

# Assessing and recording your staff's language skills



# Introduction

**More than Just Words is the Welsh Government's Strategic Framework for the Welsh Language in Health and Social care. It has been active since April 2013. The aim of More than Just Words is to ensure that the language needs of Welsh speakers are met, to provide Welsh language services for those who need it and to demonstrate that language is an integral aspect of the quality of care, not an "add-on".**

**It aims to ensure a more proactive approach to language choice and need in Wales, placing the responsibility for ensuring appropriate services on the service provider and not on the individual. As an employer or manager you will realise that being able to provide services in Welsh depends wholly on your staff. These resources will enable you to identify what Welsh language skills you already have within your workforce. Sometimes these are hidden through lack of confidence or because no value has been placed on them. This pack aims to help you make effective use of the skills as you would any other workplace skill, for the benefit and well-being of people who use your services.**

# Assessing and recording your staff's language skills

**This resource will support you to assess your staff's Welsh language skills based on the types of communication tasks (reading, writing, speaking, and understanding) which your workforce are able to undertake in Welsh.**

Within this resource you will find a Language Skills Framework that will enable you to be clear about the exact skills levels that you need to refer to when assessing, recruiting and planning the use of your staff's communication skills.

## Guidance charts

Once you have looked through the charts, go through the Language Skills Framework to decide which level of skill is required in terms of speaking, understanding, writing or reading Welsh.

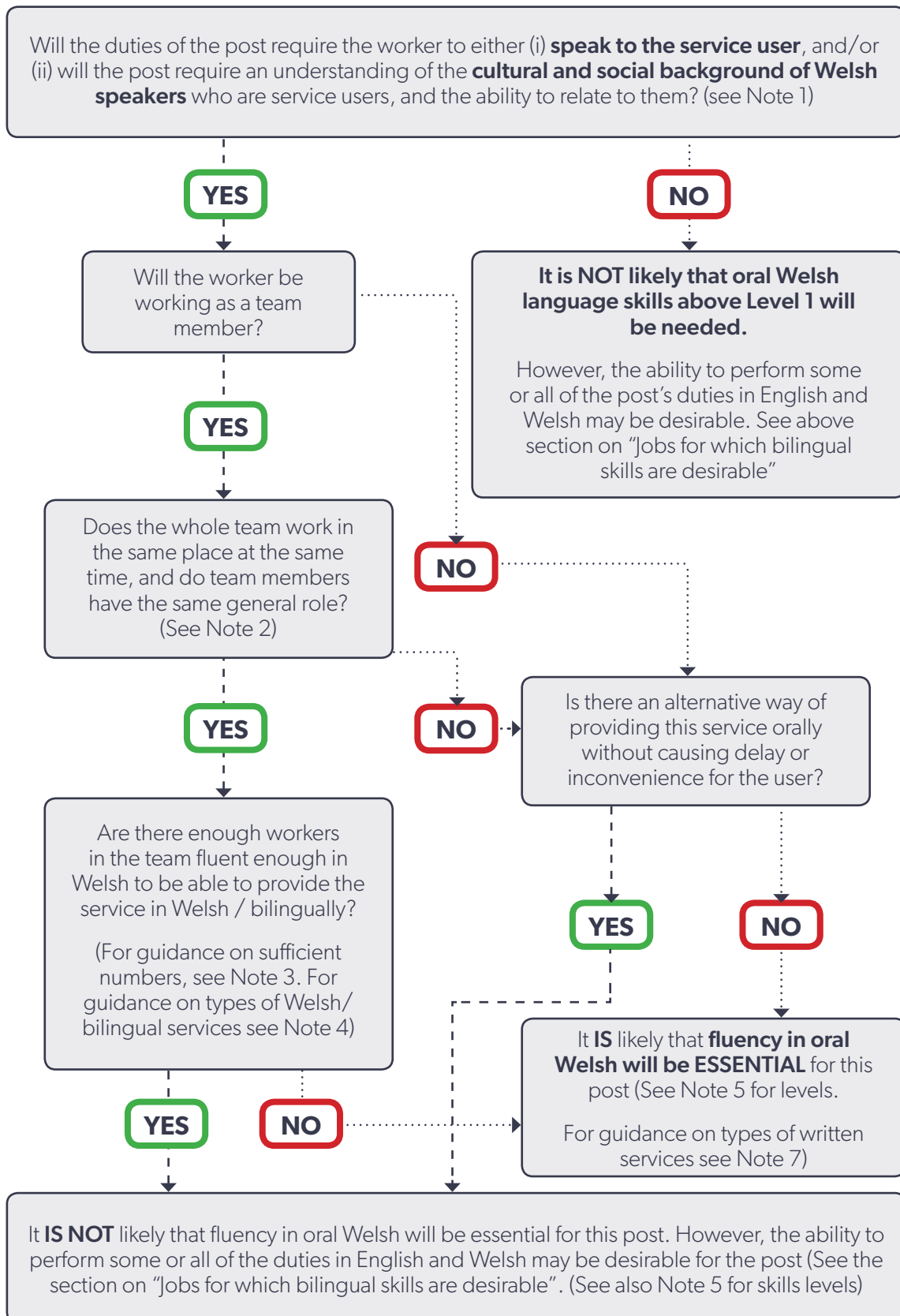
Please remember that this is only a guide. These Frameworks and Flowcharts should not be used in a superficial and mechanistic way to decide which skills are required; consideration must be given to the specific circumstances and requirements of each job.

