

Report to Conclude the Language Designations Project

Llio Mai Dafydd (Project Manager)

This report is submitted as was written in June 2023, with an additional update at the end.

Corporate Services Department

Improvement Priority 5 – Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Cyngor Gwynedd has been at the forefront of ensuring that services for residents are available through the medium of Welsh, as we operate internally through the medium of Welsh. Promoting the use of the Welsh language within Council services is continuous work, and we are aware of the need to continue to maintain the language skills of our staff.
- 1.2 In addition, statutory requirements are imposed on the Council to implement and ensure Welsh language services through the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011). These Standards impose several duties on the Council in relation to recording the language skills of staff and assessing the linguistic needs of posts.
- 1.3 To ensure this, Cyngor Gwynedd's Language Policy also states that Council employees need to 'plan and provide to ensure that all services meet the needs of the local population from a linguistic point of view' and 'ensure that the user's language preference is always identified and respected'.
- 1.4 This project contributes to the main aim of the priority by looking specifically at the linguistic requirements of our posts and adapting them where necessary, as well as the individuals in those posts to ensure that we continue to offer the best service to the residents through the medium of Welsh. Alongside that, it is ensured that the support is available and offered in a timely and appropriate manner to those who need, or want, to raise the standard of their Welsh to meet the linguistic requirements set out on the Person Specification of their post. This is also stated in the Council's Language Policy under 11.11 - 'Council staff are required to be able to communicate effectively in Welsh and English up to an appropriate standard and in order to be able to carry out their duties in full'.
- 1.5 This project was implemented to look at two aspects in particular:
 1. Review the language requirements of our posts and adapting them where necessary to ensure that any new persons are appointed on the basis of

- realistic and appropriate language requirements taking into account the general requirements of the post
2. To ensure that current Council staff receive the necessary support to develop their skills or learn Welsh in order to reach the Language Designations of their post. Also ensure that there is support for members of staff who are already acting in accordance with the Language Designations of their post or higher to maintain the standard and develop further.

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2015 the Language Committee decided to look at the procedure for recording the language skills of staff, in preparation for the implementation of the Language Standards in 2016 and in an effort to gain a better understanding of the exact skill level of staff, rather than just being able or not being able to speak Welsh.
- 2.2 In January 2016 a decision was made that the language requirements and conditions of the Council's jobs needed to be reviewed first to set realistic requirements alongside the duties of the post. For example:
 - **Teacher:** The requirements were kept at the highest level due to the nature of the job.
 - **Leisure Assistant:** The speaking and listening requirements were kept high in order to reflect the importance of the oral skills for this post, but the writing requirements were lowered as a leisure assistant is not required to write reports, minutes etc.
- 2.3 In 2017 the second part of the project began, which was to record the language skills of staff and ensure that support was available for current members of staff to either maintain the standard of their Welsh language skills or meet the language requirements of their post if a discrepancy existed.
- 2.4 We started by running a pilot with the Gwynedd Consultancy department at the end of 2017. This was partly due to the Department's needs and because of their desire to work with us. One of the most important lessons learned from the pilot is the importance of meeting Heads of Departments and Managers and involving them in the process from the very beginning. In addition, the department and management took ownership of the work, and this was crucial to the success of the project.
- 2.5 A Project Board was set up to monitor the work. As the project calls for looking at jobs (needs assessment and recruitment process), people (appointment and skills assessment) and training, it was decided that the Project Board would include representatives from different services who would contribute to these elements, e.g. the Human Resources service and the Support service.

3 Overview of the project's work

- 3.1 From the end of 2018, the implementation of the project began with the Council's other main departments. This was done by contacting Heads of Department and Managers.
- 3.2 In addition to the Council's main departments, work has also been undertaken to collect language assessments and to develop the language skills of Byw'n lach staff. Although no specific effort has been made to implement the project with the organisations hosted by Cyngor Gwynedd, e.g. North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent, North Wales Economic Ambition and GwE, they are able to complete the language self-assessment questionnaire, and support is available to them on request. Work has also taken place to collect language assessments from School staff, which will receive further attention because of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.
- 3.3. To facilitate gathering information on staff language skills, the [language self-assessment questionnaire](#) was developed and we started using it from 2019 onwards. The questionnaire asks an individual to score their ability to do a variety of tasks through the medium of Welsh. Based on the answers, the questionnaire provides a language level at the end. It is also an opportunity for staff to note their confidence in the use of Welsh, to identify whether there is anything the Council can do to assist them in using more Welsh in their work, and to give them the opportunity to identify any training needs.

The questionnaire is based on the Council's Self-Service system, and an external version is available for those who do not have access to the Self-Service system.

