

APPENDIX A

Annual Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2019/20

**Prepared in accordance with the requirements of
The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

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1. Introduction

This report is the fifth Welsh Annual Report produced under the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The table below details the requirements for this report:

Areas	Relevant Standard and/or sub-section
Complaints The annual report must include the number of complaints you received during the year which related to your compliance with the standards with which you were under a duty to comply.	147, 148, 156, 158(2), 162, 164(2), 168(a), 170 (2), (d)
Welsh Language Skills The annual report must include the following information (where relevant, to the extent you are under a duty to comply with the standards referred to) – (a) The number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance standard 151)	170(2)(a) 151
Welsh Language Training The annual report must include the following information (where relevant, to the extent you are under a duty to comply with the standards referred to)- (a) The number of members of staff who attended training courses by you in Welsh during the year (in accordance with Standard 128) (b) If a Welsh version of a course was offered by you in accordance with standard128, the percentage of the total number of staff attending the course who attended that version.	152, 170 (2) (b)
Recruitment The annual report must include the following information (where relevant, to the extent you are under a duty to comply with the standards referred to) – (ch) the number of new and vacant posts that you advertised during the year which were categorise as posts where – (i) Welsh language skills were essential. (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post, (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable, or (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary, (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance with standard 154)	170 (2)(ch) 154

2. Complaints

Standard 158, 164 and 170 requires that the annual report must include the number of complaints you received during the year which related to your compliance with the service delivery standards, policy making standards and the operational standards with which you were under a duty to comply.

The Corporate Complaints procedure logs all complaints related to the Welsh Language and the Welsh Language Standards. Complaints can be made in any format (e.g. email, letter, in person, telephone, social media etc.). No such complaints were received via the Corporate Complaints system during the reporting period.

However, during the reporting period, one complaint was received by the Council which related to the compliance duties for the Council.

Date of Complaint	Complaint	Action
30 th January 2020	CSG700: The Welsh Language Commissioner issued an investigation on Blaenau Gwent Council on 10 March 2020. The investigation was regarding a complaint received from a member of the public regarding correspondence the complainant received in response to a freedom of information request. The complaint was due to there being a delay in receiving a response to the request they presented in Welsh and that the response included some English only text.	Outcome by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office The case is still under investigation due to the Welsh Language Commissioners Regulatory work being paused on 17th March, 2020 as a consequence of the National Covid-19 pandemic. Evidence regarding the complaint has been submitted to the Office of Welsh Language Commissioner for consideration and a decision regarding what appropriate action needs to be taken will be finalised in October 2020.

3. Welsh Language Skills and Ability

Standard 170 requires the number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question.

The information in this section has been provided via the Organisational Development Team using the Council's iTrent system and represents staff Welsh language ability as at 31st March 2020.

Staff have the ability and responsibility to maintain their own staff records. The base figure for the data is 2,891 staff on the Council's establishment list, (an increase of 10 staff from the previous year).

Speak Welsh

The number of employees who have Welsh language speaking skills as at 31 March 2020 amounts to 573 (19%) staff; they can speak 'fluently', 'quite well', 'moderately', or 'a little'. However, just over half of the total number of staff declare they have no Welsh Speaking ability (54%). The number and percentage of staff that can understand, speak, write and read Welsh varies slightly between each comparator, which is illustrated in the graphs below:

Chart 1: Speak Welsh

Ability to speak Welsh	Number of Staff
Fluently - 41	41
Moderately - 154	154
Quite Well - 18	18
A Little - 360	360
No ability - 1570	1,570
No response - 767	767
Total	2,891

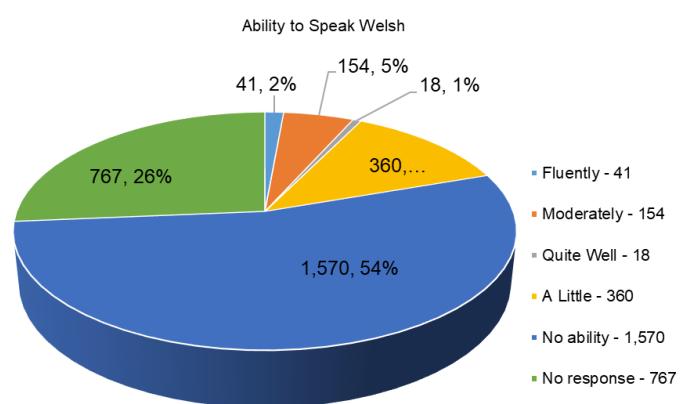


Chart 2: Understand Welsh

Understand Welsh	Number of Staff
Fluently - 42	42
Moderately - 178	178
Quite Well - 28	28
A Little - 402	402
No ability - 1,536	1,536
No response - 725	725
Total	2,891

