised in the draft findings, the Council assured the WLCO that corrective measures had been taken to resolve signage errors and that Aneurin Leisure Trust was actively working to meet the Welsh Language Standards.

In June 2024, the investigation reached a final determination under Section 71 of the Welsh Language (Wales) 2011 Measure. The determination stated that the Trust provides services promoted through these websites and social media accounts on behalf of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (the Council) and manages the site where the signage was placed. Consequently, the Council is responsible for ensuring compliance with Welsh language standards.

The Final Decision Notice set out the required actions, timelines for compliance, and requested that the Council, in partnership with Aneurin Leisure Trust, implement an organisational approach with clear accountability and governance to develop an Action Plan. The deadline for submission was 4th September 2024.

The WLCO approved the final draft of the Action Plan on 20th September 2024 under Section 80 (3) (a) of the Welsh Language Measure, with a completion deadline of 20th March 2025.

To ensure the implementation of the plan's actions, action leads met on a six weekly basis. The group helped drive progress, complete the required actions, and enhance compliance with the Council's Welsh language obligations.

The Final CS1170 Investigation Action Plan Progress Report (Appendix 1) provides updates on the implementation of planned actions between September 2024 and March 2025, along with a summary of future steps.

Confirmation was received from the WLCO on the 20th March 2025 that confirmed the CS1170 investigation has been closed and that there was no further action required.

Blaenau Gwent Council's Compliance Investigation – CS092

The CS092 investigation ("the investigation") was opened by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) in November 2021 following concerns raised during a direct verification assessment of whether the Council was compliant with the Welsh Language Standards in terms of providing a Welsh language telephone service.

In April 2022, the Council provided an initial response to the investigation, which in turn raised further compliance concerns with regards to promoting services, assessing the language skills of staff, providing training opportunities and assessing the language needs of posts. This led to the terms of reference for the investigation being widened to include a number of additional operational standards.

In September 2022, a final determination of the investigation, in accordance with Section 77 of the Welsh Language (Wales) 2011 Measure, was provided to the Council. The determination outlined the steps required to reach compliance and expected delivery timeframes. It also requested the Council take forward an organisational approach

(including clear accountability and governance framework) to develop an Action Plan, with a deadline 31 January 2023. The final draft Action Plan was presented to the Corporate Leadership Team for consideration and signed-off on the 26 January 2022. The WLCO signed off the report on the 5 April 2023.

The CS092 Final Progress Report (Appendix 2) provides a final position on the implementation of actions set out within the plan which was submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioners Office for consideration of closing the case.

Confirmation was received from the WLCO on the 1st July 2024 that confirmed the CS092 investigation has been closed.

To acknowledge the successful closure and maintain the momentum of the efforts leading up to it, the following information was shared with all council email users:

From Investigation to Inspiration: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Welsh Language Journey!



In 2022, the Welsh Language Commissioner looked into Blaenau Gwent Council to see how well they were meeting the Welsh language standards. This sparked an amazing journey of revitalising the Welsh language in the area, leading to fresh enthusiasm and inspiring changes in public services.

As part of our response to an open investigation, we created a dynamic action plan to integrate the Welsh language into all our work. Enthusiastic members from various departments formed a 'core group' to champion this mission and ensure the plan's success.

Here's what we've achieved so far:



Our main telephone systems and staff guidance have been updated, highlighting the importance of answering calls bilingually.



We've set up a Teams Channel where staff can quickly find a Welsh speaker to handle calls in Welsh – let us know if you want to join!



Customer-facing staff received weekly training through Dygsu Cymraeg, and many are progressing to advanced training in September!



Our recruitment processes now prioritise Welsh language skills, and the Welsh guidance on the intranet is a key part of the induction process.

Check out the new training policy or reach out to the policy team to find your learning path.



The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of keeping iTrent skills assessments up to date, aligned with the new Welsh language skills framework.

In July 2024, after a long journey, we proudly announced that the investigation had been closed, and our action plan satisfied the commissioner. But we're not stopping here! Let's continue this incredible journey and keep improving our Welsh language services.



**Keep an eye on the Welsh guidance intranet page and keep up the fantastic work.
Email: cymraeg@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk for further information or support**

3. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27

All local authorities across Wales are required to develop a strategy detailing how they, in collaboration with their partners, will promote the Welsh language, enhance its visibility, and create opportunities for engagement with both the language and its culture. Our strategy aligns with the Welsh Government's ambitious target of reaching one million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.

Blaenau Gwent is currently in the fourth year of its Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. During this reporting period, the strategy's objectives—alongside qualitative and quantitative data—have been integrated into the organisation's business planning processes. This approach was introduced to strengthen monitoring efforts, improve accountability across departments, and ensure the effective implementation of the strategy's aims and objectives.

These enhanced arrangements were established following the publication of the 2023–24 Welsh Language Annual Report, where the need for improved monitoring and streamlined reporting became evident. The new approach was recognised and commended by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office, which subsequently invited the team to speak at their national seminar on promotional standards. The session was well received and inspired several local authorities to adopt our best practices.

STAFF NEWS 2025

NEWYDDION DDA – GOOD NEWS!

Blaenau Gwent's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and monitoring arrangements were identified in The Welsh Centre for Language Planning – IAITH's survey into all local authorities in Wales as an example of good practice.



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

When drafting the last Welsh Language Annual Report, it was acknowledged that the monitoring arrangements for the Promotion Strategy aims were in need of strengthening. With the excellent support of the Performance Team the strategy's aims were embedded into the council's business plans, making sure the Welsh language was everyone's business!

Following IAITH's recognition of this as an example of good practice we were approached by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office to deliver a presentation to all local authorities Welsh language and policy departments across Wales. This session was very well received and has encouraged a number of local authorities to follow our example of best practice! Da iawn pawb!




Shared Prosperity Funding and the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

In early 2024, the Policy Teams sought Shared Prosperity Funding to cover employment-related expenses and support the activities of a Welsh Language Support Officer within the council. In March 2025, we received confirmation of our successful funding application, securing continued employment for our Support Officer for an additional year.





This funding has strengthened the Policy Team's capacity to implement the objectives outlined in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. A key component of this effort is our communications plan, which plays a vital role in promoting the richness of Welsh language and culture—both within our organisation, to the wider public, and through our education channels.




An integral part of this initiative is the Welsh celebrations and traditions calendar, which is outlined below.


Calendar of Welsh Celebrations



The calendar features a central graphic with the word 'Wales' in large red letters. Surrounding it are various Welsh symbols: a harp, a football, a castle, a cow, a dragon, a map of Wales, a DNA helix, and a flower. The calendar is organized into two rows of boxes, each representing a month and its key celebrations.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
1st Calennig <u>New Year's gift giving</u> 25th St Dwynwen's Day (Welsh Valentines Day) 31st Six Nations Rugby starts	7th Welsh Music Day. 	1st St David's Day. 	14th National Laverbread Day. 	1st Calan Mai <u>Start of Summer</u> 14th Dylan Thomas Day 26th - 31st Urdd Eisteddfod	21st - 22nd Pride Cymru 

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5th 1948 NHS was established 	2nd - 9th International Eisteddfod Llangollen	16th Owain Glyndŵr Day 	15th Shwmae Su'mae Day 31st Noson Galan Gaeaf	1st Calan Gaef - Qld Hallows Eve 15th Aneurin Bevan Birthday 	Y Mari Lwyd 25th Plygain Welsh Carol Service



Blaenau Gwent
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
County Borough Council

See below for some examples of the key communication projects that have taken place over the past year.

Dydd Miwsig Cymru 2025

‘Dydd Miwsig Cymru’, or ‘Welsh Language Music Day’ is an annual event that occurs in February celebrating all forms of Welsh language music. This year the celebration fell on the 7th February and was embraced wholeheartedly by the borough, with the release of a first ‘Blaenau Gwent Anthem’, written and performed by representatives from each primary school in the borough.

Each year, the council hosts three Children’s Grand Council sessions at the General Offices, where primary school council members come together to learn, collaborate, and work on various projects. On the 27th of November 2024, musician Mei Gwynedd joined the session, guiding students through the process of crafting the anthem's lyrics. The children shared what Blaenau Gwent meant to them—their favourite places, traditions, and experiences—capturing the very essence of their community in song.



After the session, Mei set to work composing the accompanying music, ready to return for a special filming event at an Extraordinary Children’s Grand Council on the 31st of January. That day, students split into smaller groups, taking turns to record verses in a room

equipped with Mei’s sound gear, while others engaged in activities exploring Welsh music through videos, worksheets, quizzes, and creative exercises.

The event was an overwhelming success, providing students with an enriching artistic experience while deepening their appreciation of Welsh-language music and its significance to their country’s culture.





See the music video [here](#) or click the image below



The anthem is a legacy for the schools, celebrating the spirit of young voices and their community. By offering a creative outlet and a tradition to carry forward, it honours our rich past while setting the stage for an inspiring future.

A [Dydd Miwsig Cymru Booklet](#) ([Fersiwn Cymraeg](#)) was created and shared with all of the school schools to showcase the lyrics and video created and offer some information on what Dydd Miwsig Cymraeg is and how to celebrate the day.



Welsh Rarebit Day

Welsh Rarebit is a traditional but iconic Welsh dish that has been enjoyed for centuries. It's a combination of hot melted cheese on toast with a few additions. Some still call it posh Cheese on Toast. However. Despite its somewhat peculiar name, Welsh Rarebit has stood the test of time, evolving into a beloved culinary creation enjoyed around the world.

Owing to it's roots in Wales' heritage the national celebrate 'Welsh Rarebit Day' on the 3rd September every year, and this the council got one of our residential homes involved with the celebrations. The residents of Cwrt Mytton Care Home in Abertillery were entertained by Jonny Bevan who performed a number of songs, closing with a powerful performance of the the national anthem after being served some delicious Welsh foods.

The council was able to fund the ingredients provided to Cwrt Myttons talented chefs who served up rarebit with home baked bread along with leak and potato soup finished off with some bara brith and Welsh cakes.

This simple holiday was a great opportunity to reach out to the older generation to embrace the culture and language through the music, and offered an opportunity for the Welsh language officers to engage with the residents. As can be seen below this event was full of fun and way to highlight how active the culture is within the community





Dydd Gŵyl Dewi

School Celebration at The Market Hall Cinema

For Dydd Gŵyl Dewi, Blaenau Gwent Council partnered with Brynmawr Town Council to create a vibrant celebration for local primary schools at the Market Hall Cinema. Students showcased their talents by singing Welsh songs, reciting poetry, and enjoying a mesmerising harp performance, while also having fun with face painting. The event was a heartfelt tribute to the community's pride in its language and culture. To round off the festivities, every student received balloon dragons, flags, daffodils, and traditional Welsh cakes—a perfect way to celebrate the day.



Click the image below to watch the video:



Blaenau Gwent CBC · Follow

1 March · 🌐

We're thrilled to share that Brynmawr Town Council, in collaboration with the Blaenau Gwent Council hosted a fantastic St David's Day Celebration at the iconic Market Hall Cinema.

The event was filled with joy and national pride as amazing performances were delivered by our talented schoolchildren!

A huge thanks to the participating schools for making this day unforgettable. Check out the video to see the excitement and pride in our community.

[#BrynmawrTownCouncil](#) [#BGCBC](#) [#StDavidsDay](#)



STAFF NEWS 2025

CELEBRATING ST DAVID'S DAY/DYDD GWYL DEWI HAPUS

We are excited to celebrate St David's Day, a day dedicated to the patron saint of Wales. Here are some highlights and activities to look forward to:

Teams Background

To add a festive touch to your virtual meetings, we encourage everyone to use a special St David's Day-themed background on Microsoft Teams.



Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau - sing the Welsh national anthem

Mae hen wlad fy nhadau yn annwyl i mi Gwlad beirdd a chantorion, enwogion o fri El gerol ryfelwyr, gwladgarwyr tra mād Tros ryddid gollasant eu gwlad	This land of my fathers is dear to me Land of poets and singers, and people of stature Her brave warriors, fine patriots Shed their blood for freedom
Gwlad, Gwlad, pleidiol wyf i'm gwlad Tra môr yn fur i'r bur hoff bau O bydded i'r heniaith barhau	Land, Land! I am true to my land! As long as the sea serves as a wall for this pure, dear land May the language endure for ever.

National Anthem

Let's embrace the spirit of the day by singing the Welsh National Anthem, "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau" (Land of My Fathers). Here are the words for you to sing along:

Welsh-Themed Sing for Wellbeing Session

Join us for a special Welsh-themed Sing for Wellbeing staff session on 5th March. It's a wonderful opportunity to come together, enjoy some music, and boost our wellbeing.



Marie Curie Daffodils

Support a great cause by purchasing Marie Curie Daffodils, available for sale in the General Offices and Blaina ICC. Your contributions will help provide essential care and support for those in need.

