
A Measure of Success

A summary of
the Welsh Language Commissioner's
2017-18 assurance report



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner



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This is a summary of the 2017-18 assurance report – an annual report that presents the Welsh Language Commissioner’s evidence and opinion about the experiences of Welsh language service users, and how organisations comply with language duties.

There is, by now, irrefutable evidence that standards have led to an improvement in Welsh language services. We should aim to increase the momentum that is building, and the regulatory system, which has formed the basis for this progress, should not be weakened.

The report highlights three main challenges for organisations:

- ensuring that all kinds of Welsh language services are always available;
- taking positive steps so that an increasing number of people choose to use Welsh language services;
- giving detailed and strategic consideration to increasing opportunities to use Welsh, in all decision making and internal operations.



Meri Huws
Welsh Language Commissioner

While users' experiences continue to improve, consistency is needed to build trust that services are always available in Welsh, and that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English

1 Organisations are providing Welsh language services of good quality in a number of areas, with the improvement seen last year maintained or increased

40% of opinion survey respondents believed that opportunities to use Welsh with county councils are increasing, and 42% believed that the opportunities have remained the same. Only 9% believed that opportunities are decreasing



A greeting in Welsh was given by the operator in **89%** of telephone calls



Automated machines offered options in Welsh in **98%** of calls where that method was used



An email in Welsh received a reply in Welsh in **93%** of cases



88% of organisations had a Welsh language corporate identity



100% of self service machines worked fully through the medium of Welsh

2 Welsh language services are not always available, and performance varies across sectors and aspects of service



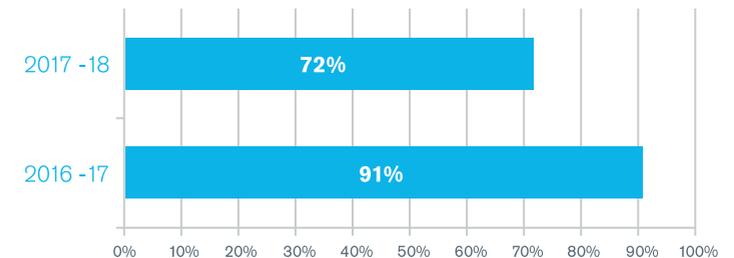
Reception staff were able to deal with a basic enquiry in Welsh in **37%** of cases



Each page tested was available in Welsh on **62%** of apps



Simultaneous translation was available in only **5 of the 10** public meetings attended



72% of opinion survey respondents agreed that they were able to deal with public organisations in Welsh (**91%** in 2016-17)

3 Welsh is sometimes treated less favourably than English in terms of the quality of services



47% of opinion survey respondents agreed that the quality of Welsh language services was as good as English language services



25% of relevant apps that were available in Welsh treated Welsh less favourably than English when publishing material



49% of responses to English correspondence, and only 30% of Welsh responses, included additional information or documentation



Welsh was placed where it was likely to be read first on **67%** of signs

Organisations need to encourage the use of Welsh language services, make them easy to use, and understand the reality of users' experiences

4 People's decisions to use services in Welsh, or not, are influenced by complex factors linked to trust in organisations



32% of Welsh speakers surveyed said that they prefer using Welsh when dealing with public organisations, with **42%** wishing to use English

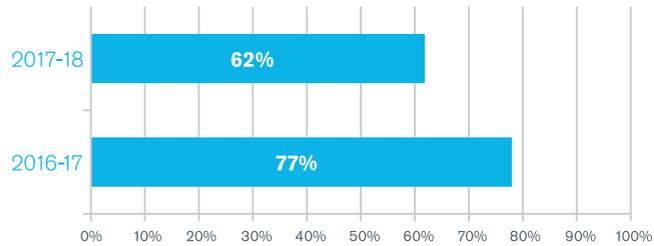


98% agreed that it was important that people had the right to receive services in Welsh (**97%** in 2016-17)

Influences on Welsh speakers' decision to use Welsh or not (user shadowing sessions):

- the language reception staff use amongst themselves;
 - visual cues regarding being able to use Welsh;
 - the language of the music playing whilst waiting in a cue on the telephone;
 - the language, tone, style and accent of a greeting;
 - expectations based on the location and reputation of the organisation;
 - a statement that welcomes communication in Welsh;
 - the accuracy of services on the website;
 - whether or not they had to specifically request a Welsh language service.
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5 Organisations should let people know that good quality services are available in Welsh, and using Welsh language services should be an easy, positive and straightforward experience



62% of opinion survey respondents stated that organisations ask them in which language they wish to be dealt with (**77%** in 2016-17)



61% of respondents stated that they know from which organisations they have a right to receive Welsh language services, and **61%** know which services they have a right to receive



Only **57%** of replies to Welsh emails included a statement that they welcomed correspondence in Welsh and that corresponding in Welsh would not lead to a delay



Callers had to ask for service in Welsh during **19%** of telephone calls

No positive experience **14%** of times when attempting to use Welsh on the telephone



A sign indicating that people are welcome to use Welsh was seen in **60%** of visits to receptions



