



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023-2024

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Cymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh

If you require this information in larger print or in an alternative format, please contact the
Corporate Policy Team on 07805 771506 or email: policy@npt.gov.uk

Introduction



This, our latest annual report, highlights work undertaken to continue to comply with the Welsh language standards as applied to the council.

Complying with the language standards continues to be challenging but we are encouraged by the progress made in a number of areas as highlighted by the Welsh Language Commissioner during the year.

However, our compliance journey remains challenging, particularly with a continually limited number of Welsh speakers who are willing and able to use their language skills at work.

With our revised Welsh Language Promotion Strategy (WLPS) now in place to complement the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) we are confident that progress in the awareness, acceptance, confidence and use of Welsh will become a part of our everyday lives.

While we recognise that not everyone wants to use their language skills at work there is also an element of underreporting and a lack of confidence amongst staff and this is something that we would like to understand more fully in conversation with staff, though we recognise this may take time.

There is still a great deal to do before compliance becomes second nature in all aspects of our lives but we are on the right road to achieve this - marathons rather than sprints come to mind but however we get there, get there we will.

Background

This annual report provides an overview of how as a council we have implemented the Welsh language standards and provides information on specific areas: the number staff who are Welsh speakers and the language requirements of vacant posts as required under the Welsh Language Measure (2011) and Welsh Language Standards (No1) Regulations 2015.

The standards which have been applied to the council under section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 are contained in our [compliance notice](#).



Accountability

The council has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the standards, with the Chief Executive having overall responsibility for ensuring arrangements are in place to secure compliance. In addition, we recognise that each member of staff has a role to play in the successful implementation of the standards.

Our governance arrangements require the Annual Report to be monitored by Cabinet thereby ensuring progress on performance is being sustained.

At the time of writing we are in the process of reviewing and revising our equalities oversight arrangements to ensure they remain as effective as possible. It is proposed to establish a Member Panel along with an Officer Group to help oversee and progress the equalities agenda, including the Welsh language, across our service areas. Local Equality Groups will remain a key part of these arrangements; participating in the Member Panel as well as contributing through invaluable insight through the Officer Group.

The Welsh Language Officer Group (WLOG) supports the administration and implementation of the standards and helps with the early resolution of any issues that may occur, supports staff in the delivery of services in accordance with the duties placed on the council as well as helping promote the language.

All information and support materials relating to the implementation of the Welsh language standards are available on our intranet, NPT Connect. Awareness of the requirements of the standards is raised via Corporate Management Group, directorate management teams, team meetings as well as through the council's usual internal publicity mechanisms, e.g. Viva Engage communication channels, NPT Connect Highlight (top news stories), the online newsletter, 'In the Loop' and Sway staff newsletters.