Discussions should be held with a Human Resources Manager or Service Manager, or other appropriate colleagues, to confirm your conclusions.



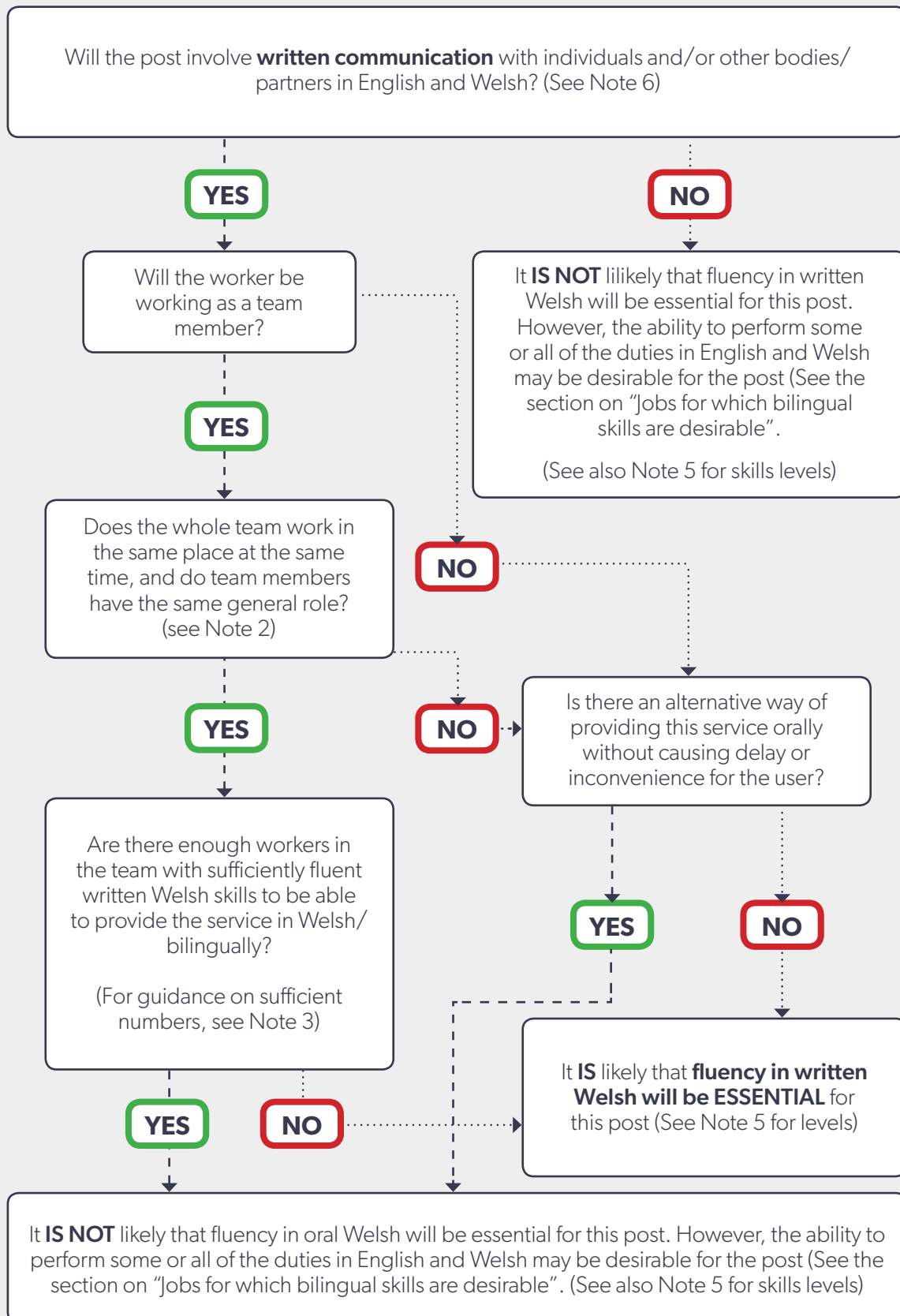
# Oral Welsh Language Skills

Additional information is provided in numbered Notes at the end of this document



# Welsh Language Writing Skills

Additional information is provided in numbered Notes at the end of this document



# What is the skills framework?

The following framework is a series of tables that look more in-depth at the different language levels which range from Level 1 to Level 5.

## Level 1

Can understand basic everyday phrases if the speaker talks slowly and clearly and is willing to help. Can introduce yourself and others and can ask and answer questions regarding basic information, e.g. where someone lives; what they like doing. Can pass on a simple message or make a straightforward request, e.g. via e-mail.

With reference to the WJEC Framework and The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) levels

Level 1	
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> understand simple personal information details; e.g. where someone lives, his/her name, who the person wishes to see</li><li>• <b>Can</b> understand information about basic personal needs; e.g. food, drink, toilet and clothing needs</li></ul>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> pronounce place names and personal names correctly</li><li>• <b>Can</b> greet individuals face to face or over the phone</li><li>• <b>Can</b> open and close a conversation or open and close a meeting</li></ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> read short sentences, e.g. basic signs, simple instructions, agenda items, simple information on forms</li></ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> open and close an e-mail or letter</li><li>• <b>Can</b> write personal names, place names, job titles</li><li>• <b>Can</b> write a simple message to a colleague on paper or e-mail, e.g. such and such has called</li></ul>



## Level 2

Can understand sentences when people talk about everyday situations, e.g. simple personal and family information. Can hold a basic conversation with someone to obtain or exchange straightforward information, e.g. discuss how a person is feeling; something which has happened; a simple plan for the future. Can write and understand messages in letters or e-mails describing familiar issues and written in short sentences.

Level 2	
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand when people speak slowly about everyday situations, e.g. providing personal information, talking about what they have been doing, what they would like to do, how they feel in general</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand when people ask you to do something.</li> </ul>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> communicate simple information or ask common questions, e.g. to acquire information from an individual, carer or colleague, or to ensure the safety of an individual</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> use welsh to get to, and empathise with, the individual, but not able to conduct the entire conversation or session in Welsh</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> hold a short conversation with an individual when providing care or exchanging relatively straightforward information</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> contribute to a meeting, but need to revert to English for specialist terms.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> read short messages and certain letters or e-mails, e.g. those which make a request or ask you to pass on a message.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> write a short message to a colleague asking a question, thanking her/him, explaining something e.g. time and place of a meeting</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> write a short letter or e-mail to arrange an appointment.</li> </ul>

## Level 3

Can understand the main points when an individual or colleague is talking about familiar subjects, e.g. during a conversation or small group meeting. Can hold extended conversations with fluent speakers about familiar subjects involving everyday work. Can describe experiences and events and provide concise explanations and reasons for opinions and plans. Can read articles, letters or e-mails about general subjects. Can write letters or e-mails about most subjects, e.g. requesting something; providing information; inviting somebody or organising an event.



