

Carmarthenshire County Council

Welsh language Skills Strategy

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1. Context and background

Recent legislation

Due to recently enacted legislation relating to the Welsh language and policy developments in Wales, it is timely that Carmarthenshire County Council ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place in order that adequate staffing for bilingual services is available in Welsh and English to the public.

Welsh Language Measure and Standards

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 received Royal Assent in February 2011 giving official status to the Welsh language in Wales. The Measure sets a new legislative framework for the Language in all aspects of life, namely the Welsh language Standards. The aim of the Language Standards is to simplify the process of placing duties on bodies and to introduce greater consistency across sectors and areas. The Language Standards will replace the current language schemes, and place duties on organisations named by the Welsh language Measure in five areas; service delivery, policy formulation, implementation, promotion of the Language and record keeping.

The duties associated with the standards mean that those organisations must not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language, and must also promote or facilitate the use of the Welsh language. This is in accordance with the two principles that form the basis of the Welsh Language Commissioner's work:

- in Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language
- persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so.

The Welsh language Skills Strategy is a key document in relation to meeting the Implementation Standard. We will also be required to develop a policy on the use of the Language within the internal administration and to include bilingual provisions for:

- employment contracts
- employment information and guidance
- training opportunities and records
- appraisals and performance objectives
- information available through Human Resource software
- workplace policies and guidance
- dealing with complaints made by staff
- disciplinary procedures and meetings
- information technology for staff use
- intranet pages
- internal signage and information displayed
- recruitment and selection policies and opportunities

A Living Language: A Language for Living

The 'Living Language: A Language for Living' Strategy was published by the Welsh Government in April 2012. The strategy reflects the vision of the Government in taking steps to ensure that the Welsh language thrives. The strategy builds on the vision set out in 'Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales' published in 2003.

The Government will work with a wide range of partners, who will contribute extensively in order to achieve the vision. To this end, the Government has six aims:

- To encourage and support the use of Welsh within families
- To increase the provision of Welsh activities for children and young people and increase their awareness of the value of language
- To strengthen the position of the Welsh language within the community
- To increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace
- To increase and improve Welsh medium services for citizens
- To strengthen the infrastructure for the language, including digital technology.

The strategy also emphasises the importance of the Welsh Government's 'Welsh Medium Education Strategy' as an essential element in the creation of Welsh speakers in the future - in conjunction with the encouragement of the use of the language within families.

"The Welsh language in Carmarthenshire" report

Following the publication of the 2011 Census results and the decline in the number of Welsh speakers in Carmarthenshire, Carmarthenshire County Council agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate the factors that have led to the deterioration of the Language and make recommendations to address the situation. The Working Group agreed to look at the following priority areas:

- Planning (affordable housing and the Language within sustainable development)
- Education (nursery, statutory, further, higher)
- Language and Economy
- Welsh Medium Workplaces and the administration of the Council
- The impact of organisations working for the benefit of the Welsh Language, such as the Mentrau Iaith
- Opportunities to use the Language within communities (Welsh for Adults and the use of Welsh outside school)
- Language Transmission in the family
- Marketing the Language

The County Council is one of the largest employers in Carmarthenshire with over 9,000 staff and 74 elected members. The council has a central role in providing leadership and setting an example for its residents and partners in a number of areas, and central to all this is providing firm leadership in terms of the future of the Welsh language in the county. In this context it is important to consider the council's 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 policy procedures and direct services in order to, primarily, enable the public to contact and engage with the council in Welsh or English according to their choice. The council's Welsh Language Scheme sets a firm expectation in terms of the council's involvement with the

public and the Contact Centre and Customer Service Centres are very positive examples of this being put into practice where the council offers a natural bilingual service.

However, in response to the significant drop in the number of Welsh speakers in the county, the County Council needs to adopt a more proactive approach and set higher expectations 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. Our long term vision is that this will lead to developing the council's ethos and culture as a naturally bilingual organisation which will be able to confidently evolve to administering mainly through the medium of Welsh in the future.

Further information and guidance

- If you have any enquiries in relation to the Welsh language Standards (2015), contact the Policy & Partnership Team on 01267 224008/4914.
- Further information in relation to this document and guidance on implementation can be found through the People Management and Performance Division.

2. Welsh language Skills Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that Carmarthenshire County Council implements the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards.

The same responsibility applies to the implementation of recommendations prepared by the Census Working Group following 2011 Census results.