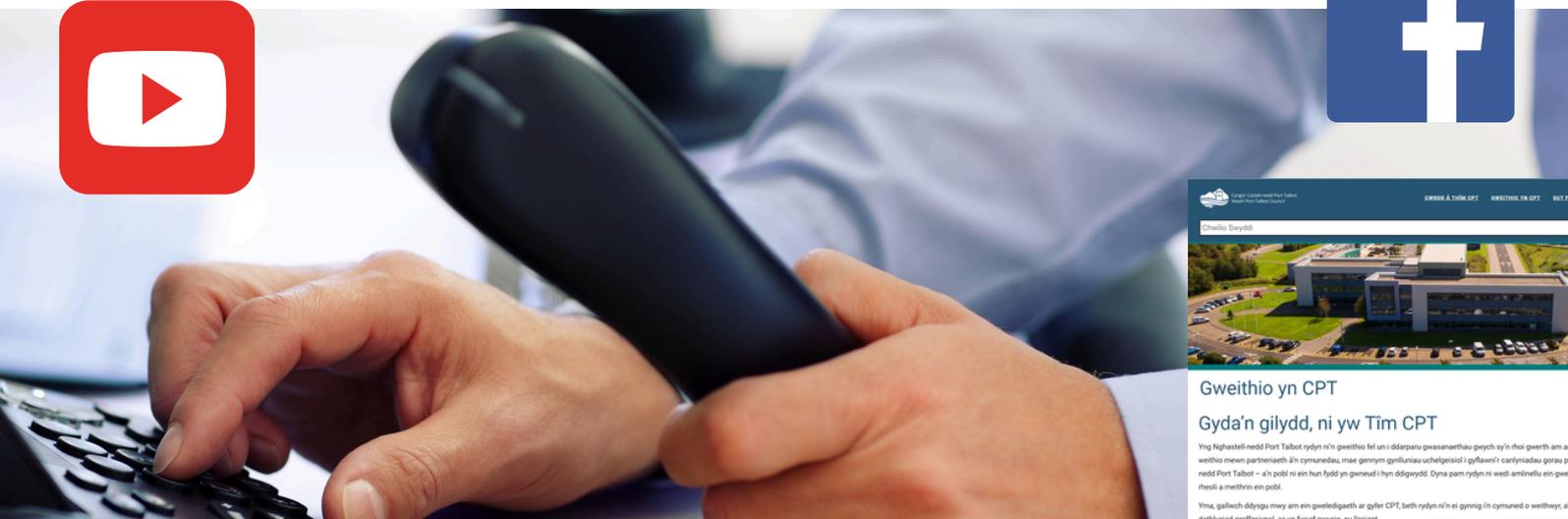
Compliance & Promotion

Welsh Language Commissioner: compliance with Welsh language standards

In March 2024 we met with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Standards Setting and Compliance Officer to discuss the outcome of the compliance monitoring exercise.

A selection of areas of activity were assessed including: telephone calls; corporate identity; website; publicity and advertising; documents; forms; jobs.

Our compliance was assessed as good particularly in relation to telephone calls, corporate identity (including our corporate social media accounts) and in complying with all the 'supplementary' standards.



Although the majority of the feedback received was positive, there were a few instances where we fell short including the following:

- some documents/forms lacked a statement that the document was also available in Welsh
- instances where links in a Welsh language form went to an English document.
- out of the 15 webpages reviewed, five had something missing e.g. text, links etc.
- there appeared to be a number of inconsistencies in compliance among the fifteen vacancies reviewed.

Addressing the above issues will be key to our work over the coming months.

Over the year we have become aware of instances where compliance with the standards has impacted on publicity and engagement with our residents. Consequently we are working with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office to address some of these: for example balancing compliance and creativity in the use of publicity videos; utilising appropriate questions to meet the requirements of the policy making standards while ensuring respondents don't feel overwhelmed and lose interest.

Use Your Welsh Campaign

The campaign ran between 27 November and 11 December 2023 and although we were unable to explicitly promote the campaign to the wider public we had already been promoting the use of Welsh amongst staff since the beginning of the year.

Details of social events and activities, short videos and word of the week, new learner and improver language skills training opportunities as well as language awareness and training sessions, Welsh speakers' and learners' peer support have all begun to provide a foundation for encouraging the use of Welsh to, by and amongst staff.

Our revised [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy](#) and [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan](#) both pre-empted the ethos of the campaign though their objectives/outcomes and actions.

Using Welsh at Work with Health & Social Care, Early Years & Childcare Sectors

Following the link from Social Care Wales for further information and guidance on the below and much more:

- Why is using Welsh at work important?
- Welsh Language Policy and Legislation
- What is 'More than just words'?
- How can I make the active offer?

Using Welsh at work | Social Care Wales

Internal Use of Welsh

Over the year 2023-2024 we have seen an, albeit small, increase in the use of Welsh internally; in work and social conversations; in meetings; and most encouragingly, unprompted bilingual posting on our various Yammer channels.

