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**Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for 2023-24**

**Social Care Wales**



**Foreword by the Chief Executive**

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out a legal framework which imposes a duty on Social Care Wales, among other public institutions, to comply with the Standards relating to the Welsh language. I welcome the opportunity that the Welsh Language Standards provide to improve our provision of Welsh language services.

Although we must comply with the standards, our commitment to deliver a service and work environment where neither Welsh or English is treated more favourably than the other is not driven by the standards but by the culture, value and leadership in our organisation shown by all staff at all levels. We are a truly bilingual organisation providing an environment which nurtures and develops staff to learn and improve their bilingual skills.

We welcome contact from our customers in Welsh and English and provide a completely bilingual service across all our work areas.

Through our work, we also promote and influence the importance of language choice for people who use care and support. Our joint [workforce strategy delivery plan and annual report](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy#:~:text=We%20have%20developed%20a%20delivery,be%20seen%20in%20the%20plan.&text=2022%20to%202023-,A%20Healthier%20Wales%3A%20a%20workforce%20strategy%20for%20health%20and%20social,delivery%20plan%202022%20to%202023.), Ymlaen strategy and the Welsh Government’s [‘Mwy na Geiriau’](https://www.gov.wales/more-just-words-welsh-language-plan-health-and-social-care) sets out our work with the social care and early years sector on Welsh language. We have more information on our work on supporting Welsh language for the social care and early years sector on <https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/using-welsh-at-work>

As a national leadership organisation we know how important it is for children, adults, their families and carers to receive care and support in their language of choice.

This report sets out our compliance with the Standards and submits the necessary data for the 2023-24 financial year.

Sue Evans

Chief Executive, Social Care Wales

**Background and the current situation**

In accordance with section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, we received our organisation’s compliance notice in November 2018. The compliance notice notes which standards within the Welsh Language Standards (No. 4) 2016 Regulations states which standards we need to comply with, and this is available on our website. Our Welsh Language Standards came into effect on the 30 May 2018. We are committed to the aims of the Standards and meeting the needs of Welsh speakers.

**Strategic plan**

In 2021 our Board approved our new [Strategic Plan](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-outcomes) for 2022-2027. The Plan ensures that the Welsh language is a central theme to all our work. The Plan states that we are committed to supporting the Programme for Government 2021 - 2026, the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and our responsibilities as a Welsh public service organisation. Our [annual impact reports](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-outcomes/impact-report-2022-to-2023) set out how well we are progressing delivery of on our outcomes.

In addition to this there are other pieces of legislation and policies that guides our Welsh language work. Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers by 2050 articulates the ambition of Welsh Government to see an increase in numbers of Welsh speakers to safeguard our language and make Wales a truly bilingual country. An important part of the vision involves renewing the association between the language and the workplace. Welsh is spoken for cultural, commercial, social and emotional reasons, but it is also a vocational skill – a skill that should be better recognised and utilised.

‘Cymraeg. It belongs to us all’ is the Welsh Government’s strategy on the internal use of the Welsh language. Welsh Government have committed to leading by example by promoting and facilitating increased use of Welsh by its own workforce.

We also have a key role in leading on the implementation of [More than Just words](https://www.gov.wales/more-just-words-welsh-language-plan-health-and-social-care). More than Just words promotes the “active offer” of language choice in the social care sector. Through our work, we also promote and influence the importance of language choice for people who use care and support. We know how important it is for children, adults, their families and carers to receive care and support in their language of choice. <https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/social-care-workers/using-welsh-at-work>

**Accountability**

The Chief Executive is accountable for our successful compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. The responsibility for its successful compliance lies with everyone who contributes to the organisation’s work – the Board, the Chief Executive, and all members of staff. The Director of Improvement and Development has strategic responsibility for ensuring this happens.

All Directors and managers, however, are responsible for implementing those aspects of the Standards which are relevant to their work. They are responsible for making sure that their teams deliver services in both Welsh and English, develop and adopt policies and practices in line with the Standards.