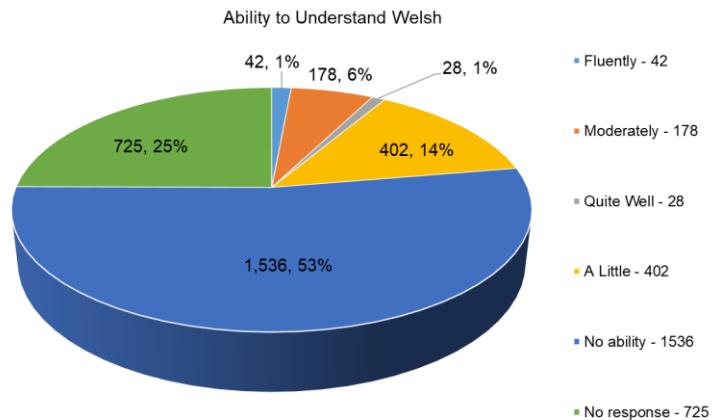


Chart 3: Write Welsh

Write Welsh	Number of Staff
Fluently - 37	37
Moderately - 125	125
Quite Well - 20	20
A Little - 291	291
No ability - 1606	1,606
No response - 830	830
Total	2,891

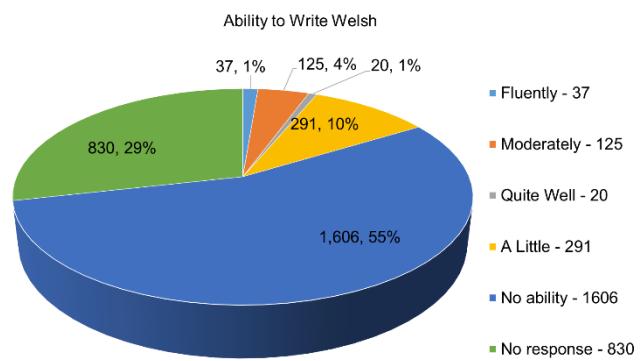
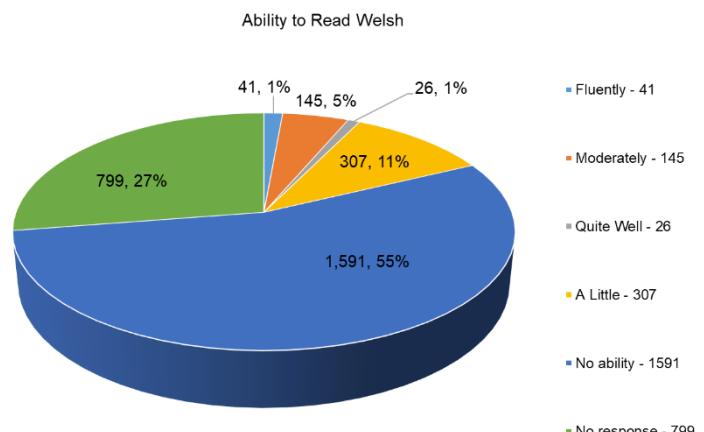


Chart 4: Read Welsh

Read Welsh	Number of Staff
Fluently - 41	41
Moderately - 145	145
Quite Well - 26	26
A Little - 307	307
No ability - 1591	1,591
No response - 799	799
Total	2,891



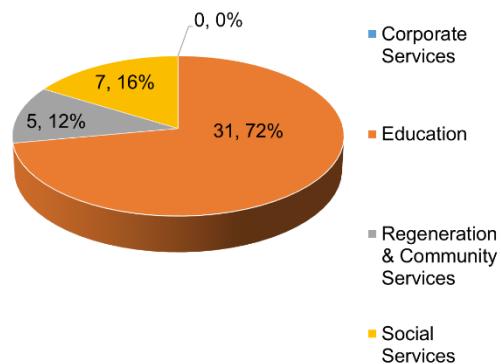
The above graphs show that the figures are very similar across all 4 skill areas. The percentage of staff that declare, they are 'fluent' is 1% while the percentage who say they have 'no ability' is between 53%-55%. Nearly a quarter of staff (22%) consider themselves as having an ability to Understand Welsh, while only 16% have an ability to Write Welsh, with 18% noting an ability to Read Welsh and slightly more being able to Speak Welsh at 20%.

Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate

The following graphs and tables reflect the corporate spread of Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate and Contract Type.

Education has the most fluent Welsh Speakers (31) and it is noted that there are no staff who declare fluency within Corporate Services.

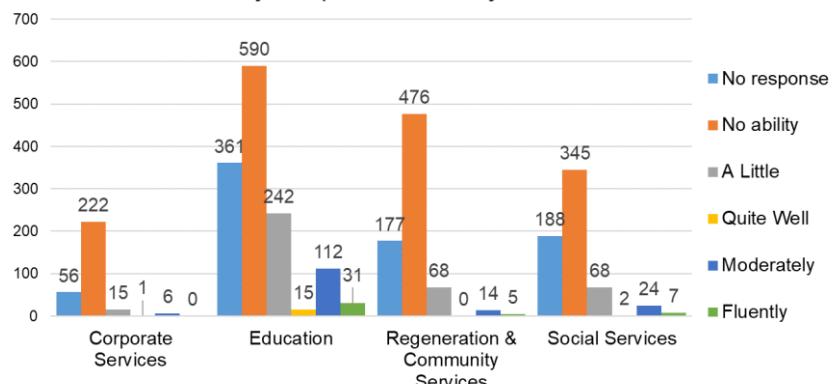
Fluent Welsh Speakers By Directorate



Ability to speak Welsh								
Directorate	No response	No ability	A Little	Quite Well	Moderately	Fluently	Total	
Corporate Services	56	222	15	1	6	0	300	
Education	361	590	242	15	112	31	1,340	
Regeneration & Community Services	177	476	68	0	14	5	735	
Social Services	188	345	68	2	24	7	631	
Total	767	1,570	360	18	154	41	2,891	

Compared to the previous year's Annual Report, there has been a decrease in the number of staff identifying as fluent Welsh Speaking (49 in 2018/19).

Ability to Speak Welsh By Directorate

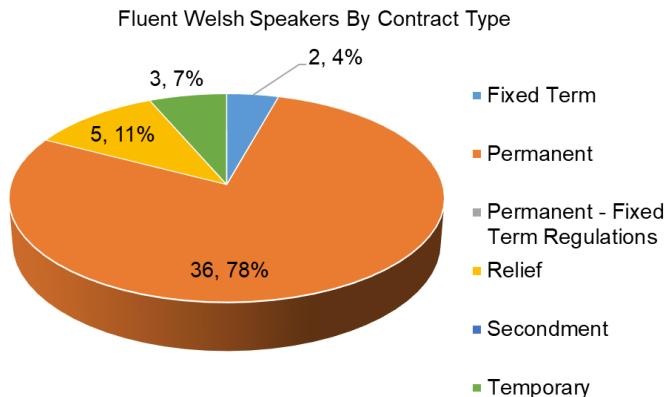


Corporately there is a fairly good foundation to encourage and support the development of our employee's Welsh Language Speaking Skills further, given that 154 staff declare they have a Moderate ability, 18 can do 'Quite Well' and 360 can speak 'a little'.

Fluent Welsh Speakers by Contract Type:

Ability to Speak Welsh								
Contract Type	No response	No ability	A Little	Quite Well	Moderately	Fluently	Total	
Fixed Term	93	48	46	1	17	2	206	
Permanent	539	1,437	277	13	125	36	2,415	
Permanent - Fixed Term Regulations	13	19	13	1	3		49	
Relief	110	228	53	3	15	5	410	
Secondment		2	1				3	
Temporary	78	63	30	1	7	3	181	
Total	767	1,570	360	18	154	41	2,891	

When considering the Contract Type of those staff who identify as Fluent Welsh Speakers, the highest number (36) are on Permanent Contracts; with the remainder on Fixed Term (2), Relief (5) and Temporary Contracts (3). There is little change when compared to the previous year.



