

Monmouthshire County Council

Annual Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2021-2022



The vision for our county is of building sustainable and resilient communities. As part of this it is essential that we promote and protect culture, heritage and the Welsh language, encouraging people to participate fully in their communities. Monmouthshire County Council is committed to ensuring that people can interact with the council through the medium of Welsh.

This report reflects the council's progress on its Welsh language commitments under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards during the financial year 2021-2022.

This report is updated annually on the Council website each year in compliance with Standard 158.

Legislative requirements

The standards as applicable to Monmouthshire County Council under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 are to be found on our website at <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouthshire-welsh-language/>

Translations

- Our process for translating documents, forms, leaflets and social media posts is working well with a long-standing group of external translators commissioned to work to deadlines determined by clear prioritisation of work.
- We continue to monitor our website to ensure that any new pages are published in both Welsh and English. Monitoring of the website will always remain a priority due to the number of officers with the appropriate permissions to upload information and the sheer volume of work. We have commissioned an external company to carry out an independent audit to complement that of the Commissioner. This identified a small number of areas where translations needed to be improved and it has been agreed that we will carry out this piece of work on an annual basis to ensure that we are providing our information through the medium of Welsh and English to the residents of Monmouthshire. This is designed to complement the annual reviews carried out by the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- In the light of pressures on the Welsh Language Budget due to the sheer volume of translation requests, council agreed an increase of £22,000 per annum for 2021 – 2022 taking the overall budget to £81,000. This budget is still forecast to overspend

with increasing volumes of published material and public consultations on subjects such as the Replacement Local Development Plan.

Workforce

- We continue to be pro-active with our recruitment process and use a Welsh Language skills assessment for all vacancies.
- Welsh Language training is offered to all staff whether as learners or for people with existing skills that have lost confidence in using the language (See Standard 170 (2) (b and c) for more detail). We continue to offer the *Cymraeg yn y Gweithle, Mynediad, Sylfaen, Canolradd* and *Cyrsiau Penwythnos* that are being funded by the council and attended on- line by officers annually.
- We have also supported officers to attend residential courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn and will continue to do so.
- Job vacancies advertised are monitored by the Welsh language translation team to check for completed skills assessments at the point that they are received in the translation email in-box. The Welsh Language Officer also carries out weekly checks using the jobs vacancy list published each week to ensure compliance.
- All vacancies are classified as Welsh desirable as a minimum (Information regards recruiting to empty posts (*Standard 154, 170(c)*) is shown below).
- There are difficulties recruiting Welsh speakers to key front-line positions. This creates challenges providing some services through the medium of Welsh. Managers are mindful of the risks of having posts vacant for extended periods through not being able to appoint to Welsh Essential roles due to the low number of applicants.
- The situation is starting to improve with an increasing number of applications and successful candidates from people with existing Welsh Language skills with the number of non-school based employees with Welsh skills increasing by 17% from 264 to 308 and the fluent speakers increasing by 25% from 35 to 44 over the past year.

Customer Service

Our Welsh language line, established in 2017, remains in operation and feedback from users is that it is a valuable resource as it allows Welsh speakers from Monmouthshire and further afield to interact with the council through the medium of Welsh.

Between 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 there were 80 calls to the Welsh language line.

The following is a list of the service required or the nature of the phone calls received by the Welsh line in the last financial year. This data will provide the basis to discuss the need for Welsh speaking staff in the areas with the greatest demand.

• Refuse/garden waste	25
• Communications Team	10
• Council Tax/rates/finance	8
• CYP/Education	6
• Welsh Language Officer	5
• Human Resources	5
• Elections	3
• Grass Routes/Passenger Transport	3
• Social care	3
• Licensing	3
• Environmental Health	3
• Planning	2
• Highways	2
• Countryside	2

In addition to telephony, we have a fully bilingual App for customers to make payments and request services and a fully bilingual chatbot.

Policy Making

The Council has an Integrated Impact Assessment too and a procedure to accompany the Council's decision-making process. This ensures compliance with the Welsh Language policy making standards, equality legislation and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The assessment is completed by officers and accompanies any policy recommendations considered by Council, Cabinet or Single Member. This ensures that recommendations take account of the impact on the Welsh language and how positive effects can be enhanced and negative effects mitigated. All integrated impact assessments are monitored monthly in accordance with the council meeting calendar by a group of officers to ensure that each assessment is robust and complies with legislation. The group comprises the Performance and Data Insight Manager, Equality and Welsh Language Policy Officer and the Sustainability Policy Officer. The questions on the impact on the Welsh language include: opportunities to use Welsh and the negative or increased positive effect the decision may have on the language whilst ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English Language.

