



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Arrangements to assess Welsh language promotion strategy

Creating a cultural change by implementing processes to collect quantitative and qualitative data to report progress on aims and objectives – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

January 2025

Background

The Welsh language standards require local authorities to adopt and implement a 5-year strategy which explains how they intend to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the wider use of the Welsh language in their areas.

The standards also require local authorities to assess the extent to which they have followed that strategy by reporting on the number of Welsh speakers in the area and their age, and the activities organised or funded to promote the use of the Welsh language during the period of the strategy.

What were the challenges?

The information and work supporting the Promotion Strategy's goals were collected annually to prepare the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report. This involved contacting the Council's departments and stakeholders to gather information and data on activities from the reporting period.

The main challenges were delays in collecting information, lack of response to requests and instances of lost information due to ineffective recording and collection.

Gathering information and data for the annual report was a time-consuming and complex process. There was a clear need for a more consistent reporting method to ensure that no information was lost.

How did you address these challenges?

The Council uses internal business plans to track progress on the Corporate Plan and key policies, including the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. To ensure consistency, specific staff members have Welsh language action points, with progress monitored and reported quarterly through the business plans.

Relevant departments include steps in their business plans to effectively monitor Welsh language standards. This includes setting clear goals, assigning responsibilities, and establishing a timetable for action. See examples of the business plan in the appendix.

Including monitoring activities in business plans enhances staff awareness of how their work supports the strategy's objectives and ensures accountability. The Council can monitor how these actions are implemented within relevant departments. Support sessions were organised to ensure staff fully understand the steps in the Business Plans.

Officers receive reminders of upcoming deadlines and need to update their departments using performance indicators. The performance team supports officers through quarterly face-to-face meetings, and an audit is held every quarter to ensure updates are completed.

Scorecards are being developed to show key information per Directorate to the Senior Leadership Team, including progress on the Welsh language. This will help the Council to identify gaps and implement improvements. The scorecards will be distributed quarterly.

What changes were made?

Existing policies and strategies were reviewed and amended to align with the Welsh language standards and the promotion strategy's objectives. This involved engaging with a range of stakeholders and making necessary adjustments to ensure compliance.

In September 2023, a Welsh in the Workplace Policy was developed, including action steps for Aim 3 of the strategy to increase the opportunities for staff to use Welsh at work.

To persuade managers, consultations and internal presentations were conducted, and consent from senior managers was obtained. Internal consultations and meetings were also held to gather feedback, which was incorporated into action plans.

Practical arrangements included organising regular meetings, installing monitoring systems, and ensuring continuous communication between departments to check progress and address issues quickly.

What are the advantages?

Including action points in the Council's business planning processes has been very positive. It has improved monitoring and compliance with Welsh language standards, ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations and promotes Welsh across all departments.

This has also led to better communication and participation with Welsh-speaking residents, enhanced cultural inclusion, and a more structured approach to monitoring compliance.

Including Welsh language action points in the Council's business plans has simplified processes, reduced duplication, and ensured effective use of resources, resulting in cost savings and better use of staff time.

The response from staff, clients, and stakeholders has been very positive. Staff appreciate the clear guidelines and support, while clients and stakeholders welcome the Council's commitment to promoting the Welsh language, leading to higher satisfaction.

What advice would you give an organisation who is thinking of adopting similar arrangements?

Other organisations can adopt key factors, such as setting clear goals, involving all relevant stakeholders in the planning process, and providing adequate training and resources. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are crucial for early identification of issues and necessary changes.

Including action points in business plans has improved monitoring by providing a structured approach to compliance. For example, the Policy and Performance Workshop held in February 2024 discussed Welsh language standards and how they are monitored across all departments.

Stakeholders also highlight ongoing efforts to develop and include high-level, consultative actions in business plans.

Contact details

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Appendix:

Example 1:

Lead	Business plan	Action and location	Latest Update
Communication Team manager	Corporate Services- Tier 1 - Customer and Commercial	Communications and Marketing Lead (CML) 2.10 - Welsh events (including Welsh Medium Education and Leisure) and training promoted on Blaenau Gwent (BG) platforms	All events and training are regularly promoted internally and externally using Council communications channels.
Service Manager Customer Experience and Transformation	Corporate Services - Tier 1 - Customer and Commercial	CML 3.12 - Evaluation of access channels to BG services in the medium of Welsh	<p>All Welsh events and training are regularly promoted internally and externally using Council communications channels.</p> <p>Customer Service staff use the Corporate “Correspondence Disclaimer” on all correspondence sent out as per the Welsh Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Customer Service Officers are aware that telephone greetings must be bilingual. • Any translations are carried out in line with the Welsh Translation Procedure available on the intranet e.g. for website, leaflets, forms etc. • Officers will look to

			<p>transfer to someone that is able to deal with calls in Welsh if the caller requests.</p> <p>bilingual Interactive Voice Recordings (IVR) message (in and out of hours).</p> <p>All material within the Hubs that are displayed are bilingual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefit applications will be available in Welsh for customers who request this.• Benefit website information is available in both Welsh and English. Welsh language training continues for 10 staff across the Customer Service environment (benefits / hubs / customer experience and contact centre staff) staff members where applicable wear Welsh language lanyards within the front facing environment.
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Example 2:

Lead	Business plan	Action and location	Latest Update
<p>Service Manager Children's Services</p>	<p>Social Services - Tier 1 - Flying Start, Early Years, Childcare and Play</p>	<p>Flying Start, Early Years and Play (FEP) 2.2 - Early years provision promoting the medium of Welsh or in the medium of Welsh</p> <p>Promotion of extra-curricular Welsh language/bilingual activities and social opportunities for children and young people from both Welsh medium and English medium schools</p> <p>-Resources provided to new parents to improve their Welsh language / bilingual skills to support their children through Welsh / bilingual education</p>	<p>Everything our Family Information Service (FIS) promotes regarding Local Authority (LA) services and events is done so in both Welsh and English, FIS also regularly shares social media posts from Mudiad Meithrin, MEIC, Cymraeg I Blant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIS Officer sit on the Welsh in Education Forum WEF <p>Communications Group and helps plan activities to promote Welsh Education and Childcare in Blaenau Gwent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We share Being Bilingual resources at local community events <p>2x 2 Incidental Welsh evening courses in Feb & March which will support practitioners to become confident in using basic Welsh language within their settings. The sessions will cover how to adopt the basic Welsh language into setting's daily</p>

		<p>routines, simple adaptations they can make to work towards Care Inspectorate Wales' (CIW) Active Offer as well as providing ideas for songs, rhymes and activities to use with the children in their care. A Welsh language activity resource pack will also be provided for each setting who attends. In addition online Camau Welsh training is on the current training programme & will also be on the programme for 24/25. Which provides 20 hours of independent Welsh. FIS also promote Welsh Language -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Welsh Medium events via the FIS page • Promotion of Welsh Courses for Parents and Grandparents from Learn Welsh • Promotion of Ti a Fi's and Welsh medium childcare • Sharing Ti a Fi story on Facebook and Website • Worked alongside the Meithrin to promote their services at the Superhero event days • Promotion of Do Re Mi Welsh event & Bwrlwm Blaenau
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St David's Day promotion with the request for a Welsh song to be sung by the children.
Service Manager Education, Transformation and Business Change *	Education - Tier 1 - Education Transformation and Business Change	<p>Education Transformation Programme (ETP) 6.7 - Annual transition rates from Welsh-medium nursery provision to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.</p> <p>ETP 6.8 - Raise the profile and levels of participation for Welsh-medium education (admissions support recourse/promotion (e.g. Parent/Care Guide) info from Welsh In Education Forum) and extra-curricular Welsh language/bilingual activities and social opportunities for children and young people from both Welsh medium and English medium schools</p>	<p>WESP subgroup monitoring groups have been established in order to collate information quarterly</p> <p>The Welsh medium seedling provision has been established in its temporary location of Bedwellty House from September 23, uptake has been good with 7pupils on roll as at September 23: 2 nursery risers started in January 2024</p> <p>9 nursery pupils are due to start in September 2024</p> <p>Interior Services Group (ISG) have commenced onsite during November 23, scheduled completion date is still expected to be March 25</p> <p>Regional Welsh in Education Forum met during this period.</p> <p>The Regional Welsh medium planning of school places group met once during this period Need to arrange a regional</p>

		<p>group to discuss the planning of Secondary School places for 2028, this will be arranged in quarter 4</p> <p>The Welsh-medium seedling provision has been established in its temporary location of Bedwellty House from September 23, uptake has been good with 7 pupils on roll as at September 23: 2 nursery risers started in January 2024.</p> <p>9 nursery pupils are due to start in September 2024, a change of use has been submitted for September 2024 to accommodate and additional class in Bedwellty House.</p> <p>Welsh Medium Seedling School- ISG have commenced onsite during November 23, along with Wicksead to move the park area to allow ISG to immobilise on site, drilling and grouting has commenced with the main school build being scheduled March 2024 with completion date expected to be March 25.</p>
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			<p>The Welsh in Education Forum met during this period</p> <p>The Regional Welsh medium planning of school places group met once during this period"</p> <p>"Collaborative discussions are ongoing to establish a solution to the Welsh Medium planning of secondary school places, this has been raised with Welsh Government (WG) and further to the consideration of all authorities rolling programmes will convene a regional group to discuss further</p> <p>A sustainable Communities rolling programme has been developed and taken to CLT to forward plan for projects and the planning of school places into the longer term, the rolling programme has been submitted to WG in relation to a 3,6, 9 year rolling programme, we are awaiting feedback.</p>
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