

Iaith ein Gwaith

Our work: Our Language

Policy on the internal use of the Welsh language

Carmarthenshire County Council

Policy & Partnership

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1. Setting the context

The County Council is one of the largest employers in Carmarthenshire with over 8,500 staff and 74 elected members. The council with its partners and other large employers, has a central role in providing leadership and setting an example for its residents and partners in a number of various areas, and central to all this is supporting the development of the future of the Welsh language in the county. In this context it is important to consider its role as a service provider to bilingual communities but also as a significant employer within a bilingual population.

Over recent years the County Council has developed and put in place a number of procedures and direct services in order to, primarily, enable the public to contact and engage with us in Welsh or English according to their choice. The Welsh Language Scheme set a firm expectation in terms of our involvement with the public and the Contact Centre and Customer Service Centres are very positive examples of this being put into practice where we offer a naturally bilingual service.

However, in response to the significant drop in the number of Welsh speakers in the county, the County Council established a Members Working Group to address the main areas and the 'Welsh language in Carmarthenshire' report can be read through this [link](#). This working group has now evolved to be a Members Advisory Panel for the Welsh language. As a result, the council has taken a proactive approach and has set a higher expectation for itself as an organisation that can lead the way in raising the status and increasing the use of the Welsh language in the county. Over time this will lead to developing the council's ethos and culture as a naturally bilingual organisation.

In that regard, the development of the new 'Welsh Language Standards' framework is beneficial as it will require the council to comply with the requirements of the central five standards:

- Service delivery;
- Policy making;
- Operational;
- Promotion;
- Record keeping.

This policy is central to the compliance of the Operational Standard and will be reviewed annually. Further information on the Standards can be found through this [link](#).

Our structure

The diagram below explains the context and the relationship between the key strategies / groups which contribute towards the Standards.

Consideration must also be given to the More than just Words Framework, specifically within health, social services and social care. Further information can be seen through this [link](#).



2. Carmarthenshire County Council's Principles

Welsh and English are both official languages in Wales and Carmarthenshire County Council strongly believes that its staff, and its residents, has the right to use Welsh in their everyday lives. This means in formal and informal situations in the workplace. Council officers and Elected Members have the right to Welsh informally while socialising in the workplace and formally in providing services to members of the public. This right should not be restricted; however, we expect sensitive linguistic behaviour from staff and Councillors towards those who do not speak Welsh.

The council would like to foster a positive bilingual atmosphere within the workplace where Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers appreciate the unique asset that the county has in its bilingual population. We will appreciate the linguistic skills of those who speak Welsh and ensure that they feel confident in using their skills (to whatever level and extent) in all aspects of work without being criticised. We also recognise the need to support officials in their efforts to work bilingually, ensuring that their workload does not increase as a result.

In addition, the council wishes to have a culture of cooperation as Welsh speaking officers provide support to those who strive to learn Welsh and indeed gain the confidence to use the Language where they may not feel confident to do so. This support can be informal daily support or a formalised relationship between a learner and mentor.

Principles

- As a council, we recognise the Welsh language as a skill in our workplace and encourage our Councillors and staff to build confidence in their use of language
- We are a bilingual employer, which respects the right and linguistic choice of our customers, employees and Councillors
- In official and formal situations (seminars, meetings, workshops, training sessions, correspondence and newsletters, electronic communications, using the intranet, telephone communication, consultation, official documents and guidelines, etc.), the council will provide the bilingual services it offers to its internal customers (staff, Councillors and schools) according to the same requirements and standards of service it offers to its external customers.

Carmarthenshire County Council's objectives

- We will increase the use of Welsh in the workplace
- We will encourage the use of Welsh in the council's work
- We will support Councillors and officers to develop skills and confidence in Welsh, irrespective of their current skills
- We will ensure that the Welsh Language is an integral part of appraisal meetings and continuous professional development across the organisation
- We will provide a range of continuing professional development opportunities through the medium of Welsh
- We will provide support to Councillors and officers to be able to work professionally in Welsh, ensuring the use of Welsh in the development of modern technology. This also

includes the information presented to Councillors through seminars / information events by internal and external providers.