Data required each year from 1 April – 31 March

The report presents data on the required indicators in the following fields in compliance with Standards 158,164 and 170:

- Information on complaints (*Standard 158(2); 164(2); 170(2)(d)*)
- Information on staff language skills (*Standard 170(2)(a)*)
- Welsh medium training for staff (*Standard 170 (2)(b and c)*)
- Recruiting to empty posts (*Standard 154, 170(d)*).

Complaints relating to the Welsh Language Standards

In 2021-2022 we had two complaints (CS112 dated 1st January 2022 and CS118 dated 24th January 2022) that have been amalgamated into one formal complaint (CS112) in relation to the Welsh Language Standards. This complaint was in relation to our revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy and relates to a suspicion of non-compliance with Standards 88, 89 and 90. These particular complaints were submitted to the council by the Welsh Language Commissioner and at 31st March 2022 were at the initial stages of investigation and evidence gathering.

There is also an existing complaint that is being dealt with: CS024. This was initially brought to the attention of the council on the 18th of March 2021 and is in relation to a complaint regarding the increasing of capacity in two English medium schools in Caldicot and a

suspicion of non-compliance with policy making standards 91-93. This complaint is now at the latter stages of the process and the council was written to the Commissioner to indicate the steps that have been taken to comply with recommendations .

The outcomes of these investigations will be featured in the 2022-23 monitoring report. However, any failures which are identified will be acted upon immediately and the Cabinet member briefed.

Staff Welsh language skills

Welsh Language Skills of Employees as at 31/03/22 (not including school- based staff)

Staff Competency	Mynediad Beginner	Sylfaen Advanced beginner	Canolradd Intermediate	Uwchradd Advanced	Rhugl Fluent	Total
Welsh Language skills (31 Mar 22)	182	31	46	5	44	308
Welsh Language skills (31 Mar 21)	173	32	18	6	35	264

Welsh language spoken skills by service area at 31 March 2022 (Not including school-based staff)

	Mynediad Beginner	Sylfaen Advanced beginner	Canolradd Intermediate	Uwchradd Advanced	Rhugl Fluent	Total
Children and Young People	10	1	5	1	1	18
Social Care and Health	55	9	10	0	21	95
Communities and Place	84	16	29	2	10	141
Resources	11	2	1	2	1	17

People and Governance and Chief Executive's Department	22	3	1	0	11	37
Total	182	31	46	5	44	308

Recruitment

Job application processes are fully accessible in Welsh in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and every single vacancy is advertised bilingually regardless of the Welsh assessment made and thereby goes over and above the requirement set by the standards allocated to us.

Below are the details of advertised posts in 2021 – 2022.

Non-School Roles	2020-21	2021-22
vacant/new posts advertised	166	1011
vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills essential'	1	2
vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills desirable	165 (99.4%)	1009 (99.8%)
vacant / new posts advertised specified as posts where it is 'necessary to learn Welsh-language skills when someone is appointed to the post';	0	0
The number of vacant/new posts advertised from 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021 that 'did not require Welsh language skills'	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The number that did not include an assessment	0	0
The number not stated	0	0

School Roles	2021-22
Schools vacant/new posts advertised	91
Schools vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills essential';	20
Schools vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills desirable or desirable but not essential'	71
Schools vacant/new posts advertised where it is 'necessary to learn Welsh-language skills when someone is appointed to the post'	0
Number of schools vacant/New posts advertised that did not require Welsh language skills	0
Number that did not include an assessment	0
Number not stated	0

Welsh language training for staff

In 2021 - 2022, staff have been attending Welsh Language sessions and all are financially supported. This includes fees, books and the time to attend and study:-

- 8 members of staff enrolled for the Cwrs Mynediad Year 1 Cymraeg yn y Gweithle 2 hour 30 week course provided by Coleg Gwent Welsh for Adults.
- 1 member of staff doing Mynediad 2
- 3 members of staff enrolled for Sylfaen 1
- 1 member of staff enrolled for Sylfaen 2
- 5 members of staff enrolled for Canolradd 1
- 1 member of staff enrolled for Uwch part 2 (after work).
- Staff are funded to attend Coleg Gwent Welsh Weekend Courses should they chose to in addition to the normal weekly courses.

More opportunities are to be offered and fully funded from September 2022 or if opportunities arise before. The take up this year has been slightly less than in the previous ten years due to two principal reasons:

- the pandemic and the need for staff to change roles to provide additional support to the public.
- Some officers prefer the classroom classes rather than the on-line offer.

Vocational and community Training

The council has a programme of vocational (external and in-house) training and training provided to members of the public through our Community Education service. All fluent Welsh speaking staff have been informed that they have the right to have this training provided through the medium of Welsh as have members of the public through the booking procedure but as yet we have not received any requests.