Blaenau Gwent Council

Welsh Language Standards

Annual Report for 2020-21

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This document is also available in Welsh.

1. Introduction

This report is the sixth Welsh Language Standards Annual Report produced under the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report considers 4 key areas (complaints; welsh language skills; welsh language training; and recruitment) and provides an overview of how we have met our relevant requirements as set out in the table below:

Areas	Relevant Standard and/or sub-section
Complaints The report details the number of complaints we have received during the year in relation to our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.	147, 148, 156, 158(2), 162, 164(2), 168(a), 170 (2), (d)
Welsh Language Skills The report outlines the number of employees who have Welsh language skills between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021	170(2)(a), 151
Welsh Language Training The report provides information on the number of Blaenau Gwent Council staff who attended Welsh Language training courses we provided (the percentage of the total number of staff attending a Welsh version of the course.	152, 170 (2) (b)
Recruitment The report outlines the number of new and vacant posts that we advertised during the year whereby: • 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.	170)(ch), 154

2. Background and current situation

This report has been produced in-line with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out the legal framework regarding the use of the Welsh language in the delivery of public services. Furthermore, under Standards 158, 164 and 170, the Local Authority must produce a Welsh Language Annual Report that outlines how the Council has complied with the service delivery standards, policy-making standards and the operational standards.

Further information on Blaenau Gwent's requirements is available on our Council webpage and also outlined in our Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice provided by the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner including information on how we promote and facilitate the use of Welsh language services through our Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2017-22.

Accountability

The following are responsible for the Welsh language within the organisation:

Political Leadership

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

Strategic Leadership

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 and is the decision making body for the corporate element of the Council.

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.

Implementing the standards

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 continue to offer

views and experiences on any key consultations and are the main point of contact for discussing this report.

All staff across our directorates and departments are responsible for the efficient implementation of the standards and for supporting and encouraging the promotion of the Welsh language.

Each year the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report is presented to our Corporate Leadership Team and is presented to our Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee for approval prior to publicity and publication.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that as an organisation we meet the Welsh Language requirements we recognise there is always room for improvement. The Corporate Compliments & Complaints procedure is available for anyone to make a complaint related to the Welsh language and the Welsh Language Standards and is used to help us identify and make any required changes. We welcome complaints to be made in any format (e.g. email, letter, in person, telephone, social media etc.)

For further information about our Corporate Compliments & Complaints procedures please visit our website.

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 Organisational Development (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.

3. Matters arising during the reporting period

Coronavirus Crisis

In March 2020, the First Minister officially declared there was a threat to public health in Wales due to Coronavirus. Due to these exceptional circumstances, this resulted in public services across Wales moving into emergency-response, in order to prioritise preventing the spread of the virus, and to ensure vital support was provided to local people and communities.

On 17th March, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office (WLCO) wrote to the Council setting out its expectations regarding its regulatory functions during Covid-19 in relation to upholding the Welsh language standards and scheme. As an organisation we fully supported the approach, and as far as possible upheld our commitments towards the Welsh Language. For example, we shared the information received from the WLCO with our Corporate Leadership Team and Managers and encouraged information and advice to be shared in Welsh.

However, in response to the pandemic many staff across the organisation were redeployed to support the delivery of critical services, such as the 'Locality Response Hubs', which were set up to support those needing to shield etc. This included all staff from the Policy Team - who lead on supporting the implementation of the Welsh language standards and scheme – being deployed from March 2020 to September 2020 which meant that all planned development work around the Welsh language needed to be temporarily postponed for a significant proportion of the year (for example, review of Welsh language Translation Policy; Welsh Language skills courses for staff etc.). This was in-line with the Council's decision to pause all non-urgent operational work across all service areas across the organisation.

