



Annual Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2017/18

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

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1. Introduction

This report is the third Welsh Annual Report produced under the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and covers the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2108. The table below details the requirements for this report:

Areas	Relevant Standard and/or sub-section
<p>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.</p>	147,148, 156, 158(2), 162, 164(2), 168(a), 170 (2), (d)
<p>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 are 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)</p>	170(2)(a) 151
<p>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.</p>	152, 170 (2) (b)
<p>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)</p>	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 complaints were received via the Corporate Complaints system during the reporting period.

However, during the reporting period, three complaints were received by the Council's Welsh Language Support Officer which related to the compliance duties for the Council under the service delivery standards. The complaints were received on 23rd May 2017, 24th September and 26th December 2017 and were all connected to compliance with Welsh Language Standard 63.

Standard 63: You must ensure that the Welsh language text on signs is accurate in terms of meaning and expression.

Date of Complaint	Complaint	Action
23/05/2017	The word "Derbynfa" was written as "Derfynfa" on a glass panel at the Reception in Anvil Court, Abertillery. The complaint was made by a member of the public who did not leave their name or any contact details.	The Welsh Language Support Officer liaised with the Services Manager – Business Support to correct and replace the sign.
24/09/2017	The word order for the Welsh of Cwmtillery Industrial Estate was incorrect.	The problem was reported to the Senior Engineer – Road Safety who liaised with the Welsh Language Support Officer to obtain the correct word order and the incorrect sign was replaced with the correct Welsh signage.
26/12/2017	Incorrect preposition used in Welsh on a road sign in Aberbeeg.	The problem was investigated by the Senior Engineer – Road Safety who established that the road sign did not belong to Blaenau Gwent and the matter was passed to Caerphilly County Borough Council to deal with.

CSG119 Swimming Lessons Investigation into Welsh Language Standards 81, 84 and 86

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

Standard 84: If you offer an education course that is open to the public, you must offer it in Welsh. You must comply with standard 84 in every circumstance, except:

- When an assessment carried out in accordance with standard 86 comes to the conclusion that there is no need for that course to be offered in Welsh.

Standard 86: If you develop an education course that is to be offered to the public, you must assess the need for that course to be offered in Welsh; and you must ensure that the assessment is published on your website.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was subject to an investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office (WLCO) regarding compliance with Standards 81, 84 and 86 and the provision of swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh. This investigation spans two reporting periods, namely, 2016/17 and 2017/18.

On 03/06/2016, the Welsh Language Commissioner received a number of complaints from a member of the public. The complaints involved the swimming lesson provision of a number of local authorities, including Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. Evidence was provided to support the investigation into the complaints; this evidence involved the response of the local authorities to queries regarding the availability of Welsh language swimming lessons.

In the case of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, the Commissioner received a copy of the Council's response to a written query regarding Welsh language swimming lessons. The query was made via email by a member of the public in May 2016. The response stated that the Council did not offer any swimming lessons in Welsh.

The complainant was acting on behalf of other persons, who had made the queries to the councils, but the information submitted did not make it known who these persons were. Consequently, the Welsh Language Commissioner was not satisfied that the complainant was acting on behalf of persons who have been directly affected by the alleged conduct. On that basis, the Welsh Language Commissioner was not of the opinion that the complaints were valid according to section 93 of the Welsh Language Measure.

However, the Welsh Language Commissioner was of the opinion that the information received created a suspicion of a failure by the Council to comply with some of the Welsh language standards imposed on it.

Following submission of evidence, the Council received the Commissioner's proposed decision notice in February 2017. It stated that the Council had not failed to comply with Standards 81 and 86 but had failed to comply with Standard 84 as it did not offer swimming lessons in Welsh at any level although lessons are offered in English.

On 2nd August 2017 the Final Decision Notice was received by the Council from the Welsh Language Commissioner. In the case of non-compliance with Standard 84, the Council was required to prepare an action plan which stated the steps the Council would take in order to comply with Standard 84 in relation to swimming lessons which was to be returned to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office by no later than 17th October 2017. This action plan was created with Aneurin Leisure Trust working in conjunction with the Policy Team.

