



Equality and Diversity

**Cydraddoldeb ac
Amrwyiaeth**

Foreword

At the time of Monmouthshire County Council's first Welsh Language Scheme in 1998, the level of demand for Welsh-language services in the county was, by any estimation, extremely low. The 1991 census had revealed that only 2.3% of Monmouthshire's population spoke Welsh, and there seemed little indication that the fortunes of the language would ever revive in the area.

However, the census of 2001 revealed that major changes had occurred and were continuing to occur in the linguistic profile of the county. The establishment of the two Welsh-medium primary schools, Ysgol y Ffin and Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni, Welsh being taught as a key part of the national curriculum and a growing interest among residents of all ages in learning the language were all reflected in a substantial increase in the number of people identified as Welsh speakers up to 9.3% of the county's population. The growth in the number of young Welsh speakers was particularly notable. The Census of 2011 has once more revealed a slight increase in the numbers of Welsh speakers living in Monmouthshire from 9.3% to 9.9% or 8,780 people. Remarkably Monmouthshire is one of only 2 Councils out of 22 to see an increase.

This is the Council's first Welsh Language Linguistic Skills Strategy and will require Council departments/divisions to decide which posts will require Welsh language skills as an essential requirement, to be able to deal with the Welsh speaking residents of Monmouthshire. The Council will give its full backing to this strategy in order to try and sustain the very positive increase in the number of Welsh speakers living in the County. It will work in tandem with the Council's new Welsh Language Scheme which was given formal approval by Cabinet on the 22nd of November 2012 and will continue to develop the Council's service delivery and commitment towards the Welsh language in line with the expected requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (as introduced by the Welsh Language Measure 2011).

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Leader of the Council

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**Deputy Leader of the Council
And Equality Champion**

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1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction to this strategy, the Census of 2011 revealed that Monmouthshire along with Cardiff was one of only two councils in Wales to have an increase in the numbers of Welsh Speakers from 9.3% in 2001 to 9.9% or 8,780 people in 2011. It is therefore very important that the introduction of a robust Linguistic skills strategy (LSS) coupled with the Council's new Welsh Language Scheme 2013 - 2016 can hopefully contribute in some way towards sustaining this very positive trend.

Monmouthshire County Council is committed to the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales we will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality and as such aim to deliver a range of service that of the same high standard and quality in both languages.

Our Welsh Language Scheme sets out how it will give effect to that principle in support of the aims of the Welsh Government's National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales 'laith byw laith fyw'.

In order to assist us with "laith byw laith fyw" a key action of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme Action Plan 2012-2015 states that a Linguistic Skills Strategy (LSS or the Strategy) will be developed to run alongside the Scheme.

Also the Welsh Government has developed a Welsh Language Strategy "More than just words"/"Mwy na geiriau" that is designed to give Welsh speakers language choice when using health and social care services in Wales. The Council is proactively working on the strategy's action plan to ensure it delivers on its aims and objectives.

2 Welsh speakers in Monmouthshire by ward - Census 2011

	Residents 3+	Speak	Speak	Speak, Read + Write	Speak, Read + Write
Electoral Division Name	Numbers	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Caerwent	1735	151	8.7	114	6.6
Caldicot Castle	1885	221	11.7	166	8.8
Cantref	1994	169	8.5	127	6.4
Castle	1749	173	9.9	127	7.3
Croesonen	2330	232	10	160	6.9
Crucorney	2054	216	10.5	158	7.7
Devauden	1448	139	9.6	94	6.5
Dewstow	1888	172	9.1	120	6.4
Dixton with Osbaston	2501	180	7.2	129	5.2
Drybridge	3291	346	10.5	238	7.2
Goetre Fawr	2332	270	11.6	197	8.4
Green Lane	2014	220	10.9	147	7.3
Grofield	1785	185	10.4	128	7.2
Lansdown	2125	202	9.5	129	6.1
Larkfield	1952	151	7.7	108	5.5
Llanbadoc	1281	135	10.5	96	7.5
Llanelly Hill	3818	337	8.8	253	6.6
Llanfoist Fawr	1811	211	11.7	158	8.7
Llangybi Fawr	1820	163	9	132	7.3
Llanover	2244	173	7.7	128	5.7
Llantilio Crossenny	1718	164	9.5	118	6.9
Llanwenarth Ultra	1406	117	8.3	92	6.5
Mardy	1432	150	10.5	109	7.6
Mill	2424	263	10.8	209	8.6
Mitchel Troy	1221	108	8.8	86	7
Overmonnow	2314	196	8.5	146	6.3
Portskewett	2083	220	10.6	167	8
Priory	2117	219	10.3	166	7.8
Raglan	1876	209	11.1	144	7.7
Rogiet	1747	272	15.6	203	11.6
St. Arvans	1569	134	8.5	95	6.1
St. Christopher's	2490	299	12	214	8.6
St. Kingsmark	3032	247	8.1	186	6.1
St. Mary's	1776	120	6.8	82	4.6
Severn	1630	172	10.6	123	7.5
Shirenewton	2158	172	8	112	5.2
The Elms	3536	452	12.8	335	9.5
Thornwell	2630	282	10.7	189	7.2
Trellech United	2694	261	9.7	187	6.9
Usk	2766	271	9.8	195	7
West End	1861	199	10.7	155	8.3
Wyesham	2072	207	10	151	7.3
Total	88609	8780	9.90%	6373	7.20%

