



Legal Aid Agency
Welsh Language Scheme Report 2013/14

Introduction

This is the Legal Aid Agency’s report on the operation of its Welsh Language Scheme based on activities undertaken for the period April 2013 and March 2014.

This report has been produced having regard to the framework for monitoring and reporting as agreed with the Welsh Language Board in September 2010.

Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme

The LAA’s revised scheme introduced in 2009 detailed planned activities over the three years to 2012. We rolled this over in 2013 and are currently in the process of reissuing our scheme to reflect our change of status to an Executive Agency and we anticipate that this will be sent to the Commissioner for approval shortly.

The table below sets out our progress against the activities in our current Welsh Language Scheme to date.

LAA Scheme – Agreed Actions	LAA Scheme - Initial Timetable	Progress during 2013-2014
<p>New Policies and initiatives (para.4)</p> <p>1. Equal status to be given to the Welsh language in any development of new policies and procedures or when considering the impact of government policies and initiatives.</p>	<p>We will implement a formal process to ensure that any new policies and procedures comply with our obligations under this scheme within 6 months of implementation.</p>	<p>Action completed</p> <p>Our Equalities Impact assessment documentation includes a requirement to