In terms of resilience it is noted that 125 of those staff who declare a 'Moderate' ability to speak Welsh are on Permanent Contracts, as are 277 Permanent staff can speak 'A Little.'

4. Welsh Language Training

Standard 170 requires:

- The number of members of staff who attended training courses you offered in Welsh during the year;
- If a Welsh version of a course was offered by you during that year, the percentage of the total number of staff attending the course who attended the Welsh version

During the reporting period, the online training Croeso Cymraeg course was completed by 2 officers.

There were no courses delivered through the medium of Welsh. This is perhaps not surprising given that only 15 of the 2,891 staff identified their language preference as Welsh. This is a positive increase of 12 staff since the last reporting period 2018-19.

Recruitment - Welsh Language Skills Requirement

Standard 170 required the number of new and vacant posts that you advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where:

- Welsh language skills were essential,
- Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post,
- Welsh language skills were desirable, or
- Welsh language skills were not necessary

During the scope of the reporting period a total of 251 posts were advertised by the Council; of which 0 posts stated that Welsh Language Skills were **essential** and 251 posts identified Welsh as '**desirable**'.

The Council's policy is that all posts are to be made Welsh 'Desirable' as a minimum requirement. Therefore no posts will ever feature that identify Welsh language skills as

'not necessary'. Also, no posts were listed in the reporting period where Welsh language skills were identified as skills that needed to be learnt when an individual was appointed to a post.

5. The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

Standard 145 requires Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to produce a strategy detailing how it will promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language over the next five years¹.

The aims of the Blaenau Gwent's Welsh Language Strategy are linked with the Welsh Government's vision to create a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050. In order to meet a target of 44% increase of Welsh speakers by 2050, we would need to gain an additional 2,324 Welsh speakers against the 2011 Census Blaenau Gwent baseline of 5,284. Therefore, this represents an average annual increase of 70 additional Welsh speakers, i.e. 3% of the target figure of an additional 2,324 in Blaenau Gwent for the next 33 years.

The Council has identified the following three Welsh Language Promotion objectives:

- i. Promote and encourage the use of the Welsh language within the families and the community;
- ii. Increase the provision of Welsh language education and informal activities for children and young people and to increase their awareness of the value of the language;
- iii. Increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace.

Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2017-22

Below are some of the key pieces of work being taken forward to promote the Welsh Language within the Council and communities of Blaenau Gwent:

Objective one of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy states that: "The Council will promote and encourage the use of Welsh language within families and the community".

During 2019 the Council continued promoting of events as well as courses and day schools offered by Menter Iaith, Coleg Gwent and Cymdeithas Gymraeg Gwent on the Council's website.

Becoming Bilingual

The Council has produced a booklet promoting and ensuring that parents are fully aware of the Welsh-medium education and childcare options available to them. The aim of the booklet is to answer questions, address concerns and state the advantages of being bilingual. The booklet also maps a clear path for children through the school years from nursery, to primary and secondary schools and beyond.

The document is reviewed annually and has been shared with the families of prospective BG school pupils and promoted via the BG Starting Schools booklet aligned to school

admissions. The booklet is also shared via health professionals, early year's settings, schools and other relevant partners/professionals, in order to promote Welsh language opportunities and education locally. A copy of the booklet is available at:

Becoming Bilingual Booklet

Objective two of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy states: "To increase the provision of Welsh language education and informal activities for children and young people and to increase their awareness of the value of the language".

Welsh Education Strategic Plan

Blaenau Gwent's Local Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was formally approved by Welsh Government in March 2018. The strategic objectives highlighted in the draft WESP document for the next three years can be summarised as follows:

- Raise the profile and levels of participation for Welsh-medium education across the County Borough by 2020, to contribute to the vision for one million speakers by 2050.
- Increase the early year's provision offer to stimulate parental demand to enable growth across the County Borough.
- Increase transition rates from Welsh-medium nursery provision to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg by 50% in 2020.
- Work regionally with South East Wales Local Authorities to secure places for Blaenau Gwent learners in Welsh-medium secondary provision between 2017-2020 and beyond.
- Improving Welsh medium learner outcomes by 2020 so that learners raise aspirations and improve their life chances.

The Blaenau Gwent WESP was formally approved by Welsh Government in March 2018. Blaenau Gwent was the first and only Council within the South East Wales Council region at the time, to have the plan approved with no further amendments.

