
Time to set the standard

A portrayal of Welsh language users' experiences

The Welsh Language Commissioner's Assurance Report 2015-16



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner



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Contents

Foreword	3
Background	5
Part 1: Opportunities to use the Welsh language	7
Part 2: Quality of experiences	36
Part 3: Treating the Welsh language as a skill	53
Appendix 1: Service experience surveys' methodologies	71
Appendix 2: Public organisations included in the service experience surveys	76

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Foreword

People are central to this report - people who either choose or need to use the Welsh language when they as citizens engage with the state. A portrayal is presented here of people's relationship with public organisations - a portrayal based on the real-life experiences of people who have used the Welsh language in common situations during 2015-16. It reveals opportunities and lack of opportunities to access public services through the medium of Welsh.

My aim as Welsh Language Commissioner is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and to make it easier for people to use the language in their everyday lives.

In his first statement on the Welsh language in the Senedd, Alun Davies AM - the Welsh Government's Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language - stated that there was a need to support Welsh speakers across Wales to use the language in a practical way. He also said that it is important to not only offer people opportunities to learn Welsh in every part of the country, but also to develop their confidence and desire to use the language as a matter of course. The Minister identified the need to set a new ambition and to take large steps forward.

This report supports that view and highlights the need for public organisations to step up and deliver good quality public services that will enable Welsh speakers to increase their use of the language in their everyday lives.

In publishing this report, my aim is to help public organisations develop an understanding of the reality faced by those they serve. I hope that the findings will motivate them to channel their efforts effectively into improving the experiences of Welsh language users. To that end, I am eager to facilitate a discussion between organisations on some of the issues which have been highlighted in this report.

Foreword

The way in which Welsh language services are delivered is undergoing a significant change as Welsh language schemes are replaced by Welsh language standards - public organisations must respect the new rights which citizens have to use the Welsh language. Along with my officers, I will invest all my energy in seeking to ensure that it is not only the law that changes - but that people's experiences also change for the better.

Meri Huws

Meri Huws
Welsh Language Commissioner



Background

- 1 At the beginning of a period of significant change in terms of the way in which Welsh language services are delivered, this report asks is Welsh speakers' experience of public services as it should be, or is the experience less favourable when people choose to use the Welsh language?
- 2 Over half a million people in Wales speak the Welsh language, namely one in every five.¹ The 2011 Census showed that a significant number of Welsh speakers live in every corner of Wales - in the urban and populated areas of the south-east such as Cardiff where over 36,000 speak the language and the Rhondda with over 27,000 Welsh speakers, as well as the rural areas of mid and west Wales such as Ceredigion where there are over 34,000 Welsh speakers and Powys where 24,000 speak the language.²
- 3 The Welsh Language Act 1993 (WLA 1993) required public organisations to produce a Welsh language scheme explaining which services they would deliver in Welsh.
- 4 Today, the legislative context has changed. The Welsh language was given official status in Wales for the first time as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (Welsh Language Measure). The role of the Welsh Language Commissioner (the Commissioner) was established to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in order to provide more opportunity and make it easier for people to use the Welsh language in their everyday lives. The Commissioner has a responsibility to ensure that Welsh language service provision increases and improves.
- 5 There are two principles which the Commissioner must consider in ensuring that services are delivered in Welsh³:
 - The Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language in Wales; and
 - Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so.

¹ Census 2011, Office for National Statistics- 562,000 (19.0%) people aged 3 and over say that they are able to speak Welsh

² Census 2011, Office for National Statistics

³ Part 2 (3) Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

Background

- 6 The Welsh Language Measure requires the Commissioner to impose and enforce Welsh language standards. However, the Commissioner has decided to adopt a framework to explain how she will undertake her regulatory duties.⁴ The quality of Welsh language users' experience will be central to the way the Commissioner measures organisations' compliance with their statutory duties. She will adopt various approaches to gather information and will analyse findings to gain a better understanding of the reasons why things are as they are.
- 7 During 2015-16, the Commissioner undertook a series of surveys in order to assess people's experience of using the Welsh language as they seek and use public services.⁵ Reception areas across Wales were visited and telephone calls were made. Correspondence was sent via letter, e-mail or a social media account and tested and face-to-face interviews held with officials from public organisations.⁶ Although the survey findings in this report provide only a snapshot, they report on real life experiences.
- 8 It should be noted that the public organisations under consideration were sampled at a time when they all implemented a Welsh language schemes and performance should be judged on that basis.

⁴ The Welsh Language Commissioner's Regulatory Framework (2016)

⁵ A list of the organisations surveyed can be found in Appendix 2.

⁶ Further details on the methodology used is provided in Appendix 1.

Part 1: Opportunities to use the Welsh language

People who wish to use Welsh language services must often persevere or persuade public organisations to deliver them

More often than not, Welsh language services must be requested - they are not offered proactively as a matter of course

'May I help you' was the greeting I received from a member of staff at reception – even though she managed to answer the enquiry wholly through the medium of Welsh.

I was asked 'You alright there?' even though all the staff (at the reception) were fluent and I received a response in Welsh to my enquiry.



Source: The Commissioner's service experience surveys

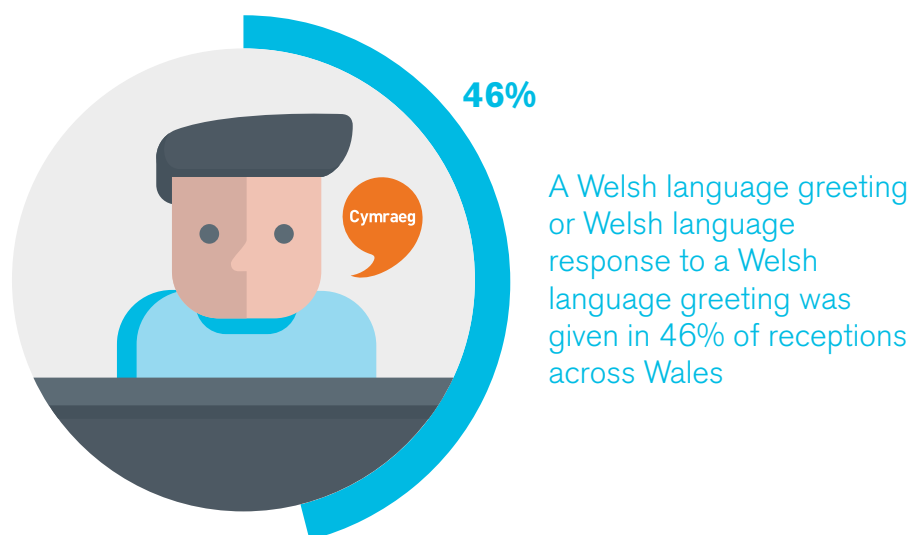
- 1.1 Offering a Welsh language service proactively means offering a service to an individual without them having to ask for it. An organisation that does so has taken the responsibility of having to ask to use the Welsh language from the individual. Also, they do not assume that a person who uses the Welsh language can and is willing to use English.
- 1.2 Often, if language choice is not offered proactively, a service is delivered in the organisation's preferred language rather than the citizen's preferred language.
- 1.3 In providing guidance on the form and content of Welsh language schemes, the Welsh Language Board stated that organisations, in delivering services, should adopt ways of conveying that they offer a language choice and that people are welcome to use the Welsh language. There are simple ways of clearly demonstrating to people that services are available in Welsh, such as using the Welsh language when greeting a visitor at reception or answering the phone. Such a simple act enables an organisation to identify the citizen's language choice and respect that choice by making an active offer to deal with the enquiry in Welsh.

1.4 Since 2012, the Welsh Government has adopted the principle of the active offer for NHS health services and social services and social care delivered by county councils and others in Wales. A strategic framework was published in order to fulfil the principle which states that only by making an active offer can NHS Wales and social services meet the linguistic needs of people and deliver a service which is both safe and effective to patients⁹.

1.5 The service experience surveys undertaken by the Commissioner in 2015-16 identified to what extent Welsh language services were being offered to people without them having to ask for them, in other words, being offered proactively.

1.6 The experiences identified during the Commissioner's survey of reception services suggest that the majority of public organisations have not adopted approaches which give a clear indication to people that their services are available in Welsh. No Welsh language greeting was received in over half of the 432 visits to receptions.

Using reception services: being greeted in Welsh

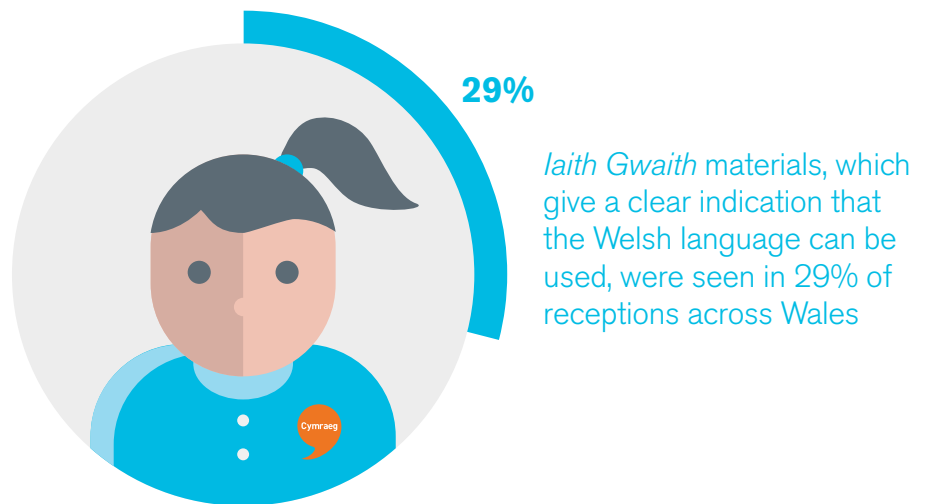


⁹ More than just words..., Follow-on Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care 2016-2019 (2016)

1.7

Placing a sign on a counter or wall or asking a staff member to wear a badge is a simple way of clearly demonstrating that services are available in Welsh. It also gives people confidence that they can use the Welsh language and may encourage its use in the workplace - it is an easy way of promoting the use of the Welsh language. No *laith Gwaith* (Working Welsh) sign was visible in 71% of receptions which is 102 of the 143 visited.⁸

**Using reception services:
visible sign that a Welsh language service is available**



1.8

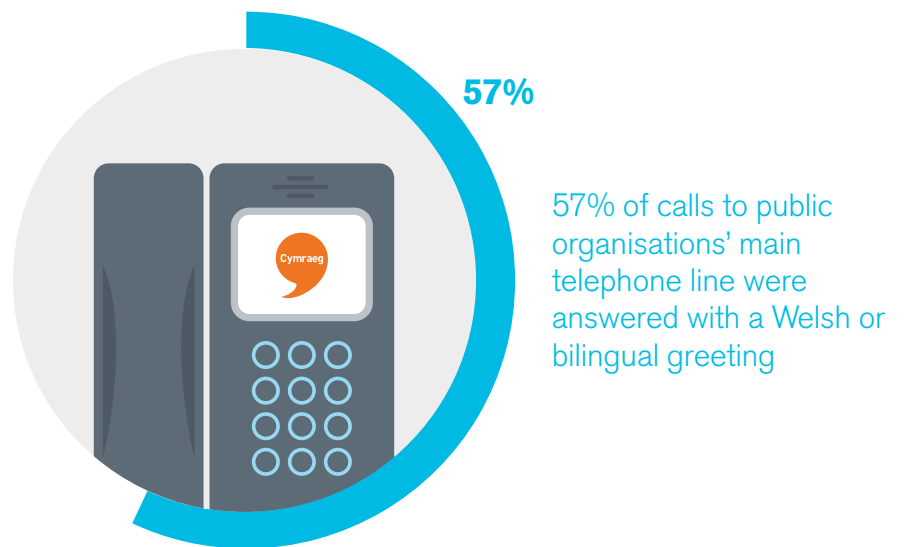
No *laith Gwaith* materials, which promote the use of Welsh, were seen in 76% of receptions managed by county councils nor 78% of National Health Service (NHS) receptions.

