

Welsh Language Standards report

25 January 2017 – 31 March 2017



1. Introduction

A compliance notice was issued to Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) by the Welsh Language Commissioner on 25 July 2016.

This compliance notice outlined WCVA's duty to meet 147 of the statutory Welsh Language Standards established by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This Measure gave equal status to Welsh and English so that Welsh cannot be treated less favourably than English.

The introduction of the Welsh Language Standards is designed to ensure that those in Wales who wish to live their lives in Welsh can do by obliging public bodies and some third sector organisations, to deliver their services in Welsh.

The Welsh Language Standards require WCVA to present an annual report, in relation to each financial year, that deals with the way that it has complied with the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards. Provision is also included within the Standards concerning publishing and publicity of the Annual Report. This Report sets out the WCVA's progress towards complying with the Standards from 25 January 2017 to 31 March 2017.

WCVA believes that it is responding to the Standards in a positive manner. Staff have received Welsh Language Awareness training, as part of their induction to WCVA, for the last ten years. This training was designed and is delivered by the Communications and Public Affairs Manager, who also acts as Welsh Language Officer. Every two years, staff are required to attend a Welsh Language Refresher course, and since December 2016, staff have received further training, and the induction session amended, to include details about the Standards and how to improve working practices accordingly.

WCVA is committed to encouraging all its staff to use the Welsh language skills that they have, and to creating a bilingual working environment where they feel they can use Welsh. Learners and less confident speakers are encouraged to use the language in a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

2. Background

The Standards are a set of legally binding requirements that aim to improve the bilingual service that the people of Wales can expect to receive from a number of public and statutory bodies. WCVA is also included. The Standards clearly set out what our responsibilities are in terms of providing bilingual services, ensuring the Welsh language is not treated any less favourably than the English language.

The Language Standards are divided into five different categories

- Service Delivery
- Policy Making
- Operational
- Record Keeping
- Promotion

WCVA is required to comply with Standards for Service Delivery, Policy Making, Operational, and Record Keeping.

The Standards aim to:

- Make it clear to organisations what their duties are in relation to the Welsh language.
- Make it clearer to Welsh speakers about the services they can expect to receive in Welsh.
- Make Welsh language services more consistent and improve their quality.

The Commissioner carried out a Standards investigation in relation to WCVA between 17 November, 2014 and 6 February, 2015. A RIA was also completed at the same time, for Welsh Government. A Standards report outlining the conclusions of the investigation was produced for Welsh Ministers in May 2015. The full response from Welsh Ministers was published in October 2015, together with a proposed timetable for introducing Standards.

The Welsh Language Commissioner wrote to us in January 2016 after the Welsh Language Standards (No. 2) Regulations 2016 were laid before the National Assembly for Wales on 18 December 2015 to invite us to a briefing session to provide detailed guidance on the expectations and arrangements prior to compliance notices being issued under Part 4, Chapter 6 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The briefing session was held during February 2016.

The first part of the form includes comments where the Commissioner wishes to receive further information and/or evidence in relation to specific standards. The second part of the form includes a space for you to note if you are of the opinion that one or more of the standards included within this notice is unreasonable and/or disproportionate.

WCVA received its draft Standards Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 31 March, 2016. This was the beginning of a consultation period (until 26 May, 2016). There were two parts to the consultation: the first part dealt with where the Commissioner wanted to receive further information and evidence in relation to specific Standards (nine in total); and the second part was an opportunity for us to note if we were of the opinion that one or more of the Standards included were unreasonable or disproportionate.

We responded positively and made representations regarding 14 Standards. Following meetings with the Commissioner's staff, we received the final Standards Compliance Notice on 25 July, 2016, with acknowledgment that nine Standards were now not being imposed; three Standards given additional time for compliance; and the remaining two Standards amended according to our requests.

3. Welsh Language Officer role

To support WCVA in implementing the Standards, the Communications and Public Affairs Manager was given additional time to lead this work across the organisation. This made a difference to the progress we were able to make in meeting the Standards.

During the six months prior to the Imposition Date, 25 January, 2016, for most of the Standards, the Communications and Public Affairs Manager worked with teams and managers across the organisation putting procedures in place to help staff understand their role in assisting WCVA meet the Standards.

Staff were required to attend training sessions and desktop guidance notes were produced to assist with compliance. The main elements of the guidance notes dealt with the practical day-to-day implications of working to meet the Standards, such as how to answer the telephone; how to arrange meetings, talking the participants language choice into consideration; and recording the language choice of our members and contacts.

4. Vision for Welsh Language

WCVA's Welsh Language Scheme is still a working document which outlines the organisation's commitment to the Welsh language. We are working on a plan to develop our work with CVCs, which should be ready by December 2017. Part of this work involves developing a training package for CVCs.

In November 2015, WCVA and the Welsh Language Commissioner signed a Memorandum of Understanding, and the accompanying action plan sets out joint working for each financial year. This work includes co-hosting learning opportunities, and looking for opportunities to promote WCVA's and the Commissioner's work at national events.

We are looking at developing a Welsh language learning programme for our staff. We have previously supported staff to learn Welsh, by paying for the course and also giving staff the time to attend sessions.

5. Developing our Welsh language learning offer

We have arranged for 16 Welsh or bilingual courses and webinars to run on our 2016-17 training programme. From the programme there are five new webinars being delivered through the medium of Welsh on various topics. We are also continuing to work in partnership with the Welsh Language Commissioner, to deliver the *Bilingualism at work course*.

There were 107 responses to our 2016/17 learners survey, 18 through the medium of Welsh, with the majority of respondents preferring Welsh language training, rather than bilingual training. 21 respondents noted that the *finding funding* strand was the most desirable through the medium of Welsh, followed by *Marketing and communications, measuring and evaluating outcomes and public engagement* (all with 17 respondents).

6. Complaints – in accordance with Standard 141

Service Delivery - WCVA is subject to 75 Service Standards. **No complaints have been made relating to WCVA's compliance with the Service Standards.**

Policy Making - WCVA is subject to 16 Policy Making Standards. **No complaints have been made relating to WCVA's compliance with the Policy Making Standards.**

Operational - WCVA is subject to 46 Operational Standards. **No complaints have been made relating to WCVA's compliance with the Operational Standards.**

7. Welsh language skills and learning – in accordance with Standard 145

Welsh language skills of WCVA staff as of 31 March, 2017.

21 staff identify themselves as Welsh speakers

8 staff are learning Welsh

63 staff identify themselves as not having any Welsh language skills

8. Recruitment – in accordance with Standard 148

The number of new and vacant posts advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where -

- (i) Welsh language skills were essential: 1 post
- (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post: 0 posts
- (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable: 3 posts
- (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary: 0 posts

All posts are advertised as either Welsh language skills essential or desirable. Where possible, we explain the level of skills required.

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WCVA welcomes receiving correspondence in Welsh. We will respond to correspondence received in Welsh, in Welsh. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.

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