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OMBWDSMON GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS CYMRU  
PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

# Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2021/22

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September 2022



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**Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.**

**This document is also available in Welsh.**



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# **Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2021/22**



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## Foreword

At PSOW, the Welsh language is integral to who we are and what we do. We want to make sure that people who contact us are aware of their right to receive service in Welsh. We also want to fully support the use of Welsh by our staff – those who already are Welsh speakers and those who are starting on the learning journey.

2021/22 is the first full year of our compliance with all our Welsh language standards. This Report explains how we have promoted and facilitated the use of the Welsh language, ensuring that we have not treated it any less favourably than English in all aspects of our work. We are delighted to report on our successes this year. For example, we expanded the range of software available to our staff in Welsh, translated key sections of our Intranet, and noted an increase in the proportion of our staff who have fairly good or fluent Welsh language skills.

We are accountable for how we comply with the standards to the Welsh public and to the Welsh Language Commissioner. I am pleased that we have had no complaints from the public during the year about how we comply with the standards. As I write these words, the Commissioner's office is conducting a detailed evaluation of our compliance. We are happy to have been selected for that evaluation.

We trust that it will give us an opportunity to demonstrate our good practice as well as to identify ways in which we can improve how we provide services to Welsh language speakers.

However, although we are confident that we comply with the standards, we know that we need to do more. For example, our equality monitoring data consistently shows that only a small proportion of people who complain to us state that Welsh is the main language of their household.



In addition, our national survey, conducted in January 2022, showed that awareness of our office among Welsh speakers dropped slightly to 48%, from 52% in 2020.

I am currently consulting on my Strategic Plan, setting out my ambitions for the office over the next three years. Under the Plan, I propose to place a renewed emphasis on increasing our accessibility and inclusion. As part of that work, we will be exploring new ways to raise awareness of our service among Welsh speakers and will encourage people to use their Welsh language rights.

**Michelle Morris**  
Public Services  
Ombudsman for Wales

September 2022



# Background

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# About Us

We serve the people of Wales in 3 different ways.

Our first role is to handle complaints about maladministration, service failure, or failure to provide a service by most public service providers in Wales, such as:



Local Government



NHS (including GPs and dentists)



Registered Social Landlords



Welsh Government and its sponsored bodies

More information on our process for handling complaints about public bodies in Wales can be found [on our website](#) (also in [Easy Read](#)).

Our second role is to consider complaints that elected members of local authorities have breached their Codes of Conduct, which set out the recognised principles of behaviour that members should follow in public life. In this role, we can consider complaints about:



County and County Borough Councils



Community Councils



Fire Authorities



National Park Authorities

More information on our process for handling complaints about a local authority member's conduct can be found [on our website](#) (also in [Easy Read](#)).

Our third role is to drive systemic improvement of public services. Traditionally, we have done this mainly by publicising our findings, for example in public interest and thematic reports, annual letters to bodies in our jurisdiction and casebooks. However, in 2019 we were given new powers to drive systemic improvement. We can now undertake investigations on our own initiative, even when we have not received a complaint. We can also set complaints standards for public bodies in Wales and monitor their performance in complaint handling.

# Our Welsh Language Duties

Under our Act, we are required to comply with Welsh Language Standards (the Standards). We welcome the use of the Welsh language, and we are committed to the aims of the Standards and to meeting the needs of Welsh speakers.



We agreed with the Welsh Language Commissioner that we would have complied with all but one of our Standards by the end of July 2021. Compliance with Standard 100, which relates to the ability to request annual leave and to record flexible working and absences in Welsh, was extended to 1 April 2022, as this required us to upgrade our human resources IT system. This was introduced in March 2022.

[\*\*You can read the Welsh Language Standards and our compliance notice with our Welsh Language Policy on our website here.\*\*](#)

## Responsibilities

Our Management Team has the overall responsibility for the strategic direction and governance of the office. Our Chief Operating Officer and Director of Improvement ensures that operational management complies with all legal, statutory and good practice guidance requirements of the Standards. Day to day responsibility for the Welsh Language sits within our Improvement Team.

Our Head of Policy, Communications and EDI is responsible for overall policy development and reporting and can be contacted to discuss this report.

All staff receive information about our duties and commitments under the Standards and our Welsh Language Policy and are expected to comply and contribute as relevant and appropriate.

## How we prepared this report

In developing this report, we drew on guidance and advice from the Welsh Language Commissioner. The report was approved by our Management Team on 13 September 2022.

## Compliance with the Standards

At the request of the Welsh Language Commissioner, in August 2022 we completed a self-assessment of a selection of service delivery, policy and operational Standards. The outcomes of that exercise reassured us that we fully comply with the majority of the Standards that we assessed. Only one standard was assessed – related to how we communicated with successful job applicants – and this had a medium level of assurance.

