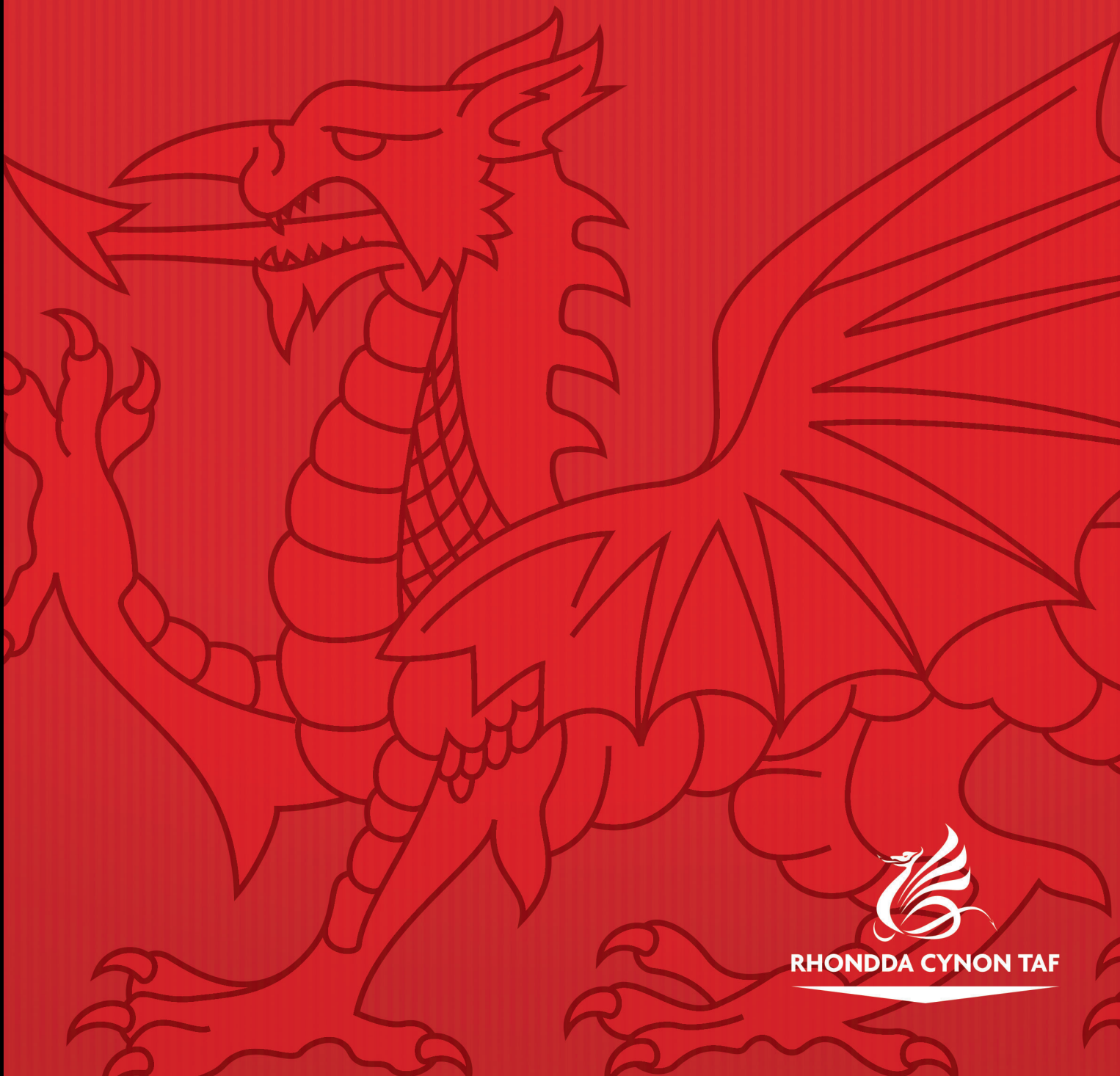


Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

2022 - 2027



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-2027

Promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language
in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Prepared in accordance with the requirements of Standard 145,
The Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

Overview

This is Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 5-year strategy for promoting the Welsh language. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Standard 145 of the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015. It replaces the Council's first promotion strategy covering the period 2017-2022. This new strategy was approved by the Welsh Language Cabinet Sub-Committee on 25 October 2022.