Local Events

During half term and the week after, there is so much happening in the community to celebrate St David's Day. Enjoy delicious St David's Day-themed afternoon teas and choral performances at Bedwellty House and Park, local celebrations with school children in Brynmawr Market Hall, and a concert at St. Michael's Church, Abertillery.

Keep an eye on our social media platforms for updates on various local events celebrating St David's Day. There's something for everyone to enjoy.

Let's come together to celebrate our heritage and support our community and do the little things that make you proud to be Welsh. Diolch yn fawr!



Diwrnod Shwmae

Since 2013, Shwmae Su'mae Day has been celebrated annually on 15th October, encouraging people to embrace the Welsh language by simply starting conversations with the Welsh greeting 'Shwmae'. The initiative was developed by Dathlu'r Gymraeg, a collaborative group of 26 Welsh organisations and societies dedicated to promoting the language.

During this reporting period, the council made Diwrnod Shwmae a priority, particularly given that Blaenau Gwent is a predominantly English-speaking area. By emphasising the significance of a simple Welsh greeting, we aimed to spark interest in learning the language and encourage those with Welsh language skills to use them more confidently. This initiative supported our broader efforts to integrate Welsh into everyday interactions across workplaces, communities, and the education sector. Internally, staff were provided with information on the importance of Diwrnod Shwmae and ways to participate, which were detailed in the staff newsletter.

Diwrnod Shwmae 15 Hydref 2024


DIWRNOD SHWMAE
15fed o Hydref

Beth yw ystyr SHWMAE?

Cyfarchiad Cymraeg ydy Shwmae sy'n golygu - Hello - Sut wyt ti? - lawr?

Wrth gyfarch pobl ar y 15fed o Hydref pam ddim ei wneud yn Gymraeg?

HOWCH GYNNIG ARNI!
GIVE WELSH A GO!



Beth allwch chi ei wneud i ymuno?

- Cyfarchwch bawb welwch chi ar-lein neu wyneb yn wyneb heddiw gyda Shwmae neu un o'r cyfarchion o'r sleidiau ar y [fewnrrwyd!](#)
- Defnyddiwch y [cefnidir-Timau](#) hwn!
- Peidiwch ag anghofio y gallwch ymgymryd â hyfforddiant yn ystod oriau gwaith, rhoi cynnig ar y [sesiynau blasu](#) hyn, neu os ydych eisoes yn defnyddio Duolingo neu SaysSomethingIn rhwch wybod i ni!

Byddem wrth ein bodd yn gweld eich lluniau neu glywed sut yr ydych yn cofleidio'r diwrnod, gadewch i ni wybod drwy'r blwch post cymraeg@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk neu defnyddiwch #shwmae24 #shwmaesumae24

Shwmae Day 15 October 2024


SHWMAE DAY
15TH OF OCTOBER

What does SHWMAE mean?

Shwmae is a Welsh greeting that means 'hello', 'how are you?' 'alright?'

When greeting people on the 15th of October why not do it in Welsh?

HOWCH GYNNIG ARNI!
GIVE WELSH A GO!



What can you do to join in?

- Greet everyone you see online or in person today with Shwmae or one of the greetings from the slides on [the intranet!](#)
- Use this [Teams background!](#)
- Don't forget you can undertake training during work hours, give these [taster sessions](#) a go, or if you're already using Duolingo or SaysSomethingIn let us know!

We'd love to see your pictures or hear how you are embracing the day, let us know via the cymraeg@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk mailbox or use #shwmae24 #shwmaesumae24

Internally, we encouraged all staff to make a deliberate effort to greet one another and start their meetings in Welsh, using the guidance provided through the intranet. This simple yet meaningful action has had a lasting impact, as we've observed a noticeable increase in Welsh greetings during meetings and across the office. To further reinforce our commitment to Diwrnod Shwmae, we created a [video](#) showcasing our fantastic staff, which was shared both internally and externally as part of our communication campaign.

5



Business Involvement

The Welsh Policy Officers collaborated closely with the council's Regeneration Team to encourage local businesses to embrace Shwmae Day by greeting their customers and clients in Welsh and making use of the resources we provided. Engagement was carried out through multiple channels, including social media posts, content shared via the [business hub website](#), updates through the Evoluteive (business) portal, and direct, in-person interactions across the borough.

The face-to-face engagement proved especially valuable, strengthening relationships with local businesses and allowing us to identify those with Welsh-speaking or Welsh-learning staff. To support their participation, we developed resource packs, which included:

- Useful phrase booklets tailored to different sectors
- [Iaith Gwaith Signage](#)
- Learner/Welsh speaker lanyards
- Cards highlighting key Welsh holidays and traditions
- Locally crafted wooden Agor/Cau and Croeso signs
- Information on Helo Blod's translation services
- Diwrnod Shwmae bunting to decorate workplaces
- Colouring sheets

These efforts helped integrate Welsh into everyday business interactions, fostering a welcoming bilingual environment.

**DIWRNOD SHWMAE
SU'MAE DAY!**

**TUESDAY
15TH OF
OCTOBER**

On this day the people of Wales show their pride by simply greeting everyone in Welsh - whether they speak the language or not join us in saying 'shwmae', 'shwdi' or 'bore da' on this special day!

This year the Council is offering FREE resource packs, and hands on support to local businesses to embrace the day!

To get your personalised business pack
contact: cymraeg@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

SHWMAE SU'MAE

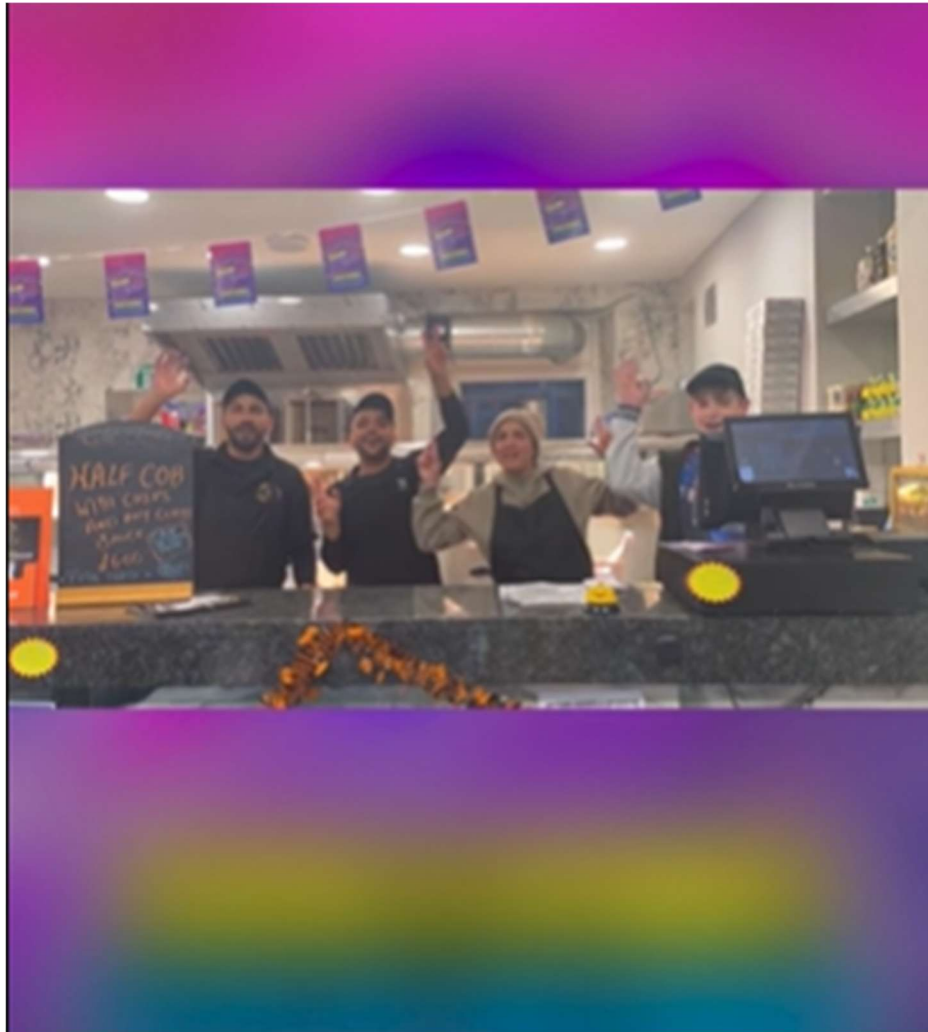
**RHOWCH GYNNIG ARNI!
GIVE WELSH A GO!**

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Many businesses went above and beyond in their celebrations, adding their own unique touch to the festivities. Crystal Café and Kenny's Vinyl Vault in Abertillery delighted customers with Welsh cakes, a full day of Welsh music, and engaging storytelling sessions in Welsh.

The Market Hall Cinema in Brynmawr fully embraced Welsh culture with a special screening of Kevin Allen's adaptation of Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood, followed by an exclusive Q&A with the director himself.

Click the image below to watch the video, which beautifully captures how local businesses embraced this special day and contributed to our ongoing mission to enhance the use and visibility of the Welsh language across the borough.



Libraries

Libraries across Blaenau Gwent marked Diwrnod Shwmae with a range of FREE activities, offering adults and children the chance to experience Welsh in a welcoming and engaging setting. Tredegar Library hosted a beginner-friendly Welsh language taster workshop, introducing attendees to basic words and phrases. Cwm and Brynmawr Libraries celebrated with a Welsh teatime, while Cwm Library welcomed Bethan and her charming dragon puppet, Dewi, for a special Welsh Storytime session for children.



To round off the celebrations, craft activities were available at all libraries, allowing attendees to get creative while embracing Welsh culture. Extending the festivities beyond the day itself, Ebbw Vale Library hosted a special 'meet the author' event the following weekend, featuring the writer of *The Green Lady of Caerphilly Castle*.



School Involvement

Schools across the borough embraced the celebrations with themed assemblies, engaging activities, and video entries contributing to our communications efforts. The Welsh Policy Officers were also welcomed at Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar, our seedling school currently based in its temporary home at Bedwellty House. Students explored the meaning of Diwrnod Shwmae, shared their love for the Welsh language, sang songs, and decorated bunting to brighten their classroom for the day. This special visit, along with the enthusiasm that resonated across local schools, is beautifully captured in the [video](#) below.



Dylan Thomas Day

As part of this year's programme of work for Welsh language and culture the Council invited all schools in Blaenau Gwent to enter a competition to recreate a poem about their local area in the style of the famous poet, and Welsh icon, Dylan Thomas.



The year 5 class at Beaufort Hill Primary School submitted a number of creative poems. The poems showcased the pupil's imagination, creativity, and writing skills about local landmarks such as Caerphilly and Raglan Castle. The teachers at Beaufort Hill Primary School were so impressed by the quality of their submissions and the effort put in by the pupils that they invited Councillor Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education and the Welsh Language Support Officer to a special assembly to showcase their poems and celebrate the life of Dylan Thomas.

The year 5 and 6 choir sang a beautiful rendition of the [Eli Jenkins' prayer from Under Milk Wood](#), which was performed perfectly with emotion. Councillor Sue Edmunds praised the school and the pupil's efforts and was delighted to present the class with a hamper of literature resources to keep up their great work which included Cerys Mathews illustrated retelling of 'Under Milk Wood', 'Welsh Fairy Tales, Myths and Legends', 'Poems of Positivity' and 'Nature Poems'.



International Women's Day

In addition to the Welsh calendar of events and communication campaigns, we strive to integrate the language into all aspects of the council's work. For example, this year's International Women's Day event at the General Offices featured a diverse range of stalls and activities, including a dedicated space led by our Welsh Language Support Officer. Staff had the chance to engage with Welsh-language music, information, guidance, and learning resources, making it a valuable opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Support Officer and explore ways to develop their linguistic skills. The event encouraged staff to embrace Welsh both in the workplace and beyond, reinforcing our commitment to promoting the language in everyday interactions.



Celebrating our Welsh Speaking Community

As part of the Welsh Language programme of work, celebrating our Welsh-speaking community has been a vital way to showcase the richness of the language and inspire new learners. Throughout the year, Blaenau Gwent has highlighted the journeys of individuals like [Antwn Hicks](#), [Daniel Minty](#), and [Sarah Merton](#),



each of whom has contributed to the vibrancy of Welsh language learning and usage. Their stories serve as powerful examples of how embracing Welsh can open doors to new opportunities, foster a deeper connection to heritage, and strengthen community bonds. Daniel Minty, for instance, has transformed his learning journey into a career, now working as a Community Development Officer to promote Welsh language engagement.





Alongside these individual stories, Welsh language groups such as Caffi Tyleri and the Welsh Learner group at Parc Bryn Bach provide welcoming spaces for learners and fluent speakers alike to connect, practice, and celebrate the language together. By sharing these experiences and fostering community engagement, Blaenau Gwent continues to ignite interest among potential learners, demonstrating that Welsh is not just a language but a living, evolving part of everyday life.