Level 3	
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand individuals and colleagues when exchanging information or discussing plans, if the subject is familiar</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand a discussion at a meeting if the subject is familiar</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand individuals receiving care, carers and colleagues in a familiar situation or in everyday conversation.</li> </ul>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> take part in most conversations with colleagues about work and plans if the vocabulary is not too technical</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> hold a conversation with an individual when providing care or exchanging relatively straightforward information</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> contribute to a meeting, but need to revert to English for specialist terms</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> adapt the style of language to suit the audience.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand most e-mail messages or letters concerning day to day work</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> guess the meaning of a word based on context if the subject is familiar</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> read a simple, straightforward article in a newspaper or magazine types of written material.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand most e-mail messages or letters concerning day to day work</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> guess the meaning of a word based on context if the subject is familiar</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> read a simple, straightforward article in a newspaper or magazine types of written material.</li> </ul>



## Level 4

Can usually follow most conversations or discussions, even on unfamiliar topics, unless the speaker has a strong or unfamiliar accent. Can talk confidently with fluent speakers about familiar subjects relating to work, and can express an opinion, take part in discussion, and talk extensively about general topics, e.g. in meetings or one-to-one situations with individuals or carers. Can understand most correspondence, newspaper articles and reports intended for fluent speakers with the aid of a dictionary and can scan long texts to find details.

Can complete forms and write reports relating to work and respond accurately



Level 4	
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> follow most conversations and discussions with individuals receiving care, carers and colleagues even if the subject matter is unfamiliar</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand differences in register and dialect.</li> </ul>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> contribute effectively to internal and external meetings in a work context</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> converse comfortably with individuals and exchange information as required during assessments, planning etc</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> argue for and against a specific case</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> chair meetings and answer questions from the chair confidently.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> read most correspondence and scan long texts to find details</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand most newspaper articles and reports with the aid of a dictionary</li> <li>• <b>Can</b> understand novels and other texts, unless written in a very formal or colloquial form.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Can</b> produce correspondence of all types, short reports, documents and literature with the support of an editor or electronic aid.</li> </ul>

## Level 5

Can easily understand everything that is being said, including carrying out assessments or undertaking detailed and intensive work with individuals and their families. Can talk extensively about complex issues, presenting difficult information or information of an emotional nature; can facilitate and summarise extended or complex discussions. Can summarise information from different sources (orally and in writing) and present it in a cohesive way. Can express themselves spontaneously, fluently and in detail, adapting the language register to suit the audience.

Level 5	
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> follow all conversations and discussions with individuals, carers and colleagues</li><li>• <b>Can</b> understand the ambiguity and nuance of language when assessing risk in work with vulnerable users.</li></ul>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> express yourself fully and in detail, even when discussing complex issues</li><li>• <b>Can</b> adapt the style and register of your language to suit the audience.</li></ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> read and understand almost all written texts without difficulty, referring to a dictionary occasionally</li><li>• <b>Can</b> read long texts to find relevant details and can understand most types of written material.</li></ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Can</b> write reports, assessments and records in a clear style appropriate to the reader with the support of electronic language aids</li><li>• <b>Can</b> write formal or informal Welsh as required</li><li>• <b>Can</b> write a range of documents accurately and with confidence.</li></ul>



# Notes and References

Here is some additional information. Read through the following notes and references for additional information on the use of Welsh language skills at work.

## Note 1

Speaking to individuals receiving care, for example:

- talking to the individual during the delivery of care
- holding meetings with individuals and their family, individually or in a group
- providing an answer-phone service
- reception duties
- giving talks or presentations to the public or to staff.

You should make the active offer in all of these situations from the first point of contact. Having found out the individual's language need, all interactions should be delivered in that language. Please bear in mind that language need may differ depending on whether the service being offered is an oral or written service.

In all cases, all employees should show basic linguistic courtesy towards individuals and families by offering, and responding to, simple Welsh greetings, and being able to accurately pronounce and record Welsh place names and personal names. This is not simply a matter of courtesy.

The ability to understand, record and communicate place names, personal names and addresses and convey and receive simple instructions with accuracy is essential for providing a safe and effective service. It can be a key factor in ensuring effective communication and establishing good relationships with individuals, as well as ensuring that information is recorded accurately.

The question on the chart also refers to "an understanding of the cultural and social background of Welsh speakers... and the ability to relate to them". Social care services to the personal circumstances of vulnerable individuals and in order to assess needs and respond appropriately, it is vital to understand individuals' cultural backgrounds. The ability to communicate in Welsh with Welsh speakers is a key aspect.

The ability to communicate in Welsh with Welsh speakers is a key component of delivering social care. A lack of understanding may lead to Welsh speaking people's needs not being identified or met and people who access services' dignity and respect is compromised

## Note 2

If team members have:

- similar job descriptions, and broadly the same duties
- similar working hours
- a shared workplace, or if they work from the same location.