On 1st December 2017, a letter was received by the Policy Team from the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office that stated they were pleased to note that the Council had prepared an action plan that includes clear actions based on the advice document and that the plan contains reasonable steps to meet the requirements of the standards but as it did not contain a specific timetable or time commitment for each of the actions, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office were unable to approve the action plan.

The Council resubmitted an updated plan and a letter was received by the Policy Team on the 23rd January stating that the action plan had been approved and would come into force on the 13th February 2018.

Challenge Applications

According to the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, if the authority is of the opinion that the duty to comply with a standard or to comply with a standard in a particular way (and that can include the imposition date) is unreasonable or incommensurate, the authority can make a formal application to the Welsh Language Commissioner to challenge that standard and ask the Commissioner to adjudicate on that question.

Just outside the scope of the report on 29th March 2017, Blaenau Gwent submitted a Challenge Application to the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding Standard 41:

If you produce the following documents you must produce them in Welsh - (a) agendas, minutes and other papers that are available to the public, which relate to management board or cabinet meetings; (b) agendas, minutes and other papers for meetings, conferences or seminars that are open to the public.

You must comply with standard 41(a) in every circumstance, except:

- Other papers that are available to the public, which relate to management board or cabinet meetings.

You must comply with standard 41(b) in every circumstance, except:

- Other papers for meetings that are open to the public.

The Council received a Determination Letter from the Welsh Language Commissioner detailing her decision regarding the Council's challenge to Standard 41 on 2nd August 2017. The letter stated that the requirement to comply with Standard 41 is unreasonable and/ or disproportionate and the Council's compliance notice was varied so that the Council must comply with the requirements of standard 41 by 30th March 2018.

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 31 March 2018.

Staff now have the ability and responsibility to maintain their own staff records. The base figure for the data is 3,344 posts on the Council's establishment list, (a decrease from the last year's baseline figure). It should be noted that each data set has a non-response number of between 573 and 718 staff. The non-response number amounts to those who chose not to answer a particular question.

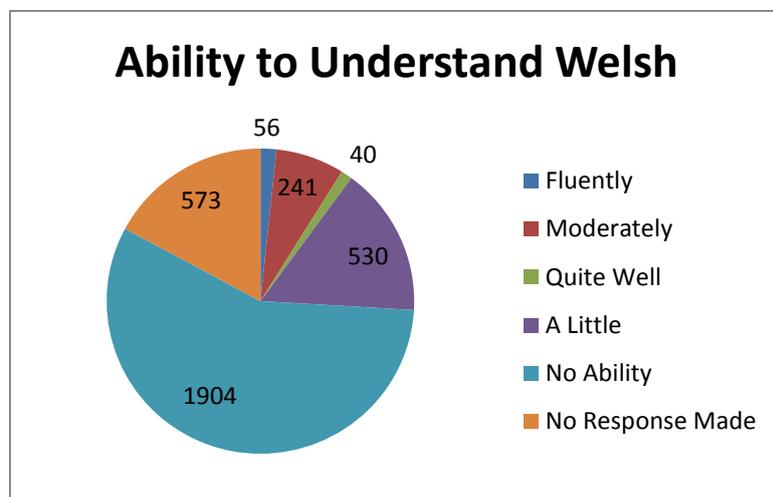
Speak Welsh

The number of employees who have Welsh language speaking skills as at 31 March 2017 amounts to 765 people, who are categorised as staff who can speak 'a little', 'moderately', 'quite well' or 'fluently'. However 71% of staff declare they have no Welsh Speaking ability.