Alongside a review of the WESP, the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Education Forum (WEF) structure, membership and associated documentation have been reviewed and strengthened annually. The terms of reference have been streamlined and is now more reflective of the groups focus and remit.

4 WEF meetings took place throughout the course of the academic year 2018/19 with membership, attendance and engagement improving on previous years. Partners have commented on the effectiveness of the Forum, which has in turn had a positive impact upon attendance and outcomes. A WEF Communications Sub-group has also been established, with the work and good practice of partners along with engagement, training and other opportunities promoted and monitored via the Communication Plan and associated arrangements.

The Education Transformation Manager is the chair of the Regional Planning of School Places and Demand Sub-group of the WEF Strategic Forum. The group has focused on the following priorities/ areas of work:

- Co-ordination of Welsh-medium Demand Survey Arrangements
- Consultation Outcome and Analysis

- Promotion and Communication
- Regional Review of Primary and Secondary Provision, Welsh Medium Grant and Band B Proposals
- Consultation and Promotion Plans

Good progress was made in relation to the delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan throughout 2019, along with the associated processes and partnerships including the Welsh in Education Forum, which underpin its delivery.

5 of the main achievements during the reporting period include:

1. Numbers of pupils on roll, along with those applying for a place at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg continues to increase, with a positive trend noted over the last 3 years in relation to both nursery and reception. In addition, transition rates between primary and secondary continue to be above 95%.
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.
3. Blaenau Gwent has successfully coordinated a planning of schools places and demand South East Wales Consortia (SEWC) Sub-group over the last 2 years. During the 2018/19 academic session, the group coordinated demand survey arrangements and associated promotion arrangements. This has resulted in the SEWC region having demand data to support proposals for growth and development on a regional basis and again, to inform strategic planning.
4. Representation, attendance and frequency of WEF meetings have increased over the last year, with partners firmly committed to and recognising the effectiveness of the Blaenau Gwent Forum. Partners have hailed the work of BG WEF as an example of good practice.
5. The Youth Service has strengthened out of school hour's provision for Welsh Speakers in Blaenau Gwent; increasing opportunities for, engagement with and the use Welsh language within informal settings.

On behalf of Welsh Government, Aled Roberts carried out a rapid review of the proposed local authority Plans in 2017. The review acknowledged the need for change, not only in terms of individual plans' ambitions, but also in terms of the legislative framework set out by Welsh Government. The review highlighted a need to change the regulations and guidelines in order to clarify the responsibilities and expectations of local authorities and other stakeholders.

The review highlighted the need for a significant change in Welsh Government and local authority approaches to planning, in order to succeed in line with the WG aim of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050. The review noted that the legislative requirements and guidelines currently in place were insufficient, which led to Welsh Government reviewing the legislative framework for Plans for 2021 onwards, with the priority being creating a legislative framework which enables local authorities to develop long-term strategic plans.

Following the drafting and subsequent consultation period, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019, along with the draft guidance were laid on 5 December 2019 and came into effect on 1st January 2020.

Local Authorities must submit their first draft 10-year Plan to the Welsh Ministers on 31st January 2022, with the plan operational from September 2022. The Current BG WESP will remain in force until that date.

Welsh Medium Grant Proposal

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance announced on 16th January 2018 that £30 million would be allocated to support capital projects dedicated to and growing Welsh language in education, (the grant will be administered in addition to the capital allocations confirmed in Band B). Proposals were required to create value and contribute to meeting the Welsh Government's aim of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. The grant application process was initiated in March 2018. Blaenau Gwent Council received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6 million in creating additional primary provision.

The project was put on hold in early 2019, pending discussions between the Council and Welsh Government at a senior level, regarding revenue implications. Post a detailed financial review, it was determined at an informal Executive/Corporate Leadership team meeting in February 2020 that the project could proceed to statutory consultation stage subject to a report to the Executive Committee in the autumn-term 2020. Therefore, a revised timeline has been produced in line with proposed implementation. The timeline and project progression will be subject to the statutory consultation process.

Objective three of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy state the Council will aim: "To increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace".