This Strategy explains how the Council will promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area and its implementation will be subject to regular monitoring by the Welsh Language Cabinet Sub-Committee.

Find out more

For further information on this strategy, please contact:

Welsh Language Services welshlanguageofficer@rctcbc.gov.uk

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Introduction by the Cabinet Member

I am pleased to present Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's second Welsh language Promotion Strategy.

This follows on from the 2017-2022 strategy, a period that has presented huge challenges, with the effects of flooding and the Covid-19 pandemic being an integral focus to our efforts as a Council. However, it was also a period that witnessed stability and growth in terms of the Welsh language.

This strategy builds on the work carried out by the Council and our partners to promote and facilitate the use of the language over the last five years. It contains new goals in response to new challenges and needs. It also sits alongside our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 so that we, as a Council, can play a full part in the Welsh Government's vision of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The growth of Welsh-medium education is crucial to increasing the numbers of speakers and the Promotion Strategy will complement our new WESP ensuring opportunities outside school for children and young people to use their Welsh socially and as they continue their journey into the world of work and training.

The Welsh language belongs to all and our residents have expressed their desire for more opportunities to speak and hear the language, and to learn the language within their communities. Therefore, this strategy is designed with the aspirations of our residents at its heart.

Of course, the language has a long and rich history in these valleys for centuries, from welcoming the first National Eisteddfod to Aberdare in 1861, to holding the 2024 National Eisteddfod here in the county. We warmly welcome the rest of Wales to join us in celebrating the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf and all the social, cultural and economic opportunities that it brings. Maintaining the 2024 National Eisteddfod legacy, or Gwaddol, for the future will be key and this strategy plays an important role in ensuring that those opportunities take root and thrive, so that the Welsh language enriches the lives of all residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Councillor Rhys Lewis

Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language

Our Vision

Our vision is to develop Rhondda Cynon Taf into a fully bilingual county. A County Borough where residents are able to live, work and play, as well as access services and support, through the medium of Welsh and English. An area where bilingualism is promoted quite naturally and the Welsh language is protected for future generations to use and enjoy.

The Welsh language belongs to all and we are keen to include those who do not speak the language as we all take pride in it and its history in this area, and its contribution to our culture, economy and identity.

In order to play our part in the national vision of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 it will be necessary to achieve an increase of 5% or more on the 2021 figure of Welsh speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf¹.

Over the next 5 years, we will be working to ensure more and more opportunities to use the language and to hear the language through a variety of activities, reporting regularly on progress.

Realising the vision

Our strategic priorities for delivering the vision align with the Welsh Government's three strategic areas in its Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers. To deliver the Strategy we will adopt an action plan (to be prepared / agreed upon publication of 2021 Census results) with targets covering all the strategic priorities. The action plan will be a live document, and can be adapted easily and regularly, enabling us to be flexible, progressive and responsive in implementing the strategy over the 5 years. We will work with local and national partners to achieve the aims in this Promotion Strategy. **Section 5** provides details how we will put these aims into practice.

¹ We will revise this strategy to ensure greater clarity on this percentage and associated numbers of speakers when the 2021 Census figures are available to us.

Context

The Promotion Strategy exists in a wider policy context in terms of the prosperity of communities and the Welsh language.

The Welsh Language Measure

The production of a 5-year strategy to promote the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a statutory requirement under the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 (Welsh Language Standards 145 and 146). The Council is required to:

- Produce and publish a 5 year strategy explaining how the Council intends to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of Welsh more widely in the area
- Include a target for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the five year period
- Explain what action the Council intends taking to achieve the target.