The first step towards preparing a Language Skills Strategy is to recognise that the Welsh language is a skill, like any other job related skill. Within the recruitment framework for Carmarthenshire County Council jobs, all posts will be advertised at a minimum of Level 1 on the ALTE Framework and an individual assessment will be undertaken on every post advertised.

The council is committed to ensuring that all new staff can provide a courteous level of language with customers and colleagues, as well as language awareness and sensitivity. Support will be offered to new employees who do not attain level 1 of the ALTE Framework, to reach this level before completing their probationary period (within a maximum of 12 months).

Carmarthenshire County Council offers a range of opportunities to learn and improve Welsh language skills in the workplace. All members of staff should discuss their development needs in their 'Helping People to Perform' meetings with their line managers and appropriate support will be offered when Welsh language skills are identified as a requirement for the post.

The aim of the Language Skills Strategy is to manage and plan staff language skills and covers the following key areas in the management of language skills:

- Determine the Welsh language skills required for workplaces, teams and jobs, across the Authority;
- Record and monitor staff Welsh language skills;
- Recruit people with the appropriate level of Welsh language skills for the post being advertised;
- Develop language skills and language awareness.

A Language Skills Framework is a key tool for Managers as they design and implement their workforce plans. Many of the leading employers in the public sector in Wales have adapted a widely recognised skills framework, which is the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers of Europe). This provides a good reference for employers due to the fact that it is based on recognition of what individuals can achieve linguistically (in Welsh and English in this context). It is a way of measuring language skills according to the types of communication tasks that a person can achieve in speaking, understanding, reading and writing.

Carmarthenshire County Council has adopted the ALTE framework for the assessment of all Languages and a copy of the framework can be seen in Appendix 1.

3. Welsh language Skills Strategy Action points

Summary of Actions

- (i) Conduct a survey of jobs, workplaces, teams and to determine the skills and working practices needed for the relevant jobs, workplaces and teams.
- (ii) Update the results of the audit of language skills of our workforce in line with ALTE Framework, placing the results on the Resource Link HR software.
- (iii) Compare the need for bilingual skills with the bilingual skills held by existing staff.
- (iv) To identify options for closing the skills gap.
- (v) Prepare and implement an Action Plan, to include strategies for
 - Training / development / support for staff;
 - Recruitment of new staff;
 - Relocation and flexibility of staff where required.
- (vi) Monitor and report on the implementation of the Strategy, taking into particular consideration the commitments in relation to the Welsh Language Standards (2015).

Step by step implementation of the Welsh language Skills Strategy

- (i) Conduct a survey of jobs, workplaces and teams to determine the skills needed for the relevant working practices.**

Audit of existing posts

Think about the individual jobs, teams and staff workplaces. Consider the communication skills that are needed to ensure that the service can be provided equally in both Welsh and English. You should consider these requirements regardless of who happens to be in office, or team / workplace at the moment.

A template for completion can be found in appendix 2. Managers are then required to complete the assessment matrix and update the job profile in accordance with the audit results.

If the post is not vacant, and if the skills are required by the person currently in post, you can offer training to raise the skills of that person. This should be discussed with the individuals in your team as part of the appraisal meetings.

On the basis of this survey, you can proceed to compare the skills that are needed to the existing skills of the staff, and thus, will be able to identify the skills gap.

(ii) Language skills audit of existing staff

The County Council has already begun the work of conducting a detailed audit of the language skills of our workforce. However, the record needs to be updated to reflect the agreement to adopt the ALTE Framework.

Managers are asked to discuss staff language skills as part of appraisals. Records should be updated in light of the meeting and any development opportunities in relation to the Welsh language are identified and actioned.

In addition to recording the levels of Welsh language skills, you can use the survey to find out what levels of staff language skills in other languages, including British Sign Language.

(iii) Comparing bilingual skills required to the bilingual skills of existing staff

After undertaking the survey of existing posts, you will know that language skills are needed in your team or division now and in the future. After undertaking the skills audit, you will know what skills you have. The natural next step is to compare the skills required with the skills currently in place. In doing so you will be informed about the areas where bilingual skills are required but are not available at present within the different jobs and teams.

This evidence must form part of the departmental Workforce Plan for discussion and action at Departmental Management Team level.

There will be an expectation for service managers to work with their Departmental Management Teams to develop an action plan, in conjunction with People Management and Performance which will bridge the skills gap.

You will need to consider the options available in light of:

- The resources available for implementation;
- The importance of the job in ensuring that you are able to provide services equally in both Welsh and English, considering the team or specific location;
- The need to make the most of every opportunity to increase or improve your bilingual provision;
- The need to consult with staff in respect to any changes to working practices.