⁸ Based on data collected during the first visit to all reception areas

1.9

The Commissioner's survey of telephone services found that 57%, which is 117 of the 205 calls to public organisations' main telephone line or call centre, were answered with a Welsh or bilingual greeting - a simple act which can give people confidence that a Welsh language service is available. Therefore the Welsh language was not used to answer 88 calls.

Using telephone services: being greeted in Welsh



1.10 The caller was able to present an enquiry to a person who could speak Welsh and could understand the enquiry's nature in 58% of calls answered, without having to ask to use the language (either to the receptionist or another officer after receiving an active offer to transfer the call to a Welsh speaker.) During 11% of calls made the caller had to ask for the call to be transferred to a Welsh speaker. The organisation was unable to deal with the enquiry in Welsh in 31% of calls as no Welsh speakers was available.

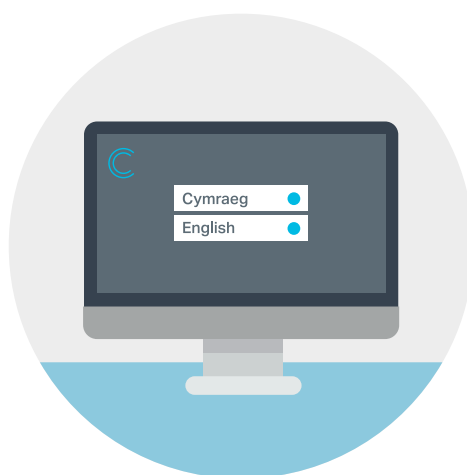
**Using telephone services:
being offered a Welsh language service without having to ask**



- Able to speak Welsh straight away
- Received an offer to transfer the call to a Welsh speaker
- Need to ask to use the Welsh language
- Not possible to receive a Welsh language service at all

1.11 People are increasingly using organisations' websites to search for information about public services and are using online services to make payments or provide details rather than doing so over the phone or through the post.

1.12 The Commissioner's advice document *Technology, Websites and Software: Welsh Language Considerations* provides a detailed definition of the features of a good bilingual website - offering language choice proactively from the beginning of the user's visit is one of them. Publishing a splash page, that is, a cover page that offers a clear language choice, enables an organisation to make an active offer to users before they access the website.⁹



1.13 28% of the websites of the public organisations in Wales included in the survey had a splash page to enable people to make a language choice before accessing the homepage (when using the Welsh language to search for the organisation using an internet search engine).

1.14 The link to the splash page did not always appear if English was used in an internet search engine. That in itself means that citizens, if using the organisation's English name to search the internet, are not given a clear choice to use the Welsh language services on the organisation's website before arriving at the homepage at the start of their visit.

⁹ Technology, Websites and Software: Welsh Language Considerations

1.15 The experiences identified during the Commissioner's surveys suggest that some of the main public organisations in Wales have not managed to provide guidance to front-line staff on actively offering Welsh language services. As a result, these organisations are missing an opportunity to promote the use of the Welsh language. All too often, in many different scenarios, organisations are failing to give a clear indication to citizens that they are welcome to use the Welsh language and that services are available to them.

1.16 Implementing the active offer

In Canada

A study undertaken by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in Canada this year has highlighted that the active offer is more likely to happen where there is robust leadership and where managers explain the importance of making an active offer and why. In order to make a significant improvement, it was noted that organisations need to ensure that they consider people's attitudes towards front line services.¹⁰

In Wales

Beaufort Research conducted a survey on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner to gather evidence of the experiences of fluent Welsh speakers in relation to county councils' Welsh language services. 75% of fluent Welsh speakers said that they always interacted with the relevant departments of their county council in Welsh when they know they can do so.¹¹

Therefore, the survey shows that people may be unwilling to ask to use the Welsh language in situations where an organisation has not normally offered services in Welsh. In order to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh, organisations need to raise awareness of the fact that Welsh language services are available and offer those services proactively.

¹⁰ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages Canada Annual Report 2015-16

¹¹ Research Report: Local Authority Welsh Language Services, Beaufort Research on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner (2015)

People who choose to use the Welsh language must often go to greater lengths to receive a service

I can get it translated for you but it means sending it to the translation department.

I can call someone from upstairs to come and help if you like.

I felt like a nuisance so I turned to English.

It's available in Welsh on the website; you can print it from there.

The fact that someone had to come downstairs to give me a Welsh language service made me feel like I should turn to English.

I felt like it was inconvenient for them to provide a Welsh language service.



Source: The Commissioner's service experience surveys

-
- 1.17 Would a person who enjoys the convenience of completing an online form and who also wants to use the Welsh language be prepared to search for a Welsh version when an internet search engine fails to find it?

Would an elderly person who needs to telephone for help and who wants to use the Welsh language be prepared to repeat their enquiry over and over to various officers?

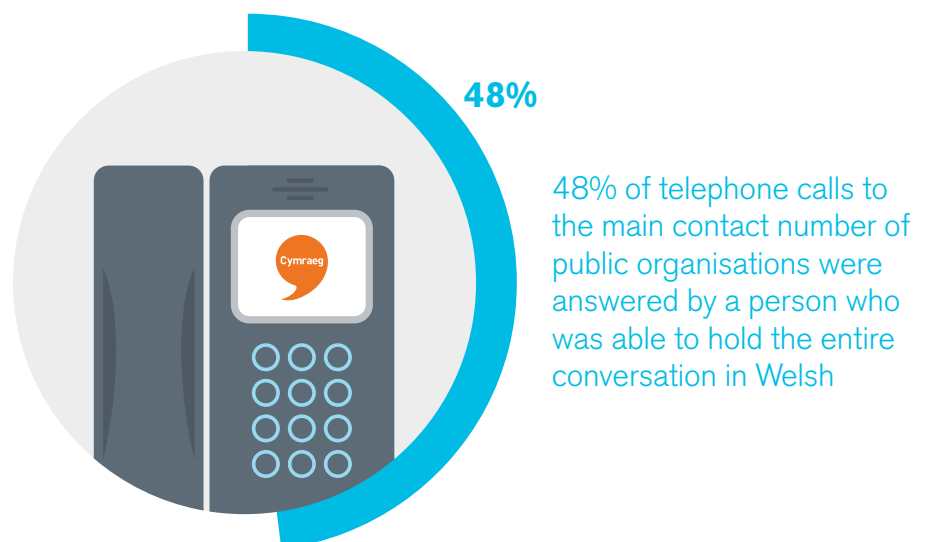
Public organisations are increasingly seeking to facilitate citizens' experience of using their services. For example, they provide comprehensive information on their websites; collect personal details and payments online; provide an automated telephone answering service and offer choices which allow citizens to have their enquires answered quicker or more directly. But, to what extent do organisations consider the need to facilitate the experience of Welsh language users? Do they assume that they are more willing to search or persist in asking for the service they want to use?

- 1.18 The Commissioner's surveys highlighted that citizens must go to greater lengths to persuade organisations to answer enquiries in Welsh over the phone or in receptions, and that they must often show persistence and determination if they want to receive a form in Welsh or find information in Welsh on a website.

1.19

The Commissioner's survey of telephone services shows that the experience of having to repeat a request to use a Welsh language service over and over is common. Calls were transferred here and there within organisations as there were no Welsh speakers available. Frequently, at the end of such an experience, the caller was informed that it was not possible to deal with the enquiry in Welsh and that the organisation would arrange to return the call. Often, the person answering the phone was unsure what they should do when the individual asked to use Welsh.

Using telephone services: Receiving a Welsh language service immediately



1.20

The experiences from the Commissioner's telephone service survey do not provide assurance that the vast majority of the main public organisations in Wales have effective procedures in place to ensure that citizens are able to use the Welsh language when calling their main receptions or call centres.

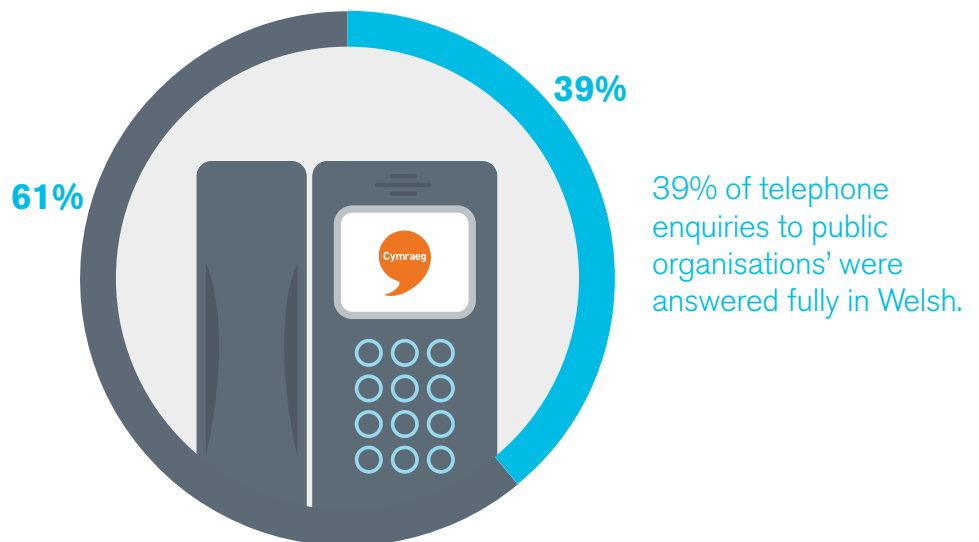
1.21

Having used the Welsh language to make an enquiry via one organisation's main telephone number, the call was transferred by the person who answered to a machine which provided a list of options in English. After choosing an option, the call was transferred to three different officers in turn but none could deal with the enquiry in Welsh. One said "I don't speak Welsh, do you speak English?" and arrangements had to be made for the organisation to return the call. In another organisation the call was transferred four times. One of the four officers was a Welsh speaker but was unable to deal with the enquiry and therefore arrangements had to be made for the organisation to return the call.

1.22

The response given by the person who answered a call to one organisation's main telephone number was: "I don't honestly know what you're saying". The call was transferred to a central call centre but no-one was available there either to discuss the enquiry in Welsh. Two attempts were made to transfer the call to the 'language line' unsuccessfully. The organisation then offered to return the call.

Using telephone services: Receiving a Welsh language response to a Welsh language enquiry



- Enquiry answered fully in Welsh
- Enquiry could not be answered fully in Welsh

1.23 Half the calls to county councils' main telephone numbers were answered by someone who could conduct the entire conversation in Welsh. Calls made to health organisations such as hospitals were least likely to be answered by someone who could conduct the entire conversation in Welsh, just 17% of calls. Calls made to Fire and Rescue Services were most likely (89%) to be answered by someone who could conduct the entire conversation in Welsh.

1.24 Several aspects of a service were frequently found to be lacking when using the Welsh language to make an enquiry. For example, an enquiry was made at a reception in Welsh but an English language information leaflet was provided. A copy in Welsh was requested and the officer responded by saying that the leaflet could be translated but that it would have to be sent to the translation department. Then, another officer mentioned to his colleague that the leaflet was available on the organisation's website and that it could be printed. The officers' attitudes were positive and they proceeded to print the leaflet from the website. In conversation, one officer told the other that everything was available bilingually on the website.