NOSON GYMRAEG TYLERI CYMRAEG EVENING



AT CAFFI TYLERI
(JIM OWEN PAVILION, CWM TYLERI
NP13 1LW)



YN DECHRAU: 13eg o Chwefror
STARTING: 13th February

5:30 - 7pm

For those who have had
little to no contact
with Cymraeg.

7 - 8:30pm

Sgwrs i bawb -
conversation for all



Welsh Folklore: Strengthening Tradition Through Community Events

Throughout the year, we have embraced Welsh folklore as a key part of our programme, ensuring that these traditions remain vibrant within our community.

Winter: Blaenau Gwent Council proudly embraced St Dwynwen's Day, celebrating Wales' patron saint of lovers as an integral part of its cultural programme. Recognising the importance of preserving Welsh traditions, the council highlighted the folklore surrounding Dwynwen's tale—her devotion to love and faith. Schools and local groups were encouraged to participate in storytelling sessions, crafting traditional love spoons, and sharing poetry inspired by Welsh heritage.



Blaenau Gwent Libraries

January 23 · 🌐

To celebrate St. Dwynwen's Day we have some FREE love themed activities for children this weekend! ❤️

📅 Saturday 25th January 10am – 12pm
At Abertillery, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar Libraries ~
No booking necessary

I ddathlu Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen mae gennym rai gweithgareddau thema cariad AM DDIM i blant y penwythnos hwn! ❤️

📅 Dydd Sadwrn, 25ain o Ionawr, 10am – 12pm
Yn Llyfrgelloedd Abertillery, Glynebwy a Thredegar ~ Nid oes angen archebu lle

Blaenau Gwent CBC Families First - Blaenau Gwent See less



Ebbw Fawr Learning Community

21h · 🌐

Dathliadau Dydd Santes Dwynwen wedi dechrau yn Ebbw Fawr. Mae'r Criw Cymraeg wedi bod yn brysur yn derbyn archebion, paratoi a dosbarthu rhosynnau i ein cymuned dysgu! Mor hyfryd! 🌹❤️

Dydd Santes Dwynwen celebrations have started in Ebbw Fawr. The Criw Cymraeg have been busy receiving orders, preparing and delivering roses to our learning community. So lovely! 🌹❤️



St. Dwynwen's Day

This week our libraries are celebrating all things love and romance in readiness for St. Dwynwen's Day on Saturday, 25th March, with dedicated book displays encouraging our visitors to fall in love with a good book - or at least cosy up with one this weekend!

For those who don't know, St. Dwynwen is the Welsh patron saint of lovers, and she was a fourth century Welsh princess who lived in what is now the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park. Dwynwen was rather unlucky in love, and so she prayed for true lovers to have better luck than she did.

To celebrate St. Dwynwen's Day our libraries will be providing free love themed craft activities for children to enjoy on Saturday, 25th January from 10am -12pm at Abertillery, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar Libraries. No booking is necessary, just come along and join the fun!

For more information, call the library:

Abertillery Library [01495 369608](tel:01495369608) | Ebbw Vale Library [01495 369615](tel:01495369615) | Tredegar Library [01495 369613](tel:01495369613)



Dydd Santes Dwynwen

Yr wythnos hon mae ein llyfrgelloedd yn dathlu popeth sy'n ymwneud â chariad a rhant yn barod ar gyfer Dydd Santes Dwynwen ddydd Sadwrn, 25 Mawrth, gydag arddangosfeydd llyfrau pwrpasol yn annog ein hymwelwyr i syrthio mewn cariad â llyfr da - neu o leiaf ymlacio gydag un y penwythnos hwn!

I'r rhai nad ydyn nhw'n gwybod, Santes Dwynwen yw nawddsant cariadon Cymru, ac roedd hi'n dywysoges Gymreig o'r bedwaredd ganrif a oedd yn byw yn yr hyn sydd bellach yn Barc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog. Roedd Dwynwen braidd yn anllwus mewn cariad, ac felly gweddiodd am i gariadon gwir gael mwy o lwc nag a gafodd hi.

I ddathlu Dydd Santes Dwynwen bydd ein llyfrgelloedd yn darparu gweithgareddau crefft am ddim ar thema cariad i blant eu mwynhau ddydd Sadwrn, 25 Ionawr o 10am -12pm yn Llyfrgelloedd Abertillery, Glynebwy a Thredegar. Nid oes angen archebu, dewch draw ac ymunwch â'r hwy!

Am ragor o wybodaeth, ffoniwch y llyfrgell:

Llyfrgell Abertillery [01495 369608](tel:01495369608) | Llyfrgell Glynebwy [01495 369615](tel:01495369615) | Llyfrgell Tredegar [01495 369613](tel:01495369613)



As part of our work programme, we have actively recognised Y Mari Lwyd, ensuring that the tradition's deep-rooted significance is understood and celebrated.



Blaenau Gwent CBC
24 December 2024 · 🌐

...

Y Fari Lwyd

One of the weirdest Welsh traditions involves a horse's skull, lots of ribbons and a rap battle – Yes you would be correct if you guessed the Mari Lwyd.

This tradition happens in mid-winter, usually between Christmas day and the 12th night with the earliest account dating back to 1798. The idea was to scare away the darkness and welcome love and laughter into your homes. This generally involved groups taking the Mari Lwyd door to door and having a rap battle or 'pwnco' to gain entrance. The Mari gets invited in and the homeowner provides food and drinks, usually lots of alcohol, so that they gain the favour of the Mari and have plenty of luck for the coming year. For more information and to read about the Blaenau Gwent Baptist minister, who thought it a 'sinful' practice, follow this link: <https://loom.ly/g-aHQNo>



Spring: In celebration of Dylan Thomas Day, we have promoted the retelling of The Mabinogion by awarding a literature hamper to Beaufort Hill School. This initiative encourages young minds to engage with Wales' rich mythology, ensuring that the legendary tales continue to inspire future generations. By supporting storytelling in schools, we strengthen the tradition of oral narratives, keeping Welsh heritage vibrant and accessible.



Summer: Our involvement with the National Eisteddfod 2024 in Ynys Angharad Park focused on supporting Cymraeg i Bawb as a Welsh Government funded project made up of Councils and Education staff from across Southeast Wales to promote Welsh medium education. The Council took this opportunity to highlight all the fantastic developments within Welsh education in Blaenau Gwent. Staff were able to share the exciting updates regarding the construction of the new Welsh medium primary school in Tredegar with local visitors as well as those who had travelled from all over the UK to attend this monumental festival. Staff were lucky enough to enjoy live music and meet some great people from all walks of life, some had never been to an Eisteddfod before and commented how fantastic it was. Welsh culture at its best with fantastic bands and live music all over the site, with visits from Michael Sheen and Homes under the hammer star, Martin Roberts as well as musicians such as the legendry Dafydd Iwan and other artists from all over Wales.



Autumn: Our recognition of Calan Gaeaf and its celebrations celebration at Caffi Tyleri has encouraged the continuation of folklore-inspired gatherings, including woodland walks, Welsh storytelling and pumpkin carving, ensuring the spirit of Wales's past remains present.



By embedding these traditions into our programme, we've helped forge connections between generations, ensuring Welsh folklore continues to thrive through shared experience

4. Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/32

The Education Transformation Team

The Education Transformation Team review and monitor the [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan](#) (WESP) monthly; providing termly reports to the Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) and an annual report to Welsh Government. In addition, WEF development and progress reports are taken via the Council's political processes annually. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is also a key focus of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme board and Admissions Forum.

WESP

1. Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar opened in September 2023 in a temporary location – Ty Bedwellty, for pupils of Nursery and Reception ages, in September 2024 pupil numbers grew. Numbers are positive with the school currently having 30 pupils on roll for Nursery, Reception and Year 1. It is anticipated that in September 2025, the numbers on roll will be 36, a second classroom on the temporary site was set up for September 2024 to accommodate pupils until the new building is completed in the Autumn term 2025/26.
2. Admissions to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg have also risen in its nursery and reception classes for September 2025/26 academic year even though there is an overall decreasing school population.
3. Blaenau Gwent successfully delivered against the Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme for remodelling works at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg in Autumn term 2022, an official opening by ministers was held in June 2023. As mentioned above, Education are taking forward a project to create a 210 place Welsh-medium primary school Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar, under the current governance arrangements of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. Along with an associated childcare facility within the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley on Chartist Way, which will be ready for occupation in the Autumn term 2025.26 academic year.
4. A commitment has been given as part of the WESP 10-year plan to undertake a feasibility study to determine where there is a need for further provision and map that accordingly across Blaenau Gwent.

Welsh Medium Secondary Planning

1. Welsh Government have now established a working group to look at Local Authority Secondary needs across the south-east region, Blaenau Gwent have a focus group with Monmouthshire, Powys and Torfaen. The need to develop secondary education further across the region was a concern for the academic year 2028 due to the current provision at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw anticipating being at capacity. However, it is now expected that they will likely be able to accommodate Blaenau Gwent learners until 2032.
2. Blaenau Gwent Council has developed a strong marketing and communication plan, targeting and promoting the benefits of being bilingual, whilst also establishing appropriate methods of engagement and consultation with stakeholders, in order to inform key strategic priorities. With plans for a further leaflet and bookmark drop around the benefits of bilingualism and the new seedling provision in Sirhowy, Tredegar planned for the summer term 2025 to cover across Blaenau Gwent.
3. The Welsh in Education Forum meet termly to discuss progress against the objectives set out within the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Two of the Welsh in Education Forums were held at Ty Bedwellty, giving members the opportunity to visit the temporary classroom on location. During this reporting period monitoring groups have been set up and assigned specific objectives to report against their assigned objectives. The Communications Sub-Group made up of key partners, education and council officers have continued to meet bi-monthly, with membership having increased over the course of the year. The group work collectively to share up coming events and resources that support in the delivery of the WESP objectives and develop communication materials that aid the promotion of Welsh in education and the opportunities present in Blaenau Gwent.
4. Sabbatical Welsh figures continue to increase annually with school staff uptake of courses increasing year on year, demonstrating a continued commitment to the Welsh language.

Plans for the Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar's building

In October 2024, the contract building the seedling school filed for administration. A new contractor was appointed, Tilbury Douglas, who

carried out emergency works and are now entering into contract to complete the building in the Autumn term 2025/26. Pupils and teachers have previously visited site and there are plans for returned visit for May and July 2025.

March 2025



Planned finished project-



Immersion Grant

Welsh Government provided LA's with funding to develop immersion unit within Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, to accommodate late comers to Welsh-medium education. There has been 3 rounds of funding pilot 2021/22, 2021/22 pilot, 2022/2025 and now 2025/26.

In line with the delivery of the project the Council work 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.

Please see the wonderful video created in partnership with Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (Parents for Welsh Education) that offers a real life insight into the success of the immersion unit and a glimpse of the facilities available.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6pWTphOwww>

Cymraeg i Bawb – Welsh for Everybody

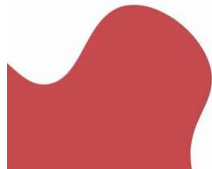
Cymraeg i Bawb is a project funded by the Welsh Government with partners contributing in kind to support the promotion and increase the engagement with Welsh education. The South East Wales Welsh Medium Education Promotion Partnership and Llio Elgar as the Pencampwr (Champion) are responsible for Cymraeg i Bawb.

The partnership consists of Local Authorities, Mentrau Iaith, Cymraeg i Blant, RhAG (Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg/Parents for Welsh Education) and the Welsh Government in south-east Wales. The project was initiated by Grŵp Deddf – South East Wales Welsh officers, seeing the potential in working together as an established collective to Welsh-medium education. The Policy Team provided content for Blaenau Gwent's page on the Cymraeg i Bawb [Website](#) that was launched in February 2024.



Mae dwyieithrwydd i bawb

Bilingualism is for Everyone



Additional Learning Needs

In addition, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Primary School from September 2024 established a special needs resource base (SNRB) for up to 10 ALN pupils in line with the recent Additional Learning Needs Consultation (2022). A classroom was remodelled to be a resource base with a sensory room and calming room with outside space to support learners.

During the reporting period 5 new members of staff have been recruited for the 'Canolfan y Noddfa', which is the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) centre in Ysgol Bro Helyg.

Early Years and Childcare

The Blaenau Gwent Early Years and Childcare Team's Flying Start expansion plan for 2024/2025 has strengthened Welsh-medium childcare provision in the northern Ebbw Fawr Valley, increasing demand and facilitating a smoother transition into Welsh-medium education. The newly established setting, which opened in January 2025, is actively working towards achieving Croes i'r Bont, with the Camfa Officer expressing great satisfaction with its progress towards bilingualism.

Additionally, a Welsh-medium seedling school is under construction in Tredegar, featuring a dedicated Welsh-medium childcare facility.

The team is fortunate to have Welsh-speaking professionals, including the Childcare Co-ordinator, the Quality Improvement Officer, and the Speech and Language Therapist. Their expertise plays a vital role in promoting the use of incidental Welsh across the team. The 2024/25 Childcare Professional Learning Offer included training on integrating incidental

Welsh into childcare settings. Due to high demand, two additional training sessions were delivered, with 94 participants from 21 childcare settings (including 7 childminders) attending.