The Welsh Language Standards as a whole provide a statutory framework to extend the use of the Welsh language by the Council in the following five areas:

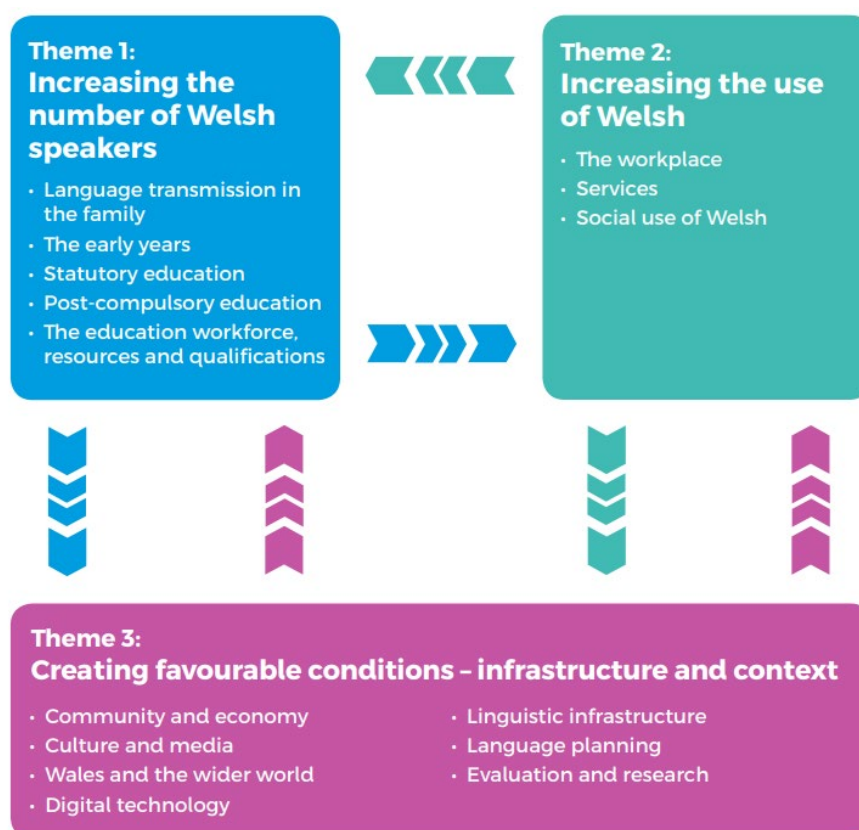
- Service delivery
- Policy making that promotes the Welsh language
- Operating through the medium of Welsh
- Keeping records in relation to the Welsh language
- Promoting the Welsh Language.

Producing a promotion strategy is a requirement under this latter group of standards but the policy making standards are key to the wider context in which the strategy exists. The policy making standards are intended to create opportunities to use the Welsh language and not to treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language in all policy decisions made by the Council.

Assessing the impact of policy decisions can highlight a positive effect on the language that would enable the Council to increase that positive effect. The hope therefore is that this strategy will highlight direct and indirect links and opportunities to other Council policy areas.

Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers

Cymraeg 2050, the Welsh Government's strategy to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050 by promoting and facilitating the Welsh language, is a comprehensive strategy with a long-term vision. It is based on three core themes:



The Rhondda Cynon Taf Promotion Strategy for 2022-2027 outlines what the Council will do to support this vision and we have therefore updated our strategy with the priorities organised according to the three Cymraeg 2050 thematic areas. We will work towards these goals by implementing activities in the three priority areas on a 5-year basis.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032

The production of a Welsh in Education Strategy Plan (WESP) is a statutory requirement, and the aim is to increase the number of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education in the county. The WESP outlines more specifically how the Council will go about increasing the percentage of Year 1 learners in Welsh-medium education by between 8% and 12% which is an increase from 506 learners (in 2019) to a figure between 720 and 825 learners by 2032. This is a direct contribution to the national strategy's long-term target of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Together with this target for the next 10 years, the strategic plan outlines how the Council will go about achieving a number of specific outcomes that include early years, immersion education, better provision for learners with additional learning needs, more informal opportunities for pupils to use the language in school, more learners studying for qualifications in Welsh and increasing the number of staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

The strategic plan also underlines the importance of marketing and promoting Welsh-medium education and bilingualism in Rhondda Cynon Taf as well as working closely with partners.

There is therefore a very close link between the WESP and the Promotion Strategy and in particular with Theme 1 in terms of increasing the number of speakers. In reality the Council will only be able to deliver on this commitment through a strong and ambitious WESP but it is vital that the Promotion Strategy works hand in hand to maximise opportunities to increase take-up. To avoid duplication this strategy will not replicate the CSCA's actions but the CSCA should be seen as the main tool of Theme 1.

More than just words

More than just words is the strategic framework for Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. The original framework was launched in 2012, with an updated framework in 2016. More than Just Words highlights the fact that care and language go hand in hand and that quality of care may be compromised by a failure to communicate with people in their first language. Central to the framework is the principle of the Active Offer, in other words that Welsh language services are offered rather than people having to ask for them.

The Council has steps in place to deliver the framework in terms of its care and social services and is a lead partner on the local More than just words Forum which brings partners together to share good practice and ensure progress with targets.

Well-being of Future Generations

Local Well-being Plans aim to provide a more holistic approach to the planning and delivery of public services in Wales, including a better way of integrating the relevant legislation, duties and frameworks.

The Promotion Strategy plays a core role with the Council's delivery of one of the well-being goals in particular, namely 'A Wales of vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language'. However, it is important to acknowledge that the language is very closely linked to the other well-being goals, as well the importance of partnerships and wider frameworks to this.

Central to Rhondda Cynon Taf's Corporate Plan is **People, Places and Prosperity** and with the well-being aim of a 'vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language' the aim is to provide a focus on ensuring more opportunities for people in the arts and culture; attracting young people to positive experiences in culture and sport and ensuring that there are more opportunities for residents to use the Welsh language. As part of this the Council plans to hold more cultural and sporting events in parks across the borough and plan carefully for the 2024 National Eisteddfod and its legacy. It will promote Rhondda Cynon Taf as a visitor destination and ensure equal access to the Welsh language across all services.

National indicators are linked to the Well-being Act which measure progress in terms of the numbers of Welsh speakers and these data will be key in tracking progress with this strategy:

- Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh (National Indicator 36)
- Number of people who can speak Welsh (National Indicator 37)

Of course, a large number of the other national indicators relating to cohesive communities, prosperity, health, digital inclusion and so on, all play their part in ensuring better opportunities for people to use Welsh in the area.

2024 National Eisteddfod

One of the main highlights of the next 5 years in promoting the Welsh language will be the National Eisteddfod's visit to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024. In order to maximise opportunities for the benefit of our communities in the years leading up to the Eisteddfod in 2024 and maintaining its legacy in the area, we have appointed an Eisteddfod Officer. In conjunction with National Eisteddfod officers and the Chair of the Executive Committee our Officer will co-ordinate a programme of activities to work closely with schools, community groups and the private sector. The aim is to build a long and lasting relationship between the Council and local communities increasing opportunities in the county to learn and use Welsh with more artistic and creative opportunities.

Our residents will be at the centre in all this in becoming volunteers and champions for their areas to help us introduce the Eisteddfod to all parts of the county and to feel a valuable part of their local communities. We hope to maintain the enthusiasm beyond 2024 and continue to celebrate and promote the history, culture and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf which in turn will boost tourism and the local economy.

The Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf

A community of communities

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough covers a very wide area – the county extends from the Brecon Beacons in the north to the outskirts of Cardiff in the south. Within the county are the three distinct areas of Taff Ely, Cynon and Rhondda. Although there is very little distance between them as the crow flight, the three areas are independent and very different from each other, a mixture of urban, part urban and rural areas.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is the third largest local authority in Wales in terms of population (241,873 as estimated by the Government in 2020), and according to Government figures, Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of the most deprived counties in Wales and a high number of areas within the county – mainly north and mid – are among the 10% most deprived areas in Wales. This presents fundamental challenges for the local authority in terms of the health, wellbeing, employment and skills of its people.

There are 6 towns in the county and 62 villages, although some of those villages have a more urban nature. There are two large towns in the county: Aberdare and Pontypridd with around 30,000 residents each, and these two towns have seen major investment in terms of construction, structure and community developments.

According to StatsWales, based on 2018 figures, the population of Rhondda Cynon Taf is projected to increase to 248,098 by 2032. The challenge for the county in growing the number of Welsh speakers is the fact that a reduction in the birth rate is projected (for example there are an estimated 2,831 5-year olds in the county in 2021, falling to 2,621 5-year olds by 2032).

Welsh Speakers

According to 2011 Census figures, the county had **27,779** Welsh speakers, representing **12.3%** of the population but we will have to wait a while yet until the 2021 Census figures are available in order to gain a clear picture of progress and those areas we will need to address, updating this strategy accordingly.

