



monmouthshire sir fynwy

Monmouthshire County Council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report

1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024



Overview

This is the Monmouthshire County Council's annual report on the Welsh language standards. Its purpose is to evaluate our compliance with the standards, and the ways in which we have promoted and facilitated opportunities to use Welsh and ensured that the language was treated no less favourably than English during the year. It was produced in accordance with Schedule 4 of the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015, to meet the requirements of standards 158, 164 and 170.

Further Information

This report can be found on the Monmouthshire County Council website: www.monmouthshire.gov.uk.

If you have any questions regarding the contents of this report, please contact us on the details below.

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh, contacting us in Welsh will not lead to a delay in response.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh



Related Documents

[Monmouthshire County Council 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#)

The cabinet member with responsibility for the Welsh language during 2023/24 was Cllr. Angela Sandles.

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1. Background

Monmouthshire County Council recognises the importance of the Welsh Language as an integral part of our cultural identity, heritage and community cohesion. Throughout the year 2023/2024 the council has been dedicated to fostering an environment where the Welsh language can thrive and Welsh speakers are able to use the language in their everyday lives.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework that imposed a duty on Monmouthshire County Council, alongside other public organisations, to comply with standards relating to the Welsh language. The key principles of these standards are that:

- the Welsh language should not be treated any less favourably than the English language.
- we should promote and facilitate the use of the language

In 2015, Monmouthshire Council received a compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner. This document outlines the standards that the council must comply with. In total, there are 176 standards that apply to Monmouthshire Council. These standards are grouped into 5 categories, which are:

- Service Delivery
- Policy Making
- Operational
- Promotion
- Record Keeping

The Welsh Language Standards require us to:

- Produce and publish on our website a 5-year strategy that sets out how we propose to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in our area. (Standards 145,146)
- Produce an annual report, in relation to each financial year, which deals with how we have complied with the standards and published on our website. (Standards 158, 164, 170)

The council's [compliance notice](#) can be found on our bilingual website.

2. Compliance

Service Delivery Standards

<i>Standards Group</i>	<i>Actions Taken During 2023/2024</i>	<i>Actions to be Taken 2024/2025</i>
Standards 1 – 7 Correspondence sent and received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff reminded of requirements to the Welsh language in our correspondence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor for compliance.
Standards 8 – 22 Telephone calls made and received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently awaiting a new Contact Centre Telephony system which will allow those wanting to speak to the council in Welsh to be prioritised to a Welsh speaking member of staff in the Contact Centre. Welsh language hunt group of Welsh speaking staff members. Answerphone messages recorded bilingually for every department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all staff are aware of the processes when receiving Welsh language phone calls. Monitor progress of implementation of new Contact Centre system.
Standards 24 – 36 Meetings with the Public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simultaneous translation provided in public meetings where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor to ensure that the offer of simultaneous translations continuous to be actively made.
Standards 37 – 51, 69 – 70 Other bilingual documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff issued reminders of the need to state that documents are also available in Welsh. Compliance monitored through website checks and translation requests made through the Cymraeg translation service. All forms for public use are created bilingually. All official notices are produced and displayed bilingually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise 'Welsh Tip' within the Compass Staff Newsletter to remind staff of requirements. Monitor compliance closely.
Standards 52 – 60 Websites, Social Media, Apps, and Self-service Machines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites and social media accounts monitored closely to ensure compliance. Welsh Language Officer participates in meetings with website authors to issue reminders of requirements and to answer any questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor and log compliance. Welsh Language Officer to participate in the Communication's Digital Café. Create mandatory training for website authors on how to use the Welsh language