3 Aim and Objectives

The **aim** of this Strategy is to discharge its commitment to deal with the Welsh speaking public in the language of their choice.

The **objectives** of the Strategy are to ensure that bilingual Welsh and English services to the public are adequately planned, funded, resourced and delivered, in terms of human resources, throughout the Council. The Strategy also gives clarity to how the Council will seek to increase the number of staff with Welsh Language skills, in order to develop the provision of services through the medium of Welsh.

This Strategy brings together the various aspects of equality of language choice in service provision, customer care, staff development and recruitment and selection into one strategy, which will take the Council forward in a positive way. In preparing the Strategy, it is recommended that the following five actions are carried out, based on the methodology recommended by the Welsh Language Commissioner:

1. Conduct a skills audit and continually update the bilingual requirements of workplaces and posts
2. Continually update the bilingual skills of both existing and newly appointed staff
3. Establish appropriate arrangements for comparing the above – i.e. the skill needs with existing skill resources
4. Establish an implementation programme for closing the skills gap
5. Establish appropriate arrangements for the monitoring and reporting of the strategy's implementation

By implementing the Strategy, the Council will:

- (i) Ensure that residents within its geographical boundaries are given the services they need in their chosen language, as far as is reasonably practicable;
- (ii) Ensure that the Council's customers are treated equally, as far as is reasonably practicable, whatever their language needs and however they deal with the Council;
- (iii) Ensure that staff receive appropriate training so that they are able to deal effectively with customers, whatever their language needs;
- (iv) Ensure that recruitment and selection practises within the Council reflect the need to provide the above;
- (v) Ensure that all employees have access to the appropriate advice, guidance and support to enable them to correctly implement the requirements of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme;
- (vi) Work with appropriate partnership and community agencies to improve the range of language skills available to the Council where possible eg Menter Iaith, the Urdd, Coleg Gwent, Aneurin Bevan Health Board;
- (vii) Implement the requirements of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme and Action Plan 2013-16;
- (viii) Ensure internal monitoring is undertaken to provide meaningful statistical information to enable the Council to note areas of good practice and areas where further development may be needed.

4 Language and Equality

Language has become part of the wider Equalities agenda as it has been recognised that in the case of a person's first or preferred language, it is as inseparable from them as is the colour of their eyes or skin. To discriminate because of language is as unacceptable as is discrimination due to a person's gender, colour, race, disability, age etc and it is imperative the Council recognises and understands this principle.

The ability to use the Welsh language in the workplace is a very valuable skill that can assist the Council in providing a service to the Welsh speaking public that is more appropriate to their needs.

One of the key objectives of this strategy is to try and increase the number of Welsh speakers employed by the organisation, and therefore line managers are required to support and encourage members of staff who are learning Welsh or those who show a desire to do so.

It is essential that staff familiarise themselves with this document, the Welsh Language Scheme/Action Plan and the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2012 - 2016 in order to avoid perpetuating inequality of access to recruitment opportunities and access to services. Where an organisation employs policies, procedures and practices that do not take account of the differing needs of employees, potential employees, service users and other stakeholders, that organisation can be said to be perpetuating institutional inequality.

5 Challenges

There are stern challenges to be faced when trying to support the operating of this Strategy.

