

GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS ON OUR ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011/12

Further information required

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS	GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
<p>CH.2 The Council is committed to reviewing and standardising place names in Gwynedd before the end of the scheme period: Provide an update of the progress made to date</p>	<p>Discussions took place between a Task Group of the Language Sub-Committee and the Welsh Language Board's Name Standardisation Team on 05/12/08, and a report of this meeting was presented to the full Sub-Committee on 27/01/09. The following decisions were recorded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approve the minutes of the Task Group meeting held on December 5 2008 b) Look at the use of the article in the forms presented and invite the Name Standardisation Team back for further discussion in the first instance. <p>No timetable was set for this, and looking back at the minutes, it would seem that 7 names are under consideration for further discussion.</p> <p>Clearly, it is timely for us to revisit this again, and in relation to October's Language Committee, a request has already been put forward for "a report to the next meeting which sets the context and notes the sources of standard names in relation to streets, houses, and so on". As part of this report, we will refer to place names and seek further directions from the Language Committee.</p>

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS	GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
<p>D.1 We note that the Council has adopted an action plan for the Language Skills Strategy. Due to the delay in adopting the plan, some target dates of the action plan have slipped: Provide a copy of the Language Skills Strategy Action Plan and state the revised target dates.</p>	<p>See Appendix 1</p>
<p>5.A Provide the number of non-Welsh speaking officers appointed to posts designated as "Welsh essential" during the year, and the number that attend training.</p>	<p>For the period January- December 2011 (the period covered by the Language Tutor's report within the Monitoring Report) 2 officers were appointed who did not reach the language requirements of their posts (note that this does not necessarily mean that they were unable to speak Welsh).</p> <p>We can confirm that they were both directed to receive Welsh language training, although one has since left the Council's employment.</p> <p>It should be noted that many more than 2 officers have been referred for language training during the time within the specified time, but these are the only examples that were referred because they did not reach the specified language level following their appointment.</p>

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<p>5.B Provide the number of Welsh speakers employed and the total number of employees within the Services</p>	<p>We are experiencing problems in reporting fully on DIG 5. The figures presented to the Welsh Language Board and again this year to the Commissioner have been incomplete and based on reports provided by Heads of Service.</p> <p>In response to the Commissioner's request, we note below the number and percentages of staff who can speak Welsh by Department. It must be emphasised that these figures are not necessarily correct, as they bring together data supplied by Service Heads (which may be incomplete) with general information held by Human Resources on staff numbers. The following should therefore only be treated as an estimate::</p> <p>Education: Total-2375 % Welsh-speaking- 100% Human Resources; Total- 91 % Welsh-speaking- 100% Finance: Total-182 % Welsh-speaking 98.9% Provider and Leisure: Total- 1806 % Welsh-speaking 87% Democracy and Legal: Total- 67 % Welsh-speaking- 98.5% Economy and Community: Total 283 % Welsh-speaking- 92.9% Customer Care: Total- 189 % Welsh-speaking- 98.9% Social Services and Housing: Total- 748 % Welsh-speaking 85.2% Highways and Municipal: Total- 591 % Welsh-speaking- 99.2% Regulatory: Total- 210 % Welsh-speaking 97.6% Strategic and Improvement: Total- 83 % Welsh-speaking- 100% Consultancy Total- 158 % Welsh-speaking- 82.9%</p>

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS	GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
6.A Provide a copy of the equality impact assessment template	Copy of the template enclosed (Appendix 2)
6.A Provide a list of the policies or plans that were subject to equality impact assessment during the year	<p>Between April 2011 and 2012, full equality impact assessments were concluded on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Development Plan Completion Agreement • Common Lettings Policy • Future of Tan y Marian and Pant yr Eithin Residential Homes • Future of Hafod y Gest Residential Home • Older People Commissioning Plan • Learning Disabilities Commissioning Plan • Anti-Bullying Guidelines (Children's Specialist Services) • Reorganisation of Ysgol Coed Menai • Financial Changes to Supporting People Programme • Gwynedd and Mon Local Development Plan • Bus Timetables • Awel y Coleg Lettings Procedure • Assessment of Financial Decisions 2012-13 <p>Note that these are the assessments that the Equality and Language Officer has been involved with; some Departments may have conducted their own assessments.</p> <p>Also note that many assessments begun during this period are still ongoing and not noted above; it is essential that equality and language concerns are considered at the policy planning stage.</p> <p>Our intention for the future is to increase the number of assessments undertaken and ensure better management of the process as reports are submitted to Cabinet.</p>

Questions which must be answered

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS	GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
<p>B.2 We note that the Council has an agreement with the health service to provide Specialist Children's Services Jointly: Explain the challenges that face the Council in providing joint services</p>	<p>Gwynedd Council acknowledges increasing joint provision could bring challenges in relation to complying with our Welsh Language Scheme, particularly as Gwynedd's emphasis is not so much on bilingual provision as promoting the Welsh language and the use made of it.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Scheme addresses this danger, and states our commitment to ensuring that joint provision does not lead to any deterioration in respect of our Welsh language provision.</p> <p>Requirements can vary from the need to place the Welsh text first to ensuring sufficient provision by organisations which may not have as many Welsh-speaking employees.</p> <p>In the specific case of our arrangements for Children's Specialist Services (Derwen) the Agreement contains a clause stating a commitment to providing bilingual services according to users' choice. However, as Gwynedd Council's Welsh Language Scheme requirements are different to the Health Board's, it was decided to produce a background document to outline the requirements and arrangements for compliance.</p> <p>Officers from the Council and the Health Board met to discuss and draft a "Language Guidelines" document (Appendix 3) which contains more detailed and practical guidance.</p> <p>The Guidelines were accepted as an interim document by the project's Management Board (25/07/12) . Clearly, it will need to be re-visited as both organisations prepare to respond to the needs of the Language Standards.</p>

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<p>D.3 The Language Scheme contains a commitment to deliver 4 awareness sessions during the year to front line staff, not including care or youth services staff. We note that only two sessions were provided this year (for the Youth Justice Team): Explain the arrangements that exist to ensure that 4 awareness sessions are held each year, and why only 2 have been delivered this year</p>	<p>In the past, it was our aim to offer the awareness course to specific Services, and in particular, those Services where there was evidence of lack of language awareness. However, this method has proved to be problematic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, it was rare to find a whole Service or Unit where there was a problem. This occurs most often amongst teams who work away from the main offices (e.g. leisure centres, Youth Justice Team). • It can be difficult for Services to release a significant number of staff for a half-day to attend a course. <p>We obviously recognise the need to offer further help to staff to understand the principles that underpin our Welsh Language Scheme and are eager to offer training to as many as possible. The Language Awareness course is now part of the Corporate Learning Programme and we will offer the course to all members of staff across all Departments at regular intervals, aiming to offer at least 4 sessions a year in line with our commitment. We believe that this is a more flexible method which offers the benefits of the course to a wider range of staff.</p> <p>Under this new arrangement, we will continue to recognise any areas which may have specific needs, and will either suggest that Managers send their staff on courses that have already been arranged or will prepare specific sessions for the relevant Service or Unit.</p>

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS	GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
<p>Explain what prevents the Council from taking temporary measures to enable a full report on DIG 5, until the human resource system has been introduced.</p>	<p>As noted in the Monitoring Report, the integrated wages and human resources system will not be in place before March 2014, but in the meantime, we will endeavour to improve our reporting arrangements.</p> <p>We will be asking Services heads for more specific information on staff language skills and we also hope that by the next report we will be in a position to provide an overview of language levels in relation to posts.</p> <p>This arrangement is currently being updated following the revised language skills matrix (See also Appendix 1), and although this will not necessarily give a picture of the true situation, it is an important step towards comparing requirements and skills in preparation for the integrated data system.</p>