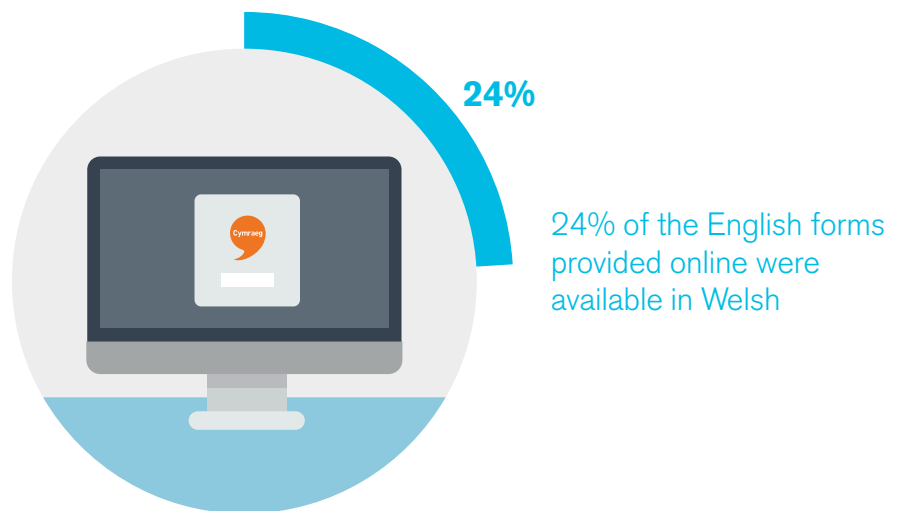
The officer's comments are revealing: "I learn something new every day. I didn't know everything is already translated into Welsh. I will print some more copies of the information in Welsh for when another customer asks for one." The experience highlights the fact that it is not always a lack of positive attitude towards the delivery of Welsh language services which is responsible for negative experiences. This case shows that investment in materials such as websites and paper and online forms needs to be supported by training to raise workforces' awareness of the need to ensure that those choosing to use the Welsh language should not have to persuade an organisation to provide them.

1.25 During the Commissioner's survey of online services, search engines did not find information or forms available in Welsh despite the fact that they were available. Having to search the website for information in English first and then using the language selector to find the corresponding information in Welsh is a common experience.

1.26

The experience of searching for Welsh language online forms was marred by technical problems and missing or unusable links. Clicking on a link on a Welsh language page routinely led to an English version: 106 forms were available in Welsh out of the 438 forms sourced and available in English, 24%. Out of the 85 organisations included in the survey, 46 of them provided every form that was available in English, also in Welsh.

Using online services: Welsh language forms



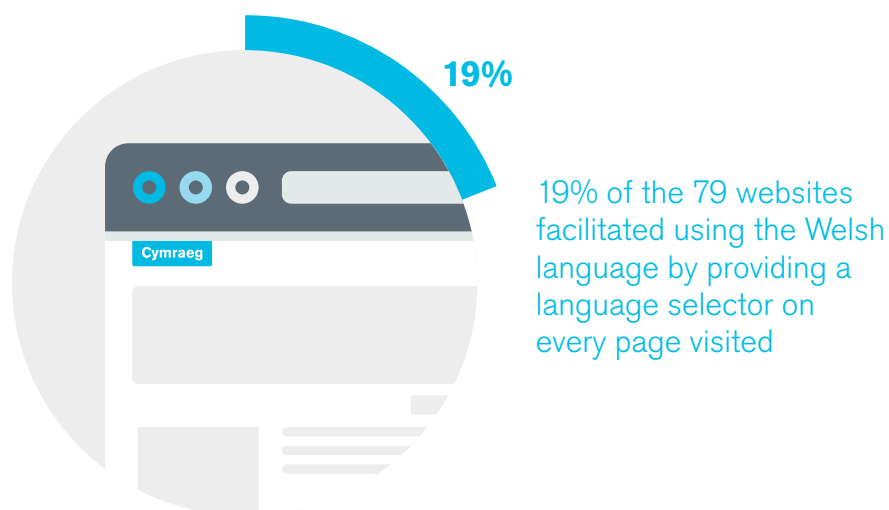
1.27

The Commissioner's survey of websites and online services highlighted the fact that the experience of finding forms in Welsh on the UK government's website gov.uk is very poor which affects people's experience of several UK government agency services. Despite forms being available in Welsh on gov.uk it is extremely difficult to find them - to the extent that the Commissioner has received comments from the agencies themselves expressing their frustration that both the quality and availability of services for Welsh language users has declined since the introduction of the gov.uk website. It became apparent that the link to Welsh language services at the bottom of pages was not clear enough, that the page listing the forms available in Welsh was not comprehensive and that the search engine would not always successfully find forms which are available on the website.

1.28 The Commissioner's advice document *Technology, Websites and Software: Welsh Language Considerations* states that a website which facilitates the use of the Welsh language will provide a prominent language choice on every page in order to enable the user to switch between Welsh and English to the corresponding page in the other language.¹²

1.29 The experience of visiting pages on public organisations' websites during the Commissioner's survey shows that 19% of the public organisations in the survey routinely provided a language selector on every page visited.

Using websites: facilitating language choice



1.30 It has already been noted that the public increasingly sources information and services online. Organisations have responded by delivering an increasing number of services online, such as forms that can be completed and returned directly without having to print a paper copy and online payment facilities.

1.31 The experience of using the Welsh language to try to find and complete some public organisations' online forms can be frustrating. Searching for them requires greater effort and more often than not, a paper version has to be downloaded, printed and returned by post, despite the service being readily available online in English.

¹² Technology, Websites and Software: Welsh Language Considerations, Welsh Language Commissioner (2015)

1.32 The Commissioner's service experience surveys show that citizens who choose to use the Welsh language need to be extremely persistent. The sad reality is that there have been several instances where the service was available in Welsh but using English came as second nature to staff; materials have been produced but staff were unaware of them or the citizen could not find them. With purposeful planning and guidance on what should happen or be available, public organisations could transform the experience of a Welsh speaking citizen of public services.

People tend to have to wait longer for services if they use the Welsh language

1.33 Several of the Commissioner's surveys have shown that people have to wait longer for services from some of the main public organisations in Wales if they use the Welsh language. The experience of using telephone services was often one of having to wait for long periods of time before getting an answer. On several occasions the inquirer was asked to hold the line but nobody took the call subsequently.

1.34 Telephone calls to public organisations, all of them, resulted in the following experiences:



Nobody on our switchboard speaks Welsh... we are trying to find a Welsh speaker for you. After the call was transferred, it was answered with bear with me, we are just trying to find a Welsh speaker. No Welsh speaker was available and the Council promised to return the call.

After the receptionist stated that they could not answer the query in Welsh, they said I can get someone to phone you back, it may be in an hour, or it might not.

After making an enquiry in Welsh, the call was transferred to a specific council department. The response provided was Well, I deal with admissions so if you want a quick answer I can give it to you in English. Another request had to be made for a response in Welsh and a callback had to be arranged.

1.35 During a telephone call to one organisation, seven minutes went by before the Welsh language line was answered. During the wait, a message stating “...neu gwasgwch 1 i gael siarad ag ymgynghorydd yn Saesneg” (or press 1 to speak to an advisor in English) was repeated.

1.36 During a telephone call to another organisation, the call was answered by an answering machine which said “To speak to someone in Welsh press 1.” After pressing 1, the machine’s bilingual message said “Please stay on the line, your call is important to us / Arhoswch ar y lein, mae eich galwad yn bwysig i ni.” After waiting 10 minutes, the caller hung up as nobody had answered.

1.37 Delays were experienced when using reception services too. Visiting a general hospital reception to enquire about prenatal classes for expectant mothers resulted in the following experience:



I greeted the receptionist in Welsh who then said *Good afternoon, can I help?* I asked in Welsh and she replied *Sorry, I don't speak Welsh. Perhaps I could help you.* I had to ask for a Welsh speaker.

The receptionist responded immediately and said very politely *I'll try to get you a Welsh speaker.* She left the counter and went to ask in the office opposite. There were no Welsh speakers there. She returned and telephoned for help from a Welsh speaking nurse. The nurse came and greeted me in Welsh and listened to my enquiry. She said that she would go and ask the midwife. She left the reception and returned a few minutes later with a midwife. I was provided with a full answer in Welsh from the midwife. It took around 10 minutes in all.

1.38 The Commissioner's survey of organisations' correspondence service has also shown that delays are more likely if someone chooses to use the Welsh language. Delays were experienced in receiving a response to 8% of letters, emails and social media messages sent in Welsh compared with 1.5% in English.¹⁵

Individuals are more likely to have to wait longer for a response when corresponding in Welsh with UK government agencies. Delays were experienced in 17% of responses to Welsh language correspondence.

1.39 The Commissioner's surveys have highlighted situations where a service is not routinely available as organisations do not consider the Welsh language when arranging rotas and schedules for their workforce or do not make alternative arrangements for its delivery. For example, when using one university's telephone service the person who answered stated:

“

There's no one available on the switchboard to speak Welsh, she's off today. Having transferred the call the officer stated The only person who speaks Welsh is (name) and she's in Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, so if you want to give a call back then.

1.40 Organisations should consider the implications of experiences such as these on a citizen's future language choice – having to wait longer for a service in Welsh. Would citizens be as confident to use the Welsh language the next time they contact the same organisation?

¹⁵ 'Delay' is defined as a response which takes longer than that set out in the organisation's policy.

In some instances, some services are not available in Welsh at all

I don't speak Welsh.
Nobody speaks
Welsh here.

We don't do
application forms
(in Welsh)...

At the moment we've
only got the English
version.

I appreciate you've
phoned the Welsh line,
but I'm not sure if we've
got a Welsh speaker
available, are you OK to
continue in English?

It should be in
Welsh but we're
waiting for more
to be printed.

At the moment
we don't have any
Welsh speakers
here I'm sorry.



Source: The Commissioner's service experience surveys

-
- 1.41 No Welsh language response was provided to a Welsh language enquiry during 59% of reception visits, namely 253 out of 432. The response provided in health organisations' receptions such as hospitals and county council receptions was less positive: 26% of NHS receptions and 40% of county council receptions managed to respond to a Welsh language enquiry in Welsh.

Using reception services: receiving a Welsh language response to an enquiry



41%

41% of the 432 enquiries made in Welsh in receptions across Wales were answered in Welsh

1.42

The experience of visiting a hospital reception to ask for a phone number to arrange a blood test appointment was recorded as follows:

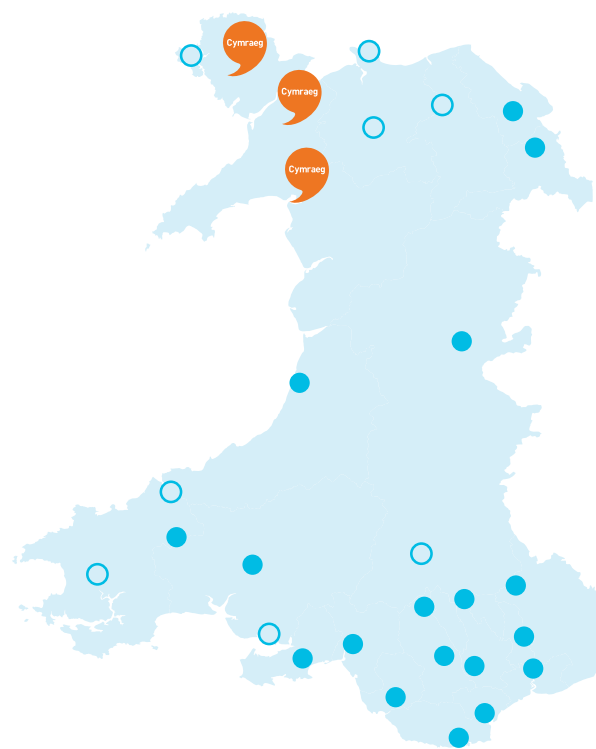


The receptionist gave a strange response - she turned to her colleague and said *Erm, this lady wants to speak Welsh*. Her colleague was rather frosty and said *Oh, we'll have to phone through to get hold of a Welsh speaker*. I felt quite uncomfortable so I said *All I want is the phone number to make a blood test appointment*. I was given a piece of paper with the information in English only. I asked *Have you got a copy of this in Welsh please?* The answer was *It should be in Welsh but we're waiting for more to be printed*.

1.43

The Commissioner's survey of reception services highlighted how much people's experience of using the Welsh language varies from area to area. Five public receptions in 29 different areas of Wales, 145 receptions in total, were visited on three separate occasions during the survey. Only in three areas was the citizen given a Welsh language greeting and a Welsh language response during every visit - namely Bangor, Llangefni and Porthmadog. Therefore, there is no certainty that a citizen will be able to use the Welsh language when using the reception services of public organisations in 90% of the areas visited.