As a direct consequence of the pandemic the publication of our 2019-20 Welsh Language Report was delayed, noting that June 2020 was a statutory deadline, and subsequently the report was published in October 2020. The WLCO were informed of the exceptional situation and we followed the advice they provided:

i) you must publicise the fact that you have published an annual report; and

ii) you must ensure that a current copy of your annual report is available (a) on your website, and (b) in each of your offices that are open to the public.

Furthermore, as an organisation all of our offices open to the public were closed and the Council took a decision to only use Microsoft Office Teams to support internal and public meetings and public events in-line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Therefore, continuing to comply with our Welsh language duties we continue to offer simultaneous Welsh language translation arrangements when required. However, unlike other known online meeting platforms which effectively support bi-lingual meetings, Microsoft Office Teams does require further development to help

support public bodies to provide Welsh Simultaneous services more efficiently, therefore we welcomed the WLCOs support in writing to Microsoft Office to outline Wales' language requirements.

Staff training

0 courses (available online) were delivered through the medium of Welsh, although this option is made available to staff if requested. This is perhaps not surprising given that only 14 of the 2,946 staff identified their language preference as Welsh, which is a slight decrease since the last reporting period 2018-19 (15).

Also during the reporting period 6 Officers completed the Cymraeg yn y Gwaith Course ("Welsh in Workplace").

Arrangement for user feedback / complaints

During this reporting period a total of **0 complaints** were received via Corporate Compliments & Complaints regarding service delivery standards; policy making standards; or operational standards. However, 1 Welsh language enquiry was received from a member of the public via email relating to the Welsh language standards being met which was actioned appropriately.

For further information about our Corporate Compliments & Complaints procedures please visit our website.

Notable events during the year

Due to exceptional circumstances, a cyber-attack on the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office, our annual Welsh language monitoring visit needed to be postponed until 2021. We continue to work with the Welsh Language Commissioners Office and have actively supported them during this period, and, plan to take forward any key updates or developments received as part of our work for the forthcoming year. We will look to provide a progress update during the next reporting period in 2021-22.

Blaenau Gwent provided a response to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Thematic Study, an inquiry into the impact of Coronavirus on public services Welsh language services and provision.

Meeting our service delivery 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.

These guides assist staff to effectively implement our service delivery standards, operational standards and policy making standards. For example, the guides include information and advice on 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.

Our Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice, along with a synopsis guide for staff for upholding them is made available on our staff intranet. This intranet page continues to be promoted via Corporate Communication and our Wider Corporate Leadership Team and is also reviewed and updated periodically.

The Council is currently undertaking a Customer Services review project which aims to explore our use of both digital and non-digital methods for delivering services, and identify where and how we can make improvements. This includes reviewing customer experiences and customer journeys, and the Welsh language is being considered as part of this work. For example, plans are underway to review and develop the Council's contact centre Connect to Blaenau Gwent's (C2BG) automated welcome message; provide Welsh language training for C2BG staff; develop a new Corporate Welsh language contacts list which includes work to scope opportunities for supporting internal verification (for example, Mystery Shoppers, sample checks etc.).

In 2019, as part of our self-assessment work, we undertook an internal audit which examined the effectiveness of our internal controls for Welsh language processes and meeting our Welsh Language Standards. The overall result of the audit was determined as being of 'reasonable assurance', and resulted in the development of an action plan to address any key recommendations by December 2020. Despite this work needing to be paused due to the pandemic work resumed in January 2021 and the following action has been taken:

- Review and development of Welsh language translation providers list and process;
- Meetings held with Communications to ensure Welsh language compliance in relation to social media posts;
- Scoping of opportunities whereby Welsh language services can be reviewed and improved via internal verification processes.

Meeting our policy making standards

The Council has a duty to comply with a number of policy making standards. For example, the Council has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process which is used to support policy and service development, procedures and functions, and proposed financial efficiency saving proposals etc. The EqIA process continues to include consideration of the Welsh language. The EqIA process highlights the importance of identifying 'positive' as well as 'adverse' impacts and opportunities for mitigation in

relation to the Welsh language, in line with our Welsh language requirements. The EqIA is currently under review and work is underway to develop an Integrated Impact Assessment of which the Welsh language will be considered.

