



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Good Practice Case Study: **Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Welsh Speakers** **Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

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Introduction

In an innovative step to promote bilingualism and strengthen the Welsh language in public services, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has introduced a guaranteed interview scheme for Welsh speakers. This initiative represents a revolutionary change in local government recruitment in Wales, aiming to increase the number of Welsh-speaking employees and ensure equal access to public services in both Welsh and English.

Background and Policy Context

The Council has a recruitment strategy that, in line with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) 2015, requires that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English within the Council's recruitment processes. The Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022–2027 further commits to increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the workforce and the community.

The Council noted that the number of applicants with Welsh language skills was low for vacancies across its departments. The Council had already been offering guaranteed interviews to former members of the Armed Forces, so it decided to adopt a similar scheme to increase the number of staff able to provide services in Welsh on behalf of the Council. The scheme was launched on 31 July 2024 and received special attention during the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd in August 2024.

The scheme forms part of the Council's broader strategy to support Welsh Language Standards in public life and contribute to the Welsh Government's target of one million speakers by 2050.

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme

Under this new scheme, any applicant who can speak Welsh and meets the essential criteria for the job applied for will automatically be offered an interview. This applies to a wide range of roles, not just those where Welsh is essential. One of the main features of the scheme is that it applies to all vacancies within the Council.

The aims of introducing the scheme and guaranteeing interviews for Welsh speakers are:

- To increase the number of staff able to provide services in Welsh;
- To empower less confident Welsh speakers to use the language professionally and as part of their role; and
- To create a workplace that encourages the use of Welsh at all proficiency levels.

When applying for a job, candidates are asked to indicate whether they speak Welsh at Level 3 or above and meet the essential criteria for the specific role to qualify for a guaranteed interview. There is no language test unless the specific role requires advanced language skills. Applicants tick a box on the application form if they wish to apply under this scheme, which commits the individual to using Welsh following appointment to the role.

This scheme addresses the challenge identified by the Welsh Language Commissioner of maintaining Welsh language skills among young people and turning Welsh speakers into long-term users.

Implementation and Compliance

The scheme has been embedded within the Council's wider recruitment and selection framework, which includes a Welsh Language Skills Assessment for every vacancy, clear guidance on language skill levels and their relevance to roles, and integration with the Council's 5-Year Action Plan to promote Welsh.

The aim of the scheme is to increase the number of Welsh speakers within the Council's workforce, ensuring that every team and department contributes to developing a Welsh-speaking workforce across the organisation. The focus is on building individuals' confidence to use Welsh.

Impact of the Scheme

Among the positive effects of the guaranteed interview scheme are increased visibility and status for Welsh within the Council's public services and better representation for Welsh speakers in local government, as well as improved bilingual service provision.

Council data shows a significant increase in applications from individuals with Welsh language skills in the first year of the scheme.

Based on data from the first year since introducing the guaranteed interview scheme:

- Between July 2024 and July 2025, 213 Welsh speakers were appointed by the Council;
- 343 applicants used the scheme, with 177 of them being offered an

- interview;
- During the first year of the scheme, there was a 16.4% increase in the number of Welsh-speaking applicants appointed or offered a job by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council;
 - The range of roles where new Welsh-speaking staff were appointed included library assistants, social services positions, theatre roles, and leisure services (including swimming instructors).

Lessons for Other Organisations

Although the scheme was initially controversial and required thorough preparation before being presented to councillors, the success of its first year has proven that it is possible to increase the use of Welsh in the workplace and encourage Welsh speakers to apply for jobs with the Council, which in turn improves and extends the services provided in Welsh by the Council. It is an innovative, practical, and effective scheme that meets strategic requirements and demonstrates success within its first year of adoption.

Staff and job applicants within the Council are aware that using Welsh is an important factor when considering applying for roles with the Council, and the scheme offers a practical and successful example to other public bodies of how to increase the number of Welsh speakers within the public sector in Wales. This, in turn, has led to greater diversity and inclusion within the Council and strengthened Welsh language services provided by the Council. The approach, though simple, has been effective, with a positive response and showing the potential for other organisations to develop a Welsh-speaking workforce.

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