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:

Speak Welsh	Total
Fluently	54
Moderately	206
Quite Well	26
A Little	479
No Ability	1949
No Response Made	630
Grand Total	3344

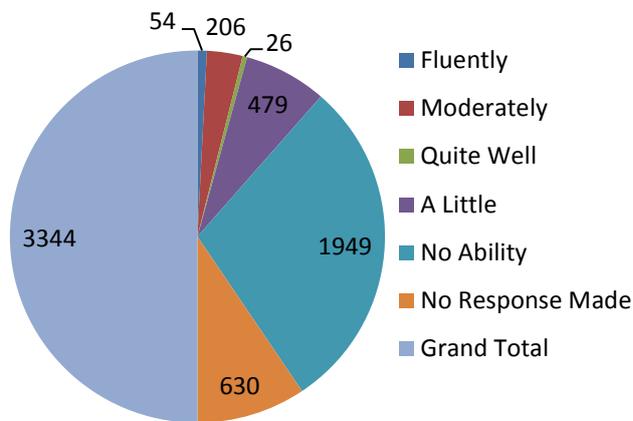
Chart 1: Understand Welsh



Understand Welsh	Total
Fluently	56
Moderately	241
Quite Well	40
A Little	530
No Ability	1904
No Response Made	573
Grand Total	3344

Chart 2: Speak Welsh

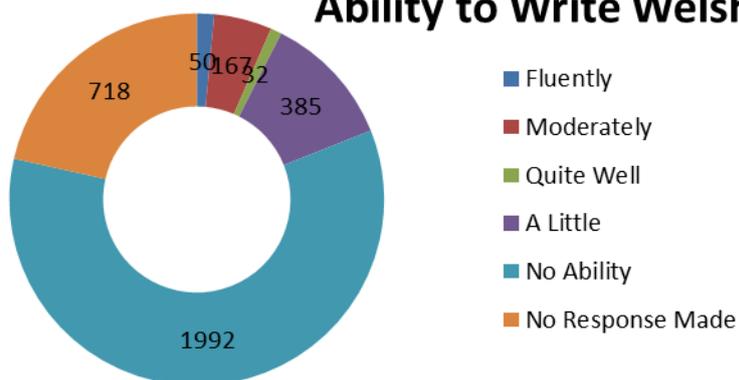
Ability to Speak Welsh



Speak Welsh	Total
Fluently	54
Moderately	206
Quite Well	26
A Little	479
No Ability	1949
No Response Made	630
Grand Total	3344

Chart 3: Write Welsh

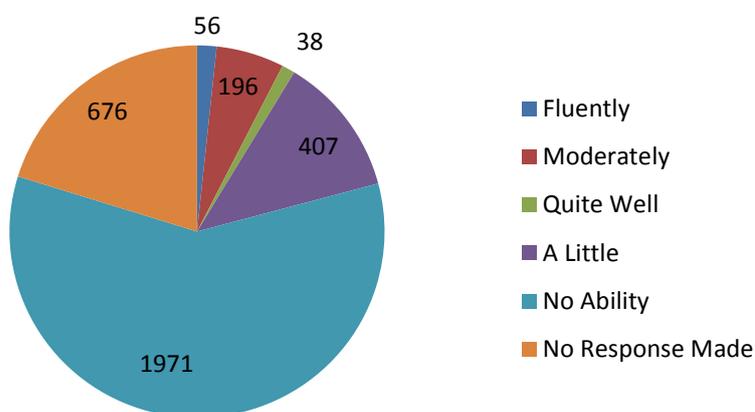
Ability to Write Welsh



Write Welsh	Total
Fluently	50
Moderately	167
Quite Well	32
A Little	385
No Ability	1992
No Response Made	718
Grand Total	3344

Chart 4: Read Welsh

Ability to Read Welsh



Read Welsh	Total
Fluently	56
Moderately	196
Quite Well	38
A Little	407
No Ability	1971
No Response Made	676
Grand Total	3344

As these graphs demonstrate, the figures are very similar across all 4 comparators, but it is interesting to note that less people feel more confident when writing Welsh. The percentage of staff that declare, they are 'fluent' is typically around 1.5%, while the percentage who say they have 'no ability' is around 75%. This demonstrates that around 23% of staff say they have some Welsh language ability, albeit 'A Little' contributes significantly more than 'Moderately', 'Quite Well' and 'Fluently' combined. It is also interesting to look at Welsh ability by division and contract type, although it should be reiterated that this information is somewhat incomplete as iTrent data fields continue to be cleansed and updated.

