

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 2023-4

Foreword:

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council received its final Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 30th September 2015. This outlined the Council's duty to meet the statutory Welsh Language Standards established by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

This Measure gave equal status to Welsh and English so that the Welsh Language cannot be treated less favourably than English Language. The introduction of the Welsh Language Standards is designed to ensure that those in Wales who wish to live their lives in Welsh can do by obliging Councils, and other public sector bodies, to deliver their services in Welsh.

The Welsh Language Standards require the Council to compile an Annual Report, in relation to each financial year, that deals with the way that it has complied with the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards. Provision is also included within the Standards concerning publishing and publicity of the Annual Report.

This Report sets out the Council's progress towards complying with the Standards during financial year 2023-24.

The Council is committed to encouraging all its customers to use the Welsh language skills that they have, and to creating an environment where they feel they can use Welsh in their interaction with the Council.

The Council is working closely with a range of businesses, third sector and voluntary sector organisations, to help us to successfully meet our obligations to the community under the legislation.

Introduction and Background:

Welsh Language Standards:

In 2011 the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the new legislation, in Wales, the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated any less favourably. Public bodies are no longer required to develop and implement a Welsh Language Scheme but must comply with a set of Welsh Language Standards instead.

The Standards explain how organisations are expected to use the Welsh language in different situations. This document sets out how MTCBC is meeting the standards.

The Measure establishes a legal framework to impose a duty on some organisations to comply with standards of conduct on the Welsh language. The Measure notes that Welsh Ministers may, by regulations, specify Standards in the following areas:

1. Service Delivery
2. Policy Making
3. Operational
4. Promotion
5. Record Keeping

These Standards aim to:

- Make it clear to organisations what their duties are in relation to the Welsh Language.
- Ensure there is fairness, justice, and rights for Welsh speakers
- Make the Welsh Language services more consistent and improve their quality.
- Ensure that the Welsh Language is a consideration in policy and legislation.
- Make it clearer to Welsh speakers about the services they can expect to receive in Welsh

“The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives the Welsh language official status in Wales. When exercising functions in accordance with this principle aim, the Commissioner must have regard to: o The official status which the Welsh language has in Wales, o The duties to use Welsh which are imposed by law, and the rights which arise from the enforceability of those duties, o The principle that, in Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language in Wales, and o The principle that persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so.”

Extract taken from the: ‘Code of Practice for the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015’; Welsh Language Commissioner, 19th February 2020.

Progress on implementing the Welsh Language Standards:

The following summaries some of the key progress that the Council is making in implementing the Standards:

Welsh Language Programme:

The Council has developed a Welsh Language Programme structured around compliance with the Standards, translation, and promotion of the Welsh language; it is made up of the following:

- Telephone and reception.
- Correspondence
- Website

- Development of supporting resources and materials
- Welsh Language Translation Services
- Welsh Language Training
- Welsh Language Courses marketing events- Learn Welsh Glamorgan
- Welsh language skills development- formal and informal learning
- Leading in a Bilingual Country- participation
- Management level engagement work to develop Siater #Shwmaeronment
- #Shwmaeronment Campaign and community partnership events
- Communication and Marketing through Social Media expansion
- Business Education Together Partnership engagement to promote the language

Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Welsh Language Programme forms part of the Council's Corporate Services work programme, supporting compliance with the Standards and delivery of the:

- Corporate Well-being Plan, 2023-2028: Well-being Goal: An Aspirational Merthyr Tydfil focused on learning
- Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050: Million Welsh Speakers Strategy; Leading in a Bilingual Country
- Merthyr Tydfil Welsh Language Strategy, 2022-2027

The Welsh Language Steering Group engages a range of stakeholders, including the Chair of the Forum Sirol, to support the self-evaluation and monitoring processes, ensuring there is progress against the targets within the Welsh Language Strategy.

A new Welsh Language Policy Officer took up post in January 2024 and the portfolio at Corporate Management level moved under the Director of Education. As such, there is now greater alignment within overlapping areas of the Welsh in Education Plan and a strengthened team approach.

The Standards Setting and Compliance Officer of the Commissioner's Office has undertaken compliance activities which included utilising different communication channels such as email and telephone correspondence, to assess the Council response and compliance with the standards. The officer also considered social media channels and the Corporate website. The Council is awaiting a written report on this area.

We have outlined below some of the key changes made when delivering the Welsh Language Programme.

Assessing Impact:

In line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Council has developed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).