Meeting our promotion standards

The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

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

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.

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".*

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".*

The Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 is directly aligned to both the Welsh Government's and the Council's Welsh Language strategic frameworks.

The strategic priorities highlighted in the draft WESP document 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 SEWC 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 are reviewed and strengthened on an annual basis.

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, 3 out of 4 WEF meetings took place throughout the course of the 2019/20 academic year, with a further 3 meetings having taken place thus far during the 2020/21 academic session. Partners have commented on the effectiveness of the Forum, which in turn has had a positive impact upon membership, attendance and outcomes.

In addition, 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 met twice out of a possible 4 meetings throughout the course of the 2019/20 academic year, and 3 times thus far during the 2020/21 academic year. The 2020/21 areas of focus for the group are as follows:

- Regional Promotion and Communication Strategy Development;
- Monitoring the Demand for and Uptake of Welsh-medium Education Places;
- Regional Review of Welsh-medium Secondary School Provision;
- Welsh Medium Grant and 21st Century Schools Band B Proposals and Projects;
- WESP and WEF Updates;

- Immersion.

The Council has worked with neighbouring authorities via the aforementioned Forum, to develop a booklet promoting the benefits of being bilingual. The document is reviewed annually and shared with the families of prospective pupils. The booklet is also linked to the admissions process and is 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 also available via the Council's website.

It has been a difficult year to sustain the strong progress made in relation to the delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan throughout 2018/19. However, the Council and its partners have remained committed to the delivery of the WESP, whilst also supporting the development of resources and engagement throughout the Local Authority area during the emergency response period, and subsequent reopening of schools. Therefore, good progress was made in relation to the delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan throughout 2019/20, along with the associated processes and partnerships including the Welsh in Education Forum, which underpin its delivery. Blaenau Gwent 2019/20 self-assessment is based upon key progress in line with each priority area. The self-assessment was sustained at Amber, with the rate of completion against the 2019/20 action plan as follows:

- 84% (or 49 actions) are complete;
- 7% (or 4 actions) ongoing; and,
- 9% (5 actions) in development.

Continued management and monitoring is required to ensure that the plan and targets are reflective of need, and that the key objectives are achieved within each delivery plan period. 5 of the main achievements in the last academic session include:

1. Blaenau Gwent has successfully secured Welsh Government approval for a 21st Century Schools Band B Project involving remodelling works at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. In addition, Education are taking forward a project to create a 210 place Welsh-medium primary school and associated childcare facility within the Tredegar/Sirhowy valley.

2. Numbers of pupils on roll, along with those applying for a place at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg has continued to increase, with a positive trend noted over the last 3 years in relation to both nursery and reception pupil numbers. In addition, transition rates between primary and secondary for 2019/20 were 100%.

3. 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.

4. Partner representation, attendance and frequency of the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Education Forum continues to be strong, 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. Also, the WESP POSP Sub-group continues to meet regularly to support proposals for growth and development on a regional basis and again, to inform strategic planning.

5. Sabbatical Welsh in a year figures are increasing annually. In 2019/20 8 school staff undertook the course, and in 2020/21 13 staff are engaging in the course. Schools, governors and staff have demonstrated a commitment to the course and the Welsh Language.

Blaenau Gwent 10 Year Plan

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Welsh Government required Local Authorities to submit their first draft 10-year plan to the Welsh Ministers by 31 January 2021; however, in light of the pandemic and associated emergency response requirements, the submission timeline has been updated. 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, with revised guidance issued in January 2021. Local Authorities must submit their first draft 10-year Plan to the Welsh Ministers on 31st January 2022, with the plan then becoming operational from September 2022. The current BG WESP will remain in force until that date.