This is our first year of implementing our new strategaeth iaith Gymraeg – the aim of this strategy is to not only comply with the legislative requirement to provide a bilingual service, but also to offer language choice on a routine basis to all those who make contact with us.

Our commitment to a work environment where neither Welsh or English is treated more favourably than the other is not driven by the standards but by the culture, value and leadership in our organisation shown by all staff at all levels. We aspire to providing an environment which nurtures and develops staff to learn and improve their bilingual skills. Our strategy aims to:

* make sure language choice is available in our service delivery for customers and within our internal processes for staff.
* develop our services which respects the Welsh language and culture, and which acknowledges that Welsh speakers have the right to use the language when they are dealing with us
* innovate and create initiatives to promote bilingualism as well as support those developed by the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner to promote, encourage and support more use of Welsh at work

Our strategy focuses on 5 key areas:

1. Leadership
2. Learning
3. Recruitment
4. Technology
5. Customer service

It is also important that we design our internal and external services in order to promote and ease the use of Welsh and treat those who speak it equally with those who speak English. We design our services that give Welsh speakers the confidence to use them in Welsh. As we become a more digitally mature organisation we are making sure that the Welsh language is central to the development of our services from the start. And we use the [Centre of Digital Public Service design standards](https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/guidance-and-standards/digital-service-standards-wales) to support us in designing services that meet the needs of people who use the Welsh language in their everyday lives.

We also link to our work in supporting the sector and the delivery of the aspirations and actions set out in ‘More than Just words’. As a Welsh Government Strategic Framework for the Welsh Language in Health and Social Care its aim is to:

* make sure that the language needs of Welsh speakers are met
* provide Welsh language services for those who need it
* demonstrate that language plays an important part in the quality of care and isn’t seen as an “add-on”.

We are committed to strengthening a bilingual social care and early years and childcare workforce and plan to support the sector to help this to become a reality. A bilingual workforce enables individuals to express themselves, which lets us get to the ‘heart of the matter’ much more eﬀectively and comfortably.

**Monitoring and progress of delivery**

There is regular engagement with our staff and Board members on the expectations in our Welsh language strategy. We provide support to Board Members and staff in implementing the actions across all areas within the organisation.

We have established an internal strategaeth iaith group which has members from across the organisation. The group is Chaired by the Assistant Director of Corporate Services chairs and reports into our Operations group. Our strategaeth iaith group:

* assists in the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards and monitors our compliance;
* assists in developing, reviewing and monitoring internal Welsh Language processes/policies;
* provides support to lead officers on considering what effects new/amended policy decisions would have on the Welsh language;
* identifies and shares good practice and areas of improvement internally
* promotes our commitment to working bilingually with colleagues across the organisation.

Compliance on the Welsh language standards is part of our planning and performance arrangements. On a monthly basis our Operations Group (Assistant Directors) monitors compliance through performance dashboards. Our Leadership Team and the Audit and Risk Committee have responsibility for scrutinising our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards on a quarterly basis.

Welsh language impact assessments against policy standards is considered and scrutinised as part of the approval process by our executive management team.

**Engagement – supporting our staff**

We expect our staff, Board members and anyone who works on our behalf to behave in a way that shows our values <https://socialcare.wales/about/what-we-do>

Training and awareness for staff on supporting our strategaeth iaith is incorporated into our annual corporate training and learning plan. As Members and staff join Social Care Wales, their induction programme includes an awareness session on the Welsh Language Standards which outlines the requirements set out, how all staff are responsible for the delivery of a bilingual service and our ethos as an organisation that supports and promotes the use of the Welsh Language.

Instructions and guidance on compliance with the Standards are available on our internal intranet. This is a reference point and compliance check for staff. Colleagues from the strategaeth iaith and our Strategy, Performance and Risk team, meet with teams across the organisation on an ad hoc basis to provide an overview of the commitments and actions which are required on how to implement the Standards in our day-to-day work.