The IIA includes an equality impact assessment in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The IIA now assesses against our socio-economic duty. The IIA accompanies reports to Cabinet and Council as part of decision making. IIAs are published on the Council's website along with the relevant Cabinet or Council report.

The IIA supports the Council in demonstrating how it is planning, delivering, and monitoring services in line with the sustainable development principle and how it is seeking to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Merthyr Tydfil, now and for future generations by:

- Thinking about the long-term impact of our work on people in Merthyr Tydfil.
- Taking an integrated approach to services, looking at the impact our work could have on other services and organisations.
- Involving people in the decisions that affect them.
- Working with others to find collaborative solutions.
- Understanding the root causes of issues and preventing them from occurring.

The IIA that is completed as part of all Cabinet and Council reports was approved by Cabinet. The IIA incorporates the Council's Well-being Objectives, the Sustainable Development Principle, Equalities, Welsh language, and Biodiversity, to support effective decision making and ensuring compliance. The IIA has been updated further this year to ensure we assess our socio-economic duty. The IIA ensures compliance with the following legislation:

- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- Section 6 of Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- Socio-economic duty (Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010).

The IIA has been applied to the MTCBC Project Management Framework and was implemented for Council and Cabinet Reports. The IIA is supported by detailed guidance to support staff when completing the document, which is available on the Council's intranet.

Implementing 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy and the Welsh Education Strategic Plan:

Welsh Medium Education Community Event

On April 18, 2023, a promotional community event was held in Play Zone at Trago Mills. This aim was to promote and increase the number of children transferring from Cylchoedd Meithrin to Welsh Medium Education. Learn Welsh Glamorgan were present to provide and promote information to parents on Welsh for adults' courses taking place in Merthyr. This event was led by the Local Authority and arranged in conjunction with Mudiad Meithrin, Learn Welsh Glamorgan, Adult Community

Learning. Teachers from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful and Rhyd-y-Grug were also present and spoke to prospective parents about any queries they had about Welsh Medium Education. Activities were provided for children by the Council's Ti a Fi officer.

Stephen and George Literacy Festival

In April 2023, The Stephens and George Charitable Trust arranged a 'Spread the Word Shakespeare Literacy Festival'. The Welsh Education Department supported with funding to provide a range of Welsh language activities and events for the day.

Urdd National Eisteddfod

In May 2023 Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful, Ysgol y Graig, Ysgol Gellifaelog, Ysgol Uwchradd Pen y Dre and Afon Taf reach reached the Urdd National Eisteddfod. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful were successful in coming third in three competitions.

In May 2024, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhyd-y-grug, Santes Tudful, Ysgol y Graig, Pantyscallog, Ysgol Uwchradd Afon Taf and Pen y Dre have been successful in reaching the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Meifod in their respective competitions.

Welsh Education Strategic Plan and Welsh Language Strategy Conference

In June 2023, a conference was undertaken to support the implementation of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy. The focus was on the next steps of implementation through partnership working. The Minister for Welsh Language and Education opened the conference by stating how the Welsh language is being developed in Merthyr Tydfil. A Welsh language song has been composed which promote the language and heritage across Merthyr Tydfil. This was sung and opened the conference by Caedraw Primary School. Guest speakers from specialist areas included Mudiad Meithrin, Learn Welsh Glamorgan, Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful, and members of the curriculum sub-groups of both strategies were invited to present a presentation on Welsh language Early Years, Welsh in the community, Welsh in the curriculum and the Workforce outcome. A series of workshops were held to discuss the presentations and discuss possible operational and strategic actions could be implemented over the two years, as well as contributing towards achieving the Welsh Government's target within the Cymraeg 2050 strategy.

Diwrnod Shwmae/Su'mae

The annual Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae event was held on October 13 2023 in Cyfarthfa Park. This was the 5th year of the annual event. The Merthyr Tydfil response to this national event continues to be developed each year and promotes the use of the Welsh language for children, adults and within the community of Merthyr Tydfil. It encourages people to use incidental Welsh and learn the language.

Seven schools from Merthyr Tydfil participated by performing a variety of items. A question-and-answer session was held with the Welsh Language Policy Officer from

the Welsh Rugby Union. They provided a session on how the language is being developed and implemented within the Welsh Rugby Union. To open the event, Efa Gruffudd Jones, the Welsh Language Commissioner, provided an address on how the language is being used in Merthyr Tydfil. Welsh Language Businesses were present selling their products. There was an increase of 5 businesses compared to when the event took place in 2022. Welsh language partners included RHAG, Learn Welsh Glamorgan, Merthyr College, Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful and Canolfan Soar. The Community Focus Schools Team were present promoting the range of services and activities which they offer to families and the community. Activities such as Welsh language face painting and balloon making were available for children and a Welsh language Children's company called 'Do Re Mi Canu' provided an entertainment session of singing for children aged between 3 and 11. The Merthyr Tydfil Youth Orchestra were present for the first time providing musical items. This event was the biggest event held to date with approximately 500 people attending the event.