(iv) Developing Welsh skills through training and staff development

Carmarthenshire County Council provides an extensive programme of opportunities to learn and improve skills in Welsh. Further details can be seen in Appendix 4.

(v) Prepare an implementation plan – recruitment of Welsh speakers to jobs / teams / specific workplaces

When a position becomes vacant, or when a new post is created, the Service Manager will start to make the recruitment arrangements, in accordance with council procedures. They job profile must be reviewed and the language skills requirement confirmed.

Always ensure that appropriate emphasis is given in the recruitment material on the actual Welsh language skills required, with reference to the ALTE Framework. Those factors should be considered when preparing the person specification, job description and advertisement (s).

We acknowledge that many Welsh speakers feel that their skills are not sufficient to use in their work. Reference to the ALTE Framework can reduce anxiety by providing reassurance to individuals that they have the exact level of skills required.

If there is no candidate with the level of Welsh skills required for the post, you may appoint an individual who is currently at a lower level provided that they commit to improve their skills. If you do, you must liaise with People Management and Performance to ensure that this is included as a condition of employment and they will assist you in preparing a learning agreement for the person who is appointed.

(vi) Monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Strategy

The Welsh Language Measure (Wales) places a clear focus on monitoring and keeping records and these elements will be part of the Record Keeping language Standards.

The Council will need to demonstrate that the strategy is being implemented and that we are progressing against our vision of being a bilingual employer. We will adopt the following performance indicators:

- *number and percentage of jobs at main reception areas where Welsh is identified as essential and the percentage of those posts filled by Welsh speakers (Level 3 ALTE and above);*
- *number and percentage of staff who can speak Welsh according to division and grade;*

- *number of posts advertised on each ALTE level.*

These indicators will enable organisations to measure the extent to which Welsh language services are available to the public and whether the service is being carefully planned. This data could allow us to measure progress over time and to account for any highlighted recruitment issues.

The Welsh language Commissioner may inquire about these issues at any time and ask for information about progress towards providing services on the basis of equality.

Appendix 1: ALTE Framework

(Applies to both Welsh and English)

Level	Listening / Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	• Able to pronounce place names and personal names correctly. • Able to greet customers at reception or on the phone. • Able to open and close a conversation.	• Able to understand short text about a familiar topic when it is communicated in plain language, e.g. basic signs, simple instructions, includes agendas.	• Able to write personal names, place names, job titles and names of council departments.
2	• Able to understand the core conversation. • Able to receive and understand simple messages on normal patterns, e.g. time and place of a meeting, request to talk with someone. • Able to convey basic information and simple instructions. • Able to open and close conversations and meetings bilingually.	• Able to understand most short reports and instructions within the expertise of work, if there is sufficient time allowed.	• Able to produce a simple short message on paper or email for a colleague within the Council or a familiar colleague outside the Council.
3	• Able to understand and participate in most normal day-to-day conversations in the office. • Able to offer advice to the general public on issues relating to the post. Referring to specialised or technical terms in English. • Able to contribute to a meeting or a presentation on general issues relating to the post; referring to specialised or technical terms in English.	• Able to understand most of the reports, documents and correspondence that would be expected to be discussed in the normal course of work.	• Able to prepare informal messages and reports for internal use.

4	• Able to contribute effectively in internal and external meetings in the context of the work subject. • Able to understand differences in tone and dialect. • Able to argue for and against a particular case. • Able to chair meetings and answer questions confidently.	• Able to understand formal correspondence and reports.	• Able to produce business correspondence, short reports, e-mails and promotional literature with editing assistance.
5	• Able to contribute fluently and confidently with regard to all aspects of daily work, including negotiating and advising on technical, specialised or sensitive areas. • Can contribute to meetings and provide presentations fluently and confidently.	• Able to understand reports, documents and articles linked to the normal course of work, including complex concepts expressed in convoluted language.	• Able to produce business correspondence, short reports, e-mails and promotional literature to an acceptable level with the aid of standard language tools. • Able to draw up detailed notes while taking a full part in the meeting.

Appendix 2: Guidance for Managers on setting linguistic levels

Areas for consideration

- Under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 the Welsh language is an official language in Wales.
- Services provided to Welsh speakers should not be less favourable than services provided in English.
- It is not appropriate to assume that English is the default language in service delivery to consumers. If you provide a service to users who speak Welsh as a family, as a first language or their day to day language, you should assume that they would prefer to speak Welsh.
- Welsh speakers should not have to ask for a service in Welsh. The service should be delivered in accordance with language choice - whether in Welsh or English. This is consistent with the principle of the 'proactive offer' set in the Welsh Government's Framework for the Welsh language in Health, Social Services and Social Care.

This means that you need to ensure an appropriate number of staff who speak Welsh within your team / division.

Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to ensuring that all their staff are able to demonstrate basic linguistic courtesy with service users, and sensitivity to the culture and language of Welsh speakers. A basic linguistic courtesy (Level 1 ALTE) requires the ability to

- Pronounce Welsh names correctly;
- Pronunciation of place names correctly;
- Provide basic greetings;
- Pronounce some simple words and phrases;
- Respond politely to someone who speaks Welsh.

If they do not hold these skills on appointment, staff can be supported by the provision of appropriate training to acquire these competencies - that is, Level 1 Welsh as it is described in the ALTE Framework in Appendix 1.

Posts which require a higher level of Welsh language skills within the ALTE Framework

There are posts within the Council which require a higher level of fluency in spoken Welsh, along with the ability to write fluently in Welsh.

As you consider what level of the ALTE Framework is required for specific posts, please ask yourself the following questions:

- Are we able to offer services in Welsh that are comparable to English medium services in quality, availability, and convenience?
- Will the post holder work with specific groups of people? E.g. young people, older people, with Elected Members?
- Will this post work directly in Education?
- Will the post holder work in a particular geographic area, where there are high numbers or percentages of Welsh speakers?
- Will the post holder be required to make presentations or interviews on behalf of the County Council? Or present regularly to Elected Members?
- Have we received any feedback or complaints about shortcomings in Welsh medium services in the past?

Template for completion within audit of existing posts

Head of Service:	Third Tier Manager:	Department / Division:
Business Unit / Team:		
	Evidence	Action points
What information do you currently hold on the language skills of your team?		
Which of the roles within the team are designated frontline positions?		
Have you received any feedback or complaints about your particular service in terms of the Welsh language?		
Do you hold current versions of every job specification?		

APPENDIX 3

WELSH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT MATRIX

TO BE PREPARED BY LINE MANAGER PRIOR TO ADVERTISING AN EXISTING OR NEW POST AND IN UNDERTAKING AN AUDIT OF CURRENT POSTS

The following matrix provides a guide to help you decide what level of fluency in Welsh is essential for the post.

You should ensure (through recruitment and / or training and development of staff) sufficient capacity within the team to achieve the aim agreed by the Census Working Group:

“To increase the use of the Welsh language within the workplace, and to further increase the bilingual internal administration within the Council with the aim in time of administering mainly through the medium of Welsh.”

This matrix has been developed to identify the level of Welsh language skills required for individual posts. When deciding upon English language skills required, please refer to the ALTE Framework.

POST TITLE:		LOCATION:	
SALARY:		POST NUMBER:	
COMPLETED BY:		DATE OF ASSESSMENT:	

SPOKEN WELSH

1. Does the post have routine contact with members of the public, either face to face or over the phone?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

2. Does the post have routine contact with a specific group of people or work in providing specialist support for groups such as young people, older people or in a care setting?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

3. Does the post have routine contact with Elected Members and individuals from external organisations?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

4. As part of the role, does the post holder directly work or liaise with Educational establishments or provide learning opportunities?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

5. Does the post work in a specific area of the county? If so, what percentage of the community speaks Welsh? Please see details through [TrafodIATH](#). If the post works across the county, please score at the highest percentage.

20 – 30%	31 – 40%	41 – 50%	51 – 60%	61 – 70%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

6. What level of communication with any service user is required in Welsh?

Able to pronounce place names and personal names correctly	Able to understand the core conversation	Able to understand and participate in day to day conversation	Able to contribute effectively in context of work subject A range of situations or discussions	Able to contribute fluently and confidently	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

7. Does the post offer support and guidance to other members of staff within the organisation?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

Overall scoring

Score of 7	Level 1 ALTE
Score of 8 – 14	Level 2 ALTE
Score of 15 – 21	Level 3 ALTE
Score of 22 – 28	Level 4 ALTE
Score of 29 – 35	Level 5 ALTE

Level of Spoken Welsh to be advertised?	
Will accept lower level with commitment to training?	
Confirmed by Head of Service	
Any variation of assessed level? Please note the reasons here	

Date	
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WRITTEN WELSH

1. Does the post prepare routine information such as e-mails, letters, posters and content for social media for members of the public on a regular basis?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