Recognising this increasing trend and eager to fan the flames of encouragement we offered respondents to our new annual Employee Engagement Survey (March 2024) the choice of responding via a Welsh or English questionnaire. The survey closes at the end of May and feedback to staff will be provided in both languages. As at the time of writing there have been 658 responses of which 6 were in Welsh; we aim to increase in this figure at each future survey.

Parhewch i Sgwrsio Am Weithio i Gyngor CnPT Arolwg Gweithwyr 2024

Eich cyfle i wneud sylwadau a dylanwadu pethau sy'n effeithio arnoch yn y gwaith!

Dweud eich dweud heddiw!



Bydd yr arolwg yn cau am hanner nos **ddydd Gwener 31 Mai 2024**



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Service Delivery Standards

Council Meetings

Council meetings are held on a hybrid basis, with participants choosing whether they attend in person in the Council Chamber or if they sign in remotely.

With the activation of Microsoft Teams Welsh translation software, we offer simultaneous Welsh translation for all participants in Council meetings (whether in person or remotely) while being fully integrated with the Council's Public-I webcasting and hybrid audio visual equipment.

Correspondence in Welsh

Although the introduction of our Welsh only online language preference form has reduced the number of erroneous requests it hasn't eliminated them completely.

Unfortunately we were unable to undertake a data cleansing exercise during 2023-2024 but aim to do so by September 2024.



105 people have indicated they wish to receive correspondence from us in Welsh.

Policy Making Standards

The requirements of the policy making standards are incorporated into the council’s Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) framework. The impact assessment process is undertaken for all new and revised policies /initiatives and so opportunities to use Welsh as well as not treating Welsh less favourably than English are considered each time. Comprehensive guidance and associated forms are currently available to all staff on NPT Connect.

This guidance and associated forms were updated in autumn 2023 to comply with the enforcement actions as contained in the Welsh Language Commissioner’s decision notice in relation to complaint CS 114 (for further details see the Complaints section page 16).

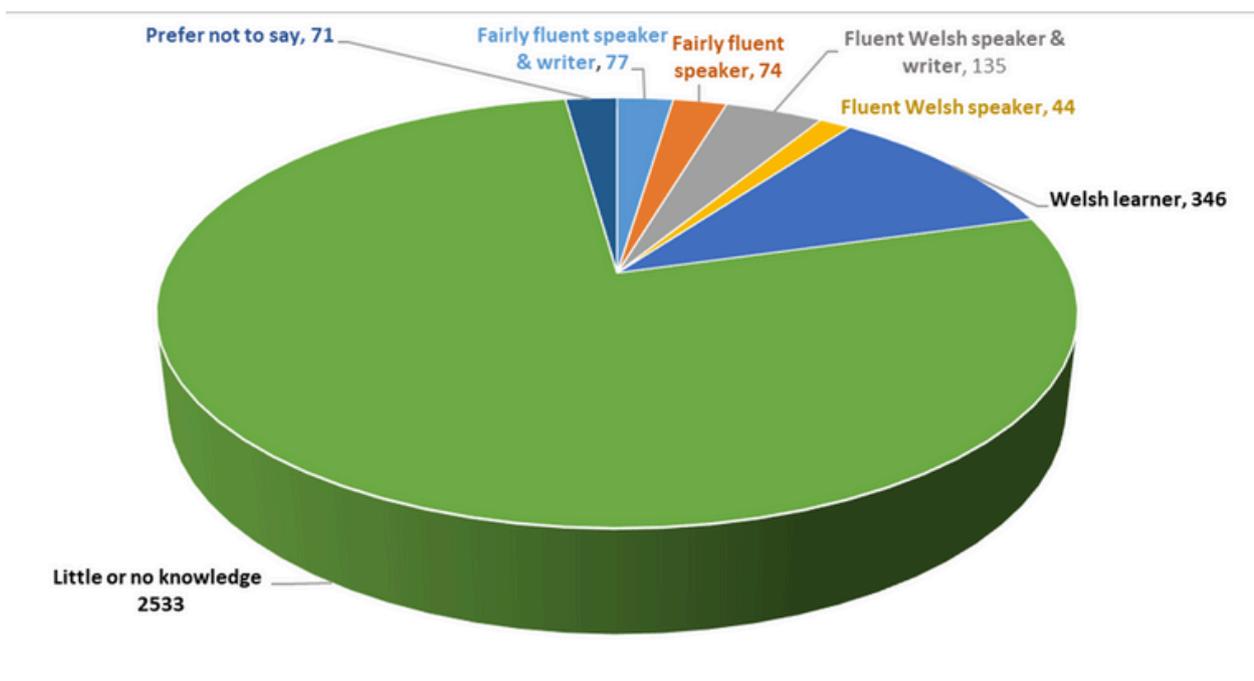
In addition training on the requirements of the policy making standards as they relate to consultation documents is being arranged for relevant officers during 2024.



