

# **A Report by the Housing and Property Department on their implementation of the Language Policy and contribution towards realising the Welsh Language Strategy 2023 -2033**

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**1. What policies and plans are in place within your department to contribute to the objectives of the language strategy? Identify the priority area (early years, learning, work and service, community or research and technology)**

## Policies and strategic plans

### **Cyngor Gwynedd Housing Action Plan**

The Housing Action Plan contains 30 ambitious and exciting schemes which aims to tackle the housing crisis in Gwynedd. The aim of each scheme is to ensure that Gwynedd residents have access to quality, affordable housing which improves their standard of life.

Since the Plan's inception, over 11,300 local individuals have received support and assistance in various ways through the Housing Action Plan, be that receiving a grant or Council tax exemption to renovate an empty house, a loan through the Homebuy Scheme, supported housing through one of our schemes for the homeless, or a grant for disable people to make home adaptations so that they are able to continue to live independently at home.

The Empty Homes Scheme aims to bring empty properties back into use by supporting owners renovate houses to an acceptable living standards, keeping residents in their communities. 128 grants have been given to purchasers of vacant homes with a local connection so that they can be renovated to an acceptable living standard. This is part of an overall larger total of 321 empty homes which have been brought back into use as a result of the Council's support, many of these to local first time buyers, which has enabled them to stay in their community. To ensure we continue to respond to the demand, the empty homes grants scheme was expanded in late 2025, by making changes to the way properties qualify for the grant, and also by increasing the eligibility income threshold for potential applicants. This follows a previous amendment made in 2024 to make all types of buyers (not only first time buyers) eligible, and an increase in the maximum grant available per applications (from £20,000 to £25,000) to address the increase in building materials costs.

A thorough consideration has been made to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 as this Plan was put together, including the goal surrounding the Welsh language, and each scheme in the Plan shows how they contribute towards those goals. In May 2025,

the Plan was reviewed and expanded to meet Gwynedd residents' needs today, extending the Plan's lifetime to 2028/29.

As part of preparing an Impact Assessment on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh language and Socio-economic disadvantage, the Plan is considered to have a positive effect on all equality characteristics and the Welsh language by increasing the number and breadth of houses within the county addressing the needs of different communities. There will be a positive effect on the Welsh language by helping approximately 63% of Gwynedd residents that have been priced out of the market have access to affordable homes, or through loans, grants, tax reliefs etc. Data about residents' ability in Welsh collected by our housing partners on new social housing developments shows that 95% of residents on average can speak Welsh. On average, these estates contained 26% more Welsh speakers than the ward in which they're located, and 31% more than the county's percentage. For example, on the Gwêl y Foel estate in Dinas, Llanwnda, 94% of residents can speak Welsh to a 'good' or higher standard, which is 13% more than the ward, and 30% higher than Gwynedd. On the Cae'r Gors, Tregarth estate, 96% of residents can speak Welsh to a 'good' or higher standard, 57% higher than the ward.

### **Cyngor Gwynedd Housing Strategy 2019-24**

The aims and objectives of the Strategy is as true today as they were when the document was put together in 2019 and the Housing Action Plan continues to directly tackle those objectives. The Department is currently updating the Strategy for the next period and preparing a consultation with partners and the public during the year.

### Projects in the Council Plan

#### **A homely Gwynedd**

- **Increasing the supply of housing for local people** – Through the fact that 97% of social housing allocations go to someone with a Gwynedd connection, and roughly 60% to someone with a connection to the community in which they wish to live, our Common Housing Allocations Policy goes as far as possible to ensure that local people are given reasonable priority when allocating housing. Last October, we had a positive meeting with the Language Commissioner's Office. They were glad to see that our housing policy, which places a strong emphasis on a local connection, that being on two levels – a Gwynedd level and a community level, helps to strengthen the Welsh language, and there is evidence to support that. This good practice was praised and it was noted that others should emulate Cyngor Gwynedd's example. Our intermediate housing lettings also attracts several local families when advertised through Tai Teg, with 10 families on average applying for every available house. By providing grants to new owners to bring empty houses back to an acceptable living standard, we succeed in supporting an average of over 3 local contractors on each application. This helps local companies and the local economy.
- **Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty** – We work closely with partners to facilitate energy-saving schemes, and provide grants and energy vouchers to help residents who are in fuel poverty. To date, 1,118 homes have seen their

energy performance certificate (EPC) improve, and 5,865 energy vouchers have been distributed to Gwynedd residents. Unfortunately, in the recent UK Government's Autumn Budget, it was confirmed that the ECO4 scheme would come to an end on 31 March 2026, with no ECO5 scheme to follow. As a result, the funding available through the ECO4 and GBIS Flex schemes is very limited, and several approved ECO providers who deliver Gwynedd schemes has no access to funding.