Education has already begun working with the Welsh Education Forum in order to establish a draft 10-year plan for consultation and approval by 31st January 2022. Following ministerial approval, the plan will come into effect on 1 September 2022. A series of workshops have taken place between autumn-term 2020 and spring-term 2021, and good progress has been made in line with the development of the draft plan to date, with consultation programmed between September and October 2021, prior to consideration in line with the Council's political processes.

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 additionality 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 £6.2 million in creating additional primary and childcare 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. The consultation process was initiated in December 2020, concluding in January 2021.

The consultation process determined that there was widespread support for the proposal among consultees, with over 93% of respondents in favour of the new school development, citing the positive impact that the proposal is likely to have upon the Welsh Language, education, employment, the local community and the economy. In summary, during the 42-day consultation period the Council received:

- 8 email response; and,
- 190 survey responses.

The responses can be broken down as follows:

- Fully support the proposal - 177 (93%)
- Partially support the proposal - 2 (1%)
- Do not support the proposal - 11 (6%)

In line with the outcome of the consultation, it was determined by Council's Executive Committee that the proposal should proceed to Statutory Notice. The Statutory Notice period, therefore, commenced on Monday 1st March 2021 and concluded on Monday 29th March 2021. Support for the proposal was further demonstrated during this period, with only 1 objection letter having been received. The response detailed concerns regarding the potential impact upon the individual as a local resident, rather than stating a formal objection to the proposal. Subsequently, the Executive Committee approved the proposal and the decision notification process was initiated. The project is currently within the development phase, with the new seedling school and associated childcare programmed for occupation from the autumn-term 2023.

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 continues to promote a range of external courses both accredited and non-accredited, along with events for staff in close working partnership with external partners such as Aneurin Leisure Trust Adult and Community Learning team.

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, all schools have participated in an 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 increasing numbers of practitioners have been recruited to attend the full-time Cardiff University Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme.

Meeting our operational standards

Employees Welsh Language Skills

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 2021.

Staff have the ability and responsibility to maintain their own staff records. The base figure for the data is 2,946 staff on the Council's establishment list, (an increase of 55 staff from the previous year).

Speak Welsh

The number of employees who have Welsh language speaking skills as at 31st March 2021 amounts to 594 (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 (50%) which is a slight decrease compared with the last reporting period (50%, 2019-20). 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 (1%)
Moderately	143 (5%)
Quite Well	20 (1%)
A Little	353 (12%)
No ability	1,503 (51%)
No response	909 (30%)
Total	2,946

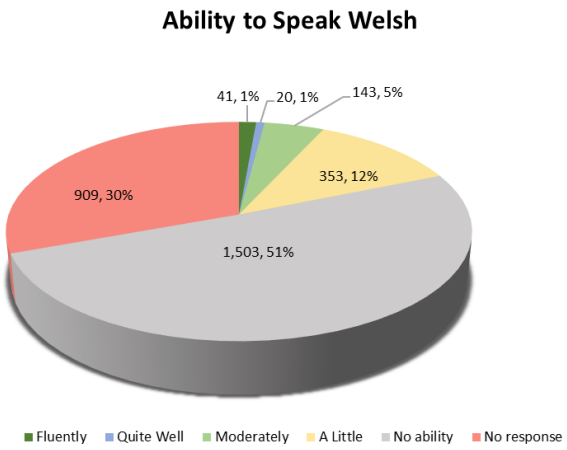


Chart 2: Understand Welsh

Ability to understand Welsh	**Number of Staff**
Fluently	42 (2%)
Moderately	167 (6%)
Quite Well	27 (1%)
A Little	396 (13%)
No ability	1,467 (49%)
No response	871 (29%)
Total	2,946