Operational standards

2023-2024 saw a decrease in the number of staff who identified as having Welsh language skills, with the exception of the fairly fluent speaker category where numbers remained the same (74). There was also a decrease in the number of Welsh learners during the period; 346 compared to 367 during 2022-2023.

A breakdown of Welsh language skills by directorate/service area can be found on page 15, while a comparison of language skills since 2021-2022 can be found on page 19.



Welsh speaking employee directory - 125 members of staff were identified on our employee directory as willing/able to use their language skills as part of their work.

We are working to introduce a framework to assist in the language skill self- assessment and so potentially boost the numbers in the directory. It is hoped that this work will come to fruition during 2024-2025.

Information, and support material - guidance and other support material on using and complying with the Welsh language standards is available to all staff via Welsh language pages on NPT Connect.

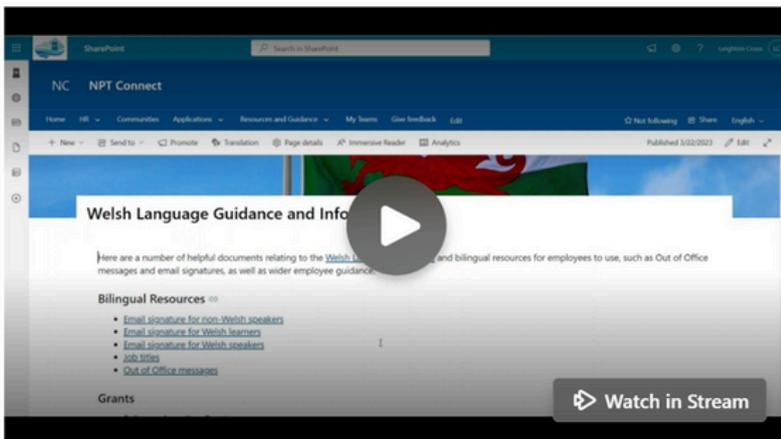
In response to feedback from a survey (undertaken in February 2023) on the ease of accessing Welsh language guidance and information, an explanatory video was produced and published to assist staff who were unaware of the availability of the Welsh language guidance. The video was publicised on our Welsh Language Standards Viva Engage channel.

Ydych chi angen help ar gyfer dod o hyd i Ganllawiau Cymraeg??

Peidiwch ag annoethio... mae llawer o wybodaeth ar NPTConnect... bydd y fideo yma'n dangos i chi ble i ddod o hyd iddo!!

Do you need help with finding Welsh Language Guidance??

Don't despair...there's lots of information on NPTConnect... this video will show you where to find it!!



Viva Engage (formerly Yammer) Communication Channels

Unfortunately we have not utilised our communications channels, Welsh Language Standards & Guidance and Welsh Speakers and Learners, as regularly as we would have liked due to limited staffing capacity.