3. Support from the Council

Support from the People Management division

It is essential to attract staff with the necessary linguistic skills to the organisation. This is addressed in detail in the Language Skills Strategy.

As part of the workforce planning process, managers need to draw attention to staff development issues. Managers, alongside the People Management division, have corporate responsibility for Workforce Planning and staff language skills are an integral part of this process.

From April 2016 onwards, Carmarthenshire County Council staff will have the right to the following internal services in Welsh:

- employment contract,
- correspondence relating to their employment,
- documents relating to performance management, training and career,
- Policies: behaviour, health and welfare at work, salaries and benefits, performance management, conditions and patterns of work,
- making complaints,
- dealing with complaints against them,
- Disciplinary process.

In addition, the division will work closely with other departments as we appoint officers to new positions and in particular in situations where the successful candidate does not reach the linguistic level of the post. The division will support departments to prepare a Learning Agreement which will provide the appropriate training and guidance in order to ensure that the individual reaches the required level within the time discussed and agreed.

Support from the Learning and Development team

The Authority is committed to offering development opportunities to all staff, regardless of their current linguistic level. This will include courses for learners at all levels, courses to improve the skills of Welsh speakers and language awareness training. We will provide different types of courses, tailored to the preferred learning methods of staff.

We will ensure that the opportunities to learn Welsh will be effective and efficient, making the best use of our resources and officer time. Priorities will be set in the context of our corporate Learning and Development Strategy and will be reviewed centrally as managers or individuals highlight new needs.

Departments will work with the Translation Unit and the Learning and Development Team in training and supporting officers who need to further use their writing skills in the workplace. This will include improvement courses and training in translation skills.

We recognise that peer support is essential when trying to increase the use of Welsh after attending courses, at all levels. To that end we will hold a mentor training program, to ensure that workplace mentors are confident in the role and understand the requirements in terms of mentoring.

The support provided by the Learning and Development Team is not focused on 'learning' Welsh only. It also covers continuing professional development courses and focuses on the following areas:

- Recruiting and interviewing
- Performance management
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Induction
- Dealing with the public; and
- Health and safety.

Some professional bodies in Wales offer courses taught in English. In those cases, the Authority will ask the organisations to offer opportunities for students to discuss their work, take examinations or submit work for assessment in Welsh. In cases where the Authority operates a formal awards based on assessing evidence of the applicant's work, it will offer the option for candidates to be assessed in Welsh.

Support from the Regeneration and Policy division

The Regeneration and Policy division lead on the implementation of the Language Standards and you can contact the Policy and Partnership team for help and advice. The team has prepared a set of guidelines that have been published on the council's intranet, and can be accessed via the 'Parth Cymraeg' link.

The division is also responsible for registering and resolving complaints from staff and the development of the intranet, which is a source of information in both languages.

In addition, we can offer support through:

- Guidance notes on the intranet: templates, phrases, job titles etc.
- Microsoft Welsh Interface with spellchecker
- Queries in relation to the grammar checker and dictionary 'Cysgliad'
- Language Leads projects

Support from the Communication and Marketing Team

Workplace information and guidance to Councillors and staff must be prepared bilingually. The Communication and Marketing team can advise on all aspects of presenting and designing information, to ensure that messages are clear, consistent and accessible. Officers must contact the team when planning any communication in order to ensure that Welsh medium information is promoted to Councillors and staff.

Support from the Translation Unit

The council has a professional Translation Unit who can offer support to all officers to work bilingually. Officers must contact the unit when planning work so that we can schedule the support needed to prepare documentation. In addition to text translation for strategies, reports etc, the unit can provide support in terms of proofreading and checking in both Languages, given sufficient notice.

4. Future development

This policy is a starting point for introducing the principles in our workplace and we must remember that this is a journey over a long period of time. We will review the policy regularly, invite staff feedback and follow local and national developments to facilitate the use of the Language.