- Assessing the number of posts in each division where there will be a need for a Welsh speaker to deal with the Welsh speaking public
- Ensuring the Council fully acknowledges and considers that Welsh language skills are to be treated the same as any other skills that are required as qualifications for eligibility for vacancies.
- Carrying out an audit to locate Council staff with Welsh Language skills
- Encouraging those staff that their skills are good enough to deal with the public
- Encouraging and supporting staff to learn Welsh or improve their skills
- Providing language choice in the recruitment and appointment process
- Working towards attracting more applications from Welsh speakers and learners
- Encouraging all staff to demonstrate basic linguistic courtesy in Welsh
- Working towards a guaranteed language choice at the “front desk”
- Making current and new staff aware of the Council’s Welsh Language Scheme and the Linguistic Skills Strategy and the commitments within them.
- Encouraging Welsh speakers to ask for a service through the medium of Welsh

6 Assess the number of Welsh speakers required in divisions

An exercise will be carried out with each division to identify how many posts will require Welsh speakers to deal with the Welsh speaking public and be designated as Welsh Essential. Where the capacity to deliver services in Welsh is required within a team, a number of roles will be highlighted – one or more of these roles must be filled by a Welsh speaker with the necessary linguistic skills. This approach will enable flexibility for managers to maximise all available skills within their team.

Each role identified as requiring Welsh language skills will be assessed for the level and range of skills required for that particular post. If for any reason someone is appointed who does not possess the level or range of skills required for the post they will be given appropriate training to improve their skills to the level identified for the post within a timescale agreed by their manager and Human Resources.

Where staff who currently occupy posts designated Welsh Essential are not Welsh speaking, they will be offered the opportunity of learning Welsh either during working hours or during their own time according to their personal preference - the Council will bear the cost of this training. Where a Welsh essential post becomes vacant, every effort will be made to recruit an individual who has the linguistic skills relevant to the job description. In addition the Council will encourage applications from Welsh speakers as part of its recruitment policy.

7 Carry out an audit of Existing Bilingual Skills

In order to develop its bilingual skills capacity, it is essential that the Council first establish how many of their staff have Welsh language skills, what those skills are (speaking, reading, writing and understanding), their level of proficiency, what job do they do and for what department. A council wide Welsh Language Skills Survey will need to be conducted and will ask the above questions and also whether they are willing to use their Welsh Language skills in their place of work or as third parties for other departments.

The information received from the questionnaires will be recorded onto a database by the Welsh Language Support Officer and will be made available to the Council's Human Resources department. Human Resources have redesigned their equal opportunities form for the application process to include questions with regard to Welsh language skills and preference in order to ensure that information is kept up to date. Members of staff who are learning Welsh will be assessed periodically as to their level of proficiency in the language.

The names of fluent Welsh speakers – that is, members of staff who are competent, confident and willing to use Welsh in their provision of services to the public – will be made available via the Council's internal information system – The Point.

8 Recruitment and Selection

When the Council recruits staff at all levels, there are many skills that need to be considered. The ability to speak Welsh is one of the skills which will be considered when making appointments. Where two candidates for a post have been scored an equal number of points in the selection process, the level of ability to use the Welsh language will be regarded as an additional skill.

During the selection process, consideration will be given to bilingualism as a desirable skill according to the organisation's corporate aims and objectives. In considering appointments where candidates have been assessed to demonstrate equal competencies for a given role, then in order to differentiate between the two, preference will be given to the candidate with demonstrable Welsh language skills who is willing to utilise those skills in support of and to deliver Welsh language services

The Council will identify those workplaces and jobs where the ability to communicate in Welsh is essential and will formulate future job descriptions accordingly. This requirement may be defined as a component of a workplace or team, rather than being attached to a particular job.

All staff responsible for writing or evaluating job descriptions and departmental managers must ensure that this Strategy is adhered to when advertising for or appointing new staff, or when re-evaluating a job description or a staff appraisal is undertaken.

Upon the creation of a new post, or when an existing post becomes vacant and is reviewed, the line manager responsible for that post will evaluate the linguistic requirements of that post.

Any Welsh language skills deemed essential for a post must be noted within the Personal Specification for that post. The level of Welsh deemed necessary for any given role must be appropriate to the tasks and responsibilities associated with that post, e.g. a good level of spoken skills rather than written would be more appropriate if the post under consideration was for example a receptionist. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suggest that a communications officer have advanced levels of spoken skills. Job Descriptions must clearly indicate any tasks that are required to be performed in Welsh.

9 Training and Development

The Council recognises that in order to continually improve the range of bilingual services it can offer, training and supporting existing staff will play an important role alongside recruitment of new staff that already possess Welsh language skills.

In developing a robust Welsh language training strategy for the organisation, consideration will be given to the differing backgrounds and training needs of individuals. When developing a training plan, initial consideration will be given to updating or supporting the existing or latent Welsh language skills within the Council rather than training a member of staff who has no existing skills.