We have endeavoured to publicise activities and events learning, using and enjoying Welsh, for example Hyderish sessions facilitated by Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot, coffee mornings as well as shows at Pontardawe Arts Centre and on S4C; articles and videos to encourage the use of Welsh, for example 'Welsh Words of the Week' and 'Diwrnod Shwmae Su'Mae'; sharing information as well as supporting learners, the latter being developed organically rather than overly planned.





Training

Our fully inclusive training programme has been updated to include a range of resources available to Welsh language learners, including the 'Help me choose a course' guide, and resources to support learning including mobile applications, podcasts, music, TV, and resources to use with children and young people.

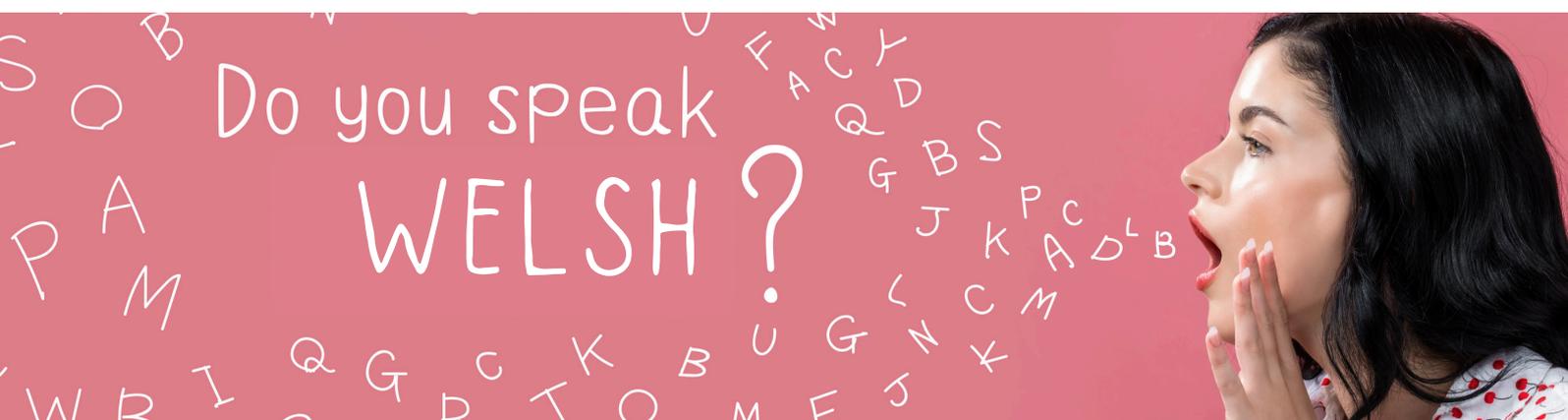
The programme also contains information on the range of courses provided by our local Welsh for Adults Centre and the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Courses are advertised on our internal staff communications Viva Engage communities, including a page exclusively for Welsh speakers and learners and on our Intranet 'NPT Connect' where we have a dedicated area for Welsh Language training.

This year we have again published our training programme electronically using Book Creator and it can be viewed [here](#).

In 2023-24:

- 18 new learners enrolled on various Welsh Language courses.
- 3 learners have completed modules of training.
- 104 learners remain enrolled and are at various stages of completion.
- 1,680 staff have completed the mandatory Welsh Language in NPT eLearning course.

Overall the online Welsh courses provided by the National Centre for Learning Welsh are the preferred option taken by staff. Feedback received from learners indicates this is because the online courses can be completed at the learners own pace and in the learners own time. Learning online is self-directed which means it can fit around a work life balance. Other feedback received from learners on the online Welsh courses included that although it had a great deal of benefits and they were very good courses, conversational opportunities in and for work being available was lacking and it was felt these things would strengthen the learning process.



Training (continued)

In the next year to combat this we will look at re-establishing the 'Sgwrs' network group that met regularly prior to the COVID pandemic and Menter Iaith newsletters will be shared regularly with the learners and speakers group. This newsletter provides updates and opportunities on when and how staff can immerse themselves in using and learning the language across Neath Port Talbot.