<p>Standards 52 – 60 Websites, Social Media, Apps, and Self-service Machines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When issues arise, the Welsh Language Officer liaises with the Website Officer and Website Authors to rectify any issues. • Welsh Language Officer logs compliance checks for websites and social media accounts and notes any actions taken. • Data of hits on Welsh (W) and English (E) are as follows: <p><i>Recycling and Waste:</i></p> <p>E: 102,814</p> <p>W: 310</p> <p><i>Council Tax:</i></p> <p>E: 36,739</p> <p>W: 101</p> <p><i>Early Years, Childcare and Schools Education:</i></p> <p>E: 2,050</p> <p>W:39</p> <p><i>Welsh Medium Education:</i></p> <p>E:792</p> <p>W:128</p> <p><i>Community Hubs and Libraries:</i></p> <p>E: 20,578</p> <p>W: 220</p>	<p>on digital platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a log of any issues identified and any actions taken to resolve them.
<p>Standards 61 – 63 Signs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new street signs are either bilingual or monolingual Welsh. Names are carefully chosen to reflect the history and heritage of the area. The Welsh Language Officer works closely with the Street Naming Officer to help with this process. • Street Naming and Numbering Policy updated to include that replacement street name plates will include Welsh and English names and both names will be updated on the gazetteer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Language Officer to continue to work closely with the Street Naming Officer on the naming of new streets. • Monitor for compliance.

Standards 64 – 68 Reception Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptions across the authority are monitored to ensure ‘Cymraeg’ posters are displayed to indicate that Welsh can be used. • Welsh language skills assessed during interview for reception roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptions across the authority continue to be monitored. • Commission mystery shopping exercises.
Standards 71 – 75 Awarding Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has a policy for ‘Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor to ensure compliance.
Standards 76 – 80 Awarding Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has a Welsh Language Requirements – Procurement checklist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor to ensure compliance.
Standards 81 – 82 Promoting Welsh Language Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh language services are actively promoted on the Council’s website and social media pages. • Social media posts created for important dates in the Welsh language calendar to promote the Welsh language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor social media to ensure that Welsh language services continue to be actively promoted. • Schedule promotions for key events / dates.
Standard 83 Corporate Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff issued with bilingual e-mail addresses. • Ensure that all aspects of corporate identity are bilingual and that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote bilingual e-mail addresses to all staff. • Ensure that bilingual e-mail addresses are used across our website, documents and forms.
Standards 84 & 86 Educational Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational courses are assessed to determine the need to be delivered in Welsh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to assess and monitor the need to deliver educational courses in Welsh.
Standard 87 Public Address Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public address systems are bilingual. • Monitoring compliance through visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue reminders to staff of requirements. • Monitor for compliance.

Policy Making Standards

<i>Standards Group</i>	<i>Actions Taken During 2023/2024</i>	<i>Actions to be Taken 2024/2025</i>
Standards 88 – 93 Policy Making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training created for ‘Welsh Language Impact Assessments’. • Welsh language impact assessments are undertaken for all policy decisions. • Quality Assuring Meetings for Impact Assessments and feedback provided to report authors – Policy Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training portal ‘Thinqi’ to be utilised to allow staff easy access to Welsh language training relating to Policy Making. • Hold workshops on how to complete and effective Welsh Language Impact Assessment and Consultations. • Quality assurance meetings to continue and monitor their effectiveness on outcomes. • Monitor compliance of standards and issue further training to staff where issues are identified.

Operational Standards

<i>Standards Group</i>	<i>Actions Taken During 2023/2024</i>	<i>Actions to be Taken in 2024/2025</i>
Standards 99 – 104 Employment Documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR documents available bilingual on the council's intranet - Hub. • Reminders issued to staff on the MCC - Cymraeg Teams Channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to issue reminders to staff periodically throughout the year.
Standards 105 – 111 Human Resources Policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR policies are available bilingual on the staff intranet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor to insure compliance.
Standards 112 – 119 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are made aware of their right to complete the complaints / disciplinary process in Welsh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure this is actively offered.
Standards 120 – 126 Staff Intranet and IT Resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Language spellchecking software 'Cysgliad' available on every computer. • Cysgliad training videos shared with Welsh speaking staff on the 'MCC- Cymraeg' Teams Channel. • Welsh language page on staff intranet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer support to staff on using 'Cysgliad' • Ensure Welsh language intranet page is updated regularly.
Standard 127 Staff Language Skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on staff language skills is collected during the application process for new posts. • Recent review undertaken by the Welsh Language Officer to make sure information about Staff Welsh language skills are correct and up to date. • Welsh Language Officer receives information from HR about new starters and the list of Welsh speakers is updated on a monthly basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate recording of the Welsh language skills of staff into the training platform Thingi. Welsh skill levels to updated yearly along with mandatory training.