At the close of the financial year, the Childcare and Play team secured additional funding, enabling all childcare providers to translate at least their Statement of Purpose into Welsh, supporting compliance with the Active Offer. Additionally, two childcare providers successfully achieved the Bronze Award as part of their commitment to the Welsh Promise.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, the team will continue expanding professional learning opportunities, including Cam Nesaf, to help practitioners develop their Welsh language skills. All staff are encouraged to complete Camau training through umbrella organisations. Furthermore, both local authority Flying Start childcare settings will work towards bilingualism, setting an inspiring example for others to follow.

5. Welsh Language Skills

Over the past year, we have embraced significant changes in our approach to the Welsh language, fostering a greater sense of appreciation and sparking renewed interest in Welsh culture and identity. Our commitment to promoting the language within the workplace has strengthened, and we are implementing a range of initiatives to enhance visibility, increase everyday usage, and support the Welsh Language Forward Work Programme.

A key aspect of our efforts is encouraging the use of Welsh in written communication, from integrating Welsh greetings in emails to fostering confidence in employees to use Welsh phrases where possible. In meetings, we actively promote the use of incidental Welsh—embedding it naturally into discussions to make it a more familiar and comfortable part of workplace interactions. Our ‘Courtesy Level Welsh’ initiative empowers employees to learn and use basic Welsh phrases, helping to create an inclusive and welcoming bilingual environment.

To reinforce our commitment, we celebrate special events such as Diwrnod Shwmae, a day dedicated to encouraging everyone to start conversations in Welsh, no matter their fluency level. This initiative is just one of many ways we engage with the language in a meaningful and accessible manner.

Beyond communication, we are focused on increasing the visibility of Welsh in the workplace. This includes bilingual Microsoft Teams backgrounds, promoting the use of Welsh in presentations and documents, and ensuring that our materials reflect our dedication to the language. The Welsh Language Forward Work Programme plays a crucial role in guiding our efforts, ensuring that our policies align with broader linguistic and cultural strategies.

Through these initiatives, we are nurturing a workplace culture that values and celebrates the Welsh language—not only as an important part of our heritage but as a dynamic and evolving aspect of everyday life. As we continue this journey, we are committed to finding new ways to embed Welsh into our daily operations, encouraging wider participation, and fostering a lasting appreciation of the language among all employees.

Blaenau Gwent Council Celebrates Shwmae Day with Enthusiasm and Pride

Blaenau Gwent Council staff were delighted to join the community in celebrating Shwmae Day, an occasion that highlights the everyday use of the Welsh language and underscores our commitment to the Welsh Language.

- Teams throughout the council opened and closed meetings in Welsh, reflecting our commitment to integrating the language into our official proceedings.
- Our call centre staff greeted members of the public with a cheerful "Shwmae". Our call centre team has embraced this initiative wholeheartedly, recognising
- the positive impact it has on customer service and the
- overall public experience.
- Our Elected Members are inspiring others to appreciate
- and utilise the beautiful Welsh language in their daily lives.

You can watch videos of local businesses, schools and staff on the website [here](#).



Training Opportunity and Support

Do you have some Welsh language skills? Did you learn Welsh at school and would like some confidence boosting to help use it more? Have you been learning but would like an extra boost to get you to the next level, for work and to use socially?

Starting in September we have a FREE tutor led, entry course available to all staff.

This course covers Standard 130 and therefore allows it to be run as part of your work duties and will give you the extra skills and confidence to be able to answer calls and deal with clients bilingually.

A quote from one of our Welsh speaking staff that has been offering support to some learners, Owain Thomson:

"I try to start every interaction online with some Welsh words, so people know I speak the language, and I've enjoyed the opportunity to talk to learners and suggest Welsh songs and podcasts to show the informal side of learning a new language."

"Apart from that, I would always support increasing opportunities to meet other learners and speakers in order to speak Welsh and celebrate the culture."

Rydw i'n trio dechrau pob rhyngweithiad ar lein gyda rhyw faint o eiriau Gymraeg fel bod pobl yn gwybod dwi'n siarad yr iaith, a 'dwi wedi mwynhau cael cyfle i siarad â dysgwyr ac awgrymu caneuon a podlediadau Gymraeg er mwyn dangos yr ochor llau ffurfiol o ddysgu iaith Newydd.

Heb law am hynni, byddai wastad yn cefnogi cynyddu cyfleoedd i gwrdd â dysgwyr a siaradwyr eraill er mwyn siarad Cymraeg a dathlu'r diwylliant.

Our Welsh Language Officer will also be on hand to offer any additional support needed.

Please contact our Welsh language officer for more information on how to register your interest or for any Welsh language related requests:
Vikki.alexander@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Bilingual Out of Office messages

Please can all staff ensure that they set their outgoing messages bilingually as per the Council's requirements, see the Welsh Language Guidance on the [intranet](#) for further advice, or use the example below:

I am currently out of the office. If your query is urgent, please contact:

Rwyf allan o'r swyddfa ar hyn o bryd. Os yw eich ymholiad yn un brys, cysylltwch â:

I am out of office at the moment, I will return on 00/00/0000.
Merry Christmas!

Rydw i'n i ffwrdd o'r swyddfa ar hyn o bryd, byddaf yn dychwelyd ar 00/00/0000.
Nadolig Llawen!

Merry Christmas

Please could you make sure all automatic replies are bilingual all year round.

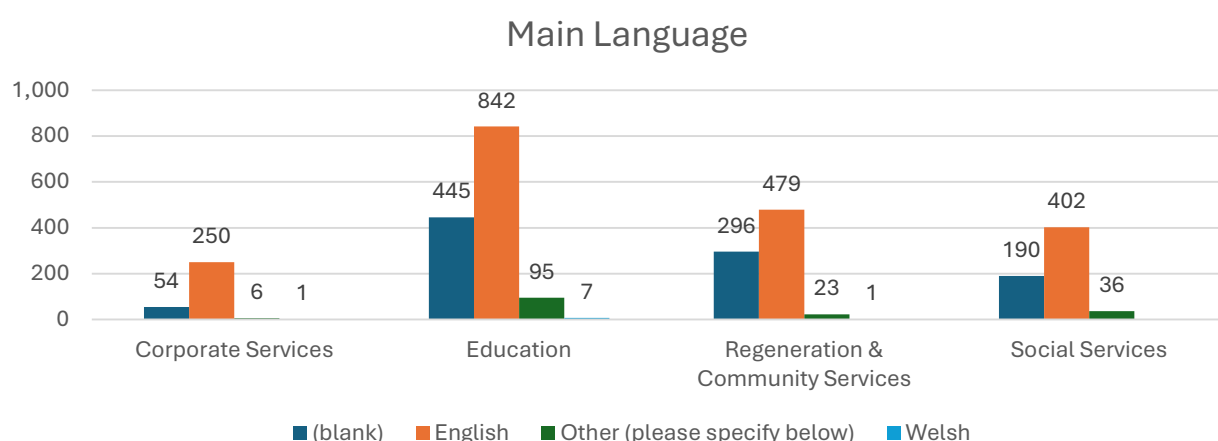
Standard 127

A body must assess the Welsh language skills of its employees

Under Standard 127 all Councils in Wales must keep a record of its staff's Welsh language skills. We record this data via our Organisational Development portal iTrent. Reminders have been sent frequently throughout the year to keep this information up to date.

As of 31st March 2025, there were **2992** staff employed by the Council. The main language of our staff and Welsh language skill level of our staff vary in count as iTrent reporting allows for multiple main language choice and records Welsh language skill levels according to staff roles not staff numbers e.g. some staff hold multiple positions within the authority.

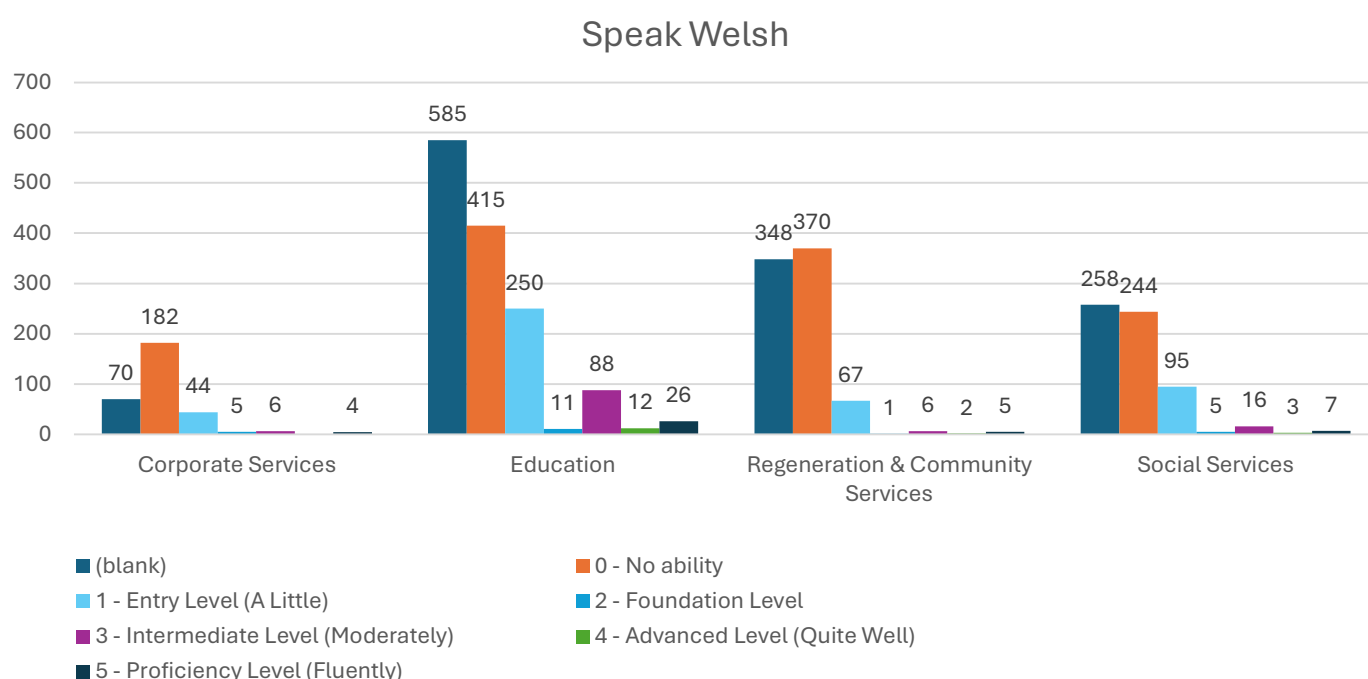
Staff Main Language



Directorate	English	Welsh	Blank	Other	Total
Corporate Services	250	1	54	6	311
Education	842	7	445	95	1,389
Regeneration & Community Services	479	1	296	23	799
Social Services	402	0	190	36	628
Total	1973	9	985	160	3,127*

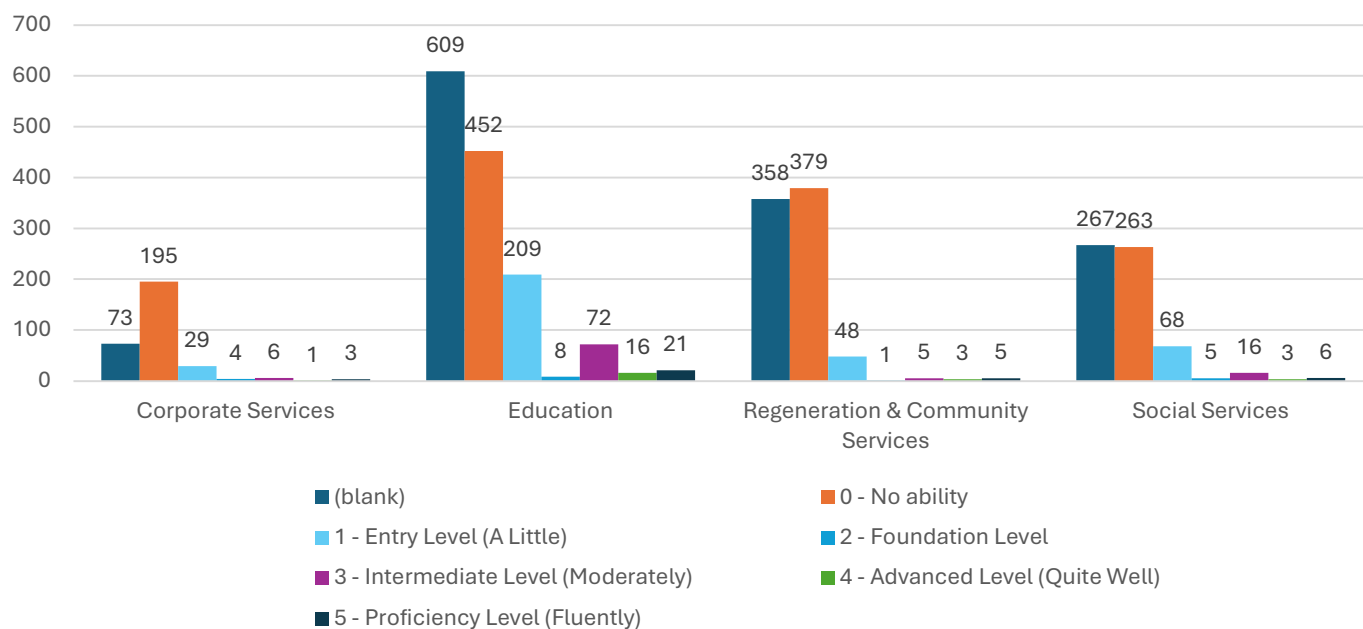
The number of main language Welsh speakers has remained largely stable amongst those providing language information in comparison to last year's data, as presented below. Overall, across all directorate we have lost just 1 main language Welsh language user.