The training provision and progress of those learning the language is kept under constant review and priorities are re-assessed where necessary. This monitoring will be undertaken by the Policy Officer Equality and Welsh Language, the Welsh Language Support Officer and the Training Manager. It is recognised that the speed at which individuals are able to learn Welsh will have a direct impact on the targets set for improving provision of bilingual services. It is also appreciated that linguistic skills vary from person to person and that some may take longer than others to acquire the language. The Council also recognises the valuable contribution which existing bilingual staff can make by helping and encouraging learners to practice their Welsh in work situations.

If you have any queries regarding this strategy please either e-mail the Policy Officer Equality and Welsh Language on: alanburkitt@monmouthshire.gov.uk or ring him on 01633 644010

Appendix 1 Action plan and timetable 2013 - 2016

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Responsible Officer/s
To ensure that the Strategy is appropriate and achievable	Consult with internal and external partners on draft version of Linguistic Skills Strategy	Amendments made and draft sent through formal process for adoption	22 nd April - 10 th May 2013	Equality + Welsh language Officer
Strategy to seek formal approval	Report and EQIA to accompany draft strategy to Cabinet to seek approval	Formally approved/ published on the Internet and internally (The Point / Team Spirit)	3 rd June 2013	Equality + Welsh language Officer
What language skills are present in the Council	Carry out a language audit of Staff	A detailed picture of the existing language skills amongst staff	January 2014	Equality + Welsh language Officer/WL Support Officer/ HR Officer
Establish which posts should be designated Welsh Essential within Directorates	Examine existing staffing structures and consider required skill levels and types of contact with the public	A range of posts across all directorates designated Welsh essential	October 2014	DMT's, Equality + Welsh language officer/HR Officer
Have an up to date record of staff language skills	Develop system of recording personal language skills	Council able to assess the skill gaps in directorates	March 2015	Equality + Welsh language Officer /HR
Ensure that all staff are aware of the Welsh speakers in the Council willing to act as third parties.	Distribute list of Welsh speakers to all Directorates and publish on the Point and Team Spirit	Public can be dealt with the Council in their chosen language.	October 2015	Equality + Welsh language Officer/ Communications

Appendix 2

Monmouthshire County Council Welsh Language questionnaire

Monmouthshire County Council is conducting a survey of the Welsh-language skills of its employees as part of our on-going work around equalities. This will provide the Council with a much better understanding of its current capacity to provide services in Welsh and help plan the development of these services in the future. Please would you take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire so that we can find out the level of Welsh language skills that are present within the Council.

Information provided will be treated confidentially – staff will not be pressurised into taking on additional duties and responsibilities simply because of their linguistic ability.

Please complete and return the questionnaire **even if it is a nil return** by xxxxxxxx

Section A

- A1. Name _____
- A2. Job Title _____
- A3. Team, Service _____
- A4. Location _____
- A5. Payroll Number _____
- A6. Phone numbers _____(office)_____ (mobile)_____
- A5. E mail address _____

Section B

B1. What level of fluency do you have in the Welsh language?

	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Quite Well</i>	<i>Fluently</i>	<i>None at all</i>
Understanding					
Speak					
Read					
Write					

If you answered 'none at all' to all categories, please skip to Section D.

Section C

C1. How often do you use Welsh whilst completing your duties in the workplace?

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Daily
Over the phone				
Face to face meetings				
Read correspondence				
Write correspondence				

C2. Where did you learn your Welsh language skills?

At home <i>Eg. Welsh speaking parents or grandparents</i>	School <i>Eg O/A level</i>	Adult Course with Monmouthshire <i>Eg Cwrs Mynediad</i>	Adult Course with other <i>(please state)</i>	Other (Please state)

Section D

D1. Are you currently learning Welsh? (*If 'yes' please list course/s and level/s*)

Yes No

D2. Would you be interested in learning or improving your Welsh language skills?

Yes No

D2. Would you be interested in acting as a third party Welsh speaker for other divisions by conversing with Welsh speaking members of the public?

Yes No

D3. Do you speak, read or write any other language/s other than English or Welsh? (including British Sign Language). *(please state details below)*

Thank you for taking your time to complete this form, your help with this survey is greatly appreciated. Please return your completed forms via the following methods:

- Electronically to davidbarnes@monmouthshire.gov.uk
- As a hard copy to David Barnes, Welsh Language Support Officer,

Monmouthshire County Council, Usk College, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1XJ

Phone: 01633 644010 or 07793798920. Email: alanburkitt@monmouthshire.gov.uk