Welsh Language Christmas Fair

On December 1st the second Welsh Language Christmas Fair was held in Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre. This event promoted the use of the language to children, families, and the whole community of Merthyr Tydfil. This event has also grown since it's inception. Three Cylchoedd Meithrin participated by singing Welsh language Christmas songs. Four schools from Merthyr Tydfil performed Christmas items through the medium of Welsh. New activities for children were introduced to include balloon making, and cartoon caricature through the medium of Welsh was undertaken. Merthyr Tydfil Youth Orchestra performed Welsh language carols. Entertainment for young children was provided through the medium of Welsh by Do Re Mi Canu. Twenty-three Welsh language businesses participated through selling their products to the public. A Welsh speaking Sion Corn was present to speak to children. Welsh language partners included Learn Welsh Glamorgan, Urdd and Mudiad Meithrin and Cymraeg i Blant, promoting the range of Welsh language activities they provide in Merthyr Tydfil. Approximately 500 members of the public attended the event.

Saint Dwynwen's Day

In collaboration with Merthyr College, a St Dwynwen's Day competition was launched for all schools in Merthyr to participate in. The main task was to create and design a St Dwynwen's day card and write a poem in Welsh. On January 25, the winners were announced with a presentation for all winners taking place at Merthyr College with the Mayor and Leader of the Council presenting prizes to the children. The categories were split into different age groups ranging from reception age all the way up to post-16 students. The successful winners were from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful, Rhyd y Grug, Coed y Dderwen, Pen y Dre and students from Merthyr College.

Careers Events

The Business Education Together Partnership (BETP), incorporating a range of employers, third sector and internal department partners, have provided opportunities for children and young people to both practice their language skills, as well as learn about the importance of Welsh in the workplace. This has also supported schools in achieving the Siater Iaith/Cymraeg Campus silver and gold awards. The Pen Y Dre Cluster, Ysgol Santes Tydfil and Ysgol Rhyd y Grug, collaborated with the BETP, for a careers event in March 2024 held at The College, Merthyr Tydfil. Six employer led bilingual workshops highlighted the advantages of learning and using Welsh in the workplace to Year 6 pupils. Additionally, 36 Year 6 pupils from Ysgol Rhyd y Grug were supported by 7 employers in a careers fair at the school in April 2024. To support their work towards Siater Iaith Gold award, the BETP team worked with 10 'Y Dreigiau' (Criw Cymraeg team) pupils to visit businesses in their local community to promote the Welsh language.

The Community Focused Schools team have also supported Troedyrhiw and Ynysowen Primary School Criw Cymraeg, taking them out into the local community, finding out local Welsh businesses. The Criw then made resources to support local businesses to practice their Welsh. The project was presented to parents. 19 parents, 5 businesses and 7 sets of parents were involved.

Cluster Eisteddfod

Four cluster Eisteddfodau took place across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil in February and March 2024 showcasing Welsh language and culture in English medium schools. A variety of items were performed by the schools with the winners of each category performing in the Noson Lawen event on March 21.

Noson Lawen

The third Noson Lawen was arranged at the "The Church of the Latter-Day Saints Church" in Georgetown, Merthyr Tydfil in March 2024. This event built upon the second event held last year. Over 200 children from across the County Borough were present to perform Welsh language items including the winners of the Pen y Dre, Cyfarthfa and BCA cluster Eisteddfods. There were additional items from Afon Taf High School, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful and Rhyd-y-Grug. The Coleg Cymraeg Ambassadors from The College Merthyr Tydfil volunteered at the event with Mistar Urdd and Dwynwen the Shwmaeronment dragon also making an appearance.

Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg / Learn Welsh Glamorgan

The Council continues to work in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg (Learn Welsh Glamorgan) to provide workplace training opportunities for staff and Councillors.

This includes an ongoing promotional campaign to encourage staff and Councillors to undertake Welsh language training opportunities via drop-in sessions, through the intranet, by email, and taster sessions. There have been courses online and face-to-face learning.