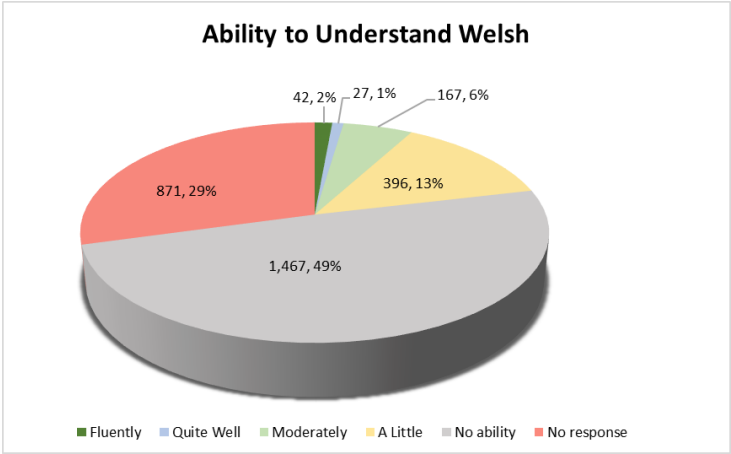


Chart 3: Write Welsh

Ability to write Welsh	**Number of Staff**
Fluently	37 (1%)
Moderately	118 (4%)
Quite Well	22 (1%)
A Little	291 (10%)
No ability	1,536 (52%)
No response	964 (32%)
Total	2,946

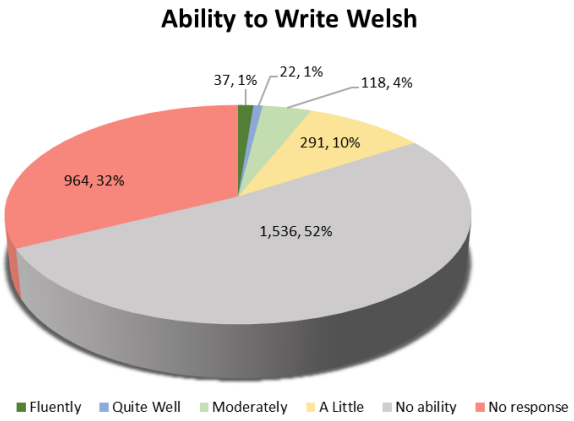
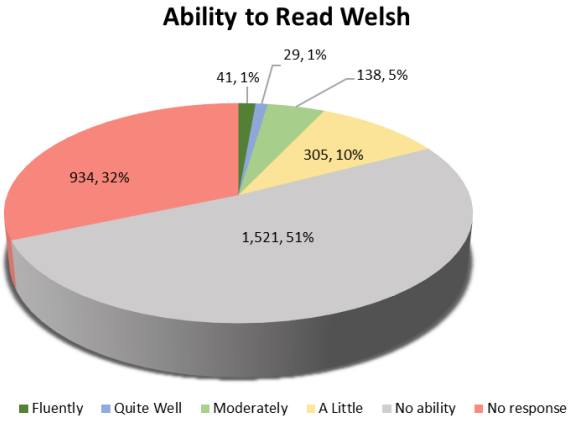


Chart 4: Read Welsh

Ability to read Welsh	**Number of Staff**
Fluently	41 (1%)
Moderately	138 (5%)
Quite Well	29 (1%)
A Little	305 (10%)
No ability	1,521 (51%)
No response	934 (32%)
Total	2,946