The map that follows provides a more visual picture of where Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh speakers are according to the 2011 Census figures by ward. The darker red areas indicate a higher number of Welsh speakers than the light areas. There are 14 wards out of the 36 with higher percentages than the county average (12.3%) of Welsh speakers with larger clusters of communities and higher percentages in the south of the county, while there are pockets of higher percentages in the northern communities of the County.

Table: Welsh language skills
KS207WA0014 (Can speak, read and write Welsh)



Map created by Hywel Jones. Variables KS208WA0022-27 corrected

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Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is a major employer in the area and is committed to ensuring opportunities for the whole workforce to develop awareness of the language, to learn it and to improve their Welsh language skills. This is also a direct way for us to play our part in increasing the numbers of our Welsh speakers.

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Council staff – Welsh language skills (figures do not include staff working in schools)	2017-2018	2020-2021
No Welsh language skills	66.99%	44.40%
Level 1 Skills	22.12%	39.64%
Fluent	5.69%	8.69%

(there has also been an increase in all other levels, 2-5)

Although increasing the Welsh language skills of the workforce is covered by the requirements of other standards under the Welsh Language Standards Regulations 2015, it is true to say that this work is key to increasing the number of our speakers and the use of the Welsh language by 2050.

The voice of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents: "learn" "use" "practise"

Between September and October 2021, a public consultation was held with residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf on the development of the new strategy to promote the Welsh language.

Residents were asked what could help them to use their Welsh language more. The most common answer was "more opportunities to use it" (55.6%). 15.7% of respondents said that an "opportunity to learn" would help them use the language, and 10.7% indicated "more confidence". Respondents mentioned identifying which members of staff speak Welsh in shops/cafes/restaurants and "more people to talk to".

Residents were asked where they used Welsh, with 53.4% saying at home and 50% at work.

We asked whether respondents, or someone they knew, would be interested in learning the language or improving their skills. A clear majority (59%) indicated that they, or someone they knew, would be interested in learning or improving skills, with a further 13% indicating "maybe".

In terms of the areas where people would want to see additional Welsh language services, 65.2% of respondents indicated that more Welsh language services were needed in Youth Services. The next most cited departments were Early Years and Tourism and Parks (59.6%) and 55.6% indicated that Sport and Leisure was also in need of increased Welsh language services.

In terms of the areas that would best benefit from these services, the key themes that respondents identified were education, early years and youth services, suggesting that language acquisition as a child and normalising the use of the language for children and young people was vital for respondents. Other responses included the need to give the Welsh language a prominent place as the Council engages with people as well as promoting culture as well as language.

Some of the comments included:

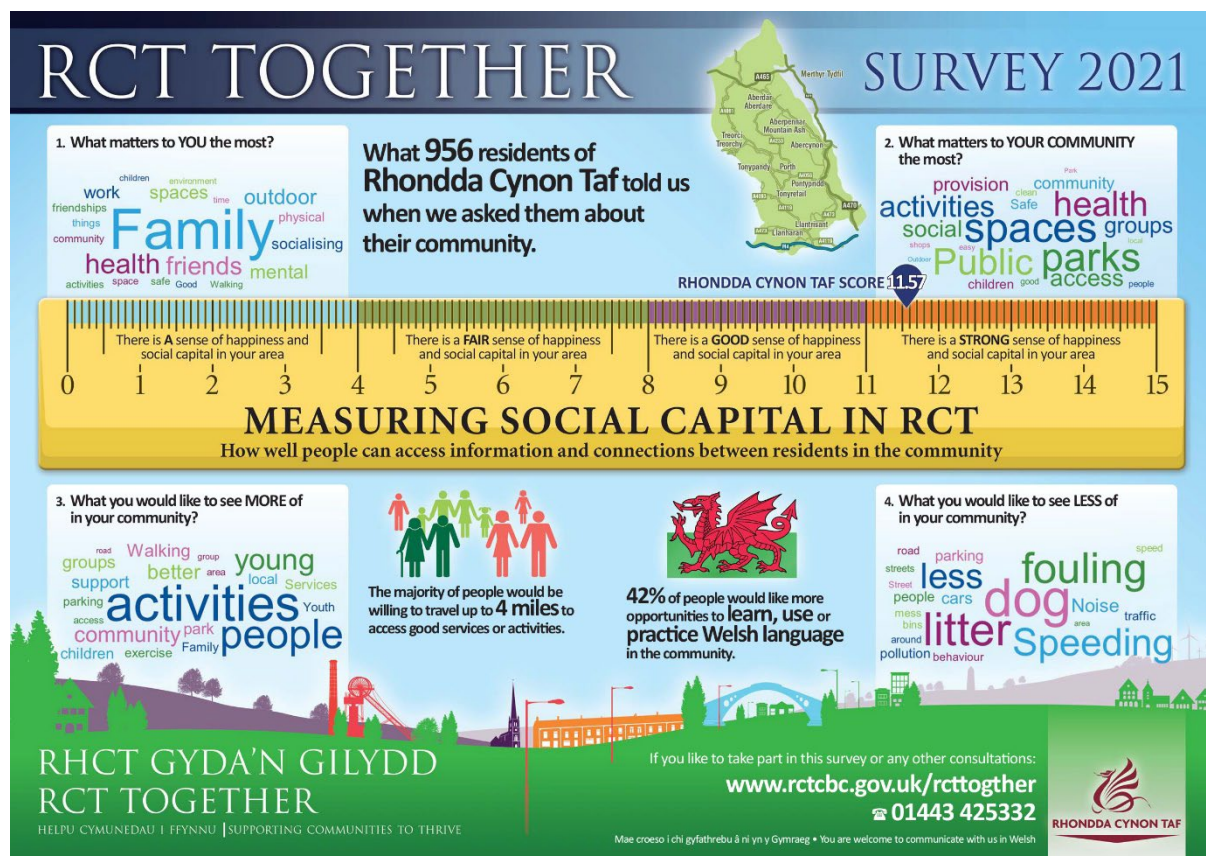
"I don't feel there are enough opportunities to use [Welsh] outside the classroom"

"My local community seems proud to use the language"

When asked how the number of Welsh speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf could be increased, it was noted

- Free or low cost language lessons
- Making Welsh the default language for public services
- Expanding Welsh-medium schools in local areas to reduce the need to travel
- Highlighting the Welsh language in shops and cafes
- Support for parents of pupils in Welsh-medium education
- Embedding the Welsh language in community spaces and activities
- Encouragement for staff and visitors in shops, cafes etc. to use Welsh conversationally.

In another survey conducted in 2021, for RCT Together, the Supporting Communities to Thrive survey, residents were asked what they would like to see more of in their communities. In response to that question, 42% indicated that they wanted to see more opportunities to learn, use or practise the Welsh language in their communities.



Therefore the desire of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents to live in communities where Welsh is part of their everyday lives is clear, and the aim of this strategy is to respond to people's aspirations in the areas concerned. The strategy commits the Council to meeting these demands, which also align with the national vision. In the next section, we explain the thematic foundations of the strategy.

Priority Areas for the Strategy

As noted, our strategy for promoting the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf is based on the desire of our residents to see more opportunities to learn the language, to practise the language and to use it in their communities.

The strategy is structured around the 3 priority themes of Cymraeg 2050 priority of increasing the number of Welsh speakers; increasing the use of Welsh and creating favourable conditions for the Welsh language.

Theme 1: Increasing the number of Welsh speakers

According to the Government, there are two main methods of achieving a million Welsh speakers:

- transmitting the Welsh language from one generation to the next within the family
- developing and maintain skills through education and training, from early years to Welsh language provision for adults.

We acknowledge the important contribution of language transmission in the home but we are also keen to emphasise the key importance of the education system as the main method of creating new Welsh speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This strategy will therefore work alongside our Welsh in Education Strategy Plan for 2022-2032. Together with the WESP and opportunities for people to learn the language in the community, we will organise our activities to meet the national goals within our local context.

1. Language transmission in the family: increasing encouragement and support for families to transmit the language in the home.

2. The early years: expanding Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point into Welsh-medium education.

3. Statutory education: maintaining and strengthening a statutory education system that increases the number of confident Welsh speakers.

4. Post-compulsory education: supporting and promoting provision which increases rates of progression and supports everyone, no matter how fluent they are in Welsh, to develop Welsh language skills for use socially and in the workplace.

5. The education workforce, resource and qualifications: supporting measures to increase and improve:

- the education and training workforce able to teach Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh
- the resources and qualifications needed to support an increase in provision.