In 2023-24 our Internal Audit department run a review of mandatory training and gave high priority recommendations to senior managers to ensure staff complete the required mandatory training. This includes the 'Welsh Language Awareness in Neath Port Talbot' eLearning module. The audit has resulted in a significant uplift in the number of staff completing the eLearning package. During 2023-24, the eLearning module was updated to include additional information around the Welsh Language Standards.

In 2023-24, 1,680 members of staff completed the Welsh Language Awareness eLearning module. The previous year just 231 staff completed the module, proving that the audit was very effective. It is hoped that the workforce will be better informed around the requirements of equal opportunities for the Welsh language to be used in public services.

Social work students seconded and hosted by the Council are instructed to complete the 'Welsh Language Awareness in Neath Port Talbot' eLearning to raise awareness of the use of the Welsh language across Neath Port Talbot and in delivering the 'Active Offer'. Social Work Students and Practice Educators also receive training on Welsh Context as part of their Practice Learning Opportunities.

Newly qualified social workers entering their second year of practice are required to undertake a consolidation programme which is available in both Welsh and English. The 'Porth Agored' partnership, of which the Council is a partner, is responsible for the writing, development and implementation of the consolidation programme and works in conjunction with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

In February 2024 we successfully filled the vacant Social Work Education Coordinator role. The individual now employed in this role is a Welsh speaker and is able to provide Welsh medium Practice Education. They actively advocate for the language and awareness of the language throughout process and practice and also support the Learning, Training and Development Team with any Welsh language requirements.

Our Learning, Training and Development Team have several publications, including phrasebooks, course books, dictionaries and light reading, available for loan to supplement and complement language training courses.

Our corporate induction includes information on Welsh language resources and encourages managers to discuss and make new employees aware of the Welsh language standards and Welsh language awareness. Other sections of the induction including set up of bilingual signatures, answering the telephone bilingually etc.

Promotional Standards

Our Welsh Language Promotion Strategy was revised and published in September 2023.

While the Strategy sets out our response to the requirement of the Welsh language standard 145 and complements our current Welsh in Education Strategic Plan it goes beyond that. It aims to permeate the fabric of our society, from helping ensure language courses are available for all who wish to learn and providing an environment in which it can be used, to celebrating and raising awareness of its place in our heritage and culture, our daily lives and as part of our visitor offer.

Welsh is more than the language it is part of our very being - whether born here or not. It is woven into the fabric of our lives - even if not instantly recognisable; our place names, forenames, colloquialisms, all are rooted in the Welsh language.

It is a strategy that will help raise the profile of Welsh, help ensure people can participate in society in their language of choice and provide a strong base for developing an environment where people can respect, accept and take pride in the Welsh language.

Vacant Posts for 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024		
Welsh language skill requirements	Number of posts	% of posts
Essential	22	2.5%
Desirable	123	14%
Need to learn Welsh	4	0.5%
No Welsh skills required	716	83%



Language Skills of Staff

Directorate/Service	Fairly Fluent Speaker & Writer	Fairly Fluent Speaker	Fluent Speaker & Writer	Fluent Speaker	Welsh Learner	Little or no knowledge	Prefer Not To Say	Not Reported	Total
Chief Officers	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	5
Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning									
Early Years Inclusion & Partnerships	6	3	8	2	32	95	4	30	150
Education Development	8	3	18	3	32	141	7	48	212
Leisure Tourism Heritage & Culture	1	1	6	0	13	92	0	9	113
Support Services & Transformation	8	4	20	9	18	314	22	148	395
Environment & Regeneration									
Engineering & Transport	3	4	4	2	10	97	2	34	122
Planning & Public Protection	3	4	1	1	25	58	1	21	93
Property & Regeneration	0	6	2	1	10	107	3	23	129
South Wales Trunk Road Agency	2	5	8	5	18	148	1	26	187
Streetcare Services	10	11	15	7	32	363	8	91	446
Social Service Health and Housing									
Adult Services	16	12	17	5	50	405	17	54	522
Business Services	0	3	4	3	8	79	1	22	98
Children & Young People Services	9	6	13	3	45	221	1	71	298
Housing & Communities	0	2	3	1	12	71	1	14	90
Strategy & Corporate Services									
Digital Services	3	1	1	0	7	71	1	20	84
Financial Services	2	4	3	0	9	127	0	14	145
Legal & Democratic Services	4	2	5	1	15	54	0	18	81
People & Organisational Development	2	3	6	1	9	87	2	24	110
Total	77	74	135	44	346	2533	71	667	3280

Complaints

No complaints were received neither via the Welsh Language Commissioner nor directly to the council, during 2023-2024.

The following complaint was determined during 2023-2024:

CS114 - Consultation regarding the closure of three English medium schools to create a new school for around 700 children in Pontardawe. The complaint alleges that the council did not include a Welsh Language Impact Assessment during the first part of the consultation process. It also refers to the Impact Assessment commissioned by the Welsh Government that was not available to the public, and therefore no opportunity was available to comment on that assessment. The Commissioner found that the council had failed to comply with Standard 91 as the consultation document did not adequately consider the potential impacts of the policy decision on opportunities to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably.

The council, following appeal to the Welsh Language Tribunal, accepted the recommendations contained in the decision notice.

Measures

Translations	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total cost of translations (where able to be identified)	£39,573	£46,701	£89,735
Number of requests for translation received by the translation unit	815	N/A	N/A

Telephone Calls	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Number of staff with fluent/fairly fluent language skills identified in the employee directory	146*	125	125
Average time to answer telephone calls – English	44 seconds	65 seconds	48 seconds
Average time to answer telephone calls – Welsh	57 seconds	81 seconds	71 seconds

Our average wait times have reduced since the 2022-2023.

We appointed a Welsh speaker who following a period of training has taken up full time duties thus contributing to reducing wait times.

By reducing our opening hours at our reception areas, this has freed up Welsh speaking staff to cover the phones between 8.30am – 9.00am and 4.30pm – 5.00pm to ensure we always have someone available to answer Welsh calls.

Social Media	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Twitter (followers)			
English corporate account	16,584	17,107	17,131
Welsh corporate account	431	476	520
Facebook (followers)			
English corporate account	17,704	21,273	22,596
Welsh corporate account	141	236	313

NPT News e-Newsletters Number of subscribers	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Welsh e-Newsletter	17	20	95
English e-Newsletter	2,186	2,480	2769
Bilingual e-Newsletter	48	63	N/A

Measures (continued)

Website	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total number of hits on website	4,009,274	5,188,512	5,197,608
Total number of hits Welsh webpages	29,177	25,675	18,588*

* Due to changes to Google analytics, there have been periods where it has not been possible to identify between Welsh and English hits. This problem has now been addressed by our new website which enable easier analysis.

Language Skills	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Fairly fluent speaker & writer	79	81	77
Fairly fluent speaker	80	74	74
Fluent Welsh speaker & writer	137	139	135
Fluent Welsh speaker	50	53	44
Welsh learner	400	367	346

Vacant Posts - Language Skills	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Desirable	181	150	123
Essential	8	29	22
No Welsh skills required	438	712	716
Need to learn Welsh	0	5	4

Complaints	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Number of complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner	6	1	0
Number of complaints where the Welsh Language Commissioner determined no investigation necessary	2	1	0
Number of complaints where the Welsh Language Commissioner determined there was no failure to comply with the standards	3	N/A	0



Have Your Say

Enquiries or feedback on this report are welcomed via:

Email: policy@npt.gov.uk

Post:

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