The following areas will be a priority for the first stage of implementation:

- Develop the principle of internal communication on the phone
- A specific campaign for non office based staff
- Raise the profile of the Welsh language in our workplace
- Collaboration with other organisations
- New Learning and Development programme
- Research with staff regarding internal use of Welsh

- Mechanical translation (Developed by the National Assembly for Wales in partnership with Microsoft, the system will consist of tools, services and applications which will provide support across the suite of Microsoft products and services, including Word and Outlook)
- Resources for staff on the intranet

5. The linguistic skills of our workforce

The council is required to keep a detailed record of the linguistic skills of our workforce and we will achieve this through our Human Resources software, Resource Link. This information is essential in further developing this internal policy, ensuring that the right Learning & Development support is in place and in the planning of other resources.

We will conduct a language skills audit of our workforce every two years; however, there will be an opportunity for all staff to update or request an update to their personal record following training etc.

The council has adopted a framework to assess language skills, based on the ALTE Framework and we will keep a record based on the 'can do statements' within the framework.

6. Sources of information

Carmarthenshire County Council guidelines -

http://brian/parthcymraeg/SitePages/Canllawiau_Safonau_laith.aspx

Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg' website –

<http://cymraeg.gov.wales/?lang=en>

Welsh Language Commissioner –

<http://www.comisiynyddygyymraeg.cymru/Pages/Croeso.aspx>

Trinity St David University - <http://www.ydds.ac.uk/>

Canolfan Bedwyr (Bangor University's Centre for Welsh Language Services, Research and Technology)

- <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/canolfanbedwyr/index.php.cy>

Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg i Oedolion / National Welsh for Adults Centre –

<http://maescymraegioedolion.cymru/>

Y Bont - <http://www.ybont.org/>

7. The Welsh language – an opportunity for everyone

I'm not a Welsh speaker, so this is not part of my duties...

The Welsh language is an opportunity for everyone, and each one of us who represent and work for Carmarthenshire County Council has the same duty and influence in the implementation of the Standards and the promotion of the language. Wherever the location of our office, whether on the front line or in a technical job, we all provide services to external customers and internal customers. Many of us will also provide support to elected members and schools. The Language is not a threat to anyone; indeed, it is an opportunity.

I'm happy to speak Welsh socially, but I do not feel confident to work in Welsh.

We recognise that time and support is needed in order to introduce and develop the Welsh language into the workplace. However, we ask everyone to acknowledge that the Welsh language is a skill in our workplace and commit to introducing new working practices through the medium of Welsh into our working days. Consider drafting an email or prepare a bilingual presentation. If you attend committees, consider responding to questions in Welsh or try to speak to some slides in Welsh. Your actions will certainly encourage others.

I can speak Welsh but working in both languages takes time.

We recognise that working in two languages takes time; however, when preparing two documents / two reports etc side by side, there is more opportunity for you to consider the reader, ensuring that it is accessible and understandable to your audience. At the end of the day, it is important that we, as a council, prepare information that is tailored for our customers.

Consider the number of words that you have prepared - can you present the information in a more concise and readable format? Of course, the more practice you get at working in both Languages, the easier terminology will become and the preparation time will reduce.

I manage a team, how can I introduce Welsh in our workplace?

There are a number of positive steps managers can take to create a bilingual ethos and atmosphere within their team, whilst ensuring that Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers feel confident and comfortable. First of all, ensure that all members have completed the skills audit and that you are fully aware of the skills that you have within your team. You can then tailor your approach. Secondly, please ensure that you keep up to date with learning requirements through the Helping People to Perform / staff appraisal process and liaise closely with the Learning and Development team.

Ensure that all staff have access to the corporate lanyards and the Working Welsh badges. Please contact the Policy and Partnership team if you need further resources or need to tailor them to your workplace. Have you considered introducing a bilingual agenda and action points for team meetings or preparing email updates in both languages? Why not conduct an audit of the resources available to your team and look around your workplace to ensure that the language is visible? Is everyone aware of the development opportunities available through Learning and Development?

Most of all ensure that you are supportive and offer every opportunity for officers to learn and use the Welsh Language.

If you have any questions in relation to the policy, please contact the:

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