Staff Language Skills



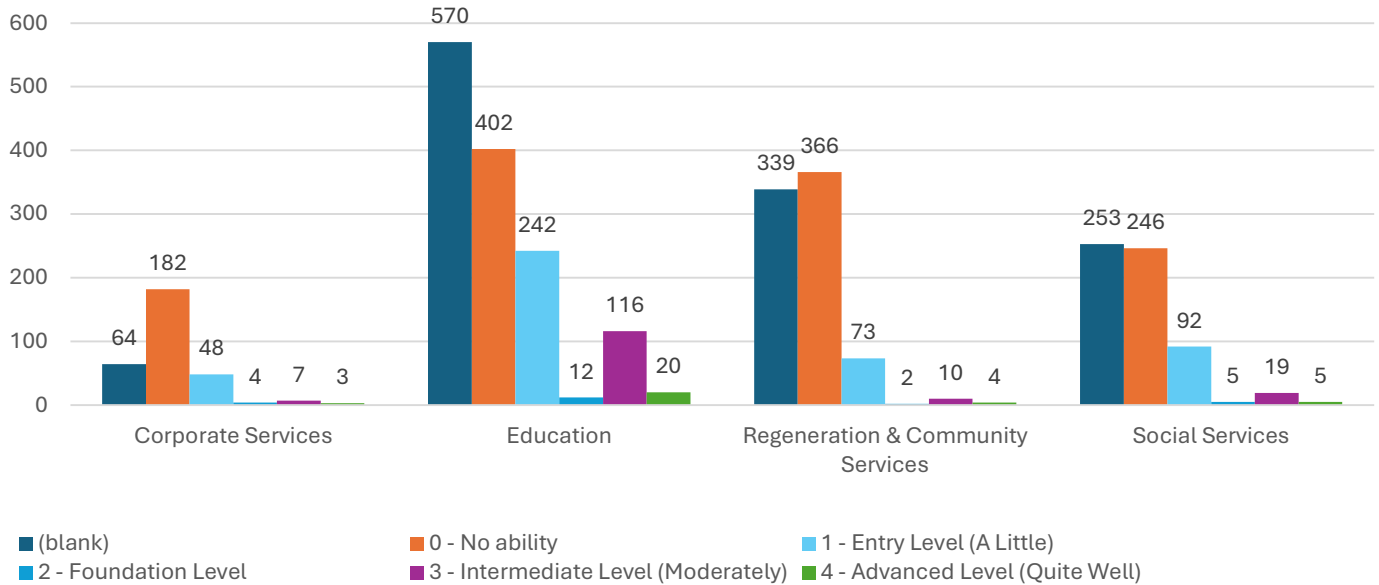
Ability to Speak in Welsh	Number of Staff
Courtesy / Entry Level	433
Foundation	22
Intermediate (Moderately)	115
Advanced (Quite Well)	17
Proficient (Fluently)	42
No Ability	1163
No Response	1232
Total	3024

Write Welsh



Ability to Write in Welsh	Number of Staff
Courtesy / Entry Level	336
Foundation	18
Intermediate (Moderately)	99
Advanced (Quite Well)	23
Proficient (Fluently)	35
No Ability	1238
No Response	1275
Total	3024

Read Welsh



Ability to Read in Welsh	Number of Staff
Courtesy / Entry Level	433
Foundation	23
Intermediate (Moderately)	150
Advanced (Quite Well)	32
Proficient (Fluently)	41
No Ability	1147
No Response	1198
Total	3024

Employees within the organisation have shown an increase in written Welsh ability overall, with an additional 10 individuals indicating some written Welsh skills. Those indicating an ability to read in Welsh to some level has increased marginally with a further 2 members of staff reporting

as such within the given data. The number of employees who have Welsh language speaking skills as of 31st March 2024 amounts to 629 members of staff; they can speak ‘fluently’, ‘quite well’, ‘moderately’, or ‘a little’, this equates to an additional 24 individuals declaring some level of spoken Welsh ability. However, 38% of the total number of staff declare they have no Welsh language speaking ability, this is a 2% positive reduction since the last reporting period.

6. Looking Forward

As we move forward, the Council remains steadfast in its commitment to upholding the Welsh Language Standards, continually promoting, supporting, and strengthening compliance across all areas of service. Our dedication to Welsh language development goes beyond meeting obligations—it reflects our ambition to create an environment where the language thrives, is celebrated, and is seamlessly integrated into everyday life.

In the coming year, we will advance key actions that ensure the Welsh language remains accessible and visible within Blaenau Gwent. The Welsh Language Compliance Group will continue to meet and monitor our progress. We will embed the Shared Prosperity funding to increase Welsh linguistic and cultural visibility, reinforcing our efforts to foster a greater sense of identity and inclusion within the community.

Collaboration will be central to our approach—working closely with local businesses and the Regeneration Team to celebrate Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae, strengthening relationships with partners, and supporting the Education Team in the continued development of Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar. Our commitment to education will also extend to council staff, as we strive to create informal opportunities for Welsh language learning, encouraging more staff to undertake training and develop their fluency.

Internally, we will consistently review and refine our operations to ensure alignment with best practices, making necessary improvements to enhance our Welsh language services. By embedding the language more deeply within our systems and fostering a more bilingual workplace, we aim to empower staff and residents to engage confidently with Welsh as part of their daily interactions.

Above all, we remain dedicated to making a meaningful impact—not only in compliance but in building a future where Welsh language and culture are celebrated, embraced, and sustained. Through these ongoing efforts, we will continue working toward delivering the highest standards of service for our staff, residents, partners, and stakeholders, ensuring the Welsh language remains a cornerstone of our community's identity for generations to come.

Appendix 1



Welsh Language Standards Compliance Action Plan Progress Report

(Investigation CS1170)

February 2025

Version: 1

Submission: 4th March 2025

Contents

	Page No.
1. Introduction 1.1. Background and Context 1.2. Action Plan Development Approach 1.3. Purpose of Report	2-3
2. Review of Existing Services Delivered by the Trust	3-4
3. Standard 52 – Websites	5-6
4. Standard 58 – Social Media	6-8
5. Other Updates	8
6. Next Steps	8

1.1 Background and Context

In July 2023 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) received notice that the Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) received a complaint from a member of the public in relation to Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) not providing Welsh versions of their websites and social media accounts and the installation of English only signs at Parc Bryn Bach. An initial response was submitted in July 2023 confirming that BGCBC subsidises ALT as a third-party body to deliver several core services. However, it acknowledged that we also recognised ALT as a not-for-profit Charitable Trust who delivers a proportion of operations which sit outside of the terms placed on it by the local authority.

Further evidence was submitted in October 2023 following a meeting with the Trust.

A draft report and decision notice were received in February 2024 from the WLCO which provided an outline to the proposed determination of the investigation and any further action the WLCO intended to take. BGCBC was invited to provide comment in writing by March 2024.

BGCBC and ALT met with the WLCO on 7th March 2024 to seek clarity and feedback on the draft report and decision notice which was followed by a written response on the following day (8th March).

On 4th June 2024 a final decision notice with changes made in accordance with the response sent on 8th March was received from the WLCO outlining the failure to comply with the following standards:

Standard 52 You must ensure that – (a) the text of each page of your website is available in Welsh, (b) every Welsh language page on your website is fully functional, and (c) the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language on your website

Standard 58 When you use social media you must not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language.

Standard 61 When you erect a new sign or renew a sign (including temporary signs), any text displayed on the sign must be displayed in Welsh (whether on the same sign as you display corresponding English language text or on a separate sign); and if the same text is displayed in Welsh and in English, you must not treat the Welsh language text less favourably than the English language text.

On 5th September 2024, BGCBC and ALT submitted a final action plan which the WLCO approved on 20th September 2024, for implementation by 20th March 2025.

1.2 Action Plan Development Approach

A working group comprising of BGCBC's Partnership Manager, Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality and Welsh Language, the Service Lead for Young People and Partnerships and the Welsh Policy Officer, and ALT's Operations Director and Marketing and Communications Manager was established to address and resolve the issues raised from Investigation CS1170, specifically relating to standards 52, 58 and 61 in accordance with section 77 of the Welsh Language Measure .

The group is responsible for:

- Conducting a comprehensive review of how ALT meets the communication standards and requirements that are part of the investigation;
- Establishing and executing a plan of how ALT will achieve the communication and standards required, throughout the organisation;
- Determining the external support and systems required to ensure sufficient resources for meeting the standards;
- Determining the training required across ALT to ensure compliance to the requirements over the long-term across all business units within the Trust, including Welsh language skills provision and evaluating the language needs for posts); and
- Full implementation of the CS1170 Action Plan.

The group has met regularly, to formulate the action plan and the investigation's needs and to review progress achieving the full implementation of the actions to meet the WLCO's requirements.

1.3 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a final update on actions taken to-date to implement the Action Plan for Investigation CS1170. For background information on the services applicable, that are delivered by the Trust, please refer to Appendix 1.

2. Review of Existing Services Delivered by the Trust

The investigation was opened due to concerns raised during the WLCO's receipt of a complaint regarding signage at Parc Bryn Bach and website and social media communication. The below summary is an update on the status of these key issues and where the Trust stands in addressing the actions agreed with the WLCO.

1. The Council must undertake a review to establish which of the following are delivered on its behalf by the Trust: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pages and information published on its websites - Posts on its social media accounts - Signs on display 						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish*	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Progress	Budgetary Commitments*
Action 1.a	Undertake an in-depth review of what services are delivered by the Trust on behalf of the Council.	August 2024	August 2024	PS	See appendix 1 for full review. Completed. Query regarding swimming lessons to be advised by the WLCO to enable ALT to adhere to instructions.	NA
Action 1.b	Use Appendix 1 to aid review of management agreement and core pricing document.	August 2024	August 2024	PS	Completed for 2025/6. To be used on an annual basis.	N/A
Action 1.c	Monitor Appendix 1 updating as required. Schedule annual reviews of appendix 1 and core pricing at point of contract renewal.	August 2024	Ongoing	PS	2025/26 contract discussed and management fee agreed. To be used on an annual basis.	N/A

3. Standard 52 - Websites

Prior to the investigation, two of the Trust's website – Aneurin Leisure Trust and BG Life – had full Welsh accessibility. This has now been extended to the other two websites, Parc Bryn Bach and Bedwellty House and Park.

A disclaimer has been added to all events pages to communicate, where applicable, that events are not delivered in the medium of Welsh. This has been extended to print and social media.

Standard 52 You must ensure that – (a) the text of each page of your website is available in Welsh, (b) every Welsh language page on your website is fully functional, and (c) the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language on your website.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish*	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Progress	Budgetary Commitments*
S52.1	<p>Determine translation provider, to existing site or development of an additional Welsh language version of the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parc Bryn Bach https://www.parcbrynbach.co.uk/ - Bedwellty House and Park https://www.bedwelltyhouseandpark.com/ - Blaenau Gwent Life https://www.bglife.co.uk/ - Aneurin Leisure Trust https://www.aneurinleisure.org.uk/ 	July 2024	August 2024	JH	Translation undertaken using Weglot. Completed. Ongoing monitoring of usage is reported to BGCBC monthly.	£400 for PBB and BHAP website. £290 pa for BHAP. £790 pa for ALT, BG Life and PBB.
S52.2	Put disclaimers in place on sections of the website that are updated regularly, and refer to services that are not being delivered on behalf of the Council (such as the events page), that note as such and that the event may not be delivered via the medium of Welsh.	August 2024	Ongoing	JH	Completed for all current events. Mandatory inclusion for all events moving forward.	Part of monthly fee. Part of ongoing design costs.

4. Standard 58 – Social Media

All planned activity, in accordance with Appendix 1, is communicated in Welsh and English.

A social media management platform, Loomly, has been identified as a necessity for managing the numerous social media platforms that the Trust has.

Aneurin Leisure Trust is in the process of changing its legal name from Life Leisure Trust to Aneurin Leisure Trust and the contract with Loomly will be established once this has been completed. The name change is anticipated to be completed by end March 2025.