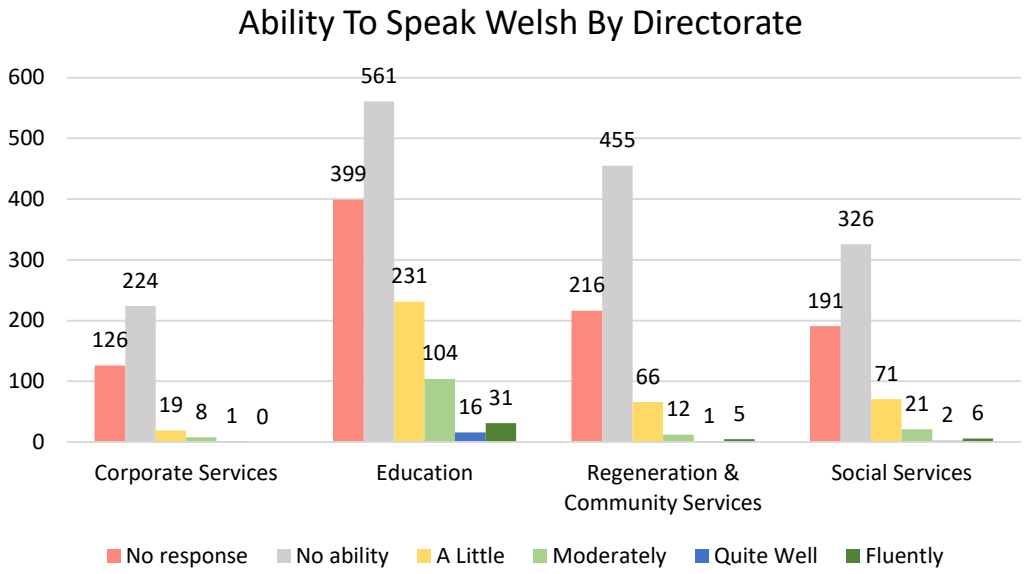
The above graphs show that the figures regarding ability are very similar across speaking, understanding, writing and reading skill areas. The percentage of staff that declare they are ‘fluent’ is between 1% to 2% (a slight increase from the previous reporting period) while the percentage of staff who say they have ‘no ability’ is between 49% to 52% (a slight decrease from the previous reporting period).

Nearly a quarter of staff (21%) consider themselves as having an ability to Understand Welsh, while only 16% have an ability to Write Welsh, with 17% noting an ability to Read Welsh and 18% being able to Speak Welsh. These figures are comparably similar to last years’ reporting period.

Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate and Contract Type

The following graphs and tables reflect the total number of Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate and Contract Type across the organisation.

	Ability to Speak Welsh						
Directorate	**No response**	**No ability**	**A Little**	**Moderately**	**Quite Well**	**Fluently**	**Total**
Corporate Services	126	224	19	8	1	0	378
Education	399	561	231	104	16	31	1,342
Regeneration & Community Services	216	455	66	12	1	5	755
Social Services	191	326	71	21	2	6	617



A total of 42 staff declare fluency with no significant change in comparison to the previous reporting period (43, 2019/20)[1]. The Education Directorate has the most fluent Welsh Speakers (31), and it is noted that there are no staff who are fluent within Corporate Services Directorate.

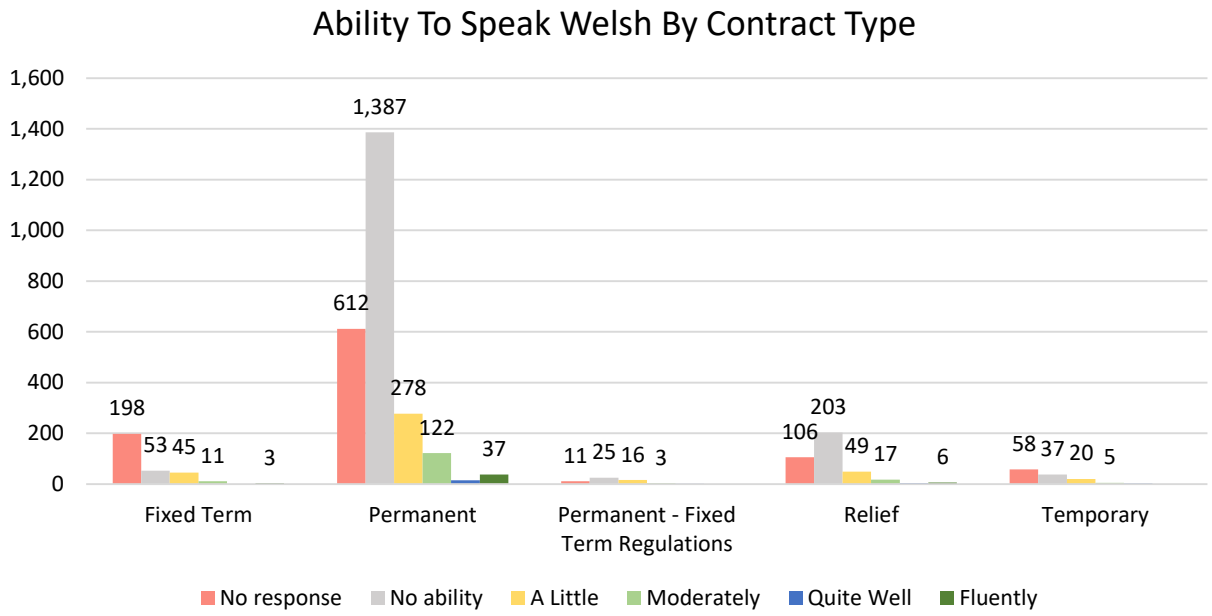
Fluent Welsh Speakers by Contract Type:

	Ability to Speak Welsh					
Contract Type	**No response**	**No ability**	**A Little**	**Moderately**	**Quite Well**	**Fluently**
Fixed Term	198	53	45	11	0	3
Permanent	612	1,387	278	122	15	37
Permanent - Fixed Term Regulations	11	25	16	3	1	0
Relief	106	203	49	17	3	6
Temporary	58	37	20	5	2	0

When considering the Contract Type of those staff who identify as Fluent Welsh Speakers, the highest number (37) are on Permanent Contracts; with the remainder on

[1] Please note the figures in the 2019-20 report should read a total of 43 staff who declare fluency by Directorate on page 7.

being on Fixed Term (3) or Relief (6) contracts. Therefore, no significant changes since the last reporting period



In terms of resilience it is noted that 122 of those staff who declare a 'Moderate' ability to speak Welsh are on Permanent Contracts, as are 277 Permanent staff can speak 'A Little.'

Overall, there is a fairly good foundation of Welsh language ability across the organisation and scope to develop our employee's Welsh Language Speaking Skills further, given that 158 staff declare they have a Moderate ability, 21 can do 'Quite Well' and 408 can speak 'A Little' which is a slight increase from the last reporting period.

Recruitment - Welsh Language Skills Requirement

When recruiting for new or vacant posts, Managers are required to complete a Welsh Language Skills 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.

During the scope of the reporting period a total of 161 posts were advertised by the Council; of which 2 posts stated that Welsh Language Skills were '**essential**' and 159 posts identified Welsh as '**desirable**'.

The Council's policy is that all posts are to be made Welsh 'Desirable' as a minimum requirement. Also, no posts were listed in the reporting period where Welsh language skills were identified as a skill that needed to be learnt following an individual's appointment to a post.

4. Conclusions and recommendations/actions

Blaenau Gwent Council will continue to response positively to the Welsh Language Standards and is committed to meeting its duties under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. We recognise that there is still further work to be done around reinforcing the requirements and seeking to continually improve the quality and availability of services through the medium of Welsh.

As part of our work in the forthcoming year we intend to take forward the following key actions:

- Promotion of use of Welsh in the workplace and increased training opportunities for staff; particularly staff who are key in supporting the upholding of our operational delivery standards;

- Continue to take forward our Welsh Language Internal Audit Action Plan which includes key actions such as a review of our internal verification processes;

- Support the delivery of our policy making standards through the review and development of a new Integrated Impact Assessment, which will consider how we ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably.

Over the forthcoming period we aim to continue our progress, in relation to meeting our Welsh language duties, and make any necessary improvements to ensure we deliver the best possible services for our staff, residents, partners and stakeholders.