Standards 128 – 133 Staff Training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Language Officer takes part in the Corporate Induction training throughout the year to inform new starters of our requirements for the Welsh language and to also offer Welsh language support. Welsh language awareness training delivered to staff. Welsh language courses are available to all staff members at every level. 40 staff members have been com- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Language Officer to continue to be a part of the induction process. Continue to advertise and promote Welsh training for staff. New training platform 'Thinqi' will allow all Welsh language training to be available to all staff members.
Standards 134 & 135 Wording and Logo for Staff Email Signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff members have access to the translation service for their e-mail signatures and line managers regularly remind their staff of this requirement. Staff e-mail signatures are monitored to ensure compliance. The 'Work Welsh' logo is available on the staff intranet as well as the MCC Cymraeg Teams Channel for staff to include in their e-mail signatures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor compliance. Continue to utilise the MCC Cymraeg Teams Channel to share information with Welsh speaking staff.
Standards 136 - 140 Recruitment Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see the section on 'Recruitment'. The council classifies each new vacant post as being either Welsh language desirable or Welsh language essential. All vacant posts are advertised bilingually, they include the Welsh language skills framework and Welsh language assessment. Welsh Language Officer monitors new post adverts to ensure compliance. All roles that are assessed as being Welsh Language Essential and some select Welsh Language Desirable roles are advertised on Welsh language recruitment sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to make use of Welsh language recruitment sites. Welsh Language Officer to monitor the outcomes of these adverts. Provide additional information for Welsh language essential posts to specify what kinds of skills will be needed for the role.

Standards 141 – 143 Internal Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance provided to staff for internal signage. • Signs monitored for compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor for compliance.
Standard 144 Workplace announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All announcements are recorded bilingually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor for compliance.

3. Complaints

Complaints from the Public

Bilingual Response – Complaint received from a member of the public that they received a bilingual automated response when they e-mailed the Contact Centre to ask to only be contacted in English. As the e-mail was an automated response which was sent to multiple people, it is a requirement of the Welsh language standards that a bilingual response is sent.

Bilingual Planning Notice – Complaint received from a member of the public who had received a bilingual planning notice when he wanted to receive all of his correspondence from the Council in English only. The customer was issued with an English-only copy, in line with his language choice.

Complaints from Welsh Language Commissioner

CS1153 – Complete – Complaint received from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding an English-only street name plate for Park Crescent in Abergavenny. The sign was erected by Monmouthshire County Council and was believed to be over twenty years old. Due to the age of the sign, there are no longer records of the exact date the sign was erected. As the sign was so old, it had been erected before the requirement for signage to be produced bilingually.

4. Welsh Language Skills

Staff Welsh Language Skill Level by Directorate

<i>Staff Welsh Language Skill Level</i>	<i>Number of Staff (without schools)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Fluent	43	12.1%
Advanced	5	1.5%
Intermediate	38	14.3%
Foundation	26	6.4%
Beginner	215	65.7%
Total	327	

Welsh Language Skill Level by Directorate

<i>Welsh Language Skill Level by Directorate</i>	<i>Number of Welsh Speakers (without schools)</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Children and Young People	9	2.8%
Communities and Place	65	19.9%
Law and Governance	5	1.5%
Resources	17	5.2%
Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	112	34.3%
People, Performance and Partnerships	10	3.1%
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing– MonLife	109	33.3%
Total	327	

Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate

<i>Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate</i>	<i>Number of Fluent Welsh Speakers (without schools)</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Children and Young People	1	2.3%
Communities and Place	2	4.7%
Law and Governance	3	7.0%
Resources	2	4.7%
Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	15	34.9%
People, Performance and Partnerships	3	7.0%
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing - MonLife	17	39.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>	

5. Welsh Language Courses

The Council offers a number of Welsh language courses to staff at all levels of learning. These courses aim to increase the number of Welsh speaking staff within the authority as well as increasing confidence so staff feel more comfortable using the Welsh language in their work. Courses are facilitated through the National Centre of Learning Welsh and are delivered through Coleg Gwent. All Welsh language courses are fully funded through the Welsh Language Department.