It is recognised that it is a challenge to ensure that some cohorts of frontline staff complete the language self-assessment questionnaire. To get an idea of their language skills, managers are asked to indicate whether or not the staff members are meeting the language designations of the post.

- 3.4 All forms of support, including in-house refresher courses, external learning courses, intensive courses, on-line courses and apps and websites, are continually offered to staff to improve or maintain their Welsh language skills.
- 3.5 In order to offer after-care to those receiving training, and support speakers who lack confidence or who want to improve their Welsh using methods other than a classroom setting, the **Cynllun Cyfeillion Cymraeg** (Buddy Scheme) was established in March 2019. This Scheme pairs a member of staff who is confident in speaking Welsh with another member of staff who wants to develop their language skills.
- 3.6 Together with staff from the Information Technology service, a system has been developed to retain the information on the language skills of staff. This system gives

the ability to generate various reports e.g. A report of individuals who do not have a language assessment, a report for one service only.

- 3.7 A process has been established to ensure that departments receive consistent information about the language levels of their staff, the number who do not meet the language designations of their posts and the number who have or are attending language training. Heads of Department now receive a report every 3 or 6 months (as requested).
- 3.8 The internal Language Training Hub has been developed as a central space to share information about language training, useful resources and about the project itself, including frequently asked questions and useful information for managers.
- 3.9 A Language Designation Forum has been set up which includes a representative from each of the Council's main departments and Byw'n Iach. The Forum meets every 3 months and offers the opportunity to discuss any challenges that have arisen in relation to the Welsh language, to share good practice and to share information about new opportunities to develop language skills.
- 3.10 Here is the data for the project at the end of the last financial year for the main Council departments (*correct on 31 March 2023 and excluding Schools*):

Total staff from the Council's main departments: **3,861**
 Number of staff who have completed the language self-assessment: **2,725 (71%)**
 Number of staff who have received some form of language assessment: **2,915 (75%)**
 Number of staff remaining without language assessment: **946 (25%)**
 Number of staff reaching the language designations of their posts: **2,668 (92%)**
 Number of staff who do not meet the language designations of their posts: **247 (8%)**
 Number of staff exceeding the language designations of their posts: **1,979 (73%)**

Since the start of the project in 2017 approximately **219** members of staff have attended language training, either to learn Welsh or to develop their skills further.

Of the 247 who do not meet the language designations of their jobs, **35** have received language training to date.

4 Measuring Success

4.1

Measure	In what way?	Succeeded?
review the language designation of each post	all posts will be reviewed, and the Language Designations will be approved	✓
assess the language level of each member of staff at a particular point in time	all members of staff will have received an assessment of their language level, and have received a level equivalent to Cyngor Gwynedd's Language	✓ As much as possible. It will never be possible to reach 100% due to

	Framework	staff turnover, staff access to technology etc.
put in place effective administrative and technical arrangements to retain and update information	an internal site that updates the staff register in line with Council staff turnover and any changes in services. This will allow the project team to know who has and has not received an assessment	✓
reducing the number of gaps between the job designation and the individual's level	offer suitable training to all members of staff who demonstrate that they are below their job designation following an assessment (or following a request from a line manager)	✓ As much as possible. This will continue to be part of day-to-day work beyond the project period.
developing a culture in which departments take ownership of the Language Designations	Managers and Heads of Department as well as individual staff will take responsibility for the Language Designations themselves and take ownership of any developmental needs, contacting the Learning and Organisational Development Service voluntarily as needed	✓ As much as possible. Work continues as new staff, management and heads of department join the Council.
user feedback, from management teams to assessed individuals	oral, written, second-hand feedback (e.g. through a Line Manager or through a contact in a department)	✓

4.2 Acceptance Criteria:

Criterion	Completed?
1. Review the Language Designations of all our posts	✓
2. All staff assessed (data to be taken at a specified date) *	✓
3. Administrative arrangements in place to keep up-to-date information	✓

*For as long as practicable

5 Results

5.1 Review the Language Designations of all our posts:

The language designations of all Council posts were looked at in the first part of the project and completed by the Human Resources service. As the rest of the project progresses, Heads of Department and Managers have been given further opportunities to check the language designations and to make any suitable changes in consultation with the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer.

A process has also been established with the Support team and the Human Resources team to ensure that the language designations of any job are not changed when re-advertising jobs. In addition, the Council's [Language Policy](#) was updated to

strengthen this element (see point 12.11), to ensure that language designations are considered throughout the advertising and recruitment process (see Section 12 in its entirety) whilst also ensuring that we comply with the Operational Standards.