**Engagement – supporting the social care and early years sector**

This annual report focuses on our compliance with the Welsh language standards. But we know the importance of our work with the social care and early years sector as being able to receive care and support from someone who can speak Welsh language is an important part of receiving dignified, high-quality care.

A couple of examples of our work with the sectors to support Welsh language include:

* organised a series of events and activities as Social Care Wales at the Care Day at the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod. The first of which saw us crown the winner of our annual Caring in Welsh award. The award recognises, celebrates and shares the work of those providing excellent care through the medium of Welsh
* sponsored, as WeCare Wales, a Care Day at the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod. The aim of the day was to promote the importance of being able to receive care and support in Welsh and to attract more Welsh speakers to the care sector
* launched a free online tool to assess Welsh language skills for the social care sector. We worked with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to develop an an online assessment tool to help people find out their Welsh language level in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
* developed a new e-learning module, launched in February 2024, to help people working in social care and early years and childcare learn more about the Welsh language and working bilingually. The Welsh language awareness e-learning module covers the Welsh language, its history and bilingualism. It looks at the practicalities of working bilingually and explains what the law says we must do and why.
* been piloting a new scheme with 20 social care employers in Wales develop Welsh language skills within their organisations. We have worked in partnership with the Welsh Language Commissioner to offer help with workforce planning, to meet the Welsh language needs of people receiving care and support.

More information on our work with the social care and early years sector on Welsh language can be found [here](https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/using-welsh-at-work)

**How we complied with the standards**

**Service delivery standards (Standards 1-82)**

This set of standards states how we are required to use Welsh in different situations so that Welsh speakers can have unhindered access to Welsh-language services. For example, when sending correspondence, calling over the phone, using online or face-to-face services.

We are a bilingual organisation and the services we provide to our customers are available in both English and Welsh - Welsh language provision is not treated less favourably than English language provision.

**Providing a bilingual service**

We display signs in our reception areas which welcomes the use of the Welsh language and all our staff who are able are provided with a badge to indicate that they can speak to visitors in Welsh.

**Telephone**

Initial telephone contact is bilingual, as are all standard letters and forms. The automatic telephone system allows the caller the opportunity to specify their preferred language. All staff provide a bilingual greeting when answering the telephone. If they are unable to provide a service through the medium of Welsh, they will transfer the call to a colleague in their team who can answer queries in Welsh.

**Correspondence**

We state in all emails and letter footers that we welcome correspondence in Welsh, that we will respond to correspondence in Welsh, and that corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay. Anyone who writes to us in Welsh will automatically be replied to in Welsh. Staff have been provided with instruction on how to make their email signature and out of office replies bilingual, and if they are able to communicate in writing in Welsh, have been provided with a banner to include in their signature.

**Meetings**

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

For larger events and meetings all literature such as invitations, notices or booking arrangements are bilingual. Agendas and presentations are also bilingual. Anyone attending public meetings, events, seminars and conferences held by or on behalf of Social Care Wales is welcome to contribute in their preferred language.

**Promotion and content**

All our content, forms, resources or materials available for the public are produced bilingually.

We produce and design content, resources and services that promote and ease the use of Welsh and treat those who speak it equally with those who speak English.

Our websites are fully bilingual. The Welsh and English language versions of content is placed on the website at the same time. All apps that we publish function fully in Welsh. We have social media channels in both Welsh and English on Facebook, LinkedIn, X (previously known as Twitter) and our You Tube channel presents our content in both Welsh and English. All our services that we offer are available in both Welsh and English.

As we design more systems to support our customers, we consider Welsh language user needs and use the Welsh Language Commissioner’s technical guidance to design specifications for a good bilingual user experience.

**Registration**

Our IT system to support the registration and support to the registered social care workforce (<https://socialcare.wales/registration/beth-yw-gccarlein>) allows registered persons to view their information online in the language of their choice. Individuals are welcome to apply to register through the medium of Welsh or English. They can also maintain their registration in the language of their choice. Once logged in their information will appear in their preferred language. They can switch between the English and Welsh screens at any time. All our registration services are available in English and Welsh.

