

Welsh Language Scheme: Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner 2024-2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is our Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner, submitted in Welsh and English. It outlines our performance in fulfilling our Welsh Language commitments during 2024-2025.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2011, we made a commitment to fully support the principle of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language in a proportionate and reasonable way and treating the language no less favourably than the English language.
- 2.2 The context for this commitment is the demand for Welsh among our customers and the linguistic profile of the county borough in which we work. We know demand for Welsh language services is currently low. However, we welcome dealings in either Welsh or English, and we respect the right of our customers to communicate with us in the language of their choice. Our scheme outlines the services we are committed to providing through the medium of Welsh.

3. Management and administration of the Scheme

3.1 Reporting on progress

Our Equality & Diversity Partner reports to Board every year, prior to sending this report to the Welsh Language Commissioner. In preparing this report, we have referred to 'The Welsh Language Commissioner's Regulatory Framework' which explains how Welsh Language Schemes are regulated.

3.2 Monitoring & reviewing

We have a dedicated resource in our Equality & Diversity Partner who is responsible for promoting, monitoring and reporting on the compliance of our Welsh Language Scheme.

Our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA's) process ensures the impact of any policy, practice or service provision on the Welsh Language is considered at the earliest stage of their development. As a general note, some policy authors have been provided with feedback how the importance of planning for the completion of EIA's

Our complaints process records and deals with complaints about our Scheme to ensure complaints are addressed, monitored and lessons are learned. During this period, no complaints about the Welsh language were received.

4. Compliance with our Welsh Language Scheme

4.1 Contact with our customers

Telephone calls come through our customer hub, where colleagues greet customers with a bilingual greeting.

What we did this year:

- Following our last report, we introduced telephony quality checks to check the quality of the bilingual greeting. Of the 932 checks completed 920 (98.71%) met our standard. Feedback was given to colleagues where the bilingual greeting did not pass the checks.
- We continued to promote that we have a process in place to ensure colleagues know how to respond to telephone calls from Welsh speakers. At the time of reporting, we have two confirmed Welsh speaking customers.
- We continue to use an external language interpretation provider where calls are received from Welsh speakers. When we arrange for customers to attend meetings, measures are in place to ensure they receive a Welsh language service if they wish. This can be with an interpreter present (booked in advance) or using on-demand video interpreting. Simultaneous translation is available for public meetings.
- Our existing service level agreement with Torfaen County Borough Council's Welsh Language team is still in place. This means we have an efficient and effective process for the translation of written material. This provides Welsh to English and English to Welsh translation, editing, checking and proofreading for us, to ensure there is no delay when a Welsh written response is needed.

4.2 Corporate Identity and signs

Bilingualism is integral to our brand guidelines, so all signs (including temporary signs, notices, on-site health and safety signage) are bilingual.

Our process to ensure bilingualism is achieved in this area is co-ordinated by our communications colleagues.

4.3 Promotional material and customer facing information

We continue to have a process in place, co-ordinated by our communications and marketing team to ensure such material is bilingual. We will be using the transition period to the standards to review our materials to identify any customer facing material that is not bilingual.

4.4 Our reception

Signage and customer facing material in our reception area are available in Welsh and English. Assurance checks continue to take place which has helped to ensure we are complying in this area.

4.5 Our website and social media

Our website is available in English and Welsh. Through our service level agreement with Torfaen County Borough Council, work continues to quality check this.

The primary purpose of our social media continues to be about encouraging feedback and engaging with our customers. When anyone contacts us in Welsh, we will provide a response in Welsh. We share public information messages bilingually across our social media platforms. for example, Bank Holiday shutdowns, Christmas, Easter and public events we are attending.

4.6 Staffing and recruitment

- Monitoring forms continue to be sent to new colleagues to identify Welsh Language skills, which helps us to build our knowledge of Welsh speaking colleagues.
- The ability to speak Welsh is currently advertised in role profiles as a desirable criterion but we will be reviewing this. We have carried out a Welsh Language mapping exercise to help us to understand the Welsh language skills of our existing colleagues. This will help us to better plan how we can provide Welsh Language services.

4.7 Welsh Language lessons and language awareness

Colleagues can access a 32-week Welsh Language course for free (through Coleg Gwent) within work hours to help and encourage them to learn and use Welsh in the workplace.

What we did this year:

- Short free online taster courses available from LearnWelsh.Cymru have been promoted. These courses introduce everyday words and phrases and are available to everyone.
- From this September, a colleague is continuing their learning (Sylfaen), and two colleagues have started at Mynediad 1.
- Our Welsh Language Scheme continues to be available on our website and staff intranet to ensure there is access to and use of the Scheme.

5. What is next?

- 5.1 Our customer experience work will continue as we focus on customer data collection and how it is used to ensure customers' language and communication needs are continually met. The Digital Programme Team are committed to ensuring that regulatory compliance is supported via the implementation of our Digital and Data Strategy.
- 5.2 Our immediate plans involve asking customers about their Welsh Language communication needs and working through the action plan that's been developed to build on our existing commitments.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 We remain committed to our Welsh Language Scheme ensuring we treat the Welsh and English languages equally.
- 6.2 We will explore how we can improve our existing offer and are committed to working with the Welsh Language Commissioner, during the transition to the Welsh Language regulations for the housing sector.