In the year 2023/2024, the number of staff who attended Welsh language courses at the relevant levels are as follows:

<i>Language Level of Course</i>	<i>Number of Staff Registered 2022/2023</i>	<i>Number of Staff Registered 2023/2024</i>
Mynediad / Entry	23	33
Sylfaen / Foundation	3	3
Canolradd / Intermediate	4	3
Uwch / Advanced	1	1
Hyfedredd / Proficiency	1	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>40</i>

<i>Language Level of Course</i>	<i>Number of Staff Registered 2022/2023</i>	<i>Number of Staff Registered 2023/2024</i>
Mynediad 1 / Entry 1	22	23
Mynediad 2 / Entry 2	1	10
Sylfaen 1 / Foundation 1	1	1
Sylfaen 2 / Foundation 2	2	2
Canolradd 1 / Intermediate 1	2	2
Canolradd 2 / Intermediate 2	2	1
Uwch 1 / Advanced 1	1	1
Hyfedredd / Proficiency	1	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>40</i>

Standard 128, requires the Council to provide training in Welsh for staff in the following areas, if they are provided in English:

- Recruitment and interviewing;
- Performance management;
- Complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- Induction;
- Dealing with the public; and
- Health and safety.

Staff are asked whether they would like to receive these training sessions in Welsh.

We utilise our Welsh Language Teams Group to actively remind staff that they are able to access the above training through the medium of Welsh.

6. Recruitment

Advertised posts for 2023–2024

	2022–2023	2022–2023	2023–2024	2023–2024
	Number	%	Number	%
vacant/new posts advertised	781	–	649	–
vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills essential'	6	0.8%	24	3.7%
vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills desirable'	775	99.2%	625	96.3%
vacant/new posts advertised specified as posts where it is 'necessary to learn Welsh-language skills when someone is appointed to the post'	0	0	0	0
The number of vacant/new posts advertised that 'did not require Welsh language skills'	0	0	0	0
The number that did not include an assessment	0	0	0	0
The number not stated	0	0	0	0

Advertised posts for schools for 2022 – 2023.

	2022–2023	2022–2023	2023–2024	2023–2024
	Number	%	Number	%
Schools vacant/new posts advertised	108	–	117	–
Schools vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills essential';	29	26.9%	20	17.1%
Schools vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills desirable'	79	73.1%	97	82.9%
Schools vacant/new posts advertised specified as posts where it is 'necessary to learn Welsh-language skills when someone is appointed to the post'	0	0	0	0
The number of schools vacant/new posts advertised that 'did not require Welsh language skills'	0	0	0	0
The number that did not include an assessment	0	0	0	0
The number not stated	0	0	0	0

Recruitment

The job application process is accessible in Welsh in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and all job vacancies are advertised bilingually. As part of the recruitment process, and a requirement of Standard 136, every vacant post must be assessed for the need for Welsh language skills. The council classifies each new vacant post as being Welsh language desirable as a minimum requirement. Where posts will involve a high degree of interaction with the public or where there is a lack of current Welsh language skills in the service area, these will be assessed as being Welsh language essential. For posts that are assessed as being Welsh language essential, we encourage managers to state in the job specification what types of Welsh skills are needed to complete the role. This is to encourage applications from those who have learnt the language, as we often find that learners lack the confidence to apply for Welsh language essential roles due to the uncertainty of what types of tasks they will need to be able to perform in Welsh. Additionally, we include the Welsh language skills framework within every job advert. We also utilise Welsh language recruitment sites to advertise posts that are assessed as Welsh language essential, as well as some select Welsh language desirable posts. By advertising roles on these dedicated recruitment sites, we make it easier for Welsh speakers to find our vacant posts, and we have successfully appointed Welsh speakers as a result of these recruitment sites.