Information about Welsh language ability is held on the Register by collecting information on equality monitoring and it is entirely voluntary for the individual to decide whether to provide this information. The information is published on our [workforce profile website pages](https://socialcare.wales/research-and-data/workforce-reports).

**Our ways of working**

Hybrid working is a way of working for all our staff.

We have revised our guidance to support our staff in this way of working. We have updated our guidance to support staff in holding and facilitating meetings on-line. This includes for example starting and ending meetings bilingually, Welsh speaking groups in workshops etc. as well as encouraging staff to use the corporate branding background which includes the Welsh language logo.

One of the areas of focus for the year has been supporting staff in speaking and hearing Welsh when working in a hybrid way. Teams have been running informal buddy sessions to provide support to colleagues who want to build on their Welsh language skills, Coffi a Chlonc sessions have been held to provide the opportunity for people to use their Welsh and we use our Intranet to promote Welsh cultural awareness around specific days (St Davids Day) and awareness campaigns (Defnyddia dy Gymraeg).

Every year we have an in-person staff conference which is delivered in both Welsh and English – showing our bilingual approach in action.

Zoom is our organisational platform for meetings as it provides a better platform to support simultaneous translation.

**Policy making standards (Standards 82-91)**

In order to comply with the class of Standards regarding policy making, we have undertaken the following actions:

* **Developing or Renewing Policies:** Staff are required to assess the impact that any policy decision may have on people’s ability to use Welsh. In March 2024 we introduced a revised approach to Welsh Language Impact assessment. This approach is based on the Welsh Language Commissioner’s [policy standards guidance](https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/public-organisations/advice-and-support/policy-making-standards). Our impact assessments are a mandatory element of all new project initiation documentation and are reviewed by each Programme Board.
* **Conducting public consultations:** Staff are required to consider the potential impact of a consultation decision on the use of Welsh and must seek the public’s opinion on this impact. In March 2024 we introduced the additional requirements for how we run [consultations](https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/public-organisations/advice-and-support/policy-making-standards) as a result of mandatory guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner
* **Awarding Grants:** All tender documents and quotations refer to our Welsh Language Standards and ask the contractor to state how they will take this into account when working with us. The evaluation matrix provides an opportunity to score against this particular requirement. Specifications specifically mention that contractors may submit their response to a tender or quotation in the Welsh language.

All contracts entered into refer to our Standards and all contractors engaging with the sector are expected to provide bilingual services. It is then the responsibility of the project manager to evaluate whether the supplier has met the requirements of the work specified in the original specification (which would include language requirements). All partners and / or contractors are expected to provide bilingual options when engaging with the sector, and all contracts state this.

* **Conducting research exercises:** Staff have been made aware of the standards in relation on seeking opinion on the use of Welsh in any research work.

**Operational standards (standards 92-139)**

These Standards relate to the use of the Welsh language in how we work within the organisation.

* **Human Resources service available in Welsh:** All staff may receive their Human Resources service in their chosen language, whether that be a service that is face-to-face, via correspondence, over the phone or online. Our internal HR system Ciphr is available bilingually for staff and internal correspondence about terms and conditions is sent bilingually by the HR team.
* **Internet and Policies available in Welsh**: Our documents and records management system (SharePoint) has been integrated within our bilingual intranet and can be used in either Welsh or English. Staff can post messages and responses in both languages. All policies on our intranet policy page are available in English and Welsh.
* **Language Awareness Sessions and Implementing the Standards:** Corporate Inductions sessions are provided to all new staff. The sessions provide an overview of the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and working in a bilingual organisation. During the year we have adapted these sessions so that they also include more detail on the practical application of the Standards. Along with the importance of using the Welsh skills that staff have and opportunities to develop.
* **Opportunities to learn Welsh-language skills:** We encourage staff to learn or improve their Welsh. We provide opportunities for employees during working hours to receive basic Welsh lessons and provide opportunities for employees at all levels to improve their language skills.
* **Role of leadership and role modelling:** We recognise the importance of leading by example in promoting the use of the language and making its importance to the organisation clear. Our staff survey during the year (23/24) shows that 96% of staff saying that we (as an organisation) show a strong bilingual ethos in how we work

**Compliance with Record Keeping Standards (140-148)**

This set of Standards requires us to keep data about the language skills of the workforce, recruitment and the Welsh language, training and complaints.