Welsh speaking members of staff were wearing a badge indicating they speak Welsh in **46%** of visits to receptions



Only for **2 of the 10** public meetings attended had the organisation stated that people were welcome to use Welsh



In only **9%** of official notices was the Welsh text likely to be read first



Only **54%** of self service machines provided an active offer to use Welsh

6 Organisations need to work systematically to gather information on the strengths and weaknesses of their own performance, using complaints as positive means of understanding what sometimes goes wrong



Only **32%** of opinion survey respondents felt that organisations made it clear to them how to complain if they were unhappy with Welsh language services



81% of respondents believed that it was important for them to be able to complain to an independent organisation on issues relating to Welsh



Only **37%** of organisations had published a complaints procedure

Since the introduction of standards, there has been a significant change in the behaviour of organisations as the Commissioner deals with complaints about their compliance, in terms of their cooperation and desire to correct obvious failings.

Organisations need to give strategic and detailed consideration to increasing the use of Welsh when they make policy decisions, and in relation to the language of internal operations

7 It is not evident that the arrangements developed by organisations following the introduction of policy making standards lead to sufficiently detailed, meaningful and strategic impact assessments factors linked to trust in organisations

When making policy decisions, organisations must give detailed and strategic consideration to the Welsh language. The standards require organisations to think about how decisions can have positive effects, and fewer adverse effects, on:

- o opportunities to use Welsh;
- o treating Welsh no less favourably than English.

20 of 26 organisations who took part in a policy decisions study stated that they had included Welsh as a protected characteristic within their equalities impact assessments. It is not evident that this approach leads to sufficiently meaningful impact assessments in relation to the Welsh language, or that it ensures that consideration is given to all the issues required by the Welsh language standards.

In response to questions about considering the Welsh language within consultations, a number of organisations focussed on the language medium of consultation documents rather than what they did to gather opinion about possible impacts on the Welsh language.

Only 3 organisations referred to gathering information about the impact on Welsh when they conduct research to assist policy decisions.

8 The impact on the Welsh language should be considered by organisations when awarding grants, and they should ensure that services provided on their behalf through third party contracts are available in Welsh

 **82%** of organisations published documents on grant applications in Welsh, and **89%** published invitations to tender for contracts in Welsh, without treating Welsh less favourably than the English

 **67%** of organisations offer grant interviews in Welsh, and **67%** offer contract interviews in Welsh

 Only **18%** of organisations had produced (or amended) and published a policy explaining how, when awarding grants, they would consider the effects on the Welsh language, and very little evidence was provided to show that organisations consider the Welsh language when awarding grants

9 Organisations need to have a policy which aims to develop the use of Welsh within the organisation and gain officers' commitment to offering Welsh language services

All 26 organisations who took part in a study looking at the language of internal operations indicated that they enable their employees to use Welsh when participating in meetings regarding complaints, discipline, and development.

22 of the 26 organisations provided examples of policies and other documents available to staff in Welsh.

Every organisation provided spellchecking software, and 18 of the 26 provided computer interfaces in Welsh.

On the whole, the language of internal meetings in organisations is English, with meetings only held in Welsh when all attendees speak Welsh.

Every organisation but one stated that English was the written language of the organisation.

Users' experiences

Quite often people want the service there and then, and that's the priority. People rarely have the energy to complain. This leads to a distorted picture of the reality for ordinary people.

Member of the public in a discussion group

You can now go to the council, and there are people at the front who can talk to you in Welsh, and this has changed since the standards were introduced.

Member of the public in a discussion group

People don't want to ask. Say that it's not available or visible, you don't want to have to start guessing whether there's a Welsh option or not – you just want to get on with it.

Member of the public in a discussion group

The decision to use Welsh or not is often made subconsciously, and we are constantly assessing the likelihood of whether a Welsh language service will be available, therefore organisations need smart ways of demonstrating that the service is available in Welsh.

Member of the public in a discussion group

Successful practice

I've decided that I personally want to see every complaint that the force receives regarding its Welsh language provision. As we start to implement the standards, this is an excellent way for me to understand the reality of the situation.

Jeremy Vaughan, Assistant Chief Constable, South Wales Police

We have established the post of compliance officer with the same status as an officer from within the audit department. The officer conducts mandatory audits with each department individually, driving forward improvements to Welsh language services.

Steffan Gealy, Welsh Language Services Manager, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

We are keen that our customers receive a bilingual service whoever provides it. This is why we've published a document summarising the standards' requirements for third parties who provide services on behalf of the council.

Ffion Gruffudd, Head of Bilingual Cardiff, Cardiff Council

We have started on a 6 year rolling programme of intensive work with individual departments to enable them to work through the medium of Welsh and use Welsh on an informal basis.

Carol Wyn Owen, Policy and Strategy Manager, Anglesey County Council

We collect information on Welsh speaking students and contact them individually to tell them about opportunities to receive Welsh language services.

Llinos Roberts, Head of Corporate Communications and Welsh Language, Coleg Cambria