We have not received any complaints regarding our compliance with the Standards during 2021/22. You can find out more about how complaints can be made about our compliance on our website.



# Our performance in 2021/22

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## Service Delivery Standards



If anyone writes to us in Welsh, we will automatically reply in Welsh.



We have 3 members of staff who are available to answer the initial calls in Welsh and work on a rota to ensure cover.



We endeavour to ensure that the Welsh language content always appears first in our social media accounts.



Our complaints services are fully bilingual. We promoted our Welsh language services on 'Shwmae Su'mae' day and on Diwrnod Hawliau'r Gymraeg



We have not received any complaints about Welsh provision of our services in 2021/22.

## Use of our services

Service users expressed the preference to be contacted in Welsh in 1% of all our cases and 1% of our complaints in 2021/22.

## Correspondence (Standards 1-7)

We state in all emails and letter footers that we welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh, that we will respond to correspondence in Welsh, and that corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. We ensure that this happens consistently by including the statement in our standard email and correspondence templates on our casework management system and any emails sent from our 'Outlook' email system.

If anyone writes to us in Welsh, we will automatically reply in Welsh. Our staff have access to instructions on how to make their email signature and out of office replies bilingual, and to a banner to include in their signature if they are able to communicate in writing in Welsh.

## Telephone (Standards 8-22)

All telephone calls are answered bilingually, with the Welsh greeting first. Our automated call answering service is also available in Welsh, and callers have the option to choose to speak in Welsh. The Welsh option is always first.

From April 2021 to end of March 2022, 1% of all callers to our office chose the option to speak in Welsh.

We have 3 members of staff who are available to answer the initial calls in Welsh and work on a rota to ensure cover.

Staff have been instructed to change personal answer phone messages, so they are bilingual. Staff have been provided with instructions and training on how to do this.

In our Intake, Assessment and Investigation Teams we have:

- 3 Welsh speaking Casework Officers
- 1 Welsh speaking Assessment Team Investigation Officer
- 2 Welsh speaking Assistant Investigation Managers
- 4 Welsh speaking Investigation Team Investigation Officers.

People who contact our office to make a complaint and who wish to have their complaint dealt with in Welsh, are allocated a Welsh speaking case officer for them to contact directly. On occasions where people call a direct number regarding a complaint where the person being called does not speak Welsh, we are able to transfer the call to a Welsh speaker to deal with the enquiry.

People who contact direct line numbers for other enquiries, such as for information about a job application or tender, can be transferred to someone who can speak to them in Welsh in as far as someone with the requisite knowledge and skills is able to provide them with the service they require.

## **Meetings (Standards 24 - 32)**

Where we have not had contact and established how a person would want to conduct a meeting, we ascertain which language they would like to use in the meeting.

All larger meetings that we organise we have bilingual and 'Welsh first' publicity, announcements, papers, and we check with the participants whether they would like to use Welsh, in case translation services are needed. An example of relevant meetings was the series of four sounding board meetings that we organised in March 2022 for our stakeholders - local government, local health boards and representative organisations of our users such as advocacy organisations. The participants informed us that they did not require translation services, but we nevertheless invited them to use Welsh during the meeting if they so wished.

We did not hold meetings that were open to the general public in the reporting period. We have not organised any public events during the year.

## Publicity (Standards 33– 72)

Our website is bilingual and we endeavour to ensure that all interfaces and menus are available in Welsh and that there are always direct links from English to corresponding Welsh pages. We have been informed by the Welsh Language Commissioner of a small number of instances where we failed to meet that standard. We will conduct an internal audit of our web pages to ensure that we find and address any shortcomings.

We endeavour to ensure that the Welsh language content always appears first in our social media accounts. During the year, we posted 202 times on Twitter, with many of the posts replicated on LinkedIn and Facebook. In one instance, a post was issued in English only, due to human error.

Currently, our office receives few visitors, but we have these facilities:



Our door greeting is bilingual with the Welsh first.



We display a sign in our reception which welcomes the use of the Welsh language.

All our staff who can speak Welsh are issued with a badge to indicate that they are able to speak to visitors in Welsh. We have 6 staff members who receive visitors and 1 person who is fully fluent and can receive people in Welsh. All other members of staff who work on our reception desk can greet people in Welsh.

## Procurement (Standards 72– 76)

Our Procurement Policy states that that tender applications in Welsh are welcome and that they will not be treated any less favourably than those submitted in English. During 2021/22 we advertised 3 tenders. None of the suppliers submitted a tender application in Welsh.

## Promotion of services (Standards 77 - 80)

Our complaints services are fully bilingual. We promoted our Welsh language services on 'Shwmae Su'mae' day and on Diwrnod Hawliau'r Gymraeg. Our Complaints Standards training is offered in Welsh, English or bilingual delivery. One public body has taken us up on the offer of Welsh language training.

Our logo is bilingual and states the name of our organisation in Welsh first. We have not received any complaints about Welsh provision of our services in 2021/22.





## Policy Making Standards



To ensure compliance with the policy making standards, our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Policy and Procedure includes attention to the Welsh language.



We undertook 11 EIAs of policies in 2021/22. None identified a negative impact on the Welsh language.



As part of our consultation on Principles of Good Administration and 'Good Records Management' guidance, we asked about any possible effects on the Welsh language.

## New or revised policies and procedures (Standards 84 – 86)

To ensure compliance with the policy making standards, we have in place the following arrangements:

- **Welsh Language Policy** – which sets out our duties and commitments with regard to compliance with the policy making standards.
- **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Policy and Procedure** – which includes an assessment of impact on the Welsh language and aims to:
  - anticipate or identify the consequences of a policy on individuals or groups of service users/employees and their use of the Welsh Language;
  - ensure that any negative effects are eliminated or minimised;
  - maximise opportunities for promoting positive effects.

- Policy Control Procedure - which ensures that all our policies are up to date, consistent in presentation, published appropriately, and compliant with our equality and Welsh language duties. The Procedure states explicitly that all our policies must be available in Welsh and in English and that they must be published at the same time in Welsh and in English on our Intranet and the website.
- A dedicated Policy Control Officer – responsible for ensuring that the EIA procedure and the Policy Control Procedure are implemented correctly.
- An internal Equality Group - to provide advice and assistance to policy owners who are developing new or reviewing existing policy on equality matters, including the Welsh language.

In 2021/22, we undertook 11 EIAs of policies. None identified a negative impact on the Welsh language.



## Consultations (Standards 87 - 89)

Between September and November 2021, we consulted on Principles of Good Administration and 'Good Records Management' guidance. The consultation document included the following questions:

- What effects could the guidance have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

## Commissioning research (Standards 91—93)

We have not commissioned or undertaken any research in pursuit of making a policy decision during 2021/22.







## Operational Standards



We have in place a Welsh Language Policy, aligned with our duties under the Standards.



We ask all new colleagues joining us to state whether they would like any correspondence and documents relating to employment, training, performance objectives or career planning in Welsh or English.



All our human resources policies relating to behaviour, health and safety, work place benefits, performance management, absence, working conditions and work patterns are available in Welsh on both our website and intranet site.



14% of our staff said that Welsh was their main language (compared to 12% last year). The proportion of people with fairly good or fluent skills was also higher:



speaking: 27% (compared to 21% last year)



reading: 30% (compared to 24% last year)



writing: 27% (compared to 21% last year)



understanding: 30% (compared to 25% last year)

## Policy for using Welsh internally (Standard 94)

We have in place a [Welsh Language Policy](#), aligned with our duties under the Standards. The policy includes a section clarifying our approach to using Welsh internally. It is available on the Hub/Yr Hwb (our intranet) and our public facing website. The policy is scheduled for review in January 2023.

## Employment documents (Standards 95 - 100)

We ask all new colleagues joining us to state whether they would like any correspondence and documents relating to employment, training, performance objectives or career planning in Welsh or English.

During 2021/22, four new colleagues joined our team. 2 were temporary and were not asked about their language preferences under this standard. We intend to change this moving forward, with all staff being asked their preference. Of the other 2 staff members, one did not have any Welsh language requirements and one only required Welsh spell checker and Welsh interfaces where available (available to all staff).

In the application form, we ask applicants if they would like documentation relating to potential employment in Welsh or English.

We complied with Standard 100 (bilingual annual leave/absences from work process) from mid-March 2022 (due 1 April 2022), once the relevant system was updated.

## Employment policies (Standards 101 - 107)

All our [human resources policies](#) relating to behaviour, health and safety, work place benefits, performance management, absence, working conditions and work patterns are available in Welsh on both our website and intranet site.

## Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures (Standards 108 - 115)

Our arrangements for [grievance](#) and [disciplinary](#) procedures can be undertaken in Welsh. We have not, however, received any grievances in Welsh nor taken disciplinary action in Welsh during 2021/22.

## Technology to facilitate use of Welsh by staff (Standards 116 - 122)

All staff have access to Welsh grammar and spellchecking apps.

We provided all staff with instructions on how to switch language settings for the following:

- Microsoft EDGE
- Microsoft Outlook  
Language proofing
- Microsoft Windows
- Microsoft Office
- HUB (Home page / News page / Policy page)

We have a site on our Intranet which includes information about our translation process, access to Welsh language training, our duties under the standards and other relevant information.

## Staff Welsh language skills (Standard 123)

We undertake an annual survey of our staff and we collect information on the level of Welsh language skills as part of that survey.

In 2021/22, 14% of our staff said that Welsh was their main language (compared to 12% last year). The proportion of people with fairly good or fluent skills was also higher:

- speaking: 27% (compared to 21% last year)
- reading: 30% (compared to 24% last year)
- writing: 27% (compared to 21% last year)
- understanding: 30% (compared to 25% last year)

Whilst we hold and have analysed the data, owing to the small numbers of staff at certain levels or in certain teams, it is not feasible for us to share data relating to Welsh speakers at different grades or in different teams without risking the identification of individuals and the disclosure of personal data.



## **Training and communication support (Standards 124 - 131)**

Attention to the Welsh Language Standards is included in our induction programme (Module 2 – Introduction to the Organisation). Much of our induction material is available in Welsh, though as yet there has been no call to have it delivered in the Welsh language.

We encourage staff to learn Welsh, including in work time, and we support those who wish to continue to improve their Welsh to do so. Training under standard 128 has been arranged for 2022.

We support the use of the Welsh language in meetings and interviews and have secured on-line training in Welsh from our training provider, IHASCO. This includes Health & Safety. We have not provided training on the other elements included under standard 124 (in English or Welsh) during 2021/22.

## **Recruitment (Standards 132 - 136)**

Our Recruitment and Selection Policy confirms that we will not commence the recruitment procedure until the need for Welsh language skills has been assessed and recorded.

We establish the need for Welsh language skills as part of the development of individual job descriptions and person specifications, based on skills shortages and needs within the organisation. We detail the need for Welsh language skills in both the job description and advertisement prior to the vacancy going "live".

We advertise all our vacancies bilingually and the advertisements state that applications may be submitted in Welsh, and that an application submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than an application submitted in English.

All documents published as part of the recruitment pack are published bilingually. Our recruitment forms give applicants an opportunity to indicate whether they would want the recruitment process to be conducted in Welsh.

We are aware that, during the year, one application form on our website, inviting applications from Clinical and Professional Advisers, has not been correctly linked to the Welsh version. We have now amended that error.

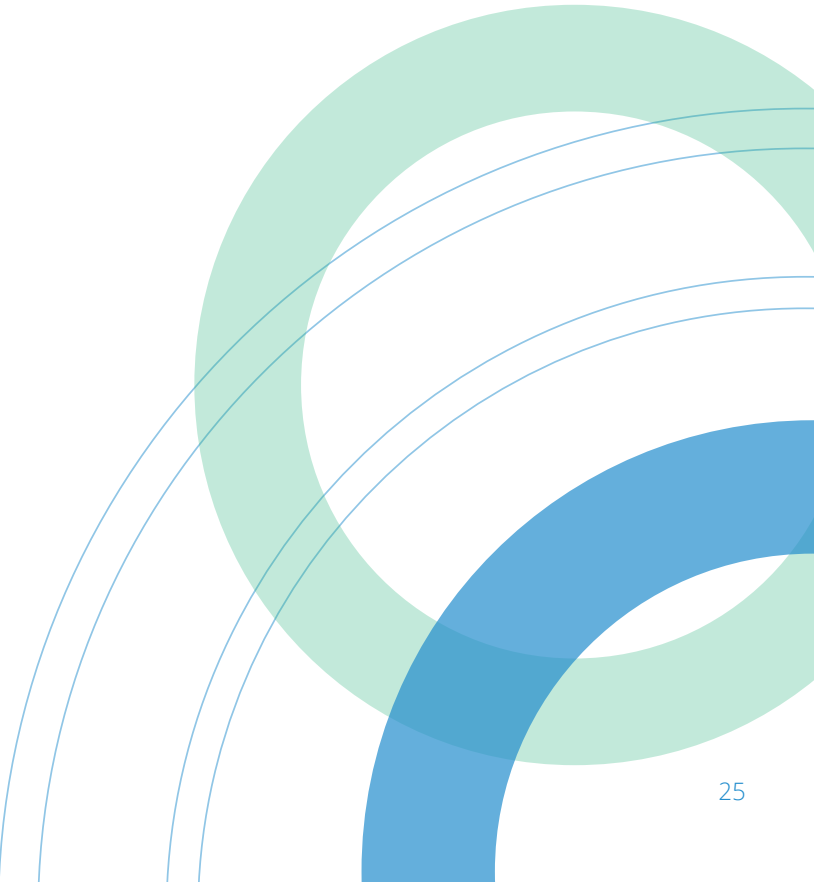




We always seek to communicate with the job applicant in the language of their choice. This includes the 'offer letter'. However, as we telephone the successful applicant to inform them of our decision, we have not always made that call in Welsh to those applicants who preferred Welsh as the language of communication with us. Our HR Business Partner has been alerted to this and will ensure that all such calls will be now made according to the applicant's language preference.

**Signs (Standards 138—139)**

As we rent our offices, we do not have control of the permanent external signs to our office. However, all our new temporary and permanent signs, put up since the introduction of the Standards, are fully compliant.



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