We anticipate that there are in fact more fluent Welsh speakers than documented below, in particular in Education (school based staff) and the on-going work to update records will be able to show this in future reports.

Fluent Welsh speakers by division:

Division	Number
Corporate Services and Strategy	2
Education	45
Environment	9
Resources	0
Social Services	7
Total	63

Fluent Welsh speakers by contract type:

Contract Type	Number
Fixed Term	6
Permanent	46
Relief	6
Temporary	5
Total	63

As documented above, of the 63 fluent Welsh speakers, 46 have permanent contracts. This will help with resilience in compliance with the Standards as we have a core of Welsh speaking staff.

Note

The difference between the numbers of fluent Welsh speakers in the Welsh language skills section compared to those in the Fluent Welsh Speakers by Division and Contract types is because the data used in the skills section is based on individuals whilst the Fluent Welsh Speakers by Division and Contract types is based on roles and on occasions, one person can hold a number of different roles. For example, in a Secondary School, a teacher can also be a lunchtime supervisor and in a Primary School, one person can be a Breakfast Club Supervisor, Teaching Assistant and Lunchtime Supervisor.

Employee Training Courses

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

At the time of writing, the Business Support Division are in the process of arranging courses for their employees to ensure that all other receptions in the Council are able to actively offer a Welsh Language reception service by the imposition date of 30th September 2018.

During the reporting period, there were two courses offered in the medium of Welsh Language; each course was attended by 1 officer.

Recruitment - Welsh Language Skills Requirements

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 153 posts were advertised by the Council. All of those 153 posts identified Welsh as 'desirable'. This was because it was agreed on 15 February 2016 that all posts were to be made Welsh 'Desirable' as a minimum requirement.

As a result, all job descriptions identify Welsh Language as a 'Desirable' requirement and 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.

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.

http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/images/att6176.pdf

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".

Examples of actions that took place during the reporting period 2017/18 in order to support this aim include the promoting of Welsh Language events by Menter Iaith, Coleg Gwent and Cymdeithas Gymraeg Gwent on the Council's website and the Council's Internal BG Issue publication. The Welsh Language Support Officer also attends Menter Iaith's meetings to engage with Welsh speakers in the area.

The more formal learning opportunities from Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent such as courses and day schools are also promoted on the Council's website and in Blaenau Gwent's internal publication, BG Issue.

Also, any leisure opportunities, for example, swimming lesson in Welsh, that are offered by any of Blaenau Gwent's partners will be also promoted using the same channels.

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

The Council and the Welsh Education Forum are committed to developing the best Welsh Language education provision that Blaenau Gwent can offer. The Welsh Language Support Officer is a member of the Welsh Education Forum (WEF). The current position in Blaenau Gwent is Welsh-medium education is provided by one primary school namely Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, with secondary provision provided from Ysgol Gyfyn Gwynllyw in partnership with the SEWC Councils across the region.

The South East Wales Regional Forum leads on the development of Welsh education standards, supporting the Welsh Government's vision for Welsh in Education. Blaenau Gwent is a committed partner who contributes to working together in the region to equip schools and education providers across age ranges and linguistic sectors with the capacity and sustainability to increase standards in Welsh and promote the use of the Welsh language within families, communities and workplaces. Blaenau Gwent and its partners will stimulate demand and provide local, accessible, sustainable, community-focused provision to meet the growing demand for Welsh-medium education in the County Borough.

http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/images/att5545.pdf

There are a number of childcare providers that offer childcare in Welsh or bilingually on the list of providers for the Early Implementers Childcare Pilot; the transition rates are improving from Welsh medium nursery provision to Ysgol Bro Helyg. Also there have been a number of events promoting the benefits of Welsh medium education to parents with more events planned. These events will help raise the profile of and levels of participation in Welsh medium education.