Using reception services: areas where it was possible for the citizen to use Welsh

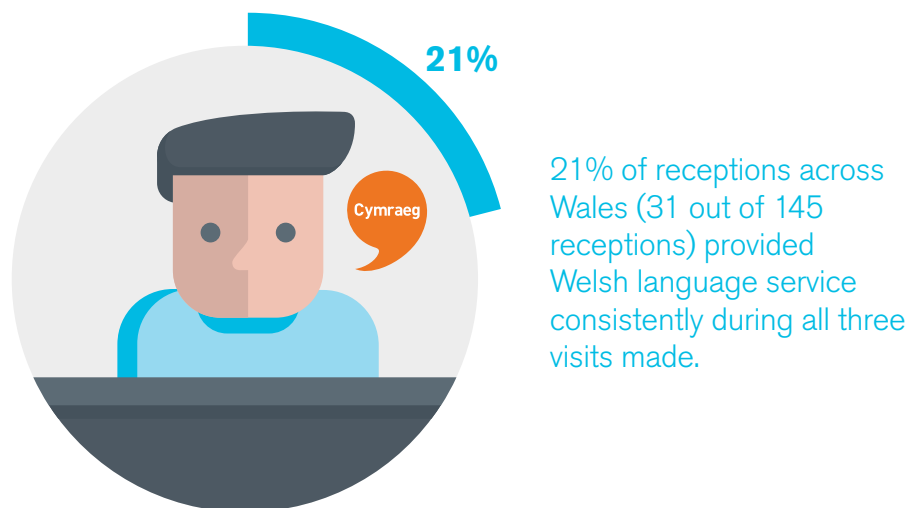


Receptions in the Bangor, Llangefni and Porthmadog areas were the only ones to provide a Welsh language greeting and a full response to a Welsh enquiry on every visit.

- Greeting and full response received in Welsh in every reception on every visit
- Greeting and full response received in Welsh in at least one reception on every visit
- No greeting and full response received in Welsh in any reception on every visit

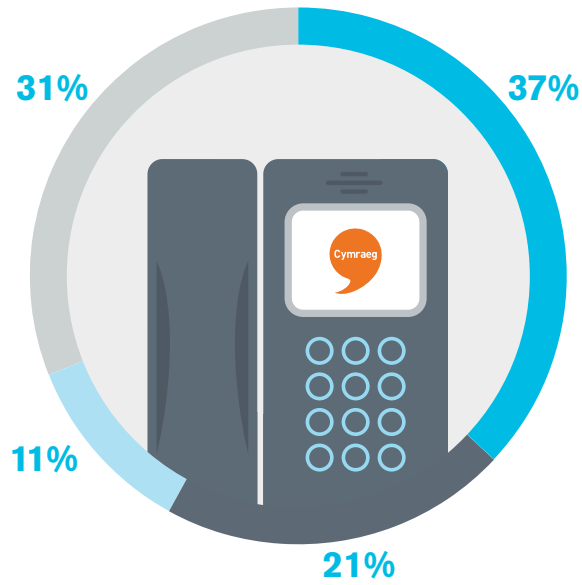
- 1.44 16 receptions in eight other areas had also greeted the citizen in Welsh and answered their enquiry in Welsh on every visit - in Cardigan, Brecon, Holyhead, Denbigh, Haverfordwest, Llandudno, Llanelli and Llanrwst. The experiences show that it is possible to deliver a reception service to those who choose to use the Welsh language across Wales, in rural and populated areas, and that this depends to a large extent on positive attitudes and the presence of staff members with the appropriate Welsh language skills in receptions.

Using reception services: receptions where it was possible to use the Welsh language



- 1.45 The experience does not improve when using telephone services. During the Commissioner's survey, public organisations did not have anyone available to deal with an enquiry in Welsh for 31% of answered calls. A call was made to the main telephone number of one organisation and it was immediately answered by a machine - the message apologised that there was no Welsh speaker available. Another telephone call to a different organisation was answered by a person who confessed that there were no Welsh speakers available at all to deal with the enquiry.

Using telephone services: availability of a Welsh language service



A Welsh language service was not available at all during 31% of telephone calls answered by public organisations.

- Able to speak Welsh straight away
- Accepted an offer to transfer the call to a Welsh speaker
- Need to ask to transfer the call to a Welsh speaker
- Not possible to receive a Welsh language service at all

1.46

Advice documents have been published by the Commissioner and the Welsh Language Board prior to that, regarding the provision of bilingual websites which would facilitate the use of the Welsh language online. Despite this, 27% of organisations provided pages in Welsh (from the selection of pages sampled), namely 21 out of 79 organisations. This experience does not provide the Commissioner with assurance that routine consideration is given to meeting the needs of people who choose to use the Welsh language when planning organisations' online provision.

Using website services: availability of Welsh language pages



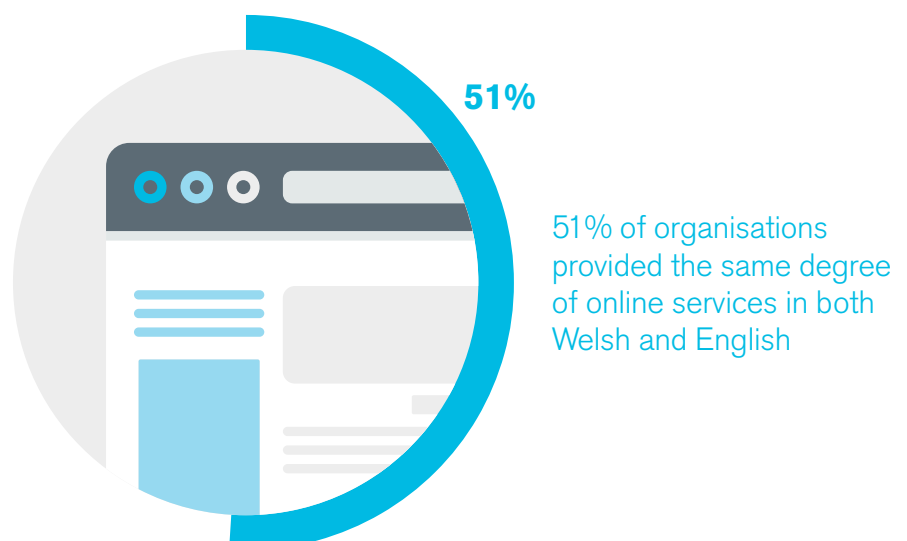
27% of organisations provided every page visited on their website in Welsh.

1.47 Half of the public organisations included in the Commissioner's survey of online services did not offer all of their online services in Welsh. The link to an online form on a Welsh language information page would often lead to an English version of the form. This was especially true of UK government agencies.

1.48 The Commissioner's survey of online services confirms that forms were often only available in English and that searching on the Welsh language pages on an organisation's website led, more often than not, leads to the English version.

For example, in the case of one county council, an application form for a single person discount on council tax was only available online in English. In order to use the Welsh language a copy had to be downloaded and printed so that it could be completed and returned to the council. On another council's website, there were no Welsh language forms available at all to apply for a single person discount on council tax.

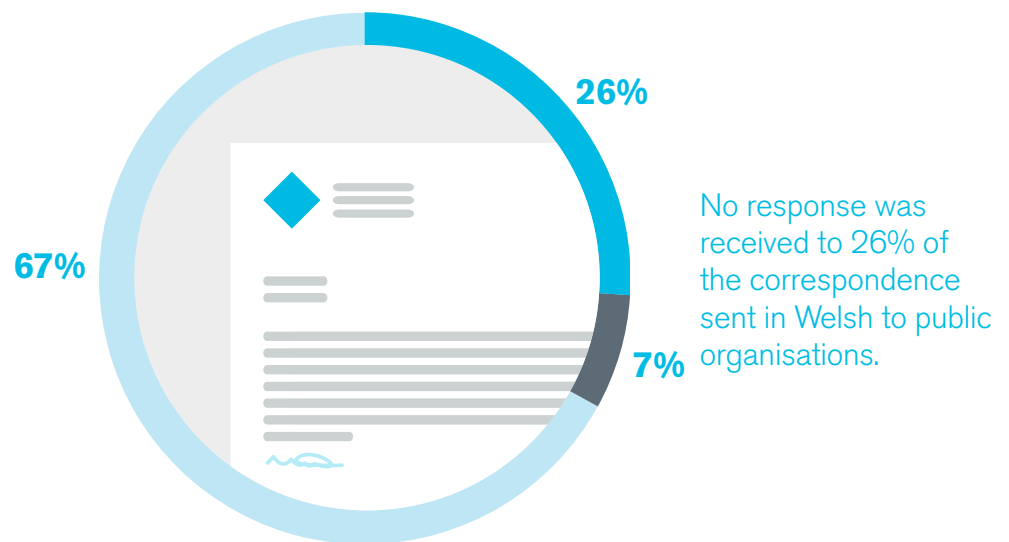
Using online services: availability of services in Welsh



1.49

The experience of using the Welsh language to send correspondence such as a letter, email or text message to organisations has also highlighted shortcomings. No response was received to a quarter of correspondence sent in Welsh - in other words, public organisations did not answer 91 of the 348 letters, emails, text messages and Facebook or Twitter messages, which is 26%.

Using correspondence services: receiving a response to Welsh language correspondence



- No response at all
- English response to Welsh language correspondence
- Welsh response to Welsh language correspondence

1.50

In the case of health organisations, the deficiency is greater and a person is less likely to receive a response. No response was received to 35% of the correspondence sent in Welsh, which is 24 of the 68 items sent. No response was received to 32% of the correspondence sent in Welsh to police forces, 12 of the 37 items sent.

1.51 One organisation did not respond in Welsh to any emails sent in Welsh. A total of eight e-mails were sent to the organisation, four in Welsh and four in English. A response was received to the four sent in English within one working day and a link was provided to the relevant pages on the organisation's website. An English response was received to the four e-mails sent in Welsh. In three of the responses, the enquiry was not answered and a request was made by the organisation for the citizen to send the enquiry again in English.

1.52 One organisation did not respond to any Welsh letters received. Four letters were sent in total, a response was received to the two English letters within five working days but no response was received at all to the two Welsh letters.

1.53 The experiences of seeking services in Welsh, and failing suggests that a number of public organisations have not met their responsibility to plan and deliver services as they should for those wishing to use the Welsh language, in accordance with the requirements of the WLA 1993. With the introduction of the new Welsh language standards these organisations need to step up - the 26 organisations implementing Welsh language standards since 30 March 2016 are required to not only deliver services but also to promote the use of the Welsh language - this should lead to increased use of Welsh language services.

The Commissioner's opinion

Public organisations need to promote and facilitate opportunities for citizens to use the Welsh language by providing services for them, without hindrance. The findings of my surveys testify that people who choose to use the Welsh language must persevere or persuade public organisations to deliver services to them. People should not have to ask to use the Welsh language, organisations should instead take the responsibility for actively offering a language choice and if people choose to use the Welsh language they should not experience a delay.

Instances where services were found to be not available in Welsh at all, lead me to conclude that there is no assurance that organisations are able to offer services as they should for citizens who choose to use the Welsh language. There is no doubt that language schemes have moved things forward significantly since the beginning of the 90s. However, it is possible that a point has been reached where no further progress has been made for some time and performance has reached a plateau. The arrival of the more robust system of Welsh language standards is therefore a positive development with clear duties and language rights for citizens who choose to use the Welsh language.

Part 2: Quality of experiences

The quality of many Welsh language services needs to improve and a genuine offer must be provided

Welsh language users experience a lack of respect and courtesy in some instances



Source: The Commissioner's service experience surveys

- 2.1 When measuring service quality, the respect shown towards the citizen is an essential element. This is very clearly acknowledged when delivering health services - the professional standards for health workers place an emphasis on ensuring patient respect and dignity.
- 2.2 Several members of the public, when they submitted evidence to the Commissioner's inquiry into primary care services believed that not offering or not attempting to arrange a Welsh language service demonstrated a lack of respect.¹⁴

¹⁴ My Language, My Health: Inquiry into the Welsh Language in Primary Care, Welsh Language Commissioner, 2014

-
- 2.3 In order to deliver good quality services to individuals who either choose or need to use the Welsh language, organisations need to show respect towards their language choice.
- 2.4 When surveying the services available to citizens who choose to use the Welsh language, the Commissioner wanted to know if the offer was genuine. The findings reveal a range of experiences - from situations where the citizen who wanted to use the Welsh language was made to feel that they were making a fuss or being a nuisance, to situations where they were belittled and shown lack of respect.