5.2 **All staff assessed (as far as practicable):**

Due to the Council's high staff turnover, it is almost impossible to reach 100%. We have reached 75% of the staff in the Council's main departments (with 5 out of 10 of the main departments reaching over 90% and 9 out of 10 of the main departments reaching over 60%).

Currently, the only department that is below 60% assessed is the Education department. A specific campaign is underway to gather self-assessments from department staff, which is due to take place before the end of July 2023. This is in line with Outcome 7, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and contributes to the Education Workforce Census. This will also ensure the continuity of the work in the future.

Ensuring frontline, casual and seasonal staff complete the language self-assessment can be a challenge. Because of this, it was decided to gather a simple language assessment from the line manager of these staff members, where appropriate. The manager will identify whether the staff member is reaching the language designations of their post or otherwise, providing us with basic information and contributing to a better idea of the number of staff who are not reaching the language designations of their posts. However, the department and manager should make every effort to ensure that these members of staff also complete the language self-assessment, if possible.

Due to the above information, and what is set out in point 3 below, it was decided that sufficient progress had been made to bring the project to a conclusion.

5.3 **Administrative arrangements in place to keep up-to-date information:**

'Staff language skills' system: Together with the Information Technology service, a system has been developed to retain the information on staff language skills. The 'Staff language skills' system is part of the Staff Development Module and uses information from the Gwynedd Jobs System. This means that any information used about staff and their employment with the Council is as up to date as possible. This system also gives the ability to generate various reports e.g. A report of individuals who do not have a language assessment, a report for one service only. This means that up-to-date information can be provided to anyone who needs it instantly.

PowerBI: In order to see a full overview of the data and view the complete data for departments individually, it was decided to use the PowerBI programme to create dashboards to display the information. The programme combines information from the Gwynedd Job System with the information contained in 'Staff language skills' and

allows it to be presented in a way that is easy to understand and interpret and can be easily updated to display the most up-to-date data.

LimeSurvey and paper questionnaires: Although most Council staff now have access to the Self-Service system, some members of staff do not yet have the necessary information technology skills or confidence to use the system. Because of this, the language self-assessment questionnaire remains available through the LimeSurvey external site and as a paper copy or PDF. Until the LimeSurvey questionnaire can be completely replaced, a procedure has been put in place with the Information Technology service to upload any results from a LimeSurvey or paper questionnaire to the central system once a month (or whenever practicable and suitable).

6 Continuation of the project

Another method of measuring the success of the project is the continuity of the work following the completion of the project. In addition to what is set out above in point 5.3, various processes and resources have been developed to ensure that much of the work will continue.

6.1 Quarterly Reports

A Quarterly Report will continue to be sent to the head of each department and to the department's representative on the Language Designations Forum. The report is a way to update heads of department about the progress in terms of data associated with the project and about staff who attend language training.

6.2 Language Designations Forum

The Language Designations Forum will continue to meet quarterly to discuss anything that arises because of the quarterly report, to give departments the opportunity to identify any challenges and to share good practice. It will also offer an additional opportunity to share information about language training and any other relevant information related to the Welsh language and staff language skills.

6.3 In-house Language Training Hub

The in-house Language Training Hub is fully developed and is regularly updated with information about new courses and resources, providing a dedicated space for staff to find information about language training and further support. There is a specific part of the site that contains information about the work of the Language Designations project, which also contains useful resources for managers to be able to turn to for help.

6.4 Welsh Tip of the Month

The Welsh Tip of the Month will still be released to staff. It has proven to be a success and a way of influencing people beyond the Council as well, due to the collaboration

with Nant Gwrtheyrn. The Tip will be a way of ensuring that staff receive information about grammar and language technology after the project ends.

6.5 Performance Monitoring

Information on staff language skills will be reported by the Learning and Organisational Development service as part of the Corporate Services department's performance monitoring arrangements.

We will be reporting on:

- Number of staff from Main Departments who have received a language assessment
- Number of staff from the Main Departments who have completed the language self-assessment
- The number of staff from the Main Departments who reach their job language designations
- Number of staff from Main Departments who do not reach their job language designations

In addition to the above we will report on any specific successes related to staff language training.

6.6 Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Report on the implementation of the Language Standards

Information on staff's language skills will continue to be reported in the annual report on the implementation of the Language Standards, and we will also continue to provide a supplement on the Welsh Language Training provided to staff.

6.7 Language Training

Due to the work of the project, we now have more detailed and complete data on the language skills of staff and therefore have better information about where we need to focus our efforts in terms of providing language training. We can now focus more of our efforts on ensuring suitable language training for all members of staff who do not meet the language requirements of their jobs, as well as offering developmental opportunities for others to develop their language skills further and at a refresher level.

