

Date	29 April, 2025
Department	Housing and Property
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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.

Relevant strategic policies and plans:

Cyngor Gwynedd Housing Action Plan

The Housing Action Plan contains over 30 ambitious and exciting schemes aiming 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.

Already over 8,000 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.

An example of such a scheme that goes head on to tackle the lack of homes for locals is the Empty Homes Scheme. 101 grants have been given to purchasers of vacant homes with a local connection so that they can be renovated to an acceptable living standard. In the Welsh National Eisteddfod 2023 in Boduan, it was declared that vacant homes which were previously second homes would now be eligible to receiving funding – a step which has ensured the possibility of recovering previously empty, dormant second homes and turning them into cosy, quality, affordable homes for the people of Gwynedd. Furthermore, to meet the demand, the Scheme's eligibility criteria was expanded in the end of 2024 to include all types of purchasers (rather than first time buyers only), and to address the increase in materials and building costs, the maximum available grant for each application has also been increased.

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.

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. The data recently collected by the Housing Association Adra on one of their new estates in Dinas, Llanwnda indicates that 94% of new residents can speak Welsh. A similar review on another new estate in Tregarth indicates that 96% of residents on that estate can speak Welsh.

A report will be presented to the Cabinet in May this year summarising the latest progress of the Housing Action Plan, along with outlining next steps in the wake of extending the Plan to 2028/29. We are confident that extending the Plan for an extra two years will enable us to support and help thousands more of Gwynedd people over its lifetime.

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 current Strategy's period recently came to an end, and work to update it for the next period is currently underway.

Projects in the Council's plan

A Homely Gwynedd

- **Increasing the supply of housing for local people** – this priority's objective is to ensure that those who are in need have access for a suitable, affordable, quality home, whether that is having the opportunity for a social or intermediate housing tenancy, an opportunity to purchase a home, or the opportunity to renovate and bring an empty, disused house back into use. 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. 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** – this priority offers support to a number of people who can't afford to heat their homes, which in turn causes a real danger to their health and wellbeing. This can then lead to needing to move out of their home, and possibly out of the county, to find a suitable home. 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, almost 670 homes have seen their energy performance certificate (EPC) improve, and 4,487 energy vouchers have been distributed to Gwynedd people.

Other projects and schemes

Gwynedd Common Housing Allocations Policy

The Gwynedd Common Housing Allocations Policy is among the strongest policies in Wales in protecting and giving priority to local people within the allocations process. As mentioned above, an average of 97% of allocations through the housing register go to someone with a Gwynedd connection, and roughly 60% go to someone with a connection to the community in which they wish to live. We believe this gives the best chance possible for locals to secure social tenancies, while also allowing the Council to comply with its statutory duty to accommodate individuals and families in a variety of vulnerable situations.

The Department and the Council have received numerous correspondence from some community councils and community groups calling for the inclusion of a language condition as part of the allocations process. This matter has been raised on a corporate level for guidance, and the Council is receiving legal advice on the matter.

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)

- 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).
- 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.

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 speaking, 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.

Over the last year, the Department has been through the process of establishing a new system for our Homelessness Service and in the process of setting up a new system for our Housing Options unit. A key part of the Housing Options system is providing access to a new online portal, an exciting move towards digitising the housing options journey.

Current procedures depend on telephoning or completing a paper form, however, in the future, individuals will be able to submit an application online, see the status of their application, message the Housing Options Team and update their application form – all online. This will make things easier for everyone and provide more people with more options on how to get in touch with us. Traditional processes (telephone, paper applications etc) will also still be available to anyone not comfortable or do not have access to the internet.

We managed to ensure that the portal will be available completely bilingually. The timetable has slipped due to issues on the Welsh side by the company, but discussions are ongoing to resolve these translation issues before opening the portal to the public. Unfortunately, it was not possible to ensure that the back-office system (used internally by officers) is available in Welsh – translating the system would incur significant extra costs that are beyond the available budget. However, this will not impact the ability of the public to be able 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. Our current system does not enable us to report this data, but once the new system (mentioned above) is operational, we will be able to report this data.

The Homelessness Service have begun to record an individual's language of choice for correspondence and contact by the Service since the new system began being used in autumn 2024. Because this is a new process, the data is not fully complete, however the data we do have indicated that approximately 25% wishes correspondence and contact in Welsh, 62% in English and 13% in another language.

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 (March 2025) indicates that 100% 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). 88.1% have completed a self-assessment, and we intend to look at ways of reaching those that have only received a line manager assessment.

Of these, 95.4% reach the Language Specifications of their posts, however we note that many of those just lack confidence, and they actually do have the 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.

The housing and property field makes significant use of systems but as mentioned above, there is a lack of Welsh language provision for these systems. All effort is made to ensure any public-facing system is available bilingually, however developing back-office systems that are available in Welsh would be very costly, often beyond the budget available and reasonable timescales, and therefore there is an obstacle for staff to use these in Welsh. However, all opportunities to develop our own systems and apps are taken, either in collaboration with the IT Service or internally, and these are all available in Welsh.

As already noted, correspondence has reached the Council calling for the inclusion of a language condition within the Housing Allocations Policy, and a process is currently underway to receive legal advice on the matter.

The department's report to the Language Committee in 2024: [Housing and Property Department Welsh Language Promotional Plan.pdf](#)