The Council actively promoted the online Croeso Cymraeg (a Welsh Welcome) course among staff. The Croeso Cymraeg course is a 10-hour online course designed for people who are keen to develop their Welsh Language skills, who consider themselves as having 'no ability' or can speak 'a little' or as a refresher/further development for those who speak 'quite well'. During 2019 the course was promoted and 2 staff have enrolled on the course.

From a schools' perspective, all head teachers are aware of the need to plan for staff language development and the need to include Welsh language in School Development Plans. In addition, BG schools have participated in audit of staff language skills and training needs via the Education Achievement Service (EAS), and engage with centrally led professional learning.

Over the last 2 academic sessions practitioners have been recruited to attend the Welsh in a Year course at Cardiff University. In addition, practitioners from the region were recruited to attend the full time Cardiff University Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme.

Political Leadership Engagement

The Leader of the Council / Executive Member for Corporate Services continues to hold portfolio responsibility for the Welsh Language and Equalities. Where appropriate, Welsh Language and Equalities is considered politically through Corporate Overview Scrutiny, Executive and where appropriate the Council.

Professional Leadership Engagement

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) is made up of the Managing Director, Directors and all Heads of Service and includes all of the senior officers. CLT is the decision making body for the corporate element of the Council. During this reporting period a self-evaluation was undertaken via an internal audit of compliance, in which all heads of service were required to report on implementing the standards. Responsibility for the efficient implementation of the standards has been delegated to staff across all directorates and departments, and therefore the audit was an opportunity for the Corporate Leadership Team to be assured of compliance. The audit found there to be a 'reasonable assurance'. An action plan for supporting further improvements has been developed for implementation during 2020-21.

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 provides annual reports 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 21st Century Schools Programme Board and Admissions Forum.

The Policy Team

The Policy team support, advise and guide the political and professional leads on all matters relating to the Welsh Language. The Council's Policy Team continued to offer views and experiences in the key consultations, which during the reporting cycle included the Consultation on Draft Code of Practice.

Welsh Language Guidance for Staff

A range of short, practical and easy to follow guides, have been produced and feature on a designated Welsh Language Guidance page on the Council's intranet.

These guides will assist staff to effectively implement many of the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards. The guides include describing how staff should answer the telephone bilingually, using bilingual out of office templates, basic greetings, correspondence disclaimers and guidance on how to obtain translation. These working documents are reviewed and updated periodically.

The Compliance Notice and a synopsis of the Standards which includes staff's responsibilities are also available on the intranet page. This intranet page continues to be promoted via a number of mechanisms, including the Corporate Equality Network and Wider CMT.

Staff Welsh Language Preference

As noted in the previous annual report a Welsh Language Preference letter was sent to every staff member with the introduction of the Welsh language standards. This information was coordinated by line managers so that they understood their staff's language choice and the preferences which were logged centrally on the Council's iTrent HR system.

The Council has since introduced a 'MyInfo' employee self-service access to their personal information held on the iTrent system. This function means that staff have every

opportunity to update this information, which includes any information on protected characteristics and language preference.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

The Council applies Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA's) and for different contexts e.g. policies, procedures and functions; service based assessments; and proposed financial efficiency saving proposals, which identify financial savings for the Council. etc. The EqIA process continues to include the Welsh language element. The document highlights the importance of identifying 'positive' impacts in addition to adverse impacts, in line with Welsh language requirements. The EqIA framework remains under review.

Recruitment

When recruiting for new or vacant posts, Managers are required to complete a Welsh Language Job Assessment form. The information shapes the content of the job description, advertisement requisition, interview procedure and subsequently any employment. In line with the requirements of the Welsh language standards, the Council maintains appropriate records of each assessment, which are reported in this annual report.

Performance Monitoring Visit

The Head of Governance and Partnerships, the Service Manager for Policy and Partnerships and Policy Team Leader met with Dylan Jones, Compliance Officer with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office on 31st November 2019. The meeting was very positive, with discussions covering the following areas of interest:

- Findings of monitoring work in 2018-19 in relation to the organisation;
- [Rights in Use 2018-19](#), the Commissioner's 2018-19 assurance report which encourages organisations to have robust internal arrangements to ensure compliance, increase workforce capacity to improve provision, and prompt people to use services in Welsh;
- Internal arrangements to ensure compliance;
- Increasing workforce capacity;
- Prompting people to use services in Welsh;
- Increasing the use and number of speakers in Welsh;
- Operational matters