6.8 Recruitment and Appointment Arrangements

Together with the Language Adviser, the information about the language designations and recruitment and appointment arrangements was added to the Council's Language Policy when the policy was last reviewed and updated (2022). The Policy contains information on setting job language requirements, advertising, re-advertising, appointment and interview.

The information contained in the Language Policy is now comprehensive, clear and easy to follow. The information is contained in the [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) and in the [Recruitment and Selection Procedure](#) as well.

There has also been collaboration with the Support service and the Human Resource Systems Project Officer to ensure that reference to the above policies and the Cyngor Gwynedd Language Framework is included in the new advertising and appointment module that is being developed as part of the Council's Self-Service system. The aim of this is to ensure that all managers have easy access to information related to the language designations at any stage of the recruitment and appointment process, and that they are aware of the procedure they are expected to follow.

6.9 Gwynedd schools and other organisations

As Gwynedd Schools have their own Language Policy, only the Council's main departments were given the main attention in the implementation of the project. Work is underway to promote the language self-assessment with Gwynedd Schools staff, and it is hoped that it will be possible to work together by providing them with the data in the future.

Similarly, it is hoped that we can continue to influence the organisations hosted by Cyngor Gwynedd, e.g. Byw'n Iach, North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent, North Wales Ambition and GwE. A number of these organisations have been in contact for help and support with the Welsh language during the project period. We will continue to welcome opportunities to share knowledge and collaborate in the future to ensure that their staff receive opportunities to develop their language skills.

7 Recommendations

During the implementation phase of the project, a record of risks, lessons learned, and issues raised were retained.

Below, we set out a series of recommendations in response to some of the main points raised. It is hoped that these recommendations can be accepted and acted upon to ensure as little risk as possible to the project's continuation. It is also hoped that they will be a means of further action on what has been learned to expand the influence of the work and ensure success.

7.1 Automatic message to new staff

By using a 'workflow' within the Sharepoint system, it is possible to arrange for a message to be automatically sent to new members of staff asking them to complete the language self-assessment questionnaire. It is hoped to arrange to do this in conjunction with the Learning and Organisational Development service.

This would ensure that all new members of staff who receive an email address are instructed to complete the language self-assessment and help ensure the continuity of the project's work using fewer resources.

7.2 Application for a Welsh tutor through the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme

The Leader and Project Manager have already had a conversation with Siwan Iorwerth from Cymraeg Gwaith to find out more about the scheme and have received confirmation that we would be able to apply.

- There would be no cost to the Council, only the need to secure a commitment from around 60 members of staff to attend courses during the year.
- A tutor would be arranged through the National Centre for Learning Welsh and would be employed by them but based with the Council.
- It would be a way of ensuring continuity to the project's work and reaching more staff who need training, particularly front-line staff who need more flexibility in terms of location and timing.
- It would be a way of addressing the increasing number of staff who are being appointed without reaching the language designations of their post due to recruitment problems in some areas.

7.3 Re-visit the language question which is part of the Council's job application form

Following a discussion at a meeting of the Project Board, it was noted that there was a need to look at simplifying the question to allay any concerns that an applicant for a position with the Council may have, and to make it easier for people to give a clear answer that is a better reflection of their real skills.

The possibility of using the options offered on the TR139 form was discussed when appointing a new member of staff.

7.4 Advanced guidance regarding the Council's stance on the Welsh language

At a meeting of the Project Board, the need for increased guidance was noted regarding the Council's message and approach to addressing the challenges associated with recruitment and appointment, e.g. appointing staff who do not meet the language requirements of the post, supporting learners, simplifying the language of the application form.

Receiving an official message from the Corporate Leadership Team, for example, would be a means of ensuring that staff at all levels, as well as the language officers, are confident in what we transfer to others as a message about the Council's position in relation to the Welsh language when discussing issues such as this.

7.5 Information being given to new managers about the Language Designations

To ensure the continuity of the project and that all staff members who do not meet the language designations of their post are encouraged to undertake language training, it is vital that information about the language designations is passed on to new managers as part of any induction arrangements.

It would be beneficial to work with the Learning and Organisational Development service to organise this.

7.6 Strengthening monitoring arrangements for members of staff attending language training

Monitoring staff members attending language training has been increasingly difficult due to a lack of resources recently. To ensure that staff who do not meet their job language designations continue with their lessons and make suitable progress, establishing a better monitoring system would be of great help.

It would be possible to look at recording language training in the MoDS system, and possibly look at an additional administrative resource.