- 2.5 The reception services survey refers to an experience where a lack of respect was shown towards an individual simply because of his decision to use the Welsh language:



After asking for information on swimming lessons held through the medium of Welsh at a leisure centre the staff member laughed and said *No, I don't understand you!* I had to switch to English as they were laughing at me - it made me feel awkward.

- 2.6 There were reports of experiences where organisations insisted that the citizen spoke English before receiving a reception service. When asking for information on the flu jab at a hospital reception, the inquirer was interrupted by the staff member, given a look and told 'English only here'. A similar experience was shared at one organisation's reception where the receptionist interrupted the inquirer and said 'Sorry, I don't speak Welsh'.

- 2.7 Having chosen to use the Welsh language, there are examples of situations where the inquirer was completely ignored whilst the receptionist spoke about them in English with a colleague, as if they were not present. Such an experience at a hospital reception has already been mentioned in the first part of this report (1.42).

2.8

A visitor to one county council's reception asked for a blue badge renewal form:



*I'm sorry I can't speak Welsh. We can arrange for someone to come downstairs to help you. The fact that someone had to come downstairs to provide me with a Welsh language service made me feel as though I should switch to English. I explained in English that I wanted a form to renew my blue badge and within seconds she had a copy of an English only form. She said *We don't do application forms, but we can give you a checklist. Here it is - did you want this in Welsh?* I said that I would like a Welsh copy. After looking for one with no success the receptionist said *At the moment we've only got the English version.* After looking for a Welsh version of the leaflet and failing to find it she had disregarded my request for a Welsh copy and obviously felt that she had gone to enough trouble, so she was happy to give me an English copy and say *Bye*.*

2.9

At times, the citizen's service experiences suggested that the receptionist had no awareness of the need to deliver services to Welsh language users. It was reported that reception staff conveyed their incredulity that a person was using the Welsh language by making physical gestures, sounds and comments and demonstrated indifference regarding the organisation's inability to deliver a Welsh language service in Welsh as it should. The following comment was made about one organisation:



I felt that she (the receptionist) was unhappy that I had started the conversation in Welsh. I felt uncomfortable for some reason - as if she didn't care that she couldn't deliver a service in the language I had chosen to use.

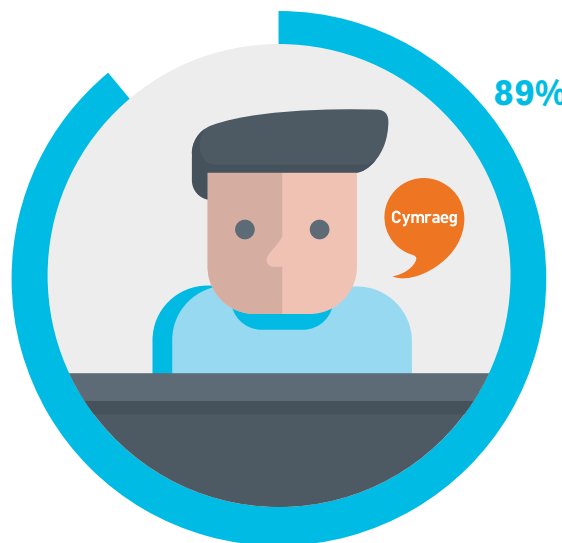
2.10

An inquirer experienced indifference when she asked for a Welsh language service at one organisation's reception - the experience of asking for forms in Welsh was described as follows:

“

Very poor customer service. English forms were provided, the existence of Welsh forms was denied, I insisted that they did. Rang someone upstairs and waited five minutes for the Welsh forms to arrive. Unsatisfactory.

Using reception services: receiving a courteous response to a Welsh language enquiry



89% of Welsh language enquiries made at public organisations' receptions were given a courteous response.

2.11

Even though a high percentage of reception service experiences were recorded as courteous, the citizen experienced discourtesy in 48 out of 432 visits, namely 11%. The results follow the same trend as the Commissioner's findings in 2014-15 which reinforces the evidence that citizens who use the Welsh language cannot be sure of receiving a courteous response when using public organisations' reception services.

2.12 People experienced indifference when using telephone services as well.

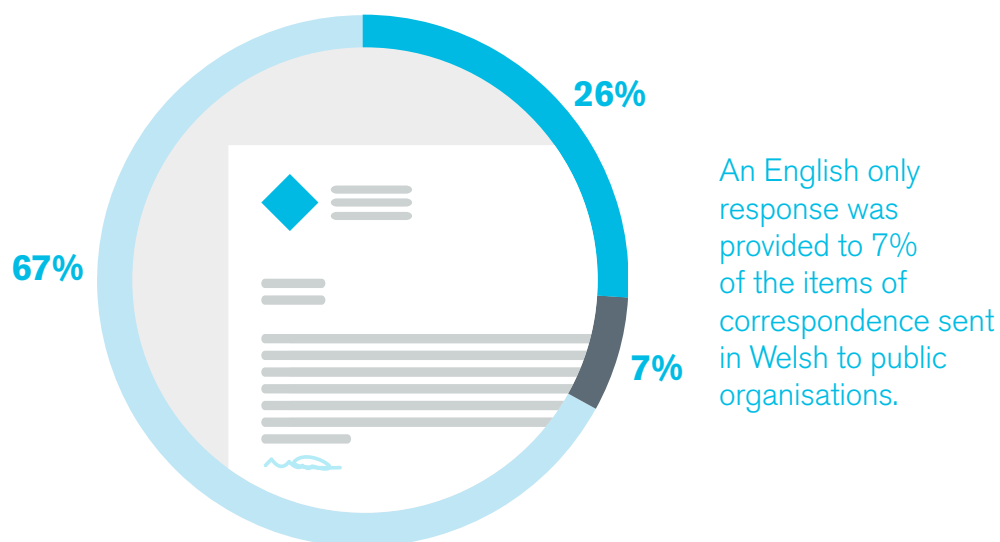
An individual rang a hospital's main telephone number and although the individuals chose to use the Welsh language during the call, the receptionist and officer in the relevant department answered in English. A similar experience was recorded when calling a further education college's main telephone number. where the switchboard seemed to understand what was being said in Welsh but answered in English. The following response was received after calling one organisation's Welsh language inquiry line



Oh, let me try and find my thingy that says I can't speak Welsh, argh!

2.13 Individuals who chose to use the Welsh language to send correspondence such as a letter or email or a message on a social network experienced a lack of respect. Although the language choice of the enquirer was evident, the organisation chose not to acknowledge it when responding to 25 enquiries, 7% of the correspondence sent.

Using correspondence services: recognising language choice when responding



An English only response was provided to 7% of the items of correspondence sent in Welsh to public organisations.

- No response at all
- English response to Welsh language correspondence
- Welsh response to Welsh language correspondence

2.14 UK government agencies (15%) and police forces (13.5%) were the organisations most likely to fail to respond in Welsh to Welsh language correspondence.

2.15 Having received correspondence in Welsh, one UK government agency, on three separate occasions, responded in English asking the individual to resubmit their enquiry in English. The organisation in question has failed to recognise the citizen's language choice and it appears to have taken a deliberate decision not to respond to correspondence received in Welsh, thereby undermining the rights of the citizen to use the language. The Welsh language scheme of the organisation in question states that it welcomes Welsh language correspondence and will respond in Welsh to all letters received in Welsh.

Information that is available in Welsh about public services isn't always up-to-date

2.16 When citizens become aware that information being provided in Welsh is not up-to-date, it affects their confidence to use the language.

2.17 The findings of the Commissioner's website services survey highlight that information on Welsh language pages does not always correspond to the information available on a website's English language pages. 13% of pages contained different information, 380 out of 2,976 pages visited.

2.18 When surveying the availability of Welsh language forms online, it was found that the Welsh language website pages of several organisations had not been updated at the same time as the corresponding pages in English. For example, in the case of one county council, the school transport application form on the website's Welsh language page was dated April 2013 and the form on the English page was dated July 2015. Furthermore, the information on the website's pages was also misleading as it had not been updated to reflect current policy.

2.19 Another organisation's website advertised a telephone number for its main switchboard on the Welsh language pages - a number which no longer works. The English language page of the website had to be used in order to find the current telephone number.

The quality of Welsh language materials and services is inconsistent

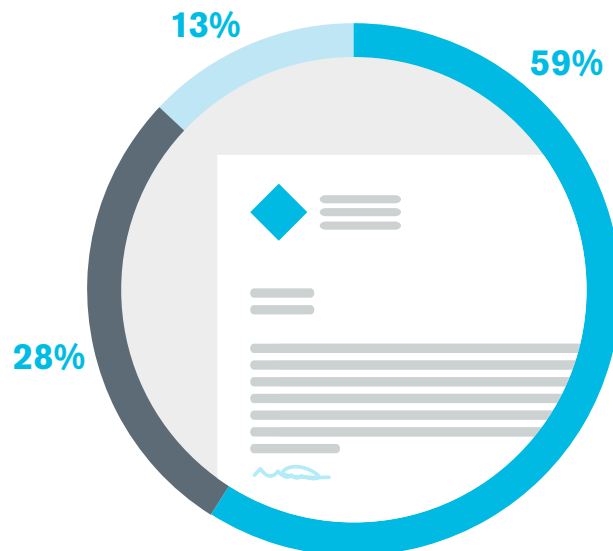
2.20 Citizens who choose to use the Welsh language in Wales should not be satisfied with second-rate services. For example, people should not have to visit a website's English language pages because the Welsh language pages are incomprehensible, nor use an English language form because the Welsh version has not been designed in the same user-friendly format.

2.21 Following the publication of the WLA 1993, guidance was provided to organisations on the form and content of Welsh language schemes - it identified the need to make a firm commitment across the organisation to delivering an equally high quality service in both languages.¹⁵ Ensuring consistency in terms of the quality of Welsh language services is also part of the aim of the Welsh Language Measure.

¹⁵ *Welsh Language Schemes* - Their preparation and approval in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 (1996, Welsh Language Board)

2.22 Of the 232 items of correspondence received in response to a letter, email, text message and messages on social media, the Welsh language used was accurate in 59% of them, 136 items. 100% of the English responses received were accurate.¹⁶ It was reported that 28% of responses received to correspondence was partly correct, and 13% of correspondence was inaccurate. In the case of one organisation, the officer responding apologised for the standard of Welsh.

Using correspondence services: quality of correspondence language



The language used was accurate in 136 out of 232 responses received in Welsh to Welsh language correspondence such as a letter, email or social media message.

- Welsh language is accurate
- Welsh language is partially accurate
- Welsh language is inaccurate

2.23 44%, namely 63 Welsh language responses received from county councils, were inaccurate or partly accurate.

¹⁶ The following definitions were used for the survey: *inaccurate* - 'text with too many serious errors'; *accurate* - 'text containing correct grammar and reading naturally'; *partly accurate* - text which read correctly on the whole but contained spelling mistakes, mismutation or non-standard Welsh.

2.24 Eight of the responses received from organisations did not answer the original enquiry - they were either incorrect or were irrelevant as the organisation had not interpreted the Welsh language enquiry correctly.

2.25 The Commissioner's website services survey has found that two organisations use Google Translate to deliver a website service to those who wish to use the Welsh language. In addition, a number of instances were identified where the content of websites had not been sufficiently checked to ensure that every element of the website's pages including the headers and drop-down menus were available in Welsh.

2.26 One experience was reported of trying to get information from a county council on arranging a party at the local leisure centre and the individual's dissatisfaction that *Google Translate* had to be used:



I made enquiries about arranging a party at the leisure centre. The member of staff apologised saying that they did not speak Welsh and that the Welsh speaker was not available. They directed me to the website which is automatically translated by *Google Translate*.