**2. What more needs to be addressed in the next year to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh?**

- Update the Welsh Language Impact Assessment on the Common Housing Allocations Policy – this will be done at the same time as possible modifications to the Policy as a result of new legislation in the area of Homelessness. This is solely dependent on the Government's schedule and the publication of the new legislation
- Continue to take every possible opportunity within our ability to help local Gwynedd people have access to affordable homes by continuing to offer opportunities for tenancies, grants, loans or support.
- Continue to receive data on the Welsh abilities of new social housing estates tenants

**3. Has the development of technology interfered with your ability to provide opportunities to use Welsh? If applicable please provide an example. How do you ensure that the development of technology does not affect your ability to provide opportunities to use the Welsh language?**

Generally, the situation has not changed from the last time we reported to the Committee. Our main back-office systems purchased from external companies are available in English only, however the Department makes great use of internally developed apps (through Microsoft PowerApps software), and these are all created in Welsh only.

The online portal is in the process of being completed by an external company, which will give direct online access to individuals to a social housing application form or to a live application – for the first time ever. Although paper and phone processes will still be used and available to anyone who does not have access or is not comfortable using the internet, this will make things a lot easier for anyone who wishes to submit a form online or need information outside normal office hours.

We managed to ensure that the portal will be available completely bilingually. Issues have been identified when testing the portal, which means it is not ready to be launched yet however the company is currently working on solutions. It was not possible for the back-office system (which is used internally by officers) to be available in Welsh as that would mean translating the whole system, incurring significant extra costs beyond the available budget. However this will not have an effect on the public's ability to access their information or the portal in Welsh.

**4. How do you keep a record of the people who use your service through the medium of Welsh? Can you share relevant data?**

The social housing application form records an individual's language of choice for communication only, and it does not form part of the allocations process. Historically, our system did not allow us to report this data, and the team would check and deal with each application individually. However, as a result of procuring the new system which came into use in November 2025, it is now possible extract this data for those who have been recorded\*. The available data is as follows:

**Table 1: Correspondence language data – Housing Options**

| Language | Number |
|----------|--------|
| Welsh    | 855    |
| English  | 805    |

*\*The data is not complete as the data was not recorded on the system for applications which have transferred from the old system to the new system*

The Homelessness Service records an individual's choice of correspondence language since the new system came into operation in autumn 2024. The data is as follows:

**Table 2: Correspondence language data – Homelessness**

|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| Welsh   | 95  |
| English | 254 |
| Other   | 5   |

We ensure that all initial correspondence always go out bilingually, with the Welsh language first, in order to encourage and promote the language wherever possible. We also ensure that any Department social media post is posted so that the Welsh is read first, e.g. we publish the English post first so that the Welsh post appears above and first in someone's social feed.

## **5. What are the language skills of your staff?**

The latest Language Specifications report (December 2025) indicates that 95.8% of the Housing and Property Department's staff have received some kind of assessment (whether that be a self-assessment or a line manager assessment).

Of these, 95.6% reach the Language Specifications of their posts. From looking at those who do not reach their posts' Language Specifications, we note that many of them merely lack confidence, and we have no doubt of their ability to provide a bilingual service to Gwynedd residents. The vast majority of our workforce are on Proficiency or Advanced level.

## **6. Please provide examples of any obstacles, complaints and commendations associated with the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium services.**

Last October, the Department was acknowledged and praised by the Language Commissioner's Office in relation to our housing allocations policy. As explained above, they were glad to see that our housing policy, which places a strong emphasis on a local connection, that being on two levels – a Gwynedd level and a community level, helps to

strengthen the Welsh language, and there is evidence to support that. This good practice was praised and it was noted that others should emulate Cyngor Gwynedd's example. The Commissioner is currently preparing a blog which will be published on their website, detailing this matter.

**The departments report to the Language Committee in 2025:**

[Housing and Property Report.pdf](#)