7.7 Ensuring more opportunities for staff to gain confidence to use their language skills

In order to ensure that staff use the skills they learn in the lessons and provide services to the people of Gwynedd through the medium of Welsh, consideration should be given to creating more opportunities for them to practise their skills and gain confidence in the workplace.

This can be done by:

- Developing the existing Cyfeillion Cymraeg scheme – attract more staff to volunteer and be part of the scheme.
- Develop the internal provision of language training at Gloywi (Refresher) level, e.g. the creation of Clear Welsh training.
- Promote the [ARFer Project](#) (Bangor University) with different suitable teams.
- Promote and organise Confidence Building courses through the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme.
- Ensure that managers encourage staff to use their skills within their services and put arrangements in place to facilitate the use of Welsh for new learners/speakers.

7.8 Continue to monitor and develop the 'Staff Language Skills' system in MoDS

To ensure that the data is accurate and up to date, it is crucial to keep a constant eye on the systems and report any problems to the IT service.

As services and departments see the value of the Language Designations project and the information available, systems/processes may need to be adapted to facilitate how departments receive live information about staff language skills.

This may include:

- Develop the 'Language Training' tab so that data is populated from MoDS.
- Add reminders to staff via Self-Service.
- Ensure that the result of the language self-assessment is placed against the person, not the job.
- Adapt the look of ready-made reports and the information that is included.
- Develop the use of the PowerBI programme.

7.9 Support for managers in running teams that include learners

Teams can very easily switch to speaking in English if there are a few people in the team who are not yet fluent in Welsh.

To support managers in dealing with a situation like this, it would be beneficial to create a guide on holding bilingual meetings and/or setting up brief training. Collaboration with the Language Advisor and Sgiliaith can be explored to develop this.

8 March 2025 Update

8.1 For comparison with the data set out in point 3.10 here is the most recent data for the main Council departments (*correct on 31 March 2025 and excluding Schools*):

Total staff from the Council's main departments: **4,009**

Number of staff who have completed the language self-assessment: **3,383 (84%)**

Number of staff who have received some form of language assessment: **3,693 (92%)**

Number of staff remaining without language assessment: **316 (8%)**

Number of staff reaching the language designations of their posts: **3,340 (90%)**

Number of staff who do not meet the language designations of their posts: **351 (10%)**

Number of staff exceeding the language designations of their posts: **2,322 (63%)**

Since the start of the project in 2017 there has been approximately **289** members of staff who have attended language training, either to learn Welsh or to develop their skills further.

Of the 351 who do not meet the language designations of their jobs, **52** have received language training to date.

8.2 Further developments to the recommendations

7.1 Since July 2023 new staff are automatically sent a message from the Learning and Organisational Development service asking them to complete the language self-assessment questionnaire.

7.2 An application for an in-house language tutor has been submitted to Cymraeg Gwaith and a conversation is now scheduled for the end of March 2025.

7.3 Work is underway to create myth busting videos about the Welsh language in the Council which will address part of the recommendation.

7.4 The work of creating the above 'myth busting' videos will also contribute to addressing this recommendation.

7.5 A 'Language Awareness for Managers' presentation has been created in conjunction with the Language Unit and will be delivered from July 2025 onwards. There is a reference to the session on the Leadership and Management Hub. There is also a reference to information about the language designations and language training as part of the resource to induce new managers, which is being developed by the Learning and Organisational Development service and specific questions about language development are part of the new Continuous Evaluation resources.

7.6 All language training is now recorded on the Staff Development Module, and administrative support is provided by the Talent and Apprenticeship Support Officer. This means that a record of language training will appear on the 'Learning Record' of anyone who has completed a course.

7.7 Staff have been referred to a Confidence Building course which is run through the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme. It is intended to hold Confidence Building sessions like this annually for Council staff through the scheme. In addition, a series of 10 'Developing Language Skills' sessions have been organised for staff to hone their skills and Clear Communication training has been created which will be delivered from May 2025. It is intended to establish a network or more opportunities to bring the Council's new Welsh speakers together.

7.8 The language training information provided on MoDS populates the 'Language Training' record for each individual through the 'Staff Language Skills' system. Work is currently underway with the Research and Information service to develop a Power BI dashboard that will provide department heads with an overview of all language data for their staff. A list of all the improvements that need to be made to 'Staff Language Skills' on MoDS has been created and submitted with the request of the Learning and Organisational Development service for further development work to the MoDS system.

7.9 It is intended to produce a guide to support managers of bilingual teams.

9 What is sought

9.1 Members of the Language Committee are asked to:

- accept the contents of this report.