2.27 The Commissioner's advice document *Bilingual Drafting, Translation and Interpretation* states that links to web-based automatic translation software should not be used to provide the Welsh medium version of a website or other publication because it is not possible to depend on the results of the automatic translation. That would contravene the principle that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language.¹⁷

¹⁷ Bilingual Drafting, Translation and Interpretation, Welsh Language Commissioner

2.28 A comment was made regarding the standard of an oral response given by an organisation during the Commissioner's telephone services survey:



The impression given was that staff members with some Welsh language skills had to deal with every Welsh language enquiry received by the organisation and that they didn't have the knowledge to do that to the same standard as a member of staff in the relevant department.

2.29 The experience of obtaining Welsh language forms online from some of the main public organisations delivering services to Welsh citizens has identified issues in terms of layout, format or content of forms especially in cases where Welsh and English versions are provided separately. There were examples where Welsh language forms had not been designed to the same degree e.g. the English version had been designed using corporate colours and the text had been divided into different formats whilst the Welsh version of the document contained text which had not been formatted and was in black and white. If citizens saw an English language version of the form which appeared to be more professional and up-to-date, is it likely that they would use a Welsh language form which is incorrect or appears less professional?

2.30 The findings of the Commissioner's surveys underline the need for organisations to ensure that they do not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language when providing information and that they need to consider issues such as the standard of language used, layout and content.

Public organisations should consider what is meant by a 'genuine' Welsh language service

I appreciate you've phoned the Welsh line, but I'm not sure if we've got a Welsh speaker available, are you OK to continue in English?

We were told to put the sign up.

We answer the phone bilingually but we don't have the information. I can't help you in Welsh, I can give you the number for the English language line or an e-mail address that you can e-mail in Welsh.



Source: The Commissioner's service experience surveys

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- 2.31 When guidance was issued to organisations on the form and content of language schemes, they were warned that they had a responsibility to offer a genuine language choice in delivering services to the public. The Commissioner's service experience surveys have highlighted practices which confirm that the offer of Welsh language services may at times appear healthy on the surface, but when the services are actually used it becomes apparent that the offer is not genuine and that opportunities to use the Welsh language do not permeate through the organisation.¹⁸
- 2.32 The experiences recorded during the Commissioner's survey of reception services survey highlight that the offer of Welsh language services was not being fulfilled in reality, despite the initial impression that the service was available.

- 2.33 The experience of visiting a further education college's reception to ask for details on the College's open day or evening was described as follows:



Although there was a Welsh poster on one side of reception and an English one on the other saying that people were welcome to speak Welsh, reception staff did not speak Welsh. They said *we were told to put up the sign* and I had to switch to English to get the information.

- 2.34 Examples of the misuse of *laith Gwaith* materials were observed during visits to receptions. In a hospital reception, where one officer was wearing a *laith Gwaith* lanyard, an individual asked for the location of the X-ray department but the officer did not greet or respond to the individual in Welsh. It became apparent that it was the staff member's first day at work and that he was wearing the *laith Gwaith* lanyard as there were no others available. Reception staff commented that nobody ever made an enquiry in Welsh.

¹⁸ Welsh Language Schemes: Their preparation and approval in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, Welsh Language Board, 1996

2.35 After receiving Welsh language correspondence, in 40 instances public organisations responded by sending further information in English, attached to their Welsh response. A number of responses were received, especially to email correspondence, which contained links to website pages only available in English.

In the case of one health board an email was sent asking for details on their freedom of information scheme. A response was provided with an attached English language form.

In the case of one UK government agency a letter was sent in Welsh asking for an application form for a child's passport. An English application form was sent even though they are available in Welsh.

In the case of one county council a letter was sent in Welsh asking for a list of Welsh medium childcare providers in the area. A response was provided in Welsh but the attached form was in English only.

2.36 During the Commissioner's telephone services survey, comments were made on the extent to which the service is available to people who choose to use the Welsh language. In other words, how far does the offer of Welsh language service permeate in the organisation. Was it possible to speak Welsh after leaving the switchboard?

2.37 One organisation's website provided a telephone number for a Welsh language line in order to enable the citizen to make comments on its services and facilities. The call was answered by a machine and a Welsh language service was offered. After choosing a Welsh language service the call was answered on all three occasions by a person who could not speak Welsh.

2.38 The experience of calling one organisation and receiving the following response to an enquiry was reported:



I can't help you in Welsh, I can give you the number for the English language line or an email address for you to send an email in Welsh. We answer the phone bilingually but we don't have the information.

The Welsh language scheme of the organisation in question states that it offers a telephone enquiry service through the medium of Welsh with support by a translation agency. Therefore, the organisation is complying with its requirements as it has made arrangements for a third party to deliver a call handling service through the medium of Welsh. However, the service cannot answer enquiries in full as they do not have access to the organisation's systems. Is this service a genuine one? Does it meet the needs of the citizen in relation to a Welsh language telephone service? Is the citizen likely to continue to use the Welsh language the next time they use the organisation's services?

2.39 It has already been noted that a website which facilitates the use of Welsh provides a prominent language choice on every page (a button in the top right-hand corner of the page) in order to enable the user to switch between Welsh and English to the corresponding page in the other language.¹⁹ The experience of surveying websites has highlighted that some organisations offer a language choice but it does not always take the citizen to the correct page. It often took the user back to the homepage, or a page with an error message. In some cases the individual was directed to a different page completely at random.

¹⁹ Technology, Websites and Software: Welsh Language Considerations, Welsh Language Commissioner

2.40 The Commissioner's online services survey has also highlighted that services being offered to the citizen are not always available to individuals who choose to use the Welsh language. 47% of the organisations surveyed offered online services in Welsh to the same extent as those offered in English. Provision was inconsistent within individual organisations which suggests that organisations are failing to consider the needs of people who choose to use the Welsh language when planning their delivery of online services.

The Commissioner's opinion

There is a real need for public organisations to take the responsibility for providing services to people who choose the Welsh language seriously and to ensure that the reality of the user's experience reflects the service standards that the organisation aims to provide to everyone, in whatever language. Organisations also need to consider how successful they are in eliciting citizens' confidence in their Welsh language services by providing services of an equal professional standard.

People who choose to use the Welsh language must be treated with respect – the service experience surveys' findings suggest that organisations need to influence the attitudes and linguistic behaviour of their staff. I also believe that public organisations have a responsibility to ensure that staff are both aware of their commitments to provide services to people who choose to use the Welsh language and that basic linguistic courtesy is integral to their ability to provide a good quality service.

Part 3: Treating the Welsh language as a skill

Public organisations must plan their workforces effectively in order to enable them to deliver Welsh language services

It is essential that public organisations are aware of their workforces' Welsh language skills

- 3.1 The quality and effectiveness of Welsh language services depend significantly on having a sufficient number of staff with appropriate language skills in the correct roles.
- 3.2 The Welsh Language Board's guidance on preparing Welsh language schemes clearly states that organisations should establish how many staff members are able to speak Welsh or are learning Welsh, their level of proficiency, and how many were in workplaces or posts identified as being Welsh essential or desirable.²⁰
- 3.3 Furthermore, the Commissioner has published an advice document which offers practical guidance to enable organisations to develop bilingual workforces. Actions required by heads/line managers were identified - one of which was to map the current linguistic capacity of workplaces and posts.²¹
- 3.4 Since adopting Welsh language schemes, organisations have reported that information is being collected about the language skills of their workforces. However, the Commissioner's workforce planning survey has not found evidence which provides assurance that the majority of the 29 public organisations who took part do so to an extent which enables them to use the information effectively to deliver Welsh language services.

²⁰ Welsh Language Schemes: Their preparation and approval in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, Welsh Language Board, 1996

²¹ *Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations*, Welsh Language Commissioner

3.5 Of the 29 organisations which participated in the workforce planning survey, 28 kept a record of their staff's language skills. Seven of those organisations confirmed that they updated that data regularly. In one case the most recent skills survey had taken place nine years ago.

3.6 The 2015-16 annual monitoring reports for health boards and NHS trusts in Wales on the implementation of their Welsh language schemes also confirm that a number of them did not keep a record of the Welsh language skills of a significant proportion of their workforces²². Of the 10 organisations, seven did not have information on the language skills of a quarter of their workforce. Three health boards did not have information on the language skills of over half their workforce.

²² Data was provided on staff language skills recorded on the Electronic Staff Register (ESR) which is used by NHS Wales organisations.

3.7 One organisation reported that they had made it compulsory for staff to respond to language skills surveys by asking them to complete a survey before being able to log on to their computer. Several other organisations noted that staff's lack of access to a computer made it more difficult to collect data on the entire workforce as they collected the information via an online self-assessment survey.

3.8 **Record of the entire workforce's language skills**

One organisation was able to collect information on the linguistic skills of 90% of the workforce by requiring staff with access to a computer to complete a survey before logging on:



A survey of the entire workforce was conducted in 2010 and a database was created containing information on who could speak Welsh and to what level along with information on those interested in learning (400 names). In 2013 another survey took place after the decision was made to include Welsh language skills as part of the public sector's equality duty survey. This survey was compulsory and for those members of staff working at a desk the questions had to be answered before being able to log on to the computer ... so we have information on the Welsh language skills of around 90% of the workforce ... information is added on new recruits. The information is used to target training and share information on Welsh language activities. There are plans to conduct the same survey again in 2016, and a project group has been established to arrange that.

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- 3.9 According to the evidence of some organisations, one barrier to collecting information on the language skills of the workforce is the perception that staff are not keen to disclose that they have Welsh language skills. The reasons given for this were a lack of confidence in their skills meaning that they underestimate their ability and the fear that they would have to take on extra responsibilities or a greater workload as they had recorded that they had the skills. One organisation noted that a high proportion of its staff ticked the 'I'd rather not say' box in the questionnaire used.

On the other hand, some organisations have managed to collect information on the language skills of a high percentage of its workforce, some with significant numbers of staff. What accounts for their success? Is it the positive attitudes of staff as the organisation has explained the purpose of the data collection? Is robust leadership responsible for the willingness to discuss and assess language skills and for the progress made by some organisations?

- 3.10 Of those organisations who provided evidence on the percentage of staff for whom they have a record of their language skills, seven organisations reported that they had information on the linguistic skills of 60% or more of the workforce. Five organisations reported that the data contained information on 25% or less of the workforce. Four other organisations recognised that the percentage was 'low' and that there were 'considerable gaps' in the information. Some organisations stated that the managers or the language officer recorded the language skills of staff and not the staff themselves.

- 3.11 One organisation of considerable size reported that they did not have any data on the linguistic skills of their workforce, but despite this they 'knew' that only a very small number were able to speak Welsh. At the other extreme, one organisation believed that they were underestimating the actual number of Welsh speakers in the workforce by around 5%.

The comments are revealing as they show, in the absence of robust data, that officers draw unfounded conclusions on the linguistic skills of the organisation's workforce. How do these impressions (or misconceptions) impact the decisions made about service delivery?

3.12 Without information on the current language skills of the workforce, how can organisations assess which skills are lacking and where, and identify the greatest challenges? How can decisions be made on how to close the gaps over time in order to enable the organisation to deliver Welsh language services as it should?

Too often, the ability to speak Welsh is not a required skill in job advertisements

3.13 In order for organisations to deliver services as they should to Welsh language users, they need to consider linguistic skills, in the same way as other necessary skills, when recruiting staff.

3.14 In the advice document *Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations* the Commissioner noted that organisations needed to discuss language as a matter of course when a new post is created or when a vacancy arises. The advice includes information on the criteria which could be considered before determining posts as being Welsh essential or desirable.²³

3.15 The Welsh Language Board's guidance on preparing Welsh language schemes refers to the need for organisations to identify, in an objective manner, those workplaces and posts where the ability to speak or write in Welsh is an essential or desirable skill.²⁴

3.16 As a result, the statutory Welsh language schemes of a number of public organisations contain commitments to meet requirements concerning appointments and recruitment, such as:

“criteria will be developed to decide whether the ability to speak Welsh is essential or desirable, and the need for such ability will be added to each personal specification.”