**What needs to be reported on?**

* **Staff Language Skills:** Number of staff with Welsh Language Skills,
* **Recruiting to vacant posts:** Number of posts advertised during the year which asked for Welsh language skills
* **Training - Learning or Improving Welsh language skills:** Number of staff who attended training courses either to learn or to improve their Welsh language skills
* **Welsh-medium Training Provision:** Number of staff who attended training courses through the medium of Welsh during the year
* **Complaints by members of the public:** Number of complaints received relating to the Welsh language

**Staff Language Skills**

Staff were asked to self-assess their Welsh Language skills in relation to reading, speaking, understanding and writing. 223 staff members completed the questionnaire; at the time we had 236 staff members as at the end of March 2024.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2024** | **2023** |
| Responses | 223 | 203 |
| Numbers of staff | 236 | 218 |

**Reading**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **% 2024** | **2024** | **% 2023** | **2023** |
| No skills | 13% | 29 | 13% | 27 |
| Can read basic words and phrases with understanding | 28% | 62 | 30% | 61 |
| Can read simple materials on everyday topics with understanding e.g. signs, in letters | 11% | 25 | 10% | 20 |
| Can read some routine work-related material with support e.g. dictionary | 7% | 16 | 8% | 16 |
| Can read most work-related material | 10% | 23 | 10% | 21 |
| Full understanding of all work-related material | 30% | 68 | 29% | 58 |

**Speaking**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **% 2024** | **2024** | **% 2023** | **2023** |
| No skills | 11% | 24 | 11% | 22 |
| Can use basic everyday words and phrases e.g. thank you, good morning | 37% | 82 | 38% | 77 |
| Can hold simple work-related conversations | 8% | 18 | 8% | 17 |
| Can hold some work-related conversations | 4% | 10 | 5% | 10 |
| Can hold most work-related conversations | 3% | 7 | 3% | 6 |
| Fluent | 37% | 82 | 35% | 71 |

**Understanding**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **% 2024** | **2024** | **% 2023** | **2023** |
| No skills | 14% | 31 | 14% | 29 |
| Can understand simple key words and sentences | 27% | 61 | 28% | 56 |
| Can understand basic conversations about everyday topics | 11% | 25 | 12% | 24 |
| Can understand routine work-related conversations | 5% | 11 | 5% | 11 |
| Can understand most work-related conversations | 8% | 17 | 8% | 16 |
| Can understand all work-related conversations | 35% | 78 | 33% | 67 |

**Writing**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **% 2024** | **2024** | **% 2023** | **2023** |
| No skills | 34% | 75 | 34% | 70 |
| Can write basic information, e.g. fill in forms | 17% | 38 | 17% | 35 |
| Can write simple work-related correspondence | 6% | 14 | 7% | 14 |
| Can prepare routine work-related material with checking | 6% | 14 | 6% | 13 |
| Can prepare most written work in Welsh | 13% | 28 | 12% | 25 |
| Can prepare written materials for all work-related matters | 24% | 54 | 23% | 46 |

**Recruiting to vacant posts**

The requirements for Welsh for new posts are assessed based on the corporate needs of the organisation and in discussion with line managers. All applicants for all posts are asked about their Welsh language skills and language preferences, including preferences for correspondence and interviews, in our application forms.