The Council currently has members of staff learning Welsh in the workplace ranging from Entry level to intermediate level 1 and 2 and some on Higher.

Working in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg we also continue to provide ongoing social opportunities for learners to listen and practice using Welsh. Previously, learners of the Council have assisted Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg with the marketing of courses and offer any support to promote the Welsh language throughout the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

Community learning hubs have also been set up in Pen y Dre, Ysgol Rhyd y Grug and Ysgol Santes Tudfil, providing opportunities for both the education workforce, council workforce, and the community of Merthyr Tydfil to learn Welsh.

Family Learning Support

The CFS team have supported Rhyd Y Grug Primary School by introducing weekly family Welsh sessions, targeted at Nursery families. These ran for 4 weeks, introducing basic Welsh vocabulary. 9 families took part, with 1 signing up for Welsh classes and 4 others expressing an interest.

Caru Cymru App

Children from across 3 English Medium Schools and 1 Welsh Medium Schools have been collaborating with Values Education on the development of a Welsh language learning App. This incorporates Virtual Reality and AI technology. Children have recorded themselves using green screen technology using common phrases for different situations. This has provided the children the opportunity to improve their own Welsh skills, as well as providing a tool for others.

Welsh Word/Phrase of the Fortnight

To support the education staff, a Welsh Word/Phrase is circulated every fortnight which supports the staff and promotes the language. With a new Welsh Language Policy Officer in post, this will be further expanded to include the Council staff and councillors.

These phrases and words are emailed out and usually include business phrases or simple phrases that would be useful. Staff are also encouraged to practice the Welsh phrases with colleagues, friends, and family.

Resources

Resources supporting compliance and learning of the Welsh language are sent out to staff, these resources are to be sent out every fortnight and will aid staff in their understanding. These resources will also be available on the Managers' Hub too.

Welsh Speaking Volunteers

To complement the Welsh Language Customer Telephone and Greeting Refresher Training the Council's list of Welsh speaking volunteers has been reviewed, updated, and made available on the Council's staff intranet.

This list sets out the members of staff who have volunteered to assist the Council in speaking to customers through the medium of Welsh, consisting of both proficient speakers and learners to support them in practising their Welsh.

Welsh Language Coffee Morning

There has been a start to a Welsh Language Coffee Morning, this is an informal event where staff members can practice and use their Welsh Language in a drop-in session in the Civic Centre. This can allow them to build their confidence and the Welsh Language Policy Officer will be looking at ways to develop this further.

Welsh Introductory Course

From April 1st, 2021, all new members of staff are required to undertake Welsh introductory course. This is called the Welsh Work 10 Hour online course.

It provides basic training in Welsh on how the following:

1. How to answer the telephone
2. Provide directions and information to external visitors when entering the building
3. Learning pronunciation of numbers
4. Place names and months of the year

All members of staff are encouraged to undertake the course as part of their focus on the future performance appraisal (annual appraisal).

Meetings

It is now customary to open all Council meetings in Welsh and the use of the Welsh language in all forms is encouraged.

GRWP DEDDF

The Council is an active member of Grŵp Deddf and regularly attends their meetings. Grŵp Deddf is a voluntary group consisting of Welsh Language Officers for public sector bodies who come under the compliance requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 at a regional level. The aim of Grŵp Deddf is to discuss and share information and good practice on Welsh language. Regular attendance restarted in February 2024. The team, supported by the Head of Achievement and Wellbeing, presented at the Cymraeg I Bawb conference in March 2024 on the topic '*Shwmaeronment and Children Improving their Welsh Language Skills*'. This gave the opportunity to share the work of partners within Merthyr Tydfil, as well as to learn from other areas.

Rhwydiaith

The Council has been an active member of Rhwydiaith and has been regularly attending since May 2024 after the appointment of the new Welsh Language Policy Officer. Rhwydiaith is a group consisting of Welsh Language Officers for public sector bodies who come under the compliance requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 at a national level. It is organised by the Welsh Government

and discusses and shares information and good practice about the Welsh language and relevant Government legislation, strategies, policies, and procedures.

Urdd

The Urdd has undertaken a wide range of activities this year with lunch time clubs in four English-medium secondary schools and one in Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, the Welsh-medium secondary school that has an intake from Merthyr Tydfil. The Urdd has also continued a weekly youth club and youth forum, as well as provided a course for 80 young people to learn First Aid. Schools have also had the opportunity through the Urdd to have multi-purpose sports clubs and go to sports competitions. There has also been jamboree's in Primary schools and promotional visits to attend the Urdd camps and to compete in Urdd competitions.