Following the implementation of Loomly, the marketing team will provide training to all business units of the new management platform to enable them to undertake Welsh and English posts that are required for key communication to the community regarding activity that has not been planned. The process for this has been established and communicated to ALT's Senior Management Team to discuss with the relevant personnel in their business areas prior to the training taking place.

Standard 58 When you use social media you must not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish*	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Progress	Budgetary Commitments*
S58.1	Marketing team to use Appendix 1 and core pricing sheet for reference when creating SM posts.	August 2024	Ongoing	JH	Process in-place for marketing team and communicated to all teams via the senior management team.	NA
S58.2	Create a bank of social media templates that can be populated to reflect the specific scenario by non-Welsh speaking staff. (e.g. TOWN Leisure Centre closed DATE // TOWN Canolfan Hamdden ar gau DATE)	August 2024	Ongoing	JH	Existing and ongoing templates logged on intranet for company-wide reference. The marketing team updates these on a continuous basis.	Significant rise in translation and design support – monitored monthly.
S58.3	Establish current Welsh spell-checking software provision, increasing access and staff ability to use effectively where necessary.	September 2024	March 2025	BGCBC/ALT	Process for urgent work agreed; Google Translate, checked by an online Welsh spell checker https://www.cysgliad.com/cysill/arlein/	N/A

* Timeframes reflect a 6-month implementation period from plan approval of 20th September 2024.

					All planned work to go through an approved translator.	
S58.3	Deliver training sessions to all officers across the portfolio with digital media responsibility to understand requirements and use of the BGCBC approved translator list and templates created.	August 2024	March 2025	PS/JH	Social media management platform to be implemented subject to legal name change of the Trust. Loomly identified. Training to be undertaken when in-place for all SM users.	TBF
S58.4	Create network of ALT staff who have Welsh language skills who would be able to assist with Welsh language social media posts.	August 2024	Ongoing	JH	Currently there is no network of ALT staff therefore the process of using approved translators will be implemented.	NA

5. Other Updates

ALT has reviewed its recruitment process and will ensure that Welsh is desirable for all jobs, unless it is a mandatory requirement.

ALT will ensure that all job recruitment ads are bilingual.

ALT has provided all staff with the opportunity to undertake a 'Welsh in the Workplace' course, free of charge.

ALT will instruct all staff that they must meet and greet customers in both Welsh and English.

6. Next Steps

ALT is progressing all actions from the above that are WIP in accordance with the timing outlined by the WLCO.

BGCBC and ALT will continue to meet regularly to review the actions and status.

Appendix 1

The table below outlines:

- (i) The services which the Council commissions ALT to deliver, and,
 - (ii) The services that do not form part of the legal agreement and are delivered and funded entirely through the Trust, either as part of their charitable status or through their trading arm.
-
- (i) Schedule 1 lists the Council's commissioned services; this is a direct copy within the legal agreement:

SCHEDULE 1 FACILITIES

SPORT AND FITNESS			
FACILITY	LANDLORD	FACILITY ADDRESS	WELSH LANGUAGE PROVIDED
Abertillery Sport Centre (ASC)	BGCBC	Alma Street, Abertillery, NP13 1QD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ All directional signage▪ All pay as you go activities▪ WG funded activities
Ebbw Vale Sport Centre (EVSC)	BGCBC	Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6GL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ All directional signage▪ All pay as you go activities (including hydrosides)▪ WG funded activities
Tredegar Sport Centre (TSC)	BGCBC	Stable Lane, Tredegar, NP22 4BH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ All directional signage▪ All pay as you go activities▪ WG funded activities

HOSPITALITY AND PARKS			
FACILITY	LANDLORD	FACILITY ADDRESS	WELSH LANGUAGE PROVIDED
<p>Bewellty House and Park (BHAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bedwellty House ▪ Bedwellty Park (Main Block) ▪ Bedwellty Park Bandstand ▪ Bedwellty Park Bush Toilets ▪ Bedwellty Park Ice House ▪ Bedwellty Park Long Shelter ▪ Bedwellty Park Stables / Mess Room ▪ Block of Coal / Shelter ▪ Ty Bach <p>Excludes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cenataph – Tredegar Town Council ▪ The Lodge – BGCBC 	BGCBC	Morgan Street., Tredegar, NP22 3XN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grounds directional signage ▪ House directional signage ▪ Heritage information boards
<p>Parc Bryn Bach (PBB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Park Grounds ▪ Visitor Centre ▪ Driving Range 	BGCBC	Merthyr Road, Tredegar, NP22 3AY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grounds directional signage ▪ Visitor Centre directional signage

		<u>PARTNERSHIPS CONTRACTS & FUNDING</u>	
FACILITY	LANDLORD	FACILITY ADDRESS	WELSH LANGUAGE PROVIDED
Abertillery Adult Community Learning Centre (ACLC)	BGCBC	Trinity Chapel, Church Street, Abertillery NP13 1DB	All bilingual
Ebbw Vale ACLC	BGCBC	James Street, Ebbw Vale NP23 6JG	All bilingual
Abertillery Library	BGCBC	Trinity Chapel, Church Street, Abertillery NP13 1DB	All bilingual
Brynmawr Library & ACLC (Shared Facility)	BGCBC	Market Square, Brynmawr NP23 4AJ	All bilingual
Cwm Library	BGCBC	Canning Street, Cwm, NP23 7RW	All bilingual
Ebbw Vale Library	BGCBC	21 Bethcar Street, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6HH	All bilingual
Tredeggar Library	BGCBC	The Circle, Tredeggar, NP22 3PS	All bilingual
Blaina Library	Blaina Community Institute Limited	The Institute, Blaina NP13 3BN	All bilingual (library room only as rented space)

- (ii) The services below are delivered, funded or traded entirely through the Trust, either as part of their charitable status or through their trading arm which does not form part of the legal agreement with the Council.

Sports Centres Swimming Memberships including:

- Adult and Child Aqua Membership
- Adult and Child Swimming Membership
- Adult and Child Swimming Lessons Membership
- Gymnasium Memberships (Child, Student, Adult and Concession)
- Pool Birthday Parties
- Swim School (club bookings)

Parc Bryn Bach additional services:

- Caravan Site
- Bunkhouse

- Paddle Boarding
- Open Water Swimming
- Kayaking
- Canoeing
- Team Building
- Go Karting
- Mini Golf
- Climbing Wall
- Wellbeing Work Hub (Meeting Room)
- Caving Container
- Driving Range
- Archery
- BMX Track
- Mountain Bike Trail
- Nature Trails
- Play Area
- Residentials (bunkhouse)
- Café
- Sporting Events
- Social Events

Bedwellty House and Park additional services:

- Community Events
- Weddings/Civil Ceremonies
- Dining
- Business Events/Conferences
- Private Venue Hire

Appendix 2



Welsh Language Standards Compliance Action Plan Final Progress Report

(Investigation CS092)

Version: 2

Submission: 18/04/24

Contents

	Page No.
7. Introduction 7.1. Background and Context 7.2. Action Plan Development Approach 7.3. Purpose of Report	2-3
8. Telephone Actions Standards 8, 11, 17	4-14
9. Training Actions Standards 130, 131, 132, 133	15-24
10. Recruitment Actions Standards 127, 136, 136a	25-31
11. Promotion of Improved Services Standard 81	32-33
12. Next Steps	34-35

1.1 Background and Context

The CS092 investigation (“the investigation”) was opened by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) in November 2021 (see appendix 1). Following concerns raised during a direct verification assessment of whether Blaenau Gwent Council was compliant with the Welsh Language Standards in terms of providing a Welsh language telephone service.

In April 2022, the Council provided an initial response to the investigation, which in turn raised further compliance concerns with regards to promoting services, assessing the language skills of staff, providing training opportunities and assessing the language needs of posts. This led to the terms of reference for the investigation being widened to include a number of additional operational standards.

In September 2022, a final determination of the investigation, in accordance with Section 77 of the Welsh Language (Wales) 2011 Measure, was provided to the Council. The determination outlined the steps required to reach compliance and expected delivery timeframes. It also requested the Council take forward an organisational approach (including clear accountability and governance framework) to develop an Action Plan, with a deadline 31 January 2023. The determination report was presented to the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team in September 2022. A written response was provided to the WLCO.

Results from the 2021 Census found that Blaenau Gwent’s population size has decreased by 4.2%, from around 69,800 in 2011 to 66,900. This is the second largest percentage reduction in population of 22 local authorities in Wales and Blaenau Gwent is one of only seven local authorities with a reduction in population. This also means that Blaenau Gwent now has the second smallest population in Wales, while in 2011 it had the third smallest population.

The 2021 Census identified 4,035 Welsh speakers living in Blaenau Gwent, which equates to 6.03% of its population.

The Council aims to help and enhance the availability of Welsh Primary school education and in Secondary schools through our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/32 and Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27, which will assist in raising the number of Welsh speakers in Blaenau Gwent. Moreover, we will be actively supporting the advertising of Welsh language training courses to adults and our own staff who live and work in the locality.

1.2 Action Plan Development Approach

A decision was made by the Council's Leadership Team to establish an organisational Core Officer Group (CS092) who are responsible for preparing the Action Plan and the supplementary Advice Document.

The group are responsible for:

- Conducting a comprehensive review of how the organisation meets the Service Delivery Standards that are part of the investigation;
- Making a plan for how the organisation will achieve the Operational Standards throughout the organisation;
- Determining the staff needs for how the Council is going to ensure sufficient resources to meet the Telephone Standards;
- Improving the awareness across the organisation of what the standards relevant to the investigation require (especially regarding the language skills assessment, Welsh language training and evaluating the language needs of posts); and
- Creating, developing and then carrying out the CS092 Action Plan.

The group met several times to talk about the investigation's needs and to work on a draft Action Plan. The Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality and Welsh, Welsh Language Support Officer, and Action Leads also had individual meetings to finish the main details of the draft plan.

A Microsoft Teams Channel was set up for the Core Officer Group to regularly exchange files, information and progress reports as well as help with initial implementation work.

The final draft Action Plan was presented to the Corporate Leadership Team for review and was approved on the 26th January 2022.

The Welsh Language Commissioner approved the action plan under section 80(3) of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 on the 5th of April 2023.

1.3 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on actions taken to implement the Action Plan written in response to the investigation opened on the Council by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office. For background information on the investigation's findings and our monitoring procedures please see Appendix 1.

2. Telephone Actions

The investigation was opened due to concerns raised during the WLCO's monitoring of the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. The following information provides an update on the work that has taken place to improve our compliance with the standards raised during the investigation surrounding our telephone services.

Standards raised during the investigation:

Standard 8: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must greet the person in Welsh.

Standard 11: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must deal with the call in Welsh if the person so wishes –

- a) until it is necessary to transfer the call to a member of non-Welsh speaking staff who can provide service on a specific subject matter; until no Welsh speaking member of staff is available to provide service on that specific subject matter.

Standard 17: When there is no Welsh language service available on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must inform the caller (whether by means of an automated message or otherwise) when a Welsh language service will be available.

Council Action:

The staff guidance on how to use the Welsh language when answering phone calls was reviewed, which involved assessing feedback from the 'Connect to Blaenau Gwent' (C2BG) call handlers.

As an outcome of the evaluation, the guidance on the intranet for staff was made simpler and better, with sound clips of each phrase, one said slowly and one at a normal speed. These changes are meant to make the guidance easier to use, for staff who do not have any Welsh language skills. This updated guidance was used to help create more training for staff with lower levels of Welsh language ability. *(Related to action points references S8.1a, S8.2a, S17.1a)*

The revised guidance has also been incorporated within the 'Employee Induction Process' for all new members of staff. (See page 16 for more information).

The updated guidance also provides a process map for accessing a Welsh speaker in the cases where a fluent speaker is required to assist with a call (**S11.1a**). To support this process regular reminders to staff to update their language skills as part of their staff profiles have been circulated (*see Appendix 2*), this has helped ensure we are maximising our Welsh language skills for telephone support as part of the CS092 Communications Plan (**S8.3a, S11.1b, S11.1c, & Appendices 3, 4¹, 5 and 6**). As a result, several 'Welsh Language Champions' across different service areas have been identified (**S11.1d**). Furthermore, it is hoped that a further increase of champions will be identified as a result of our updated recruitment process' (**S11.2d**).

As part of the Welsh Language Communications Plan (**S8.3a**), we have informed all staff about the updated guidance that stresses the importance of greeting callers in Welsh (*See Appendix 8*). Customer facing staff managers have also gone to a briefing session to reinforce the importance of maintaining the standard (**S8.2b, S8.3b**).

¹ Please also note that not all promotions included within the CS092 Communications Plan have been added as appendices some messages were sent on more than one occasion to highlight importance. We used the communications plan to send out Standards reminders when raised during our monitoring visit, and when it became apparent that departments were unclear on their requirements under our Compliance Notice. We have also embedded the cultural celebrations into the Communications Plan such as Diwrnod Shwmae, Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen, Dydd Miwsig Cymru, Diwrnod Hawliau'r Gymraeg, in order to increase the awareness and raise the cultural profile within our organisation. See Appendix 4.