“identify locations and posts where the ability to speak Welsh is essential or desirable and include such details in job advertisements.”

²³ Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations, Welsh Language Commissioner

²⁴ *Welsh Language Schemes - Their preparation and approval in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993*, Welsh Language Board, 1996

3.17 The Commissioner conducted a survey of jobs advertised on 57 public organisations' websites between December 2015 and March 2016. During the period, information was recorded on over 3,000 jobs across six sectors - ranging from county councils to health boards and UK government agencies.

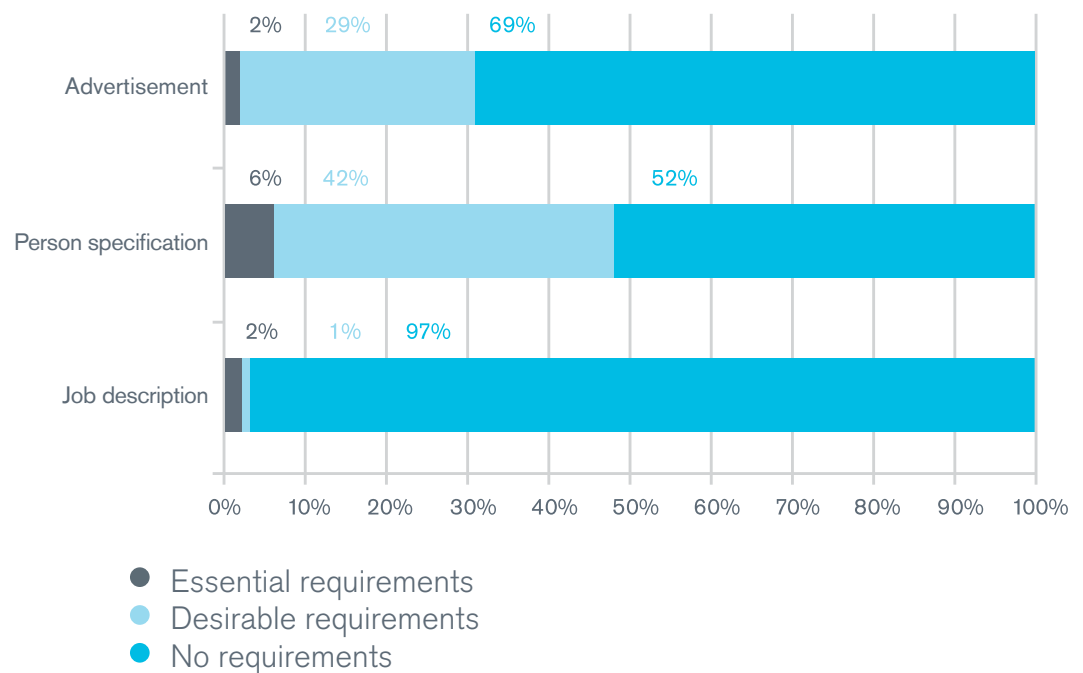
3.18 Although all organisations surveyed had been implementing a statutory language scheme for some time, the survey shows that only a limited number of posts were advertised with essential skill requirements. Of all the job advertisements, 2% namely 72 out of 3,108 posts noted that Welsh language skills were essential and 6% of person specifications.

29% of job advertisements and 42% of person specifications noted that Welsh language skills were desirable. Where skills were described as desirable, no further details were normally provided on the exact nature of those skills.

3.19 No Welsh language skills requirements were included in the job advertisements, person specifications and job descriptions of 11 out of 22 county councils. Of all the county council advertisements recorded, a total of 879 posts, 10% noted that Welsh language skills were necessary despite the fact that 42% of the person specifications included such requirements.

Fewer than 1% of Welsh Health Board and NHS Trust job advertisements contained essential status requirements (two out of 1,162 jobs recorded) and a far greater proportion, 69%, noted that Welsh language skills were desirable.

Welsh language skills requirements for advertised posts



3.20 The absence of a description of Welsh language skills requirements in a large percentage of advertisements and person specifications suggests that an adequate assessment of the requirements is not being conducted for specific posts. Evidence presented by the public organisations' officers during the Commissioner's workforce planning survey confirms these doubts.

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- 3.21 Two organisations mentioned that a decision had been made to include desirable requirements when advertising all posts. The Commissioner's survey shows that the proportion of posts with desirable status requirements is very high, especially in the health sector. Six of the ten Welsh health boards and NHS trusts had included such requirements in over 80% of the person specifications.
- 3.22 To what extent therefore do public organisations conduct assessments of the Welsh language skills requirements of posts and what is the quality of those assessments? What considerations influence decisions when determining the Welsh language requirements of posts? The Commissioner's workforce planning survey confirms that there is much work to do.
- 3.23 The Commissioner's survey has discovered that the way in which public organisations assess the linguistic needs of posts varies significantly. Some organisations have a systematic process where the advertisement or linguistic assessment is verified and scrutinised on several levels before publication. In other organisations it is very informal and a matter of including linguistic requirements if the previous post holder could speak Welsh.
- 3.24 In the majority of organisations that were included in the workforce planning survey, managers were responsible for assessing needs and determining any linguistic requirements when advertising posts. Less than half the organisations, 13, reported that they had a tool (such as a form, template, guide or flowchart) to ensure that managers consider and assess the need for Welsh language skills. However, several recognised that these resources were not always used and that some managers try to avoid using the resource in order to avoid having to determine linguistic requirements at all.

3.25 Officers made the following comments about their workforce planning arrangements:

The HR department is reluctant to lead the way on workforce planning - they have refused to establish a systematic process for assessing and determining the linguistic requirements of vacancies.

A pro forma is used by managers when producing job descriptions which contains a section on assessing language requirements. But not every manager uses the pro-forma at all times or they don't fill the section on language.

Only the post of language officer is Welsh essential and no Welsh desirable jobs are advertised.

The guide available to help managers decide on linguistic requirements is now outdated. The essential posts are mostly teaching ones... don't record requirements for the authority's other jobs.

There is conflict between delivering a medical service to a required standard and offering a bilingual service.

We have a number of foreign job applicants, therefore it is difficult to advertise that a position is Welsh essential.

We need to be more systematic when assessing job requirements - at present heads set language requirements if the previous post holder could use the Welsh language.

3.26 Having said this, the following positive comments were made by other organisations which attest to the fact that assessing the linguistic requirements of posts is happening more routinely in some organisations:

Managers must complete a proforma and justify the reason why Welsh is not essential for any post.

Every new post goes through the language unit to check if the linguistic needs identified are sufficient.

Every post is discussed in the heads group in order to determine linguistic requirements in accordance with the ALTE system and the lead group then approves the decisions.

In principle the Welsh language is essential for every post but with different levels of fluency.

3.27 As a result of deficiencies in the processes for determining the linguistic requirements of posts, more often than not the description of linguistic requirements contained in advertisements and person specifications during the recruitment process is unclear.

3.28 The Commissioner's advice document relating to recruitment notes that organisations are responsible for implementing staffing measures in order to deliver improved and increased Welsh language services to the public.²⁵ Reference is made to the need to clearly describe the skills required in advertisements and job descriptions and that relevant and user-friendly wording is one way of doing this.²⁶ The findings of a survey conducted on behalf of the Welsh Language Board showed that employers who had added practical and relevant recruitment wording for the post had been more successful in appointing Welsh speakers.²⁷

²⁵ Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations, Welsh Language Commissioner

²⁶ Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations, Welsh Language Commissioner

²⁷ The Planning and Management of Bilingual Skills, a study conducted on behalf of the Welsh Language Board by Cwmni Iaitn (2006)

3.29 The advice document also details the kind of relevant, user-friendly wording which may be included when advertising posts such as:

Appointments clerk:	the ability to converse at ease with customers in Welsh is essential for the post;
Receptionist:	the ability to speak Welsh with our customers is essential for this post;
Educational psychologist:	the ability to conduct psychological assessments through the medium of Welsh and English and the ability to present written information in both languages is essential for this post.

3.30 During the Commissioner's jobs survey the examples of advertisements and person specifications containing relevant, user-friendly descriptions of Welsh language skills requirements were few and far between..

3.31 The survey highlighted how individual attitudes can steer organisations' practices when there is no robust guidance or process for scrutinising and checking the Welsh language requirements of posts before advertising a post. For example, one health board job advertisement noted:



It is not required that the applicant speaks Welsh as the majority of the Health Board's patients speak fluent English.

3.32 The evidence gathered does not provide assurance that the recruitment and selection practices of the majority of the public organisations that were part of the Commissioner's survey are sufficient to enable them to deliver quality services to Welsh citizens who use the Welsh language.

Public organisations need to place greater emphasis on developing the linguistic skills of their workforces

3.33 Improving the language skills of the current workforce is one way in which organisations can increase their capacity to deliver services as they should to Welsh language users. The Commissioner’s workforce planning survey highlighted that the way in which public organisations develop the linguistic skills of their workforces as well as their attitudes towards the importance and effectiveness of investing in that, vary significantly.

3.34 The statutory guide published for to provide guidance on the form and content of Welsh language schemes noted that organisations should consider the best approach towards meeting their staffing objectives after assessing the linguistic skills of the workforce, and that providing Welsh language training to staff is one of the options available to them.²⁸

3.35 As a result, the statutory Welsh language schemes of a number of public organisations contain a commitment to meeting requirements concerning identifying and providing Welsh language training, such as the following commitments in the language scheme of one county council:

“The Council will encourage and support employees and Elected Members who wish to learn Welsh or improve their Welsh language skills. Steps to provide training on language awareness and language skills will be prioritised in order to reflect the level of public engagement and/or the significance of service users’ preferred language.”

3.36 During the Commissioner’s survey of workforce planning arrangements, organisations’ officers referred to a number of barriers which they believed were preventing them from developing the linguistic skills of their workforces. Limited budgets in terms of funding training to develop the Welsh language skills of the workforce was one of the barriers mentioned by some organisations. It was noted that the demand for Welsh for Adults courses amongst staff exceeded the funding capacity of one organisation. Another organisation noted that they had a waiting list for language training as the funding available could only train 50 staff members each year.

²⁸ Welsh Language Schemes - Their preparation and approval in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, Welsh Language Board, 1996

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- 3.37 It was noted that time constraints was a reason why staff could not undertake any training arranged by organisations. One organisation noted, in light of reorganisation and job losses, that there had been an increase in individual staff workloads and responsibilities and that it was therefore difficult for them to release staff to attend training courses or Welsh lessons during working hours. One organisation noted that a lack of capacity to release staff was a greater issue than a lack of enthusiasm / demand amongst staff.
- 3.38 Organisations also noted that they had not established a process for identifying the linguistic training needs of the workforce which would enable them to prioritise Welsh language training provision.

3.39 During the workforce planning survey, the following comments were made by the officers of different organisations. They reflect different attitudes towards identifying the potential to develop the linguistic skills of their current workforce in order to improve their capacity to deliver services for Welsh language users:

We target staff who have attended Welsh medium schools and have prioritised training for reception and surgery staff.

The Board does not provide Welsh language skills training.

We use the information recorded on staff skills to identify gaps for providing Welsh language training.

We have not provided any linguistic training for four years. We do not consider that the benefits outweigh the cost. Staff do not use Welsh in the workplace after receiving the training. Other statutory or compulsory training is a greater priority than Welsh language training.

We measure the demand for Welsh language training in language awareness sessions. The Welsh language is included in every staff member's appraisal and personal development.

Following one audit of language training needs, a ten week course was arranged to improve staff bilingualism in hospitals and surgeries.

3.40 Improving the Welsh language skills of the current workforce

The leaders of one organisation based in areas where the Welsh language is a main language as well as areas where the use of Welsh in the community is lower, promote the use of Welsh by requiring every officer to understand and pronounce the names of people and places in Welsh and show a basic level of courtesy. Job applicants are required to commit to reaching a higher level during the probation period as part of the work agreement. Officers must also commit to improving skills levels by the end of the probation period after promotion.