Welsh Language Groups

There are also Welsh Language Groups which are run by our community partners. These include grŵp darllen lefel Mynediau, Grŵp siarad (pob lefel mewn 2 grŵp) and a Grŵp Siarad Hapus (lefelau Canolradd+).

Partnership Working

Partnership working continues to be a strong feature within Merthyr Tydfil for Welsh Language and Culture development. The following key stakeholders provide a range of opportunities and support to develop the Welsh Language

- Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful
- Learn Welsh Glamorgan
- Canolfan Soar
- Cymraeg i Blant
- Urdd
- Welsh and English Medium Schools in Merthyr Tydfil
- Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun
- The College Merthyr Tydfil
- Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin
- The Youth Service
- Adult Community Learning
- Central South Consortium
- The Church of the Latter-Day Saints Church

SERVICE DELIVERY STANDARDS

The Council is subject to 87 Service Delivery Standards.

No Service Delivery Standard are under investigation.

POLICY MAKING STANDARDS

The Council is subject to 16 Policy Making Standards.

No Policy Making Standards are under investigation.

OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

The Council is subject to 53 Operational Standards.

No Operational Standards are under investigation.

WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS OF EMPLOYEES (ON THE BASIS OF THE RECORDS KEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARD 151):

Listening Skills	Number of Employees 2022/23	Number of Employees 2023/24
All work material	119	132
Major work conversations	23	30
Routine material	41	44
Basic enquiries	593	646
Basic social conversations	192	212
Total	968	1064

Speaking Skills	Number of Employees 2022/23	Number of employees 2023/24
Fluent – all conversations	124	140
Majority of situations	29	34
Converse with others	51	56
Answer simple queries	150	169
General conversations	570	616
No skills	780	0
No answer		1900
Total	1607	2917

Reading Skills	Number of Employees 2022/23	Number of employees 2023-24
All work conversations	121	138
Majority of materials	48	57
Routine skills	72	81
Basic work materials	139	157
Basic words and phrases	615	650
No skills	696	0
No answer		1832
Total	1691	2917

Writing Skills	Number of employees 2022/23	Number of employees 2023-24
Skilled, can do complex work	105	117
Majority of written text	40	50
Routine work, with help	53	58
Basic messages	497	537
Simple correspondence	119	131
No skills	883	0
No answer		2022
Total	1697	2917

In comparison to the figures from last year the number of employees able to conduct complex and fluent work through the Welsh Language has risen which is pleasing to see. The opportunity for staff to update the details on our HR system themselves could be the main reason for the increase in numbers, as all new employees are asked to complete the monitoring form as a matter of course when taking up a new role. Those who identify with no skills or basic can enrol for Welsh courses to assist them in increasing their skill level if they wish.

THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF STAFF WHO ATTENDED TRAINING COURSES OFFERED IN WELSH DURING THE YEAR (ON THE BASIS OF THE RECORDS KEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARD 152):

The Council currently has some members of staff learning Welsh in the workplace ranging from Entry level to Intermediate level 1 and 2. The Council also has several members of staff at higher levels and is keen to continue to support learning for staff members. Promotion of opportunity to learn and attend classes will be communicated via email, staff forum etc when the enrolment is open.

IF A WELSH VERSION OF A COURSE WAS OFFERED DURING THE YEAR, THE PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING THE COURSE WHO ATTENDED THE WELSH VERSION (ON THE BASIS OF THE RECORDS YOU KEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARD 152):

Not Applicable.

THE NUMBER OF NEW AND VACANT POSTS ADVERTISED DURING THE YEAR WHICH WERE CATEGORISED AS POSTS WHERE - (I) WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS WERE ESSENTIAL, (II) WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS NEEDED TO BE LEARNT WHEN APPOINTED TO THE POST, (III) WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS WERE DESIRABLE, OR (IV) WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS WERE NOT NECESSARY, (ON THE BASIS OF THE RECORDS YOU KEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARD 154):

Out of 367 jobs advertised, 365 jobs were advertised with Welsh as desirable and 2 where Welsh was advertised as essential.

THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED DURING THE YEAR WHICH RELATED TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS WITH WHICH WE WERE UNDER A DUTY TO COMPLY:

The Council's Complaints Department received no formal complaints in relation to the Welsh language during the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

CONTACT DETAILS

How to contact us

If you would like a copy of this Annual Report in any other format or translated into another language, please contact us on:

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