As the demand for Welsh language calls within our area is low it has been imperative that our staff are still having the opportunity to practice Welsh language telephone procedures with the support of our Welsh language Officer **(S11.2c, S11.3c)**.

One of the ways the Welsh Language Officer provides support is by doing internal monitoring calls. The checks have shown mostly good progress in handling Welsh Language calls and when problems have occurred it has enabled solutions, for example one occasion identified a lengthy delay in identifying a Welsh speaking member of staff. This delay was of no fault of the call centre staff who had followed the telephone procedure accordingly. Therefore, to avoid similar situations in the future a Microsoft Teams' channel was created to include all call handlers and identified Welsh Speaking Staff across the organisation **(S11.1b)** (including the Welsh Language Champions) **(see Appendix 9)**. The channel has enabled instant messaging of availability for to support Welsh Speaking callers **(See appendix 10)**. We remain in the early stages of implementation of this channel and will continue to review its functionality. We intend on sending more communications to all staff and directly to managers, to ensure all relevant staff are included within the channel, as well as considering how we can embed the action of adding customer facing staff to the channel, into the Corporate Induction process.

As part of this action plan, the Strategic Transformation Team have been conducting a comprehensive telephony review across the organisation. The review has helped us to find out which telephone numbers receive the most calls and have automated messages **(S8.1b, S8.4a, S17.1b)**. After finding out that the C2BG Contact Centre, Council Tax/Revenues and Housing numbers are the busiest lines, we have been able to examine the automated messages linked to these lines. Therefore, the automated messages have been revised to meet the standards and provide better service by being more concise and consistent. **(See Appendix 11)** The uniform greeting that we have applied across the updated lines is the one that staff should use from now on when they think about the Welsh language needs of a phone service (see slide 16 of appendix 11 for universal greeting) **(S8.1c S8.4b)**.

The service areas associated with the Telephony Review, alongside a number of staff from the Children and Adults Information Advice and Assistance teams, are currently attending weekly tutor-led virtual Welsh language training. **(S11.2a, S11.2b, S11.3a, 17.3a)** The course is a part of the Work Welsh Scheme delivered by Dysgu Cymraeg / Learn Welsh and is fully funded. The course will run for 35 weeks, meeting for two hours weekly accumulating 70 hours of training, those attending the sessions have also formed a community of practice to reflect on what they have learnt in between sessions. **(S11.1d)**

Standard 8: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must greet the person in Welsh.

S8.1	The Council must develop a standard Welsh language telephone greeting.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S8.1A	Review current guidance for telephone greeting customer-facing service areas and make necessary amends.	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King Bernadette Elias	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships) Leanne Roberts (Customer Experience)	Policy & Partnerships / Customer Experience service area budgets	
S8.1B	Identify service areas with automated messaging service and high-call volumes via BG Council Telephony Review Project (S8.4A) and review compliance.	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.1C	Develop consistent pre-recorded Welsh greeting automated message to be used by Customer-facing services, where appropriate, including pre-recorded bi-lingual Voicemail messages (S8.4B).	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.1D	Promote amended Welsh Language telephone greeting guidance to all staff via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications)	Communications service area budgets	

S8.2	The Council must train all Council staff dealing with telephone calls from the public on how to give the standard Welsh telephone greeting accurately and in compliance with Standard 8.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S8.2A	Use improved guidance (S8.1A) to develop mandatory Welsh language training slides on greeting accurately for all staff.	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S8.2B	Promote Welsh language training slides on greeting accurately via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S8.3	The Council must raise awareness within its staff of the importance of providing a Welsh greeting and of including a Welsh greeting at the beginning of calls.						
S8.3A	Development and implementation of CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S8.3B	Management teams to proactively raise awareness of the importance of providing a Welsh greeting and at the beginning of calls via Team Meetings / 1-1s. Promotion via Managers Brief included with CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S8.4	The Council must evaluate any automated greeting messages to check that a greeting in Welsh is placed on the automated message if a greeting is given in English.						
S8.4A	Identify service areas with automated messaging service and high-call volumes via BG Council Telephony Review Project (S8.4A) and review compliance	Mar-23	Apr-24	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.4B	Develop consistent pre-recorded Welsh greeting automated message to be used by customer-facing services, where appropriate, including pre-recorded bi-lingual voicemail messages	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships) Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.5	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 4 have been completed.						
S8.5A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.

Standard 11: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must deal with the call in Welsh if the person so wishes –

a) until it is necessary to transfer the call to a member of non-Welsh speaking staff who can provide service on a specific subject matter; until no Welsh speaking member of staff is available to provide service on that specific subject matter.

S11.1 The Council must put in place guidelines for all staff on how to deal with telephone calls in accordance with Standard 11.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	
S11.1A	Review current guidelines for Welsh language telephone answering procedure and make necessary amends (including development of process map)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Leanne Roberts (Customer Experience) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Customer Experience service area budget	
S11.1B	Review and update Corporate Welsh Language Speakers Intranet Directory for handling calls on 'specific subject matters'	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.1C	Promotion of Corporate Welsh Language Speakers Intranet Directory via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S11.1D	Development of Welsh Language Community of Practice and identification of Welsh Language Champions across service areas.	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

	Those noted in the telephone book and the customer facing staff doing training to be champions						
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S11.2	The Council must ensure that it has resources to deal with all calls received in accordance with Standard 11. The Council must ensure that there are sufficient Welsh speakers in the call centre to deal with telephone calls from persons who wish to conduct the call in Welsh, in accordance with standard 11.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	
S11.2A	Establish Welsh language training budgets available across key customer-facing service areas identified via Telephone Project (S8.4A)	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.2B	Provide long-term programme of training for existing customer service staff (call centre) upskilling them to deal with calls in accordance with Standard 11	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.2C	Conduct regular practice sessions with customer service staff (call centre) to assess functionality of procedure continually highlighting and addressing areas for improvement	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King/ Bernadette Elias / Tanya Evans	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.2D	Improve recruitment process for Welsh language speakers in accordance with Welsh Language Standard 136 (S136.1, S136.2, S136.3, S136.4 & S136A.1, S136A.2)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	

S11.3	The Council must provide training to all staff dealing with telephone calls on how to provide a Welsh language service in accordance with Standard 11.						
S11.3A	Delivery of long-term programme of training for staff dealing with telephone calls upskilling them to deal with calls in accordance with Standard 11 (S11.2B)	Mar-23	Apr-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.3B	Promotion of training to all staff dealing with telephone calls on how to provide a Welsh language service in accordance with Standard 11 via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Apr-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S11.3C	Conduct practice sessions with staff to assess functionality of procedure continually highlighting and addressing areas for improvement	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King/ Bernadette Elias / Tanya Evans	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S11.4	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 4 have been completed.						
S11.4A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

** Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration*

Standard 17: When there is no Welsh language service available on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must inform the caller (whether by means of an automated message or otherwise) when a Welsh language service will be available.

S17.1 When no Welsh language telephone service is available, the Council must inform callers when a Welsh language service will be available in accordance with standard 17.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S17.1A	Review current guidelines for Welsh language telephone answering procedure and make necessary amends (including development of process map) (S11.1A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Leanne Roberts (Customer Experience) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships / Customer Experience service area budgets	
S17.1B	Identify service areas with automated messaging service and high-call volumes via BG Council Telephony Review Project (S8.4A) and review compliance.	Mar-23	Jun-23	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	

S17.2 The Council must provide guidance to all staff dealing with relevant telephone calls on the new procedure.

S17.2A	Promote amended Welsh language telephone guidance to all staff via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
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S17.3	The Council must provide staff with training on the new procedure.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S17.3A	Delivery of long-term programme of training for staff dealing with telephone calls upskilling them to deal with calls in accordance with Standard 11 (S11.2B)	Mar-23	Apr-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S17.4	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 3 have been completed.						
S17.4A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

** Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.*

3. Training

Standard 130: You must provide opportunities during working hours

- a) for your employees to receive basic Welsh language lessons, and
- b) for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

Standard 131: You must provide opportunities for your employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge to develop their language skills

Standard 132: You must provide training courses so that your employees develop –

- a) awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of the history of the language and its place in the culture of Wales);
- b) an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards;
- c) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace

Standard 133: When providing information to new employees (for example, by means of an induction process), you must provide information for the purpose of raising their awareness of the Welsh language.

Council Action:

The Standards noted above are in place to ensure our organisation is providing Welsh related training opportunities for all staff. While the Council has provided training opportunities to staff since the Welsh Language Standards were introduced, the following update outlines the actions we have taken to be more proactive in encouraging staff to access our training provisions.

The 'Post-Entry Training Policy' (*see Appendix 12*) provides guidance to managers and their staff around the logistics of training during working hours. This policy concerns itself with courses that lead to a formally recognised qualification. We recognise the importance for staff who consult this document for guidance to know about all the Welsh courses at different levels, because we know that Welsh skills are beneficial for all roles (**S130.1a**). Therefore, we a section has been added to the policy (*see p.3 section 1.5 of appendix 12*) that directs staff to the Welsh language training procedure (**S131.1a**) (*see appendix 13*).

This action plan developed the training procedure to meet the training needs, (**S132.1a**) which included Welsh language awareness; the obligation to follow the standards; how to apply the Welsh language in the work setting; and language courses from beginner to advanced (**S132.1a, S132.1c**) (*See appendix 14 for examples of resources on the Council's intranet*). The changes to the procedure were noted in the managers' brief (*see appendix 15*) encouraging managers to familiarize themselves with the procedure and inform their staff of the updates (**S132.1d**). Furthermore, it is standard practice to attach the procedure when responding to any queries from staff regarding Welsh language training (**S130.1b, S131.1b**). We also send regular reminders to all staff regarding the training opportunities available to them (**S132.2b**) (*see appendix 16 and 17 for some examples*).

The training procedure and the recruitment authorisation form (see recruitment actions) state that managers must inform the Welsh Language Support Officer when their staff start any Welsh training. (**S130.2b, S131.2b**).

One of the actions in the plan is to provide a Welsh language training package through the new e-learning portal that is being developed, by October 2023. However, the new portal will not be accessible to staff until mid-April 2024. Therefore, while Welsh language training is

included in the portal's design, this action has been delayed. As a result, the development of a stronger monitoring procedure that ensures Welsh language training is repeated regularly through the e-learning portal will start once the portal is ready for staff use (**S132.2a**). As an interim measure, our monitoring is done via email messages sent to our Welsh Language Officer when a staff member has finished an online unit, and quarterly summary reports obtained from Dysgu Cymraeg. Managers also need to inform the Welsh Language Officer if any of their staff starts any Welsh related training. As mentioned above, this message is emphasized in our training procedure, and recruitment authorization form. This information is shared in the Welsh Language Annual Report (*see Appendix 18*) (**S130.2a, S131.2a, S131.2b**). We are close to launching the new training portal, 'Thinqi', where the Welsh Language will have a prominent role in the induction courses for staff.

The induction programme on the Council's intranet has been updated to encourage more active compliance with the Council's Welsh language requirements. A key improvement is directing employees to the Welsh language guidance and training aspects related to the telephone procedure (**S133.1Ai, S133.1Aii, S133.2a**) (*See Appendices 19, 20, 21*). To ensure managers are applying these changes, the revisions to our induction procedure were included in the managers brief (**S133.1b, S133.2b**) (*see Appendix 15*).

It is important to note that at this stage not all recruitment related documents are available in Welsh, this is due to budgetary matters. Our Organisational Development team are currently undergoing a review of all policies and procedures, including moving to a modified version of 'iTrent' and training portal 'Thinqi', as such the documents will be translated when the portfolio of work is undergoing transition.

Standard 130: You must provide opportunities during working hours - (a) for your employees to receive basic Welsh language lessons, and (b) for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

S130.1 The Council must create a procedure to provide opportunities during working for its employees to have basic Welsh language lessons, and for employees who manage other people to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S130.1A	Review and development of Post-entry Training Policy to include procedure to provide opportunities for all staff to receive basic Welsh language training during work time.	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S130.1B	Revised Post-Entry Training Policy promoted to all staff via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	May-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S130.2	The Council must record how many staff are offered this training and how many staff receive this training annually.						
S130.2A	Quarterly performance information to be collated from Welsh Government, Dysgu Cymraeg and training providers re numbers of staff receiving training.	Mar-23	Oct- 23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S130.2B	Managers and staff encouraged to inform the Welsh Language Support Officer when staff receive Welsh language training via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Communications / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S130.3	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 2 have been completed.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRSAG
S130.3A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.