Theme 2: Increasing the use of Welsh

We want the use of Welsh to be a routine part of everyday life, so that speakers at all levels feel confident to use it in formal and informal situations. We want to see all learners leaving school with the ability to use Welsh both socially and in the workplace. To support the developments in education, we need to provide opportunities to practise and use the language on a regular basis.

People need opportunities to use Welsh in a variety of situations that reflect the diversity in their lifestyles. Ultimately, the vision is for people use the language at every opportunity, with opportunities available everywhere.

This will involve targeting support in a way which acknowledges the different needs of different people. For example new speakers, or parents/carers without Welsh language skills who send their children to Welsh-medium schools, will have different needs from fluent, confident speakers. Whether Welsh has been part of someone's upbringing, acquired at school or in adulthood, the Welsh language is a language for all, and we will aim to provide opportunities for everyone to use the language.

Aims:

6. The workplace: increasing the use of Welsh in the workplace across all departments of the Council by increasing the confidence and skills of our staff.

7. Services: increasing the range of services offered to Welsh speakers, and increasing the use of Welsh language services.

8. Social use of Welsh: working with our partners locally, supporting the establishment of positive practices in the use of the language, together with formal and informal opportunities to use Welsh socially.

Theme 3: Creating favourable conditions for the Welsh language

To support efforts to increase the number of Welsh speakers and use of the language, we need to create suitable conditions and an environment in which the Welsh language and its speakers can thrive.

The economy is essential to creating the appropriate social conditions to be able to use the Welsh language. While we cannot control every factor which influences economic growth, there are things which we can influence. For example

- the prestige placed on the Welsh language
- public sector jobs in the Council
- ensuring that the Welsh language is seen as a valuable skill
- opportunities to use these skills.

To increase the number of Welsh speakers, raise their confidence, and facilitate the use of Welsh in a variety of settings, we need the support of digital resources, a variety of media, translation services that make the most of the latest language technology and

resources. These are all elements that reflect and maintain the status of Welsh as a living language, and are vital for Welsh speakers at all levels.

For the strategy to succeed, we must share responsibility for language planning with our partners, thereby developing the capacity and expertise in this area and improving the understanding of bilingualism.

Our vision is to see the Welsh language as a normal part of everyday life, with goodwill towards it and more people using it. We want the Welsh language to be relevant for everyone regardless of whether they speak Welsh, English or another language. As part of this, we need to do more to celebrate the Welsh language as a key part of our contemporary culture.

Aims:

9. Community and economy: ensuring that the Welsh language plays a prominent part as the Council supports the socio-economic infrastructure of the Rhondda Cynon Taf area.

10. Culture and media: ensuring that the Welsh language is safeguarded as an integral part of our culture.

11. Wales and the wider world: ensuring that the Welsh language is a central part of our efforts to welcome and integrate people moving to Wales and to Rhondda Cynon Taf. We will seek opportunities to celebrate and engage with our Welsh diaspora.

12. Digital technology: ensuring that the Council plays its part in ensuring that the Welsh language is at the heart of innovation in digital technology to make it possible to use the Welsh language in all digital contexts.

13. Linguistic infrastructure: ensuring that the Welsh language infrastructure (technological provisions and language resources) continues to develop in order to deliver this strategy.

14. Language planning: establishing language planning and promoting the language locally as essential elements of the Council's policy work, with a better understanding of and support for bilingualism and the needs of Welsh speakers.

15. Evaluation and research: continue to build on our evidence and data about the Welsh language and its speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf as a basis for assessing the effectiveness of this strategy and the Council's policy developments in relation to the Welsh language.

Implementation

Although this strategy relates to those areas over which the Council has direct influence, achieving success depends on collaboration in almost all areas. Many of our partners share the same priorities as us and so we will be looking for every opportunity to combine efforts and support others in order to increase opportunities to use Welsh across the borough.

Measuring Impact

In order to be able to measure the effectiveness of our activities, and develop future policies on the basis of evidence, it is essential that we identify key indicators and continue to develop our programme of data analysis and research for the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We will also work with partners to ensure that we understand the impact of all our activities on the growth and use of the Welsh language in the area and gather qualitative and quantitative evidence to track progress.