

Report of the Leadership Team and Legal Services on the implementation of the Language Policy and contribution towards the realisation of the Welsh Language Strategy 2023 – 2033

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Department	Legal Services
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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)

e.g.

Name

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Early years and learning):

This area is specifically addressed in the Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and specific measures have been formulated to monitor progress.

Brief summary

It is ensured that every Early Years setting sets a strong foundation for Welsh, ensuring that every child is given a Language, Literacy and Communication skills assessment in Welsh on entry and at the end of part-time nursery education, and at the end of the Foundation Phase.

Legal Services works with Council departments to contribute to specific policies, strategic plans, projects and work streams that contribute to the objectives of the language strategy.

Legal Services has responsibilities for:

Propriety including role of Monitoring Officer

Legal Services

Elections and Electoral Registration Team

Coroner's Support

Corporate Joint Committee (CBC) - The Council has a leading role in several regional partnerships and the Legal Services have played a central role in establishing the governance arrangements for these partnerships, e.g. the North Wales Joint Corporate Joint Committee (CJC). These services are now being taken in house. However, it is believed that this work has contributed a foundation on which CBC members can build moving forward.

Projects in the Council's plan

The Legal Services contribute to supporting and advising the work of the Council across all its functions. As well as providing advice and guidance to the Council, Cabinet and its committees on constitutional and legal matters. It is a key partner in this delivery.

Coroner Service - While the performance of a Coroner Service is a matter in the hands of the function holder, several aspects relate itself to the role of the Legal Service. As the Coroner and Assistant Coroners are appointed by Gwynedd, we have a significant influence on the requirements for these posts. This means that we have been able to ensure that those who are appointed have the ability to carry out their duties through the medium of Welsh and English. This has been recognised by the Ministry of Justice and the Chief Coroner who has an overview of the arrangements.

Electoral Services - The Electoral Services Officer is a member of the Welsh Language Advisory Group of the Wales Electoral Coordination Board. The Group includes representation from local authorities, the Electoral Commission and the Welsh and Westminster Governments.

- The aim of the Group is to ensure that Welsh and English are treated equally in terms of electoral legislation and guidance. It also shares good practice in issues relating to the Welsh language across authorities and ensures that training through the medium of Welsh is available to polling station staff.
- For several years, the Electoral Unit has been putting pressure on the supplier of our electoral control system to adapt the system to enable the production of bilingual election notices. Previously, we had to prepare the notices ourselves to ensure that they were bilingual. The system is now able to generate notices bilingually and we worked with the company to assist them in creating the Welsh versions of the documents.
- We have also worked with the company to produce bilingual letters to send to constituents to inform them of recent changes in the electoral system e.g. the procedure for requesting postal votes.

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?

(e.g. education, resources, families, promoting service use through Welsh)

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?

Over the past year Legal Services have seen an increase in the development of technology and the Welsh language.:

Legal - There is room to reflect on the service and language resources within the Legal Service such as technical documents that we have created. This can be a resource to be shared externally under appropriate conditions if resources allow. Similarly, there are additional opportunities to use case management technology to its full potential and to support provision through the Welsh language.

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

e.g.

Early years

1. *The reach data of WESP in terms of the number of childcare placements and the number of children receiving Welsh-medium education.*
2. *Number of Ti a Fi groups, Parent and Child groups that are supported/maintained.*
3. *Number of activities specifically targeted towards young families/parents and infants by Council services.*
4. *Number of family activities arranged by the language initiative.*
5. *Number of campaigns to share resources and information.*

Learning

1. WESP monitoring statistics
2. Number of Council staff receiving training to improve skills
3. Number of apprenticeships being offered by the Council
4. Number of training/accreditation opportunities being offered by the youth service.

Work and service

1. Number of businesses receiving financial support through the Arfor scheme
2. Number of staff supported to learn Welsh or develop skills
3. Number of staff participating in buddy/champion schemes

The community

1. Number of activities held by Council services and the *menter iaith* for different groups
2. Number of community enterprises supported by means of Regeneration and Economy schemes

Research and technology

1. Number of research projects undertaken by the Council, or commissioned by the Council

Any other relevant data

Not relevant to the nature of the service (i.e. supporting other departments within the Council).

5. What are the language skills of your staff?

100% of Legal Services staff (25) have the skills to deliver all the requirements of the posts through the medium of Welsh and English. Stepping back from the regional work we do not have a reliance on locum lawyers to maintain the service. Unless a specific temporary requirement arises, there is no reason to think that this level cannot be maintained.

The Teams within the Legal Services have taken advantage of *Cynllun Yfory* and Apprenticeships Scheme to successfully support the training and development of staff within the Legal and Elections Team to develop new staff.

6. Please provide examples of any barriers, complaints and praise associated with the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium services.

BARRIERS

From time to time, the Legal Services commission the use of locum workers and external lawyers to meet requirements for specific capacity or expertise. It must be recognised that it is a challenge to ensure such provision through the medium of Welsh. However, on all occasions where this is possible we will prioritise the use of individuals who are able to work through the medium of Welsh.

The other aspect is the need to employ high-level specialist lawyers who have the ability to provide a service through the medium of Welsh. Where possible, we instruct solicitors and barristers who have the language skills. On some occasions, it is possible to secure a service at the highest level to give advice or opinions through the medium of Welsh. However, on issues that either require a wider team, specific expertise or the size of a project, securing the provision through the medium of Welsh is difficult, if not impractical. The ability to deliver through the medium of Welsh is set out in national framework agreements but, this is not a general provision across the companies. This is widely reflected even within companies that have their roots in Wales. It should be noted that the ability to offer a service through the Welsh language is a factor that is reflected more and more in local companies and it is certainly developing. This allows the Council to instruct and receive legal advice through the medium of Welsh.

The employment situation specifically in the legal field has improved in terms of attracting and retaining staff in a sustainable manner. We are building on this and are confident that development can continue. This includes taking advantage of *Cynllun Yfory* to develop staff in-house either through professional trainees or apprenticeships. The Legal Service has also strived to reduce the externalisation of work. Generally, they succeeded in doing so. When recruitment was needed, we have been successful in attracting lawyers who are fluent in Welsh.

It is important to recognise that the Gwynedd Legal Service is almost unique among the 22 Authorities, having a team where all officers could provide a complete service through the medium of Welsh. This continues and the matters identified have not changed the culture or nature of the Service.

As a team, we will continue to promote and take advantage of every opportunity that arises to ensure that the Welsh language is given a prominent place, not only in the work of the Council but also at a community level within the County, regionally and nationally.

The departments report to the Language Committee in 2025: [Leadership Team and Legal Services.pdf](#)