

Welsh Language Policy

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Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

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Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Service Delivery	1
3.	Dealing with the Welsh Speaking Public	1
4.	My Public Face	3
5.	Staff Recruitment	5

1. Introduction

- 1.1 I support the principle established by the Welsh Language Act that, in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality.
- 1.2 I have accordingly produced the following policy, which covers the services that I provide to the public in Wales.
- 1.3 In preparing my policy, I have taken into account guidance about best practice issued by the Welsh Language Board.

2. Service Delivery

- 2.1 **Delivering services:** my normal practice will be to ensure that my service is available to members of the public in Welsh. I will let the public know when services are available in Welsh.
- 2.2 **Standards of quality:** services provided in Welsh and English will be of equal quality and will be provided within the same timescale.
- 2.3 **Actions undertaken on my behalf by third parties:** any agreements or arrangements which I make with third parties will be consistent with this policy.

3. Dealing with the Welsh Speaking Public

3.1 General correspondence

- 3.1.1 My normal practice will be that when someone writes to me in Welsh I will issue a reply in Welsh (if a reply is required). My target time for replying will be the same as for replying to letters written in English.
- 3.1.2 When I initiate correspondence with an individual, group or organisation, I will do so in Welsh when I know that they would prefer to correspond in Welsh.

3.2 Investigation of complaints

- 3.2.1 When someone puts to me their complaint about a public body in Welsh, I will as far as is practicable undertake any resultant investigation in Welsh.

3.2.2 Research by public service ombudsmen has shown that complainants expect a thorough and speedy investigation of their complaints. In order to facilitate a timely investigation, I will request the public body under investigation to conduct correspondence with me in the chosen language of the complainant. This is because invariably such correspondence will need to be forwarded on to the complainant. This request is made to avoid delays by having to commission translations into Welsh or English as the case may be. The vast majority of the bodies within my jurisdiction are subject to the Welsh Language Act and thus required to observe the principle that they treat the Welsh and English languages on an equal basis.

3.3 Standard or circular correspondence

3.3.1 When I send standard or circular correspondence to several recipients in Wales, it will be bilingual unless I know that all recipients would prefer to receive it in Welsh or English only.

3.3.2 Enclosures sent with bilingual letters will be bilingual, when available. Enclosures sent with Welsh letters will be Welsh or bilingual, when available.

3.3.3 The above will apply to e-mail correspondence as well as paper correspondence.

3.3.4 All hard-copy Welsh correspondence that I issue will be signed and Welsh e-mail correspondence that I issue will bear a Welsh (or bilingual) electronic signature.

3.4 Telephone communications

3.4.1 My normal practice is to ensure that the public can speak in Welsh or English when dealing with my office by telephone.

3.4.2 My switchboard staff will answer with a bilingual greeting and my main switchboard will use a bilingual message on its answer phone. If the caller wishes to speak Welsh, my switchboard will try to connect the call to a Welsh speaker qualified to deal with the enquiry.

3.4.3 If a caller rings one of my office's direct lines and wishes to speak Welsh, but the person taking the call cannot do so, they will try to transfer the call to a Welsh speaking colleague qualified to deal with the enquiry.

3.4.4 If no Welsh speaker qualified to deal with the enquiry is available, the caller will be given the choice, as appropriate, of having a Welsh speaker phone back as soon as possible, continuing the call in English or submitting their query in Welsh, by letter or e-mail.

3.5 Public meetings

- 3.5.1 I will make provision for simultaneous translation from Welsh into English at my public meetings unless I have established that all participants are likely to use the same language.
- 3.5.2 Invitations and advertisements for public meetings will be bilingual and either note that translation facilities will be available or invite the public to let me know in advance in which language they wish to speak.
- 3.5.3 I will let those attending public meetings know when translation facilities are available – and encourage contributions in Welsh.
- 3.5.4 My normal practice will be to provide papers and other information for public meetings in Welsh and English – and for reports or papers produced following public meetings to be published in Welsh and English.
- 3.5.5 When selecting staff to attend public meetings, my normal practice will be to ensure that suitably qualified Welsh speakers attend, as necessary.

3.6 Other dealings with the public in Wales

- 3.6.1 When I undertake public surveys, my normal practice will be to ensure that all aspects of communication with the public will be bilingual.
- 3.6.2 Whenever practicable, respondents will be asked if they wish to respond to the survey in Welsh or English.

4. My Public Face

4.1 Publicity campaigns, exhibitions and advertising

- 4.1.1 All of the publicity, public information, exhibition and advertising material I use in Wales will be produced bilingually, or as separate Welsh and English versions. If the Welsh and English versions have to be published separately, both versions will be equal with regard to size, prominence and quality - and both versions will be available simultaneously and will be equally accessible.
- 4.1.2 Any advertisements placed in English language newspapers (or similar material) distributed mainly or wholly in Wales, will be bilingual, or will appear as separate Welsh and English versions (with both versions appearing simultaneously, and being equal with regard to size, prominence and quality). In Welsh language publications advertisements will be in Welsh only.