The feasibility of the policy depends on treating language skills like any other skills, ones which individuals can develop through training, improve through practise, and can be measured. In order to support staff to meet these requirements and ensure that there is no risk of discrimination, the organisation provides Welsh language training in the workplace.

The organisation's experience has clearly shown that linguistic requirements can be set for posts and that staff in those posts can be encouraged to improve their Welsh language skills in order to meet the organisation's aim.

3.41 The evidence gathered during the Commissioner's workforce planning survey does not provide assurance that the practices of the majority of the main public organisations are robust enough in terms of assessing workforces' linguistic training needs. The absence of information about how organisations prioritise and provide training to enable existing staff to improve their Welsh language skills leads the Commissioner to question how effective they are at taking advantage of opportunities to increase the linguistic capacity of their workforces.

The Commissioner's opinion

This report highlights that it is a myth to claim that 'one must be able speak Welsh to work in the public sector in Wales'. A significant number of organisations that provide public services for the people of Wales need to ensure that they include the Welsh language as a factor when they plan their workforce. They must set out in earnest to increase their linguistic capacity to enable them to meet the needs of a bilingual society. Organisations need to consider how they will empower their frontline staff to provide Welsh language services; how they will effectively develop the linguistic skills of existing staff and what requirements need to be included when they recruit new staff so that the people appointed have the language skills the organisation needs.

I question to what extent public organisations have managed to change their culture to ensure that the Welsh language is given adequate consideration when services are planned and delivered. Senior management must now question existing practices as relatively simple things are not changing for the better.

Evidently, there are examples of good practice within the public sector in Wales; the challenge now is to extend those practices in order to ensure that the citizens of Wales, wherever they live, receive excellent services.

Appendix 1

Service experience surveys' methodologies

All public organisations included in the Welsh Language Commissioner's service experience surveys deliver services to the public in Wales. During the sampling period every organisation was implementing a statutory Welsh language scheme.

Reception services survey

The survey's primary aim was to gather information on the experience of using the Welsh language when using public organisations' reception services. Cwmni Iaith was commissioned to undertake the work on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

During January and February 2016 receptions were visited in 29 locations (cities, towns or villages) across Wales. A total of five receptions were visited at each location using a 'mystery shopper' approach to make enquiries. Each reception was visited on three separate occasions and the findings from 432 visits were recorded in total.¹ The receptions included a variety of service points such as county council offices, hospitals, leisure centres, libraries, museums, colleges and police stations run by 48 public organisations.²

It was noted whether the Welsh language was used to greet the visitor and which language was used by the organisation's officers to deal with the enquiry, from start to finish. It was also noted whether the enquiry was handled entirely in Welsh. Observations were also recorded on the quality of the service - whether a Welsh language service was offered proactively or did the visitor have to ask to use the Welsh language; was there a delay as a result of the visitor's decision to use the Welsh language and was the enquiry answered courteously.

It was also noted whether *Iaith Gwaith* (Working Welsh) materials were displayed in the reception areas to show visitors that it was possible to use the Welsh language.³

Telephone services survey

The survey's primary aim was to gather information on the experience of using the Welsh language when using public organisations' telephone services. The work was undertaken by the Welsh Language Commissioner's officers.

From December 2015 to March 2016 information was recorded on 213 calls to the main telephone number of 70 public organisations.⁴ The Welsh language line was contacted if one was advertised by the organisation on its website. Three calls were made to each organisation, to the same main telephone number, with a different enquiry made each month at different dates and times. The enquiry was made in Welsh and the caller attempted to only use the Welsh language during the call. The caller also sought to limit the use of English to simply ask for a service in Welsh.⁵

¹ Due to circumstances arising during the survey there is no record of the oral service for 3 visits nor of visual materials for 5 visits. A list of the public organisations included in each survey is provided in Appendix 2.

² A list of the public organisations included in each survey is provided in Appendix 2.

³ The Welsh Language Commissioner provides free *Working Welsh* resources in order to help organisations promote opportunities to use the Welsh language when delivering services to the public in Wales.

⁴ A list of the public organisations included in each survey is provided in Appendix 2.

⁵ The University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University were telephoned four times.

It was noted whether the Welsh language was used to greet the caller and what language was used by the organisation to handle the call, from start to finish: by the person who answered the call and anyone else to whom the call was transferred. It was also noted whether the enquiry was handled entirely in Welsh. Observations were also recorded on the quality of service - whether a Welsh language service was offered proactively or did the caller have to ask to use the Welsh language and did that create a sense of causing bother.

Correspondence services survey

The survey's primary aim was to gather information on the experience of using the Welsh language when receiving a response to correspondence sent to public organisations. Trywydd was commissioned to undertake the work on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Between February 2015 and March 2016 a total of 682 items of correspondence were sent to 40 public organisations via letter, email, text message or Facebook or Twitter post (if those services were offered).⁶ Correspondence in both Welsh and English was sent in order to compare response times and assess whether there was any delay as a result of the enquirer's decision to use the Welsh language.

The language in which the organisation responded to the correspondence and provided any further information was noted. It was also noted how many working days were taken to respond and whether that was in line with each organisation's corporate target times. Observations were also recorded on the quality of service - issues such as language quality and accuracy, style of correspondence and whether the correspondence was signed.⁷

⁶ A list of the public organisations included in each survey is provided in Appendix 2.

⁷ The following definitions were used for recording the correspondence's language quality: incorrect - text with too many serious errors; correct - text containing correct grammar and reading naturally; partly correct - text which read correctly on the whole but contained spelling mistakes, mistyping or non-standard Welsh.

Websites and online services survey

The survey's primary aim was to gather information on the experience of using the Welsh language when using public organisations' websites and online services. The work was undertaken by the Welsh Language Commissioner's officers.

From November 2015 to March 2016 we visited the websites of 79 public organisations. Over 3000 pages, around 45 pages from three specific areas of each website, were examined.⁸

It was noted whether language choice was offered to the user on the splash page, homepage and beyond; was each page visited available in Welsh and was it possible to navigate from one language to the other. Observations were also noted on the quality of service: the style of pages and online forms provided, the standard of language used, the prominence of the Welsh language service and how easy it was to use and did the Welsh language service correspond to the English language service.

Jobs survey

The survey's primary aim was to gather information on public organisations' practices in terms of including and describing Welsh language skills requirements when advertising new and vacant posts. The work was undertaken by the Welsh Language Commissioner's officers.

Between December 2015 and March 2016 information relating to 3108 posts advertised on the websites of 57 public organisations was noted.⁹ The information was sourced by visiting the recruitment pages of individual organisations' websites and/or group websites if used. The Welsh and English pages were read if available.

The Welsh essential or desirable skills included in the advertisements, job descriptions and person specifications of each post were noted. Observations were also recorded on the quality of the information: how organisations described Welsh language skills requirements and how clear and meaningful the requirements were for the organisation and the candidate. It was also noted whether information on the advertised posts was available in Welsh.

County councils' and county borough councils' auxiliary posts in schools, such as child transport staff, catering staff etc. were recorded. Teaching staff and teaching assistant staff posts were not recorded.

⁸ The same areas were examined on the websites of organisations delivering the same kind of services.

⁹ A list of the public organisations included in each survey is provided in Appendix 2.

All health sector posts were not included in the survey due to the significant number advertised. Posts advertised in the six staff groups most likely to come into contact with the public were included, - administrative and clerical; relevant health professionals; additional clinical services; scientific and technical professionals; medical and dental professionals and registered nurses and midwives.

No volunteering opportunities advertised by any organisation were recorded.

Workforce planning survey

The survey's primary aim was to gather information on the arrangements made by public organisations to plan the Welsh language skills of their workforces. Arad Research was commissioned to undertake the work on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Public organisations were invited to take part in the survey and face-to-face interviews were conducted with officers from 29 organisations between January and March 2016 in order to learn about any arrangements organisations may have in place which enable them to take a systematic approach to ensuring an adequate Welsh language skill capacity.

A series of talking-points was sent to the organisations in advance in order to allow time for them to prepare for the meeting and to provide the details required. Information was collected about the specific issues which the Commissioner wanted to learn more about such as arrangements for identifying and recording the Welsh language skills of the workforce; the provision of language awareness training and training to improve the Welsh language skills of existing staff; identifying the Welsh language skills needs of posts and recruitment processes. Information about any positive developments as well as comments on any barriers that hinder progress was noted.

Appendix 2

Public organisations included in
the service experience surveys

Sector	Organisation	Reception areas	Telephone	Correspondence	Websites	Jobs	Workforce Planning	
Welsh Government	Welsh Government	✓	✓		✓	✓		
	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Caerphilly County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Conwy County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Bridgend County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Torfaen County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Wrexham County Borough Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Cardiff City Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	County Councils	City and County of Swansea Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Newport City Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Gwynedd Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Vale of Glamorgan Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Ceredigion County Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Denbighshire County Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carmarthenshire County Council		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Monmouthshire County Council		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pembrokeshire County Council		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Powys County Council		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Flintshire County Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Isle of Anglesey County Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Sector	Organisation	Reception areas	Telephone	Correspondence	Websites	Jobs	Workforce Planning
Wales NHS Health Boards and Trusts	Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cardiff & Vale University Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cwm Taf University Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Hywel Dda University Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Powys Teaching Health Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Velindre NHS Trust		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Welsh Ambulances Service NHS Trust		✓		✓	✓	
Public Health Wales NHS Trust		✓		✓	✓		
Community Health Councils	Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Community Health Council				✓		
	Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council				✓		
	North Wales Community Health Council				✓		
	Powys Community Health Council				✓		
	Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Community Health Council				✓		
	Cwm Taf Community Health Council				✓		
	Hywel Dda Community Health Council				✓		
National Park Authorities	Snowdonia National Park Authority	✓	✓		✓	*	
	Brecon Beacons National Park Authority	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Sector	Organisation	Reception areas	Telephone	Correspondence	Websites	Jobs	Workforce Planning
Further Education Establishments	Cardiff and Vale College	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Coleg Cambria		✓		✓	✓	
	St Davids' Catholic College		✓		✓	*	
	Coleg Ceredigion	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	YMCA Wales Community College						*
	Coleg Gwent	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Gower College Swansea		✓		✓	✓	
	Workers' Educational Association Wales						✓
	Merthyr Tydfil College						*
	Bridgend College		✓		✓	✓	
	Pembrokeshire College	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Coleg Sir Gâr	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Coleg y Cymoedd	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	NPTC Group	✓	✓		✓	✓	
UK Government Agencies	Food Standards Agency			✓		✓	
	Department for Work and Pensions		✓				
	Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency			✓		✓	
	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency			✓		✓	
	HM Revenue & Customs			✓		✓	
	National Savings & Investments		✓	✓		✓	
	HM Passport Office			✓			

Sector	Organisation	Reception areas	Telephone	Correspondence	Websites	Jobs	Workforce Planning
Fire and Rescue Services	Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service		✓		✓		
	South Wales Fire and Rescue Service		✓		✓		
	North Wales Fire and Rescue Service		✓		✓		
Police Forces	South Wales Police		✓	✓	✓		
	Dyfed-Powys Police	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	North Wales Police	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Gwent Police	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Police and Crime Commissioners	South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner				✓		
	Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner				✓		
	North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner				✓		
	Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner				✓		
Higher Education Establishments	Swansea University	✓	✓		✓		
	Aberystwyth University		✓		✓		
	Bangor University	✓	✓		✓		
	Cardiff University		✓		✓		
	University of Wales				✓		
	South Wales University	✓	✓		✓		
	Glyndwr University	✓	✓		✓		
	Cardiff Metropolitan University		✓		✓		
	University of Wales Trinity Saint David		✓		✓		

Sector	Organisation	Reception areas	Telephone	Correspondence	Websites	Jobs	Workforce Planning
	BBC		✓				
	Board of Community Health Councils in Wales				✓		
	National Library of Wales		✓				
	British Transport Police				✓		
	Civil Nuclear Constabulary				✓		
	Ofgem		✓				
	Ofwat		✓				
	S4C		✓				
	The Open University				✓		

*data not available for entry