They may be considered to have broadly the same role. This can apply, for example, to day care teams, night shift teams, administrative teams, or reception teams.

## Note 3

The key to managing language skills resources on a team basis is to plan ahead with a view to ensuring that the team has sufficient Welsh language capacity for all contact with individuals. When reflecting on the Welsh language skills required for individual jobs and teams, you should try to strike a balance between:

- the staffing situation of the service and the team's capacity
- the amount of contact between the post-holder and the public

On the last point, when considering the area's demographic and linguistic complexion, it is always important to remember:

That relatively low percentages of Welsh speakers can often disguise the fact that numbers are significant;

- Managers should plan to ensure that they have a sufficient number of Welsh speaking staff to meet the language needs of individuals receiving care, and not plan on the basis of their own impression of assumed demand. People who receive care are very unlikely to insist on the provision of a Welsh language service. But by actively making the offer, evidence suggests that many Welsh speakers will choose Welsh language services.
- Service teams will vary in terms of size and the amount and type of contact they have with individuals. If the team works in an area with a significant percentage of Welsh speakers and has considerable contact with the public, one Welsh speaker in the team will be inadequate. If there is only one Welsh speaker, the team will be unable to provide a service of the same standard in Welsh should the sole Welsh speaker be absent due to holidays, illness, maternity, paternity, flexible hours, or some other reason. Similarly, in a medium-sized or large team operating in such an area, 2, 3 or even 4 Welsh speakers may be inadequate. You should seek to ensure that your services are available with equal ease and to the same standard and timescale in both English and Welsh.

## Note 4

If an oral service is arranged beforehand, e.g., an arrangement is made over the phone for an individual or carer to come and talk to one of your staff members, the employee should offer them the choice of conducting the meeting in Welsh or English. Such a choice should be offered at the start of the first conversation as a matter of routine, in an impartial and friendly way, without giving the impression that it would be more convenient to conduct the meeting in English. If the individual then chooses to conduct the meeting in Welsh, the necessary arrangements should be made to ensure that a bilingual worker is available. Arrangements to provide a Welsh language service should not cause any delay or inconvenience to the individual.

As another example, you should ensure that you are able to respond in Welsh to all Welsh language telephone calls, without causing any delay or inconvenience to the caller. The caller usually makes a request for provision, and in such situations the caller will not insist on receiving a Welsh language service if it is not available immediately. In order to respond effectively to telephone calls, you should give callers every opportunity to express themselves in their preferred language. This could be achieved through having a fluent Welsh speaker answer the phone, or having arrangements in place to transfer the call without delay to a bilingual colleague.

## Note 5

Once an assessment has been made to determine whether Welsh language skills will be essential or desirable for the post, it will be necessary to decide the exact level of Welsh language skills required in terms of speaking, writing, reading and understanding Welsh. You can do this by referring to the Language Skills Framework in Section 3.

The Framework offers descriptions of different communication tasks which match different skills levels. For example, if you decide that Welsh language speaking skills are needed for a particular post, look at the Framework for the oral tasks appropriate to the post, and the appropriate level of oral Welsh needed. Levels can vary from the ability to greet and welcome people at reception (minimum of Level 2 or 3), to the ability to hold a detailed conversation or contribute to a care plan meeting (Level 4 or 5). Similarly, if Welsh language writing skills are needed, it will be necessary to decide on the level of writing skills required. This can vary from the ability to write a simple note at reception to the ability to take minutes of sensitive meetings or write reports.

## Note 6

You should seek to take advantage of every opportunity to recruit bilingual workers who are confident enough to write simple pieces of Welsh. This is far more cost-effective than sending work to external translators. When recruiting, you can offer opportunities for the successful candidate to develop skills and confidence in written Welsh.

## Note 7

A written service in Welsh will generally be one of the following:

- instigated by you as an organisation, e.g., correspondence, forms, newsletters or leaflets or responding to a message from an individual, another body or the public, or
- a written record of some kind.

You should ensure (via recruitment and/or staff training and development) that there is sufficient capacity within the team to at least prepare first drafts of these types of Welsh texts as required. It is often not cost-effective to send work to professional translators. It is more cost-effective for you to ensure that your own team has the capacity to write in Welsh.