7. Customer Service

Welsh Language Phone Calls

Between 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 there have been 56 calls to the Welsh language line.

The following list provides a breakdown of the nature of enquiries by department.

Recycling and Waste	27
Communications Team	2
Council Tax/rates/finance	9
Human Resources	2
CYP/Education	2
Social care	5
Planning	1
Highways	4
Welsh Language Officer	3
Grants	1
Total	56

In addition to telephony, we have a fully bilingual App 'My Monmouthshire' where customers can make payments, report incidents and request services in Welsh. We also have a fully bilingual chatbot so that customers can access support in Welsh 24/7. Staff monitor the chatbot during office opening hours to help assist customers with any queries that the chatbot is unable to answer.

8. Promotion

Welsh Tip

To help promote the Welsh Language Standards to staff and to distribute guidance for best practice, a 'Welsh Tip' is included in the Council's fortnightly staff newsletter. A Welsh Language Standard is identified for each issue and guidance is given on how we can comply with that standard. For example, when it was identified that there were occasions when staff were forgetting to include phrasing on their documents to indicate that the document was also available in Welsh, a Welsh tip included standards phrasing to be used.



When we produce a Welsh language version and a separate English language version of a document, we need to make sure that we clearly state on the English language version that the document is also available in Welsh. Include this standard phrasing on the English document:

"Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh"

We can also include on the Welsh document the following phrasing:

"This document is also available in English / Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Saesneg"

Pan rydym yn llunio fersiwn Gymraeg a fersiwn Saesneg o ddogfen ar wahân, mae angen i ni wneud yn siŵr ein bod yn datgan yn glir ar y fersiwn Saesneg bod y ddogfen hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. Defnyddiwch y frawddeg safonol hon ar y ddogfen Saesneg:

"Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh"

Gallwn hefyd gynnwys y frawddeg ganlynol ar y ddogfen Gymraeg:

"This document is also available in English / Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Saesneg"

Welsh Courses

Welsh courses were promoted to staff in preparation for commencement in September and then limited classes in January. These classes were promoted through the Council Staff Newsletter, All Staff e-mails, All Staff teams channel and posters at the County Hall offices. Sessions were also arranged where staff could drop in to speak to staff from Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent about the different courses available and to have the opportunity to look over some of the course content. Staff responded well to the offer of Welsh courses again this year with 40 staff members completing a course. Monmouthshire was also awarded Employer of the Year Award 23/24 at the Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent's annual award ceremony.

Dysgu Cymraeg

Eisiau darganfod mwy am ddysgu Cymraeg?

Ydych chi wedi gwneud cwrs Cymraeg o'r blaen ond yn ansicr os ydych chi eisiau ail gafael ar ddysgu?

Ydych chi wedi bod yn ystyried cofrestru ar gyfer cwrs ond ddim yn siŵr?

Dewch i sesiwn galw heibio gyda Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent am fwy o wybodaeth am gyrsgau Cymraeg.

**Neuadd y Sir
Cegin Llawr Cyntaf**

Dydd Iau 24ain Awst 12:30pm-2pm
Dydd Iau 31ain Awst 12:30pm-2pm
Does dim angen cofrestru ar gyfer y sesiynau hyn, dim ond galw heibio am e gwrs.

Learn Welsh

Want to find out more about learning Welsh?

Have you done a Welsh course previously but unsure if you want to pick it back up?

Have you been considering registering for a course but not sure if it's for you?

Come along to a drop in session with Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent for more information about Welsh courses.

**County Hall
First Floor Kitchen**

Thursday August 24th 12:30pm-2pm
Thursday August 31st 12:30pm-2pm
No need to register for these sessions, just drop in for a chat.