There are also plans to introduce a 'seedling' Welsh Primary School in Tredegar as part of the Band B for the Strategic Outline Programme for the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Education Capital Programme.

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

Leadership and Political Engagement

The Leader of the Council / Executive Member for Corporate Services has portfolio responsibility for the Welsh Language and Equalities.

The Wider 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. Wider CMT has been kept fully up to date with developments via internal reports. An example of this includes the Welsh Language Commissioner's recent investigation into the provision of swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh in Blaenau Gwent by Aneurin Leisure Trust.

Departmental Management Team

Responsibility for effective implementation of the standards rests with staff across all directorates and departments. The relevant Heads of Service have been fully involved in discussions to ensure that they are well placed to meet the requirements. The Policy Team continue to support all departments to monitor compliance with the standards.

The Policy Team

The Policy team support, advice and guide the DMTs, political and professional leads on all matters relating to the Welsh Language. This work is supported by the Welsh Language Support Officer who was appointed to support the implementation of the standards.

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 (<http://intranet/policies-plans-strategies/welsh-language-guidance.aspx>).

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 are working documents are revisited, revised and updated when and where necessary.

The Compliance Notice and a synopsis of the Standards which includes staff's responsibilities are also available on the intranet page. This intranet page has been widely promoted via a number of mechanisms, including the Corporate Equality Network, Wider CMT and the Lead Director and Head of Paid Service's' Message up until October 2017 and via Managing Director's Message from November 2017 via internal email.

Welsh Language Preference Project

The Welsh Language Preference Project began in March/April 2016 and is a significant piece of work that sought to identify the language preference of citizens, customers, partners and staff. This project is currently on hold.

Staff Welsh Language Preference

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 will continue to be logged centrally on the Council's iTrent HR system.

During the scope of this reporting period, the Council has introduced a MYOptions component to the iTrent system which means that staff are able to update this information thus ensuring that the Council have current information on the Welsh language ability of their workforce.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

The EqIA process has long since included the Welsh language element. The EqIA framework is currently being reviewed. The document was previously amended to stress the importance of the identifying 'positive' impacts in addition to adverse impacts, in line with Welsh language requirements, with note of the Policy Making standards.

Additionally, the EqIA is a clear requirement for all corporate/directorate Business Plans and the Financial Efficiency Projects proposals which identify financial savings for the Council.

Recruitment

When recruiting for new or vacant posts. Managers must complete a Welsh Language Job Assessment form. The information influences the job description, advertisement requisition, interview procedure and subsequently any employment. In line with the requirements of the Welsh language standards, the Council must keep appropriate records of each assessment, which will be reported on annually. Corporate Management Team has decided that all roles within the Council are designated as being a minimum of 'Welsh Language Desirable'.

Social Services Mwy na geiriau More than words

In Blaenau Gwent, 'More Than Just Words' has been actively promoted with care home providers following the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards and Social Services also have identified a Welsh Language Champion within the division. An Addendum has been applied to the Local Authority's contract with care homes that requires them to comply with the legislation and make an 'Active Offer' to people who live within their homes.

In response to research, and recognising the difficulties citizens face when living with dementia when English is not their first language, an audit has been undertaken of care home staff to establish the availability and opportunity for people to engage through the medium of Welsh and other languages.

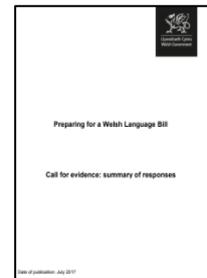
Consultation and Engagement Events During the Reporting Period

The Welsh language has been at the forefront of Welsh political life recently with the plans announced by Welsh Government to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050; the Welsh Language Standards; and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 which calls for a 'Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language'.