4.1.3 When staffing exhibitions stands and displays, my normal practice will be to ensure that suitably qualified Welsh speakers attend, as necessary.

4.2 General Publications

4.2.1. My normal practice will be to publish general material made available to the public bilingually, with the Welsh and English versions together in one document.

4.2.2 If the Welsh and English versions have to be published separately (for instance, where a single document would be too lengthy or bulky), both versions will be of equal size and quality - and my normal practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time and are equally accessible. Each version will note clearly that the material is available in the other language.

4.2.3 If not available free of charge, the price of a bilingual document will not be greater than that of a single language publication - and the price of separate, Welsh and English versions will be the same.

4.2.4 The above will also apply to the general publications material made available electronically on my website, on CD Rom or otherwise.

4.3 Website

4.3.1 My website will include pages in both Welsh and English and my normal practice will be to provide Welsh versions of any interactive pages on my website.

4.3.2 When designing a new website, or redeveloping my existing website, I will take into account the Welsh Language Board's guidelines on website design.

4.3.3 Whenever I post English language publications on my website, the Welsh versions will be posted at the same time, if available.

4.3.4 My website will include the text of the investigation reports that I make public. As referred to at section 3.2 above, investigations are conducted in the chosen language of the complainant; the full text of the report posted on the website will, therefore, be in that language. However, in all cases a summary of my public reports will be available in Welsh and English, setting out clearly the points of public interest involved.

4.4 Forms and associated explanatory material

4.4.1 My normal practice will be to ensure that all forms and associated explanatory material for use by the public in Wales will be fully bilingual, with the Welsh and English versions together in one document. This will include interactive forms published on my website.

- 4.4.2 If the Welsh and English versions have to be published separately (for instance, where a single document would be too lengthy or bulky), both versions will be of equal size and quality - and I will ensure that both versions are available at the same time and are equally accessible. Each version will note clearly that the material is available in the other language.
- 4.4.3 When other organisations distribute forms on my behalf, I will ensure that they do so in accordance with the above.

4.5 Corporate identity

- 4.5.1 I have adopted a bilingual corporate identity. My name, contact details, logo, slogans and other standard information will appear in Welsh and English on all material which displays my corporate identity. This includes my stationery - and material such as business cards, identity badges, passes, tickets, acknowledgement cards, compliment slips, and invitations.

4.6 Press releases and contact with the media

- 4.6.1 Press releases to the press and broadcasting media in Wales will be issued in Welsh and English where deadlines permit - or according to the language preference of the recipient media organisation or publication.
- 4.6.2 When press releases are posted on my website, the normal practice will be to post them in Welsh and English.
- 4.6.3 Where possible, I will ensure that Welsh speakers are available to undertake interviews with the Welsh language press and broadcasting media.

5. Staff Recruitment

- 5.1 In order that I may deliver my service in Welsh, I will need to employ sufficient and appropriately skilled Welsh speaking staff.
- 5.2 I will identify those jobs where the ability to speak Welsh is essential. This requirement may be defined as a component of a team, or it may be attached to a particular job.
- 5.3 From time to time, I will undertake audits to establish the number, ability and level of staff that can speak, read and write Welsh (including staff that are learning Welsh).

- 5.4 The results of the above two exercises will be compared to identify those areas where there is a shortage of Welsh speaking staff. I will respond to any shortages through my recruitment. I will also consider the possibility of transferring staff able to speak Welsh to fill those posts where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable or essential. When fluency in Welsh is considered to be essential this will be stated in job competencies and advertisements.

- 5.5 When recruiting, staff recruitment advertisements placed in English language newspapers (or similar media) distributed mainly or wholly in Wales, will be bilingual, or appear as separate Welsh and English versions. The Welsh and English versions will be equal in terms of format, size, quality and prominence – whether produced as a single bilingual version, or as separate Welsh and English notices. Advertisements will be in Welsh in Welsh language publications. In the English language media, posts where the ability to speak Welsh is essential may be advertised in Welsh, with a brief description in English. Recruitment advertisements placed in English language journals (and other publications) with a UK-wide distribution may be in English, unless the post is one where the ability to speak Welsh is essential, in which case the notice may be fully bilingual, or in Welsh with a brief explanation in English.

- 5.6 Where Welsh is not an essential requirement for a post, preference will nevertheless be given to a Welsh speaker as between candidates of equal ability and relevant experience.

**Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
(Originally published: July 2006; latest review: December 2011)**