Social Media Promotion

Throughout the year, the Council post social media content to promote Welsh language services and events. Key, important dates in the Welsh calendar are identified and posts are scheduled to help celebrate those days and to ensure the Welsh language is visible and celebrated within our county.



We also try to encourage engagement in our posts regarding the language, for example on Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen we asked people to share with us what they love about Monmouthshire. Additionally, on St David's Day we used the occasion as an opportunity to launch the Council's plans for the new Welsh medium school which will be opening in Monmouth in September. This is done to try to move away from a tokenistic approach to Welsh language posts and to instead have posts which are likely to have an overall bigger positive impact on the Welsh language.



Videos

We have created various videos throughout the year to help promote the Welsh language.

Welsh Medium Education

The council created a [video](#) to promote Welsh medium education and the new Welsh medium school in Monmouth which will be opening in September. The video was filmed at Ysgol y Ffin where we hear from Cabinet Member for Education, Cllr Martyn Groucutt, who discusses the benefits of Welsh medium education. We also hear from a teacher at the school who talks about how well the children take to learning bilingually and reassures parents who might not speak the language themselves about the help and support available to them as parents. At the end of the video, some of the pupils of Ysgol y Ffin tell us about how they enjoy speaking Welsh and being bilingual.



Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae Day

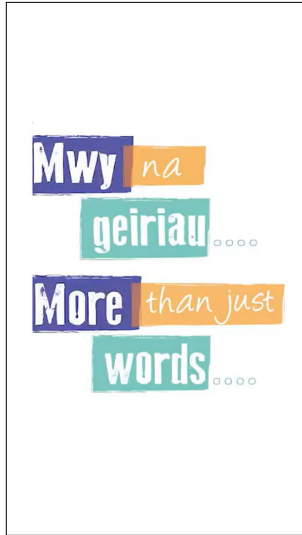
Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae Day is celebrated annually on the 15th of October. The aim of the day is to celebrate the Welsh language and to encourage everyone to start every conversation in Welsh with a simple greeting of 'Shwmae' or 'Su'mae'. You don't have to be a fluent Welsh speaker to take part in celebrating the day. Everyone is encouraged to use the Welsh language regardless of their skill levels. The most important part is that we're sharing the language with others. The Council created videos to celebrate the day with staff across the organisation along with pupils from Ysgol y Ffin sharing their 'Shwmae' greeting.



Defnyddia Dy Gymraeg / Use Your Welsh

Mwy Na Geiriau / More Than Just Words

To celebrate the Welsh Language Commissioner's 'Defnyddia Dy Gymraeg / Use Your Welsh' campaign, the Council contributed to a video created as a joint project of the Gwent More Than Just Words Network Group. In Monmouthshire's section of the video we interviewed Arwel Rowlands who works as a Care and Support Worker at Mardy Park Resource Centre. In the interview, Arwel discussed how he uses the Welsh language to support the residents at Mardy Park, and how much that means to both him and his residents. He also talked about how he helps his colleagues to learn and use the Welsh language in their work.



Events

Council staff attended various events throughout the year to help promote the Welsh language in Monmouthshire. Staff attended the Usk Show where there was a stall to promote Welsh medium education as well as various promotional events for the new Welsh medium school in Monmouth. By attending these types of events, it provides us with a great opportunity to meet the people in our community, listen to their suggestions and provide information about our Welsh language services.



9. Conclusion

Welsh Language Classes

During the financial year 23/24 we followed our previous success in the year of 22/23 regarding the number of staff who completed a Welsh course. In 22/23, 32 staff members completed a course, and in the current year 40 staff completed a course. This is a significant increase from the year 21/22 where 19 staff members completed a Welsh course. Moreover, when we look at the number of staff completing a course per skill level, we notice further improvements. The Mynediad (Entry) level is split into two sub-levels, Mynediad 1 and Mynediad 2, and takes two years to complete the level in its entirety. Last year we saw that 22 staff members completed the Mynediad 1 level and 1 completed Mynediad 2. This year we've had 23 staff members completing the Mynediad 1 level and 10 completing the Mynediad 2. This means that we are seeing that staff members are continuing to learn Welsh. In the run-up to courses starting in September 23, we held a number of promotional events at County Hall with Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent which encouraged staff to sign up for courses and gave them an opportunity to learn more about the structure of the courses and their content. Following this success, Monmouthshire County Council was awarded the Employer of the year 22/23 award at Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent's annual award ceremony. This is a big testament to the Council's staff for their dedication to learning Welsh to enable us to be able to provide better Welsh language services to our residents.