Standard 131: You must provide opportunities for your employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge to develop their language skills

S131.1 The Council must create a procedure to provide opportunities for its employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge, to develop their language skills.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S131.1A	Development of Welsh Language Training - Managers & Staff Guide to include procedure to provide opportunities for all staff to receive further Welsh language training free of charge, to develop their language skills	Mar-23	May-23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S131.1B	Revised Welsh Language Training - Managers & Staff Guide promoted to all staff via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Jun-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S131.2	The Council must record how many staff are offered this training and how many staff receive this training annually.						
S131.2A	Quarterly performance information to be collated from training providers re numbers of staff receiving further Welsh language training.	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S131.2B	All Council managers must keep a record of staff receiving Welsh Language Training and must provide annual summary to Policy & Partnerships Team	Mar-23	Oct-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S131.3	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 2 have been completed.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S131.3A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration

Standard 132: You must provide training courses so that your employees develop -

- (a) awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of the history of the language and its place in the culture of Wales);**
- (b) an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards;**

(c) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.							
S132.1	The Council must provide training to its employees on awareness of the Welsh language, an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and an understanding of the way in which the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S132.1A	Welsh language training package to be developed in accordance with Standard 132. (S132.1D)	Mar -23	Jun-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S132.1B	Welsh language training package to be made available to all staff via the Council's new e-learning portal (currently being commissioned).	Oct -23	Oct -23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	The e-learning portal will be made available to staff at the mid-April 2024.
S132.1C	Review and development of Welsh language awareness guidelines available to all staff via the intranet ensuring it includes required learning elements in accordance with Standard 131	Mar-23	Oct-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S132.1D	Promotion of Welsh language training package and Welsh language awareness guidelines via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S132.2	The Council must have a procedure in place that ensures this training is repeated periodically.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S132.2A	Develop procedure for ensuring Welsh language training is repeated periodically via e-learning portal (including refresher training)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	See action S132.1b.
S132.2B	Periodic Welsh language training (e.g., refreshers) to be promoted via the CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan	Oct-23	Dec-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S132.2	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 2 have been completed.						
S132.3a	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration

Standard 133 : When providing information to new employees (for example, by means of an induction process), you must provide information for the purpose of raising their awareness of the Welsh language.

S133.1	The Council must modify its induction procedures and sessions to include the provision of information to new employees for the purpose of raising their awareness of the Welsh language.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S133.1Ai	Developing and providing information to support the induction programme	Mar-23	Jun -23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S133.1Aii	Review and development of existing online / PDF induction programme to ensure it includes required learning elements in accordance with Standard 131	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S133.1B	Promotion of revised online / PDF induction programme via the Welsh language via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S133.2	The Council must prepare an information pack on the Welsh language and share this pack with all new members of staff.						

S133.2A	Development of information pack on the Welsh language to be included within induction information for new staff and include in Welsh Language Guidance for staff (S133.1A)	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S133.2B	Promotion of revised induction procedure and sessions via the Welsh language via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A) (S133.1B)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S133.3	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that it has carried out enforcement actions 1 and 2.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S133.3A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration

4. Recruitment

Standard 127: You must assess the Welsh language skills of your employees.

Standard 136: When assessing the requirements for a new or vacant post, you must assess the need for Welsh language skills, and categorise it as a post where one or more of the following apply:

- a) Welsh language skills are essential
- b) Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post;
- c) Welsh language skills are desirable; or
- d) Welsh language skills are not necessary

Standard 136A: If you have categorised a post as one in which Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt, you must:

- a) specify that when advertising the post, and
- b) advertise the post in Welsh

Council Action:

The staff profiles on the 'iTrent' system allow the council to monitor the language abilities of the staff. The data is published as part of our Welsh Language Annual Report (***see Appendix 18***). The data also helps us with our service delivery, for example when we undertake Welsh Language monitoring calls (***S127.2a***).

The Council follow the Association of Language Testers in Europe's (ALTE) framework to evaluate the skills of staff, based on staff self-assessments on 'iTrent'. When considering the Welsh Language Skills Assessment Procedure, we had given thought using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). However, after undertaking an initial trial with Managers, we identified that staff felt that the standards in the CEFR's beginner levels were too high and could make staff who would normally think they have the basic skills in the ALTE framework to lower their levels to a level 0. As a result, we continue to use the familiar ALTE framework but have amalgamated the Senedd's 'Courtesy' level and the ALTE frameworks level 1, (***see Appendix 22***) as we hope to break the stigma surrounding Welsh language abilities we have encountered when talking with our staff and learning from our Welsh language networks (***S136A.1b***). A copy of the framework is available to staff on the 'iTrent' system to make it a more simple and quicker for all staff to keep their language skill levels up to date. (***S127.1a, S127.2b***) (***see Appendix 23***).

The introduction of 'Courtesy Level' has helped staff to understand their own abilities and how they contribute to our organisation, as well as making them more aware of training opportunities available. We created an internal and external communication campaign that showed the benefit we as an employer get from this 'Courtesy Level' Welsh (***S127.1c, S127.2c, S136a.1c***). We were happy to see that this campaign was used as an example of good practice at a Regional Welsh in Education Network Meeting that discussed the Draft Engagement and Marketing Strategy in October 2023. (***see Appendices 24 and 25***)

The recruitment process has been updated and improved to include a check of the language skill requirements for each role before posting new vacancies. The Recruitment Authorisation

Form has been changed (*see Appendix 26*) to include a flowchart that will decide the level of skills needed on the job advert and the training the successful applicant will have to complete (*S136.2a, 136a.1a*). The form now accounts for the Welsh language capacity of the existing staff in the group and the department's ability to offer services in Welsh (*see Appendix 26*). The form also considers how often the role needs to interact with customers to provide the right level and amount of mandatory training. The expected outcomes of these changes are to raise the number of roles that are advertised as requiring Welsh language and increase the number of staff who take training.

These pivotal updates have been promoted to managers through all manager correspondence (*see Appendix 27*), presentations at Departmental Management Team meetings, and is included within the Welsh at Work Guidance sessions being provided across the organisation via the Welsh Language Officer. (*S136.1a, S136.3a*)

We have trialled the use of online platforms to recruit Welsh speakers, for example when we posted the vacancy for our new Welsh Language Officer (*S127.1b*), and we anticipate that these platforms will be used more often now that more positions will require Welsh skills. However, given the current financial situation that we and most Councils face and the cost per advert between £100-£150, it is likely that the positions advertised through these platforms will be those that need the higher-level skills. Nevertheless, we will keep using our networks to share our vacancies that require Welsh language skills at any level to help us recruit more Welsh speaking staff. Also, in the last weeks of this action plan, we have revised the job advert template that managers use for internal and external roles, to include a statement that we welcome applications in Welsh and a link to the Welsh language application form. This statement is visible on the advert without having to click on the job description to find out if one can submit their application in Welsh. (*see Appendices 28 and 29*)

Standard 127: You must assess the Welsh language skills of your employees.							
S127.1	The Council must ensure that it has a procedure in place to assess the Welsh language skills of its employees.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S127.1A	Review and development of existing Welsh Language Skills Assessment Procedure, including iTrent system, and update in accordance with Standard 127	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development) Jane Thomas (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.1B	Scope and test use of online recruitment platforms for Welsh-speakers, particularly for new or existing posts requiring Welsh as an essential skill	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.1C	Promote amended Welsh Language Skills Assessment Procedure guidance to Managers and Staff via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Sept-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S127.2	The Council must ensure that those skills are assessed annually.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S127.2A	Annual assessment of staff Welsh language skills via iTrent system reporting and analysis to inform human resource plan to ensure adequate resources for Welsh language telephone services.	Mar-23	Oct - 23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development) Jane Thomas (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.2B	Quarterly reminders for staff to update their personal information on iTrent via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.2C	Promotion to staff explaining Welsh language skills levels (e.g., 'a little' versus 'moderately') via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

** Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration*

Standard 136: When assessing the requirements for a new or vacant post, you must assess the need for Welsh language skills, and categorise it as a post where one or more of the following apply:

- (a) Welsh language skills are essential;**
- (b) Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post;**
- (c) Welsh language skills are desirable; or**
- (d) Welsh language skills are not necessary.**

S136.1	The Council must provide training to staff who assess the language skills needs for a new or vacant post on how to carry out assessments that comply with the requirements of Standard 136.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S136.1A	Support, information, and training provided to staff assessing language skills in-line with revised Welsh Language Skills Assessment procedure promotion via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A) (S127.1A) (S127.1C)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development /Communications / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S136.2	The Council must prepare guidelines for staff on how to carry out an assessment of the linguistic skills needs of a post.						
S136.2A	Guidelines on assessing linguistic needs of a post, embedded within relevant documentation, to be promoted via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A) (S127.1A) (S127.1C)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development /Communications / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S136.3	In carrying out assessments under Standard 136, the Council must, on all occasions, consider capacity within the post’s area of work to provide a Welsh language service in accordance with the Standards and consider whether the post should be advertised as a post where Welsh language skills are essential.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S136.3A	Revise Welsh language skills assessment procedure to include consideration of providing a Welsh language service and the advertisement of Welsh language skills as essential (S127.1) (S127.2A), and monitoring implementation.	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development) Jane Thomas (Organisational Development) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S136.4	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 3 have been completed.							
S136.4A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget		

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Standard 136A: If you have categorised a post as one in which Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt, you must:

(a) specify that when advertising the post, and

(b) advertise the post in Welsh.

S136A.1 The Council must change its procedures so that when the Council categorises a post as one where Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt, the body must specify that when advertising the post and advertise the post in Welsh in accordance with standard 136A.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S136A.1A	Revise Welsh Language Skills Assessment procedure to consider Welsh language skills post categorisation (S127.1) (S127.2)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay, Lee McDonald, Jane Thomas (Organisational Development) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S136A.1B	Undertake research to understand the barriers of hiring Welsh language speakers into posts	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S136A.1C	Develop proactive engagement and communications campaign which promotes the value of Welsh language skills for employers and use within the workplace	Sep-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships) Carolyn Jenkins (Communications)	Policy & Partnerships / Communications service area budget	You're more skilled
S136A.2 The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 3 have been completed.							
S136A.2A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

5. Promotion of improved Welsh language service

Standard 81: You must promote any Welsh language service you provide and advertise that service in Welsh.

Council Action:

As part of concluding the CS092 Action Plan, we feel as a Council that we are in a better position in delivering our services bilingually we have started rolling our campaign created in accordance with Standard 81. We have mirrored Carmarthenshire County Council's '['Pabynnag ffordd... / Whichever way...'](#)' campaign as noted by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office as an example of good practice. We hope this will encourage our residents to utilize our Welsh language services, not only to increase their abilities and opportunities to use the language but also to use the practice as a tool to monitor the functioning of said services **(see Appendix 30)**.

Standard 81: You must promote any Welsh language service you provide and advertise that service in Welsh.							
S81.1	For specific promotion campaign about the Welsh language telephone services would be advantageous. Such a campaign should be carried out when the body is confident that its Welsh language telephone services comply with the service delivery Standards.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S81.1A	Delivery of specific promotion campaign via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Feb-24	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S81.2	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement action 1 have been completed.						
S81.2A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

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6. Next Steps

- Revise Core Group Membership
- Welsh Language incorporated within Corporate Business Plans
- Funding Developments for 2024-25
- Communication and Engagement Plans

Overview of Key Steps

As we conclude the Action Plan we would like to note the planning and dedication shown during its implementation. As a Council we feel the Action Plan has created positive change not only with the actions themselves but also in terms of staff's awareness of the Council's duty to work in line with the Welsh Language requirements.

The 'core group' has played a crucial role in the plans delivery of each action, serving as a consultation group to showcase progress and offer input. Therefore, we are proposing that going forward the group is re-named and revised to become focus group to assist, implement and review our Welsh Language requirements which will aim support our continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the increased awareness of the Welsh language requirements has supported the work to strengthen the inclusion of the Welsh language into our business plans. Working closely with the Corporate Performance Management Team we have developed internal monitoring/accountability arrangements, to ensure quarterly feedback from a range of departments on how their work has contributed to the aims set out in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

Building on the progress made during this plan, we have been successful in securing Shared Prosperity Funding, which we are using to increase the visibility of the language and culture in the area. Part of this funding is being used to enhance the Welsh language capacity within the Council which is already receiving positive feedback through the delivery of Welsh language guidance support sessions throughout the organisations. The sessions help staff understand how to work in accordance with the Council's Welsh language policies, how to access the guidance and what opportunities there are for Welsh language training.

The funding is also being used to work closely with our Corporate Communications Team to deploy a Welsh language Communications Plan that educates and raises the profile of the language and its place in Blaenau Gwent culture. The Communications Plan has been endorsed at a corporate level with agreement from our Education department to support us in our endeavour to make Blaenau Gwent an actively Welsh area. We will also be using part of this funding to support the planning and delivery of local Welsh activities that will contribute to the increase in number of Welsh learners and speakers across the borough. We look forward to expanding on Welsh language work completed outside of the action detailed in the CS092 Action Plan in our forthcoming Welsh Language Annual Report.