In order to meet its obligations under these pieces of legislation, Blaenau Gwent County Borough has employed a Welsh Language Support Officer. This post has ensured that the Council's Policy Team has been able to offer the views and experiences of the organisation and its residents in the key stakeholder's engagement events listed below:

Preparing for a Welsh Language Bill: Call for Evidence: Summary of Responses

In a written statement by the Minister for Learning and Welsh Language at the time, Alun Davies, plans were announced on the 31st January 2017, to review the Welsh language measure to ensure that: “In a period of financial pressures”, ...scarce public resources are used to improve Welsh language services and that any potentially bureaucratic burdens are as light as possible”.



To support this preparation for a Welsh Language Bill, the Welsh language Support Officer attending a workshop event, “Preparing for a Welsh Language Bill” and co-ordinated the Policy’s Team response to the questions asked in the consultation.

Following the consultation , a document was published by the Welsh Government detailing the responses, “Preparing for a Welsh Language Bill: Call for Evidence: Summary of Responses in July 2017 and Blaenau Gwent’s response to consultation to quoted on ten separate occasions whilst other local authorities chose to remain anonymous.

Welsh Government White Paper Consultation: Striking the right balance: Proposals for a Welsh language Bill

Officers from the Policy Team also represented the Council at the consultation event for the “Striking the Right Balance White paper on 5th October 2017’ and collated the Council’s response to this important White Paper.



Rights Taking Root: The Welsh Language Commissioner’s Third Assurance Report 2016-17

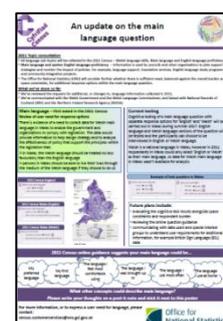
To launch this report the Welsh language Commissioner held an event which included a workshop on using services in Cardiff Bay on 12th October 2017. The Welsh Language Support Officer attended the event in the Pier head Building.



At the event, the Welsh Language Commissioner announced her three main findings of the report which were Welsh language services are improving; despite Welsh language services improving, further work is needed; and behavioural change is required in order to promote and facilitate the Welsh Language.

The Welsh Question – Office of National Statistics

The Welsh Language Support Officer represented the Council at this event on 9th November 2017 in Cardiff. This event focussed on the Welsh language question on the Census which in 2011 asked in Wales whether a respondent’s main language was English or Welsh.

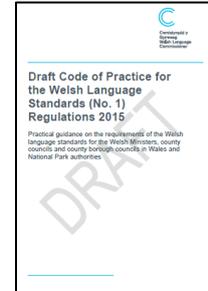


There is a need to review this question as the data collected from the 2021 Census will be used by Councils, other organisations and, of course, Welsh Government to monitor the impact of policies to improve Welsh services and, of course, to monitor the growth in Welsh speakers in the work towards achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Consultation on Draft Code of Practice

This Consultation began on the 12th January and ran until the 6th April 2018 aiming to provide practical guidance on the requirements of the Standards.

The Welsh language Support Officer attended a workshop event on the 7th February 2018 for this Consultation and at the time of writing this report is collating Blaenau Gwent's response to this Consultation.



Monitoring visit from Dylan Jones, Compliance Officer with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office – 14th November 2017

The Principal Policy and Research Officer, Policy and Research Team Leader and Welsh Language Support Officer met with Dylan Jones, Compliance Officer with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. The meeting was an extremely positive event and our discussions covered the following areas of interest:

1. Findings of the Assurance Report 2016/17: Rights Taking Root;
2. Findings of monitoring work in relation to the Council 2016/17;
3. The Proposed Code of Practice for the Welsh Language Standards;
4. Successful Practice;
5. Systemic Problems; and
6. Feedback on advice and support offered by the Commissioner.

Engagement Events

The Welsh Language Support Officer has also attended Council Engagement events on 10th and 26th January 2018 for Blaenau Gwent We Want 3 and the Happiness Pulse thus ensuring that citizens are able to respond to engagement events in Welsh should they so wish. The Welsh Language Support Officer also engages with Welsh speakers in coffee mornings and other event organised by partner organisations such as Menter Iaith and Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent.