

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS 2020-21

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

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1. Background - the duty of the Standards

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 establishes a legal framework that places a duty on the Council to comply with the standards in relation to the Welsh language. The individual standards explain how organisations are expected to use the Welsh language in different situations.

The duties that derive from the standards mean that the Council should not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language in Wales, and the Council should promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language (making it easier for people to use it in their everyday lives).

The Language Standards are divided into five fields:

- service delivery
- policy making
- action
- promotion
- record keeping

This Council received a compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner under Section 4 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, on 30 September 2015. This notice specified the precise standards the Council is required to comply with and on 30 March 2016, 147 standards came into effect, with four promotion standards coming into effect on 30 March 2017.

The Standards that the Council must comply with in their entirety, along with a copy of the Council's current Language Policy, can be viewed by going onto the Standards and Policy section of the corporate website:

<https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Strategies-and-policies/Language-and-equality/Welsh-Language-Standards-and-Policy.aspx>

2. Ensuring Compliance with the Standards

The Council's Language Policy is its main method of ensuring compliance with the Language Standards and ensuring Welsh-medium services for the people of Gwynedd.

The current Language Policy was adopted in 2016 and follows the principle that Welsh and English should be treated equally in the delivery of services, that the language choice of individuals should be respected, and that every opportunity should be taken to promote the Welsh language beyond providing a bilingual service and be proactive in giving the Welsh language a prominent platform.

The Language Policy is currently under review, in an attempt to strengthen expectations in some areas and offer more detail and clarity in others. New clauses are being drawn up for areas such as the use of technology, which have become more relevant to our day-to-day work over the last five years since the Policy was established and since the setting of the Language Standards.

The vast majority of Council staff are able to speak Welsh, and a large number have fluent Welsh language skills, which means that the use of Welsh as the language of work is now natural practice, and we can proactively and by default provide a Welsh language service. The next challenge is how to use the proactive offer in a way that encourages more residents to use the Welsh language with our services, and nurtures confidence among Welsh speakers and learners in their ability to read, understand and use Welsh.

3. Reflecting on the year - 2020-21

We believe that the way in which the Council has responded to the new challenges of the past year, and has been able to secure the bilingual service as a whole, is a clear indication of the success of the language policy, and of the way in which operating through the medium of the Welsh language is embedded in our work.

The unusual situation in which we found ourselves, and the fact that the day-to-day working methods of so many of our staff changed overnight, could have posed many challenges in terms of ensuring compliance with the Standards and the Council's Language Policy. In fact, we have been able to face up to many of the challenges - particularly in terms of using technology and remote working, and a number of new services and teams being set up to respond to new needs within the communities - and have overcome barriers in an effective and prompt manner, ensuring that all the services continue to be offered fully bilingually to the public.

We provide here a reflection on some of the challenges and successes over the year:

3.1 Simultaneous Translation

Gwynedd Council has been at the forefront in ensuring that the virtual committees and meetings provision also includes simultaneous translation.

One of the biggest challenges at the start of the year was the move to remote working, and adapting to a new approach to holding mass meetings. As a Council we had not used the Teams programme before, so we had to learn quickly what was possible and what was not possible.

One of the obstacles was finding a way to enable simultaneous translation online, to ensure that we were still able to conduct meetings through the medium of Welsh.

We succeeded in ensuring that Gwynedd Council held some of its formal committees virtually as early as April 2020, using Teams. However, the Teams provision was not adequate for all our requirements - and especially public meetings - and we decided to switch to using Zoom software, which is much easier for the user and the translator. Although there were some initial concerns about the security of the Zoom software, the IT service made sure that this was the best way to ensure that we were able to continue to hold meetings in Welsh and to secure the language rights of contributors.

By the end of March 2021, the Council's Translation team had translated in nearly 400 virtual committees and meetings. We have also been able to webcast virtual Committees live on our website, bilingually.

We still see, however, that some other public organisations remain reluctant to use Zoom software, which can undermine the use of Welsh in some meetings and impair our ability as a Council to offer the best service.

Considerable work has been carried out by Council officers (IT, Translation and Language officers) to assist our partners, locally, regionally and nationally, with the developments in their organisations, in order to encourage others to ensure that committees and meetings are available in the user's language of choice. In addition, Council officers remain involved in the national work being done in an attempt to persuade Microsoft to offer a simultaneous translation provision in Teams. We hope to see this situation changing early in 2021-22.

3.2 New Services

A number of new services were formed during the year, in a direct response to the challenges we were facing as a result of the pandemic. These services were created through a combination of moving existing Council staff away from their usual jobs, and employing externally in a short time. It therefore ensured a Welsh-medium service, as well as offering Welsh-medium working opportunities, in challenging and difficult times.

Care Service - general

A number of staff were redirected to help with the response to the pandemic, and from the Care Transformation Team in particular. Two members of the team went to work with PPE arrangements, one member of staff to lead the Covid Support Team and two members of staff to lead the volunteer recruitment campaign, one member of staff to work in the hospital Hub, one member of staff to lead on communicating the Covid Support effort, and one member of staff to lead the local Covid Support Unit.

A campaign was launched at the beginning of the lockdown to try and attract members of the public to volunteer and/or work to help the care sector, and an extremely good response was received. Over 200 people expressed an interest in the job opportunities, and as the team who were dealing with the enquiries collected information about experiences and relevant skills and qualifications, we can say that 75% of the ones that expressed an interest could speak Welsh, either as fluent Welsh speakers or learners. Only 61 declared that they could not understand or speak Welsh.

23 appointments were made directly as a result of the marketing campaign up to March 3rd 2021. A number of other posts were filled as an indirect result as well.

Covid Support Team:

The Covid Support Team was set up as a central point of contact and to support the residents of Gwynedd to access the help they needed to cope with the challenges of the crisis. Among the Team's main responsibilities were:

- Taking calls and e-mail messages from the public, relating to Covid-19 matters, and providing information to them;
- Identifying the most appropriate assistance and support for the residents who contacted them;
- Contacting everyone who was shielding and offering support, and raising their awareness of the support available in the form of Welsh Government food parcels. Between April and August 2020, 5,080 residents contacted the Team, with 4,781 of those being people who were shielding.
- Escalating any concerns to the relevant teams within the Council;
- Identifying what mattered to the residents who came into contact, and identifying a solution;
- Contacting external organisations and bodies on behalf of the residents, and acting as a point of contact between the organisation/body and the resident, where appropriate.

This service was, of course, offered entirely bilingually, with up-to-date information provided to residents through a dedicated "Help for residents and communities" website and 27 Council staff being redirected from various services to the Covid Support Team over a period of eight months (March to October 2020).

A guide was provided for staff to record conversations exactly as they were being reported (including the language), and the records show that the majority of residents contacted chose to speak Welsh.

According to feedback from the service, it was felt that the Welsh language offer had made a big difference in building a relationship with the residents and had enabled them to offer a service that made people feel comfortable and appreciative of the conversation and support.

The Test, Trace and Protect Service:

The Test, Trace and Protect service (TTP) was established in May 2020 and came into operation on 1 June 2020. The service now employs 102 workers - seven seconded from other Council services and five other members of staff working as 'bank' staff. Ninety new members of staff were employed.

The principal aim of the Test, Trace and Protect service in Gwynedd is to:

- Identify the people who have been infected or who have been in contact with a positive case of Covid-19 and support them to isolate during the infectious period, or until the symptoms or the incubation period have elapsed; and
- Support people with symptoms to get access to a Covid-19 test.

The service has been contacting thousands of people across the county, both directly and through the implementation of mutual support with other local authorities across the north, to offer invaluable support and advice. In the six months between June and December 2020, for example, the service in Gwynedd has dealt with more than 8,000 cases.

One of the barriers faced by this service was in recruitment. As the service was coordinated at regional and national level, the Council did not have full control over the recruitment process. The service was led (hosted) by another authority, which was responsible for the recruitment drive. Due to a lack of understanding of the specific needs of the north west in terms of having staff with Welsh language skills, the service in Gwynedd was left with a shortage of Welsh-speaking candidates who could be appointed to the vacant posts. This situation has left the service vulnerable in terms of having sufficient numbers of staff to respond (in any language) to surges and, in particular, to respond to the needs of Gwynedd residents in their own language.

However, 90% of staff that were appointed are either Welsh first or second language or Welsh learners. Learners are regularly paired with fluent Welsh speakers for role play, and to improve their skills. We also have a Welsh speakers group where those who are learning the language have the opportunity to speak in a safe environment with those who are fluent.

The service is responsible for its own training, and has conducted that training bilingually. The Test, Trace and Protect Service in Gwynedd Council has a dedicated training team that designs and delivers all aspects of training required, including induction and initial role training up to the implementation of new/revised Standard Operating Procedures, the last of which occurs regularly. The training method is just as flexible and responsive as the service we provide; with short weekly training interventions (for each job role), to all team members being able to self-judge their own performance and request training when they feel they need it.

Here is a quote from the service about the work that has been done to encourage staff and improve their confidence in their Welsh language skills during the period:

“When we get someone who speaks English as a first language but who has some Welsh, we pair them with a fluent speaker and role play takes place for daily checks in Welsh with them, which works very well. This builds their confidence a lot and they realise they know more than they thought. They then start contributing in Welsh during 'amser paned' and their confidence grows to be able to hold a full conversation with a customer in Welsh. We have a small team of staff who mentor these people, it works really well.”

3.3 Changing service delivery - good practice

A number of services have had to change the way they work as a result of the restrictions and there are many good examples across the Council of employees adapting and continuing to offer Welsh-medium services and activities to the public. One example of this was the ***Dementia Go service***, a programme that helps support people living with dementia, their families and carers, by offering physical exercise activities in a safe environment.

Due to the crisis, the usual community activities and classes had to be discontinued, but the team was keen to remain in contact with and support members of the group.

The team has been busy devising new ways of keeping in touch, from regular phone and video chats to sharing a newsletter, running competitions and challenges, organising webinars, filming fitness videos and fund-raising.

"Lack of social contact can have a big impact on people, both physically and mentally," said Emma Quaeck, Programme Manager. "We are so pleased to be able to continue to offer support to our members, and help people cope. It feels as if we're all part of one big family going through this challenging time together."

3.4 Challenges in moving forward

The experiences of the Council and its staff over the year have highlighted a number of challenges that we will need to be aware of and consider how to resolve over the coming months.

- **Staff skills**

How do we ensure effective opportunities to learn and practise Welsh language skills as the working model changes in the long term? In order to ensure that our ability to offer the proactive Welsh language service does not diminish/weaken, we need to work to ensure that our staff have the appropriate skills and confidence.

It is obvious that the pandemic and the shift towards more online training provision has been positive, and has offered new opportunities for Gwynedd Council staff to learn and develop their Welsh. The crisis provided an opportunity to commission lessons that would not have been possible prior to the pandemic. For example, two cohorts of learners on two different levels received online lessons provided from Learn Welsh North West – lessons that had been very difficult to arrange face to face prior to the pandemic due to working patterns and the availability of tutors. The change to online learning has also assisted greater numbers of staff (especially staff working shifts) to attend Welsh lessons or training as it offers more flexibility and less travelling to a teaching venue. It will be important that we build on these successes.

- **Informal use - building staff confidence in their Welsh**

A survey conducted amongst our staff (at the request of the Commissioner) suggested that many were missing the informal opportunities available while working in Council offices. The challenge for us is how do we re-create those situations as the working model changes in the long term.

Feedback from the Learning and Development service also indicated that this lack of informal contact between officers - in the office, on the corridor or in the kitchen - had possibly slowed the development of some individuals in attempting to learn Welsh, as the same opportunities were not available at home to practise their skills in between the more formal lessons. There is no firm evidence to support this, but our Welsh Friends Scheme offers those informal opportunities for Welsh learners to maintain their momentum while working from home and it will be important for us to look at new ways of maintaining these links.

- **Recruitment**

The experience of setting up new services at short notice has highlighted the need for frontline workers who speak Welsh. Although the Council's own staff have the right skills, there is an opportunity in going forward to ensure that there is a strong awareness across local authorities, and other partners across public services, of the need for a workforce that has the right skills, to ensure that we have the right workforce in any situations of joint working.

- **Simultaneous translation in meetings**

It is clear that a great deal of work still needs to be carried out to improve provision in this field, and Gwynedd Council is well placed to be able to share good practice and encourage other organisations to do the same. There is a need to raise our partners' awareness of the need to have the right approach to simultaneous translation, to realise the need to be making a proactive offer and not to see it as something being provided for Welsh speakers only.

- **Public use of services**

Understanding the public's habits in using our services - what drives them to make decisions about language use - has been an area of interest for some time. We reported last year on observation work carried out by the Commissioner's officers in our reception areas, and the intention to build on that work through more observation. We had also noted that we wanted to focus the work on understanding the habits of users of online services, as this was our biggest concern.

The circumstances of the past year have made any developmental work in this field impossible, but it has also highlighted the need to understand changes in people's habits and to be able to respond to those changes proactively.

As people change their habits in engaging with us, and as a result of an increasing number of services being offered online, we need to be wary of changes and consider how we can influence language use.

4. Specific work to improve compliance with the Standards and to ensure the best Welsh- language service

Field of work	Update the Council's Language Policy
Relevant standards	All Standards
Steps taken during the year 2020-21	<p>We have been working on reviewing the language policy during the last year.</p> <p>The decision to revise the policy has been driven primarily by the feeling that many current working situations were not reflected in the current Policy, nor in the requirements of the Standards. There was not enough detail, for example, to guide us in the correct use of the Welsh language when offering online services and in the use of technology, and so we decided to take the opportunity to look through the whole policy and make changes that will strengthen our commitment, and also make the requirements of the Standards clearer in some fields.</p> <p>As extensive work had been undertaken to establish the Language Specifications project, for example, the policy section dealing with appointment and recruitment processes needed to be revised. A number of changes are already in place within the recruitment process which are strengthening our compliance and these changes will be reflected within the new policy.</p>
Further steps that will need to be taken over the next year	Work still needs to be done to agree on the changes in relation to technology, and then the new policy will be presented to the Language Committee and Cabinet for approval.

Field of work	Use of technology and online services
Relevant standards	Service Delivery , specifically 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60
Steps taken during the year 2020-21	<p>This field continues to be a concern, and we continue to endeavour to find solutions for the long term.</p> <p>We are continuing to assess each of these developments individually, but we are also still facing many challenges, in particular when purchasing systems in that have not been developed bilingually in the first place. We have officers in the IT service, and in individual</p>

	services, who have worked closely with developers to ensure that what is being published at the end works in accordance with the Standards, but we are still facing barriers when attempting to integrate external systems into our website.
Further steps over the next year	Developing the use of Welsh in technology will become one of our development priorities over the next few years.

Field of work	Impact Assessment
Relevant standards	88+89+90+94
Steps taken during the year 2020-21	<p>2019-20 Update:</p> <p>Work on developing an integrated impact assessment template at a regional level is now complete and we are ready to use the new template from 2021 onwards. This assessment will cover the requirements of the Equality Act, the socio-economic duty, Welsh Language Measure and Well-being Act, avoiding having to duplicate work and complete more than one assessment for the same scheme.</p> <p>We have acknowledged during the year that our internal arrangements for conducting impact assessments were not robust enough, and have been working on raising officers' awareness of the need to conduct equality and language impact assessments on plans and policies, and are refining the arrangements when assessments are submitted as part of reports to the Council's Cabinet.</p>
Further steps over the next year	Raise the awareness of, and train relevant officers and managers across the Council, in relation to the new arrangements and templates.

5. REPORTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF STANDARD 170

5.1 Standard 151: Reporting on the number of staff members who can speak Welsh

You must keep a record (following assessments of your employees' Welsh language skills made in accordance with standard 127), of the number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of each financial year and, where you have that information, you must keep a record of the skill level of those employees.

We are using our new Language Skills System to collect our data, which gives us a better analysis of the skills our employees have. The information gathered by the system answers two main questions:

	Question	Answer
1	Does the member of staff meet the requirements of his/her job?	Yes / No
2	What is the member of staff's language level for Listening and Speaking, Reading and Understanding, and Writing?	No Skills, Entry, Basic, Intermediate, Higher, Proficiency

The information for **question 1** is gathered in two ways:

- **by Line Managers:** during meetings with managers across the Council, we ask them to note whether or not, in their opinion, their staff meet the language requirements of their posts.
- **through staff self-assessments:** staff complete a questionnaire which, based on their responses to the questions, calculates their level for Listening and Speaking, Reading and Understanding, and Writing. Those levels are compared with the Language Specifications of the post, and on this basis it is calculated whether or not the member of staff meets the requirements of their job.

The information for **question 2** is gathered through staff self-assessments.

The task of collecting the assessments is ongoing, so we report only on the number of staff who have been assessed. Therefore, this number will increase and change as we continue with the work over the next year.

As we gather more and more assessments, the system's ability to provide us with valuable information increases, and we can now begin to identify patterns by analysing the responses to the language self-assessment. For example, if a number of staff from one service is seen to be requesting language improvement courses, this can be responded to proactively.

All information is automatically gathered on the Language Skills System, enabling us to produce live reports at any time. The data recording element of the system is in place and operational, but we are continuing to develop reports that will produce the most useful data ... '

NOTE:

- **Every post** within the Council has been verified to ensure that the language specification is correct for the post and continues to be reviewed on a regular basis.
- **Every new post** has to follow a specific procedure in order to set the correct language specification.
- **Every post** contains *essential* language requirements, i.e. some element of language skills are needed for every post within the Council.
- The work of gathering information about individuals (staff members) is ongoing work, and the figures noted will never completely reflect the actual number of staff employed by the Council. However, it is aimed to obtain the most accurately correct picture of the workforce's skills at any time. Staff turnover, changes in jobs, restructuring and individuals who hold more than one job within the Council are all factors that affect data accuracy.
- We do not report on staff who are part of the following departments (although they are employed by the Council) - **GwE, North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent, North Wales Ambition Board** - as they are all joint-committees and are therefore not accountable to the requirements of the Standards. We do not include school staff in our data either.

Skills Report:

The following information is correct at the time of writing the report and is extracted from our Language Skills System.

Overview of the situation:

Number of staff members (on the Council's payroll)*	3862	
Total assessments gathered - including Line Manager Assessments and Self-assessments	2401	62%
Number of Self-assessments gathered (Question 2)*	2091	54%

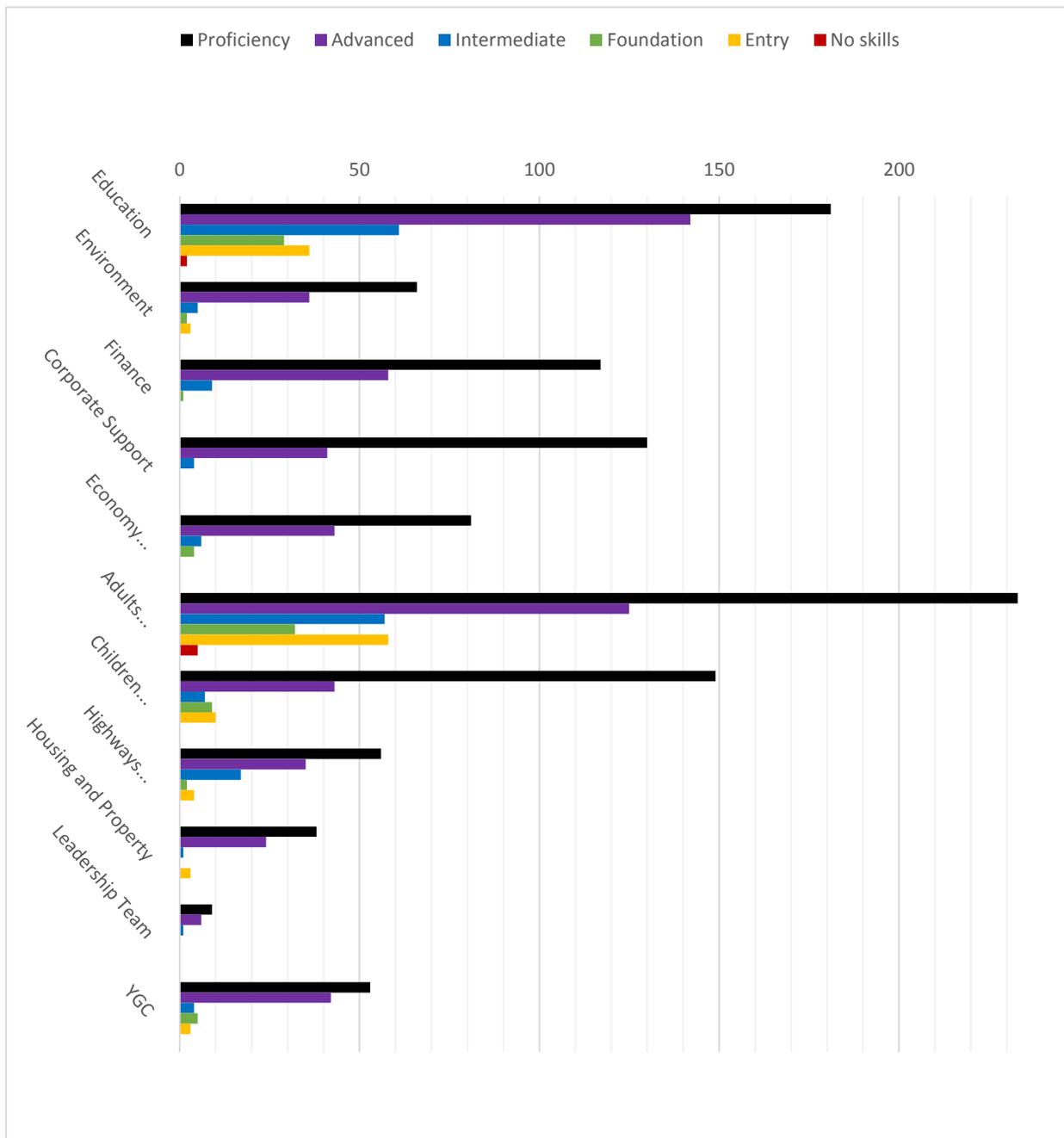
*it does not include staff from GwE, Trunk Road Agent, Byw'n Iach, North Wales Economic Ambition Board or Gwynedd schools' staff

Staff who reach the Language Specification of their post On the basis of self-assessments and managers' assessments	2204	92%
Staff who do not reach the Language Specification of their post	197	8%
Staff who possess Welsh language skills (of any kind) On the basis of the self-assessments gathered	2084	99.7%
Staff with no Welsh language skills at all	7	0.3%

Language Levels of staff per department:

The picture below shows the language skills of the workforce as currently assessed. It can be seen that the majority of the workforce possess Intermediate or Higher skills.

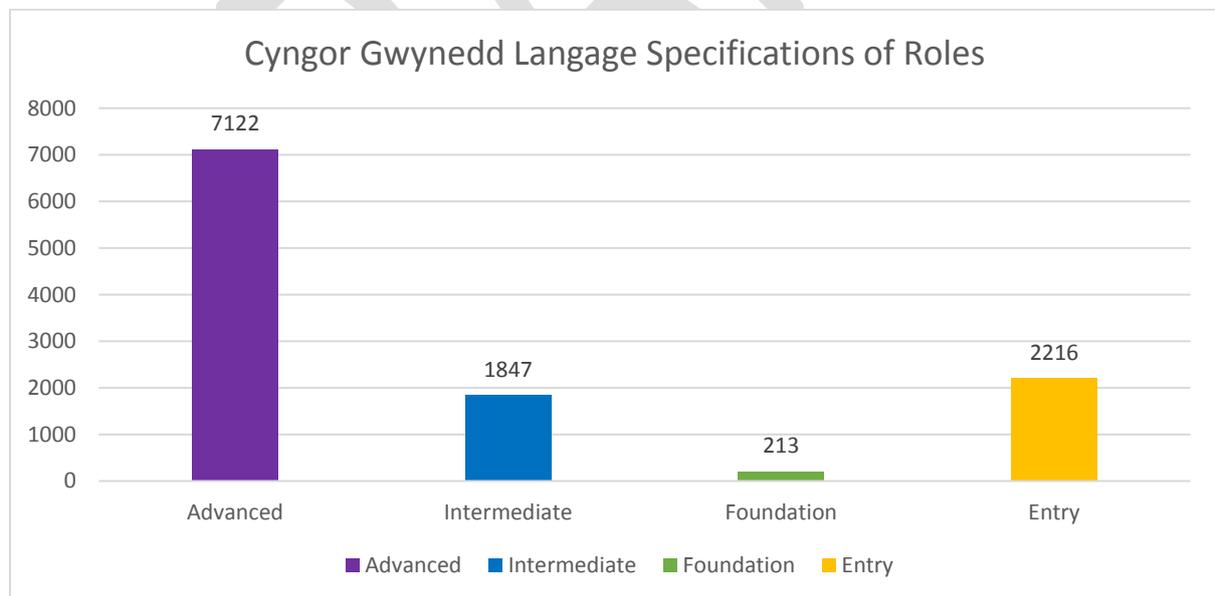
*For convenience, the names of the departments have been abbreviated in the graph below. Their names can be seen in full on the next page.



	Education (not including schools)	Environment	Finance	Corporate Support	Economy and Community	Adults, Health and Well-being	Children and Supporting Families	Highways and Municipal	Housing and Property	Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC)	Corporate Leadership Team
Proficiency	181	66	117	130	81	233	149	56	38	53	9
Higher	142	36	58	41	43	125	43	35	24	42	6
Intermediate	61	5	9	4	6	57	7	17	1	4	1
Basic	29	2	1	0	4	32	9	2	0	5	0
Entry	36	3	0	0	0	58	10	4	3	3	0
No skills	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0

Language Levels of posts - number of posts across the Council that have been designated per level:

The requirement of the levels of one job can vary from one skill to another, i.e. the Speaking and Listening level requirements may be higher than the Written level requirements. As a result, we count the Speaking and Listening level as the 'main level' for the purpose of reporting on post levels as this is normally the highest level.



We can also look at this analysis on a department level, and this enables us to see the jobs where the lower levels have been identified. A number of jobs in the Highways department, for example, are ones where higher skills in Welsh are not required because there is less direct and face-to-face contact with the public. We can take a sample of these posts at any time and verify the post's specification.

5.2 Standard 152: Reporting on the number of staff who attended Welsh-medium training

You must keep a record, for each financial year of — (a) the number of members of staff who attended training courses offered by you in Welsh (in accordance with standard 128), and (b) if a Welsh version of a course was offered by you in accordance with standard 128, the percentage of the total number of staff attending the course who attended that version.

Standard 128: You must provide training in Welsh in the following areas, if you provide such training in English —

- (a) recruitment and interviewing;
- (b) performance management;
- (c) complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- (ch) induction;
- (d) dealing with the public; and
- (dd) health and safety.

The Council's entire central training programme is provided in Welsh. A Welsh and English version of some courses is provided separately where there is a demand for that, but normally we seek to ensure that all training is Welsh-medium or bilingual.

English-only training will be offered when training is required in specialist fields, and the services of specialist trainers bought in. Even then, every effort will be made when commissioning services to obtain bilingual materials, and every opportunity will be taken to attempt to influence national providers.

General Training

The information below is noted for each department within the Council, ALL DEPARTMENTS (except Byw'n Iach, Trunk Road Agent, GwE, North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Consortium, North Wales Bibliographic Unit, Councillors).

Number of individual events between 01.04.20 and 31.03.21 - **686**

Number of titles - different courses - offered during the period 01.04.20-31.03.21 - **170**

TRAINING EVENTS	NUMBER	UNIQUE ATTENDEES
Welsh	289	1044
English	305	796
Bilingual	92	453

Standard 128 - 68 INDIVIDUALS ATTENDED THE INDUCTION WORKSHOP IN THE PERIOD 01.04.20 - 31.03.21 (7 events were held)

66 received it in Welsh (97%)

2 received it in English (3%)

Training provided by the Council for the Byw'n Iach Service:

Number of individual events between 01.04.20 and 31.03.21 - **72**

Number of titles - different courses - offered during the period 01.04.20-31.03.21 -**19**

TRAINING EVENTS		
	NUMBER	UNIQUE ATTENDEES
Welsh	34	9
English	27	213
Bilingual	11	118

5.3 Standard 154: Reporting on job categorisation

You must keep a record, in relation to each financial year of the number of new and vacant posts which were categorised (in accordance with standard 136) as posts where—

- (a) Welsh language skills are essential;
- (b) Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post;
- (c) Welsh language skills are desirable; or
- (ch) Welsh language skills are not necessary.

Welsh language skills are essential	441
Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post	0
Welsh language skills are desirable	0
Welsh language skills are not necessary	0

Every post advertised by the Council includes the ability to speak Welsh as an essential skill.

Every job is advertised with a declaration that states that the internal administrative language of the Council is Welsh, and that the applicants need to have the language skills that are specified in the job description (i.e. that language skills are essential). The exact level of skills for each post, and for written, oral and reading and understanding is noted in the person specification part of the job advertisement.

If we are unable to appoint someone with the necessary skills after the first advertisement, managers can ask to change the wording on the advert to encourage new applicants, and to allow them to appoint someone that does not yet reach the level denoted for the job in question but who shows a commitment to learn and develop those skills. This can be reflected in the contract and a training programme will be agreed between the individual, the manager, and the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer. The language level/specification for the job **can not be changed** and therefore the requirement for Welsh language skills still stands.

5.4 Reporting on language complaints

The number of complaints you received during the year that related to your compliance with the operating standards with which you had a duty to comply.

Number of pre-investigation enquiries by the Commissioner: 3

- Online Libraries Catalogue Service
- Monolingual road sign, Caernarfon
- Road sign, Pwllheli

The complaints received internally against the Language Policy

Department	The number of complaints	
Environment	1	Complaint about the Pay by Phone parking app, as it was not available in the medium of Welsh on all phones.
Finance	1	Quality of the language in a letter regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme
Corporate Support/Finance	1	Impact Assessment on the Council's Budget
Adults	1	Grant application forms (Welsh Government Grant)
Total	4	

Appendix 1:

Welsh Language Training Report 2020-21

Introduction

As a result of the shift from classroom-based learning to online distance learning, we have seen an increase in the number of individuals taking advantage of opportunities to learn or develop their Welsh. In general, the main reasons for this was:

- **no need to travel** - as a result, staff were able to spend more time in the workplace
- **availability of online resources**
- **flexibility in the arrangements**, in terms of type of courses and time
- **no geographical restrictions**, i.e. able to gain access to any course from anywhere

Here is an overview of the provision offered to staff to learn or develop their Welsh language skills during this period:

- Online in-house sessions with the Learning and Development Officer (Welsh Language)
 - 1:1 Sessions
 - Course on *Formal Writing*
- Community-based courses over an academic year (online weekly lessons)
- 1:1 individual sessions with external tutors
- Intensive courses (a week or more)
- Online self-study courses, e.g. *Entry level Self-study, Work Welsh Induction and Improving Work Welsh*
- Specially-commissioned courses on various levels

In relation to in-house provision, we will be expanding the choice available over the coming months by piloting a new online Language Improvement course which will replace the traditional Language Improvement course in the classroom, before expanding the choice by offering training such as *Mutations* and *Using Welsh language Technology*.

Some of the year's highlights

The success of a learner from the Children and Supporting Families Department

For years, it was a challenge to find a stable and effective arrangement for a service manager in the Children and Supporting Families Department. Because of the nature of his work, time was scarce, and attending a regular course, such as a weekly course or releasing time for an intensive course, was impossible. It was no easy task to find a tutor who would be able to visit the workplace to hold 1:1 sessions for him either.

Now, thanks to the new opportunities that have arisen as a result of the pandemic, he receives weekly 1:1 lessons with a tutor and is making excellent progress. The fact that the course can be

tailored to his needs is very beneficial and means that he can use what he learns in his day-to-day work, and the flexibility of the meeting time suits his timetable perfectly.

As well as receiving high praise from his tutor, it is a pleasure to note that his managers and colleagues can see progress happening too, for example, the Head of Department no longer sends bilingual e-mails to the Management Team, and even receives some e-mails back in Welsh. The Head of Department said: *"For some weeks now, he contributes to the Management Team through the medium of Welsh - and today, he did this so naturally that he used our day-to-day vocabulary rather than a formal vocabulary."*

Commissioned courses

During 2020-21, several special courses were commissioned for our staff, mainly due to the diverse needs of our workforce. Here are some examples of the courses organised:

Level	Course details	Number of participants	Additional information
Entry	Weekly, one-hour lessons over 10 weeks	8	It was realised that many staff who work shifts or frontline staff are unable to commit to a community or intensive course due to the constraints involved with such a course. As a result, a short, 10-week course, was commissioned to introduce the Welsh language and give a taste of elements of the Welsh language, at a time and date to which participants could commit. Three of these are now following a new self-study Work Welsh course.
Intermediate Part 1	Weekly one-hour lessons over 10 weeks	7	This course was held between May and July 2020 for members of Byw'n Iach staff at the request of the department. There was considerable difficulty in responding to the request originally in January 2020, mainly due to the lack of tutors who could meet the requirements and run the course on location in south Gwynedd. However, moving the provision online meant that the course could be held remotely on Skype - the first of its kind to be organised by us.
Intermediate Part 2	Weekly, three-hour lessons over 15 weeks	8	As a result of the success of the Intermediate Part 1 course for Byw'n Iach staff, a follow-up was organised for them between October 2020 and February 2021, followed by this final series of lessons from March to June 2021. At the end of the course, learners will complete the Intermediate level and be offered the opportunity to sit an examination and/or continue to study a Higher level course in September. We will also provide central support for them with a Welsh Friend.
Language Improvement	6 whole-day sessions in a 3-day block over two weeks	7	As well as organising courses for learners, we believe that maintaining the standard of our fluent Welsh speakers is just as important. The opportunity came from Work Welsh for a new type of course - an

			intensive, six-day course divided into two blocks of three days for two weeks. There was a good response from a number of different departments of the Council and it was pleasing to see staff and managers willing to give an intensive time commitment to maintaining and developing their language skills. Indeed, the success of the course in one department was such that the Head applied for another course for another cohort of staff at the end of March, with another series to be organised in June.
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Work Welsh self-study courses

We have known for some time that some cohorts of staff, mainly those who work shifts or who are on the frontline, find it difficult to commit to "traditional" lessons, e.g. community courses or intensive courses held every day for a whole week, due to the on-demand nature of their jobs.

Although this obstacle was eased to some extent as lessons moved online, the online self-study courses developed by Work Welsh allowed even more learners to take advantage of opportunities to learn Welsh. For example, an agreement was reached with the Welsh Government to allow staff from Ysgol Friars, Bangor, to enrol on the Self-study Access Part 1 course in December 2020. The flexible nature of the course, where units of work could be completed at any time during the week, meant that school staff were able to balance day-to-day and course work in a way that could not have been done before. Some of the learners who completed Part 1 will move on to Part 2 in June, and although the pandemic circumstances meant that not everyone was able to complete the course, the course and its principles of flexibility have been a new success in this field. We plan to offer the same course more widely to frontline staff, for example home care assistants, in the future.

Friends Scheme

Our Friends Scheme was launched in 2019 in order to support learners to use their new Welsh language skills in the workplace and continue to hone their ability in the language outside the classroom, in the company of fluent speakers across the organisation. The Scheme was also welcomed by a number of fluent speakers at the Council, as it provided an opportunity for them to support learners on their learning journey and offer support and lend an ear in an informal atmosphere.

One example of the success of the Scheme over the past year is that a Friend from the Dolgellau area was able to meet learners in the Arfon area, over Microsoft Teams - something that would not have been possible before the pandemic. Learners who are currently following community courses note that having the opportunity to speak in an informal atmosphere and at a time convenient to them, greatly aids their development and allows them a safe space to use the language, make mistakes and benefit from the Friend's experience and skills.

Another Friend helps a fluent speaker with language improvement, and arranges sessions as needed with the individual. According to the individual being mentored:

“I want to thank the Friend for giving her time to help me improve my Welsh over the last year. My communication skills are much better now and I have more confidence now and find it easier to communicate through the medium of Welsh.”

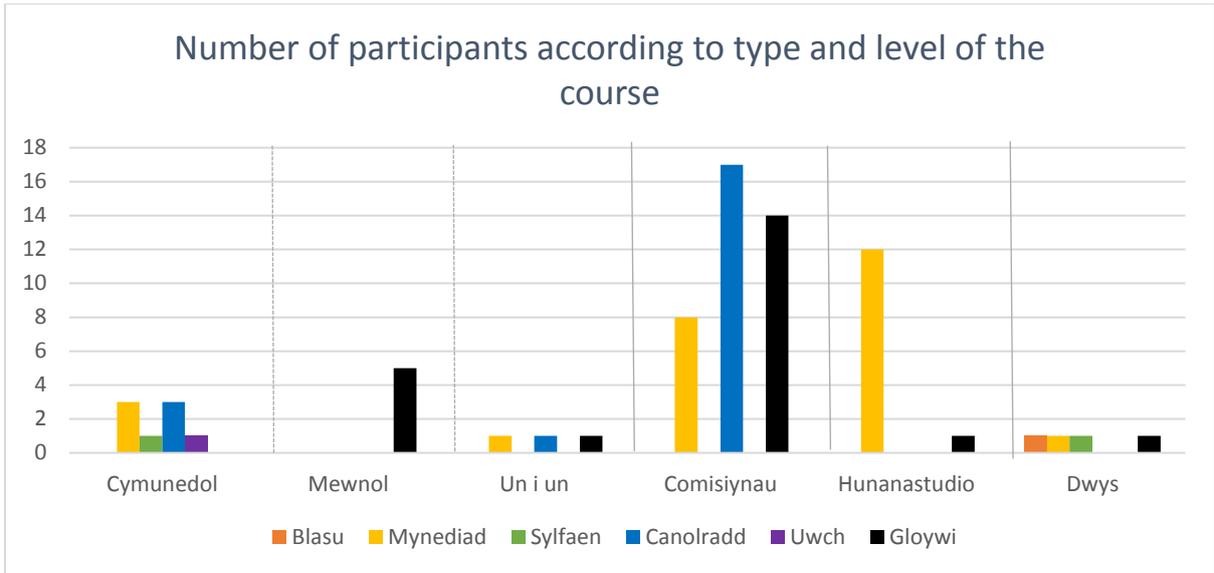
We will continue with the current arrangements and look for more Friends to support learners during the next year.

The tables below provide more information about the language training held during the year 2019-20.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO TYPE/TITLE OF COURSES

Course	Number of Individuals
In-house	
1:1 Sessions with an in-house tutor	1
Formal Writing Session	5
External	
Community Welsh Learning Courses	8
1:1 with an external tutor	2
Intensive courses	11
Online self-study courses (Work Welsh)	13
Various commissions	39
	79

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO TYPE AND LEVEL OF THE COURSE



These learners are divided across the Council's departments as follows:

