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# Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022/23

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September 2023



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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 2022/23**



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# Foreword

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**I am pleased to publish this annual report outlining our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.**

At PSOW, we embrace the Welsh language and are committed to supporting Welsh speakers. This year, we were glad to work with the Welsh Language Commissioner on her assurance assessment of our compliance. We were grateful for the feedback and pleased that the actions that we needed to take to improve how we work were very limited.

We also took the opportunity this year to revise our Welsh Language Policy, which now states more clearly how we monitor our compliance and what steps we will take to promote the Welsh language.

In another highlight, a slightly higher proportion of our staff told us this year that they have fairly good or fluent Welsh language skills. We welcome this, as it means we are better equipped to offer a Welsh-medium service.

That said, one of the main challenges that we continue to face is the low uptake of our service through the medium of Welsh. This year, less than 1% of our complainants used that option.

We will be actively looking at ways to tackle this trend – from more publicity to gathering evidence directly from Welsh speakers using our service. We are looking forward to taking this work forward under our new Strategic Plan.

**Michelle Morris**

**Public Services  
Ombudsman for Wales**  
September 2023



# Background

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# About us

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**We have three main roles.**



## **We investigate complaints about public services.**

We can look at the services provided by devolved public bodies in Wales such as local councils, Health Boards, social landlords and others. We can also look at complaints about private social care and end-of-life care, as well as some private healthcare.

## **We consider complaints about councillors breaching the Code of Conduct.**

We look at complaints about councillors at local councils, fire authorities, national park authorities. We also look at complaints about police and crime panels. We are also a “prescribed person” under the Public Interest Disclosure Act for raising whistleblowing concerns about breaches of the Code of Conduct by members of local authorities.



## **We drive systemic improvement of public services and standards of conduct in local government in Wales.**

We can investigate on our own initiative, even if we have not received a complaint. We can also set complaints standards for public bodies in Wales, monitor how they handle complaints and provide training to them.



## Our Welsh language duties

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Under our legislation, we must 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.

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

## Responsibilities

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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 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 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

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In developing this report, we drew on guidance and advice from the Welsh Language Commissioner. The report was approved by our Management Team on 15 August 2023.

## Compliance with the Standards

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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 most of the Standards that we assessed. Only one area assessed – related to how we communicated with successful job applicants – had a medium level of assurance.

Following that exercise, the Commissioner undertook further assessment of our compliance with the Standards, as one of the

18 organisations named in the Welsh Language Standards (No. 2) Regulations 2016. Overall, the assessment results were positive, with suggestions for actions in only a few areas. We took action to address the feedback received. We refer to these actions throughout this report.

We have not received any complaints regarding our compliance with the Standards during 2022/23. You can find out more about how complaints can be made about our compliance [on our website here](#).



# Our performance in 2022/23

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# Service delivery standards

## Use of our services

Service users expressed the preference to be contacted in Welsh in less than 1% of our complaints in 2022/23.

## 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.

During 2022/23, less than 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, Public Services Complaints and Code of Conduct Teams we have:

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

People who contact our office 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 will have bilingual and 'Welsh first' publicity, announcements and meeting 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 April 2023 for our stakeholders - local councils, local Health Boards,

housing associations and advice and 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. In another example, during the online launch of our new Strategic Plan in April 2023, we gathered the language preference of the attendees and ensured that simultaneous translation was available.

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 have since addressed the issues raised and have continued to regularly review our website content.

We ensure that the Welsh language content always appears first in our social media accounts. During the year, we posted 194 times on Twitter

in Welsh, with many of the posts replicated on LinkedIn and Facebook. In one instance, pointed out to us by the Welsh Language Commissioner, 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 staff are able to greet people in Welsh.

There are badges available to staff who speak fluent Welsh which indicates that they are able to speak to visitors in Welsh.

## **Procurement (Standards 72– 76)**

Our Procurement Policy states that tender applications in Welsh are welcome and that they will not be treated any less favourably than those submitted in English. During 2022/23, 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 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.

In April 2023, we launched our new logo. The 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 2022/23.



## Policy making standards

### 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. The policy was revised during the year and we consulted on it with the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- [Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\) Policy and Procedure](#) – which includes an assessment of the 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.
- Our 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.

We undertook 11 EIAs of policies in 2022/23. Most identified neutral impact on the Welsh language, reflecting our compliance with Welsh Language Standards. 5 identified positive impact.

## Consultations (Standards 87 - 89)

During the year, we conducted 2 external consultations on:

- Our draft Strategic Plan 2023-2026
- Our proposed next own initiative investigation.

Both consultation documents 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 2022/23.



## Operational standards

### 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 was revised during the year and we consulted on it with the Welsh Language Commissioner.

### Employment documents (Standard 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 2022/23, 14 new colleagues joined our team, 5 of which were temporary. Of the 14 staff members, 11 did not have any Welsh language requirements and 3 only required a 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.

### Employment policies (Standard 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 (Standard 108 - 115)

Our arrangements for [grievance](#) and [disciplinary](#) procedures can be undertaken in Welsh. We have not received any grievances in Welsh nor taken disciplinary action in Welsh during 2022/23.

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

All staff have access to Welsh grammar and spellchecking apps.

All staff have been provided 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 2022/23, 14%\* of our staff said that Welsh was their main language – the same as last year. However, the proportion of people with fairly good or fluent skills was overall higher than last year:

- speaking: 26% (compared to 26% last year)
- reading: 31% (compared to 29% last year)
- writing: 27% (compared to 26% last year)
- understanding: 32% (compared to 30% last year)

\* This figure accounts also for staff on maternity leave and bank workers. As a result, it varies slightly compared to the figure in our Annual Report 2022/23.

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. We supported 8 colleagues to undertake Welsh language training during the year, with many more attending Welsh language awareness courses.

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 2022/23.

### **Recruitment (Standard 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 always seek to communicate with the job applicant in the language of their choice. This includes the 'offer letter'. Following feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner, we also now ensure that calls to notify successful applicants are now made according to the applicant's language preference.

### **Signs (Standard 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 with the Standards.





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