During the year 45% of the roles advertised were advertised with Welsh language skills as essential, an increase from 35.6% the previous year, and we received 24 applications in Welsh.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of posts advertised | | | |
| 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 |
| 42 | 88 | 82 | 40 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Advertised as: Welsh Essential | | | |
| 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 |
| 19 | 31 | 28 | 15 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of posts advertised as Welsh desirable | | | |
| 2023/24 | 2022/23 | 2021/22 | 2020/21 |
| 23 | 57 | 54 | 25 |

**Training - Learning or Improving Welsh language skills**

* 9 members of staff have been attending Welsh Language lessons – formally arranged by the organisation.
* We also signpost staff to the courses available in their local area – so that staff can decide what works for them in terms of learning and/or developing their language skills.
* 100% of leadership group have completed the Welcome 1 and Welcome 2 <https://learnwelsh.cymru/work-welsh/work-welsh-courses/work-welsh-taster-courses/>
* 100% of leadership and managers are in the process of completing: [Welsh language awareness | Social Care Wales](https://socialcare.wales/learning-modules/welsh-language-awareness)
* We are now encouraging staff to complete the Welcome 1 and Welcome 2 courses
* We have been encouraging staff to complete the Cymraeg Gwaith 10-hour course
* We have been encouraging our staff to complete the [Welsh language awareness module](https://socialcare.wales/learning-modules/welsh-language-awareness) we have produced for the social care and early years sector
* In 2024/25 the Welsh language on-line training courses will be included within our annual training and learning plan – this will identify those that will be mandatory for staff to complete during the year.

**Welsh-medium Training Provision**

Most training sessions undertaken internally are held bilingually with documentation provided in both languages and Welsh Language groups for discussion or role play.

All health and safety training are conducted via e-learning and are available in Welsh and English.

**Staff consultation**

When running organisation wide staff consultation on key policies we hold sessions in both Welsh and English. We follow the new guidance that has been issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner on running consultations and assessing the impact of policy decisions on our staff.

**Complaints procedure**

The provision of services in Welsh is integrated in our service standards and complaints procedures, with the aim of ensuring that the quality and standard of service through the medium of Welsh is equal to that provided in English.

<https://socialcare.wales/about/what-we-do>

We are committed to monitoring these standards, and their implementation. When we respond to a complaint relating to our service delivery through Welsh, we will inform the complainant that they may refer the matter to the Welsh Language Commissioner if not satisfied. We will record:

• the number of complaints we receive and what area of our work they relate to

• how quickly they were resolved

• what we learned from each one.

We will regularly give this information to our Chief Executive, directors and Board members so they can scrutinise us.

**During the year we didn’t receive any complaints in relation to our Welsh Language services.**

**Conclusions and recommendations**

Although we endeavour to provide a bilingual service at all times and comply with the Standards there are always areas in which we can improve. Below are recommendations that we hope to take forward during the current year:

1. We will take forward Year 2 actions outlined in our Strategaeth Gymraeg and will report on the performance targets we have set for ourselves at the end of the year. The focus for 2024/25 is to look at how we organise ourselves, our contracts, our IT systems and staff to provide Welsh language translation.
2. As we strengthen our approach to developing and designing services in line with the [Digital Standards](https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/guidance-and-standards/digital-service-standards-wales) we will strengthen how we test Welsh language content with users as early as we can and engage with Welsh language users in the testing of these services throughout the agile design approach.
3. We will continue to support staff to enable them to comply with the Welsh Language Standards while hybrid working and support newly appointed members of staff to embed the Standards. We will look at new and innovative ways to continue our bilingual ethos and ensure the Welsh language is ‘seen and heard’ throughout all teams of the organisation.
4. We will be reviewing how well we are implementing our new Welsh Language impact assessments and our consultation approach. This will include how we can assess the impact of policy, practice and projects on the Welsh Language and how we can share good practice and learning across the organisation.
5. The Welsh language standards place a duty on organisations not only to provide Welsh language services but also to promote those services, to ensure that people are aware of them and use them. We will improve the promotion of our Welsh Language services to ensure increased use of the Welsh language.