Informal evaluations with staff members are undertaken to review the staff's experience of undertaking Welsh language courses. Feedback from staff continues to be positive, with staff stating that although they have found learning Welsh difficult at times, they have enjoyed the process and their classes and feel much more confident in using the language as part of their work and daily life. With every intake of courses, the network of Welsh language speakers across the authority increases, which means that as an authority we are able to provide better Welsh language services. Additionally, it allows greater opportunities for staff to communicate with their colleagues in Welsh. The Cymraeg Teams channel also offers a great platform for the council's staff to be able to network and socialise with other Welsh speaking staff members.

Street Naming and Numbering Policy

Following a previous complaint from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding our policymaking processes regarding our Street Naming and Numbering Policy, the policy was revised in 23/24. The following paragraph was added to the policy:

"3.1.5 When an existing street with an English language name requires additional or replacement street nameplates, for example due to damage, the new nameplates will have the Welsh translation of the street name added to the nameplate, in order to comply with Monmouthshire County Council's Welsh Language Scheme. The new nameplates will display the street name bilingually, in Welsh and English."

This amendment was made to ensure that the Welsh language is treated equally and to increase the visibility of the language in the community. It is important when we translate existing street names that sufficient consideration is given to the original context and meaning of the name. Translations for street names are done by a dedicated translator to help ensure accuracy. The Street Naming Officer along with the Welsh Language Officer work closely with the translator to ensure that as much information as possible is provided to them regarding the original context of the name. All new street signs continue to either be bilingual or monolingual Welsh. Names are carefully chosen to reflect the history and heritage of the area which the Welsh Language Officer and Street Naming Officer work closely in this process.

Appointment of Equalities and Welsh Language Manager

We have recently appointed an Equalities and Welsh Language Manager who commenced the role in March 2024. The manager will be working in the financial year 23/24 to review the current Welsh language processes to ensure the Council's compliance with the standards and to promote the language. It is intended that the Policymaking processes are to be reviewed, including updating our Integrated Impact Assessment template and guidance. Work has already commenced to review our processes where dedicated training has been created for report authors on how to write an effective and conscientious Welsh language impact assessment. Our new training platform 'Thinqi' which is due to be launched soon, will be utilised so that it is easier for staff to access mandatory training. We will also incorporate the recording of staff Welsh language skills on the platform, which will allow for a more accurate representation of the language skills within the authority.

Contact Centre New Telephony System

Our Contact Centre is currently in the final stages of procuring a new telephony system. Our existing technology does not allow us to prioritise Welsh language calls to Welsh speakers in the contact centre. As a result, callers end up in a hunt group answered by a pool of Welsh speaking officers rather than a trained customer service advisor. The new system will be configured so that someone who wants to talk in Welsh, will push the appropriate number from a menu, and they will be inserted into a priority position in the call queue of Welsh speaking contact centre staff. As we have a higher proportion of English-speaking staff, we can justify this 'queue jumping' by Welsh language callers. The system will ensure that Welsh speakers are dealt with by a trained customer service advisor. This will ensure that their call can be completed entirely in Welsh. It will avoid handovers and improve the experience of callers. We have advertised for and been successful in appointing a Welsh speaking advisor to the Contact Centre, and we have two Contact Centre staff members who have been completing a Welsh course for the past two years. We hope that the new telephony system will increase the number of people who choose to use Welsh first when they deal with us, in line with the objective of our Welsh Language Strategy to increase opportunities for people to interact with public services through the medium of Welsh.