2. Does the post prepare routine information such as e-mails, letters and reports for a specific group of people or work in providing specialist support for groups such as young people, older people or in a care setting?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

3. Does the post prepare routine information such as e-mails, letters and briefing information for Elected Members and individuals from external organisations?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

4. As part of the role, does the post holder directly work or liaise with Educational establishments or provide learning opportunities?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

5. Does the post prepare reports and documents for consideration by the Council and its relevant committees?

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

6. What level of communication with any service user is required in Welsh?

Able to write personal names, place names, job titles and names of depts.	Able to produce a simple short message on paper or email	Able to prepare informal messages and report for internal use	Able to produce business correspondence, short reports etc with editing assistance	Able to produce business correspondence with the aid of standard language tools	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

7. Does the post offer support and guidance to other members of staff within the organisation? (To include preparation of internal information)

1 – 20%	21 - 40%	41 - 60%	61 - 80%	81 – 100%	
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	Score =

Overall scoring

Score of 7	Level 1 ALTE
Score of 8 – 14	Level 2 ALTE
Score of 15 – 21	Level 3 ALTE
Score of 22 – 28	Level 4 ALTE
Score of 29 – 35	Level 5 ALTE

Level of Written Welsh to be advertised?	
Will accept lower level with commitment to training?	
Confirmed by Head of Service	
Any variation of assessed level? Please note the reasons here	
Date	

Appendix 4: Learning and Development opportunities

Course description
Welsh in the Workplace – Community Education Classes (ALTE Level 1 – Level 3) Various locations - Mynediad 1&2; Sylfaen 1&2; Canolradd 1&2 2 hour sessions, once a week for 30 weeks during school terms (excluding school holidays)
Cwrs y Fferi (Griffith Jones Centre) (ALTE Level 1 – Level 3) To help you revise, practice and use your Welsh before the new term starts. There will also be a group available for complete beginners.
Cwrs Carlam (ALTE Level 1) To assist beginners to join the Community Education “Welsh in the Workplace” classes which start in September.
Cwrs Cyfun (ALTE Level 4) (Combined spoken and written Welsh course) Aimed at those wishing to develop technical or specialised vocabulary in their everyday work. The first 4 weeks will focus on advanced, tailored language, familiarising the learner with workplace language specific to their particular needs, both in written and spoken form. The last two weeks are optional and will focus on developing oral or grammar skills. Those attending the course will be expected to furnish the tutor with a list of essential vocabulary/ typical samples of written material (either in English or Welsh) at least a month prior to the course start date.
Spoken Welsh A (ALTE Level 4) (Improvement for Welsh Speakers) If the applicant is a learner - they should have passed the Canolradd exam or GCSE Welsh as a Second Language. If they are a Welsh speaker (they don't need to have a qualification) but feel that they need assistance to develop confidence and to improve their oral skills and terminology. The course is aimed at Welsh speakers who wish to improve their spoken skills. It will enable them to communicate in the workplace more readily through the medium of Welsh.
Spoken Welsh B (ALTE Level 4) (Improvement for Welsh Speakers) The course is aimed at people who have attained a level corresponding to GCSE (Intermediate), whether they are learners or Welsh speakers. It will improve their confidence to use Welsh in an official capacity in the workplace.
Written Welsh (ALTE Level 4/5) The course will be aimed at people who wish to improve their written skills in Welsh. A confident degree of spoken Welsh is expected and also the ability to produce simple texts correctly.

Appendix 5: Action plan

	Action point	Lead officer / division	Completion by:	Progress / evidence:
1.	Compile a list of departments / divisions (prioritised according to contact with the public) in order to complete the audit of current posts	People Management & Performance / Policy & Partnership		
2.	Update job descriptions / information on the Council's recruitment website to reflect the Language Skills Strategy	People Management & Performance		
3.	Prepare and coordinate briefing sessions for Managers on the new Language Skills Strategy	People Management & Performance / Policy & Partnership		
4.	Update Recruitment and Selection information and policies to reflect the new Welsh language Skills Strategy	People Management & Performance		
5.	Update the Helping People to Perform / Evaluation forms to include an update in terms of the Welsh language	Performance and Information Management		
6.	Prepare a prospectus of learning / improvement opportunities	Learning & Development		
7.	Report on the language skills of staff in accordance with the performance indicators set in the Welsh Language Standards	People Management & Performance / Policy & Partnership		
8.	Screen job descriptions to ensure compliance, before posts are advertised	People Management & Performance		

9.	Prepare resource and communications plan for the implementation of the Strategy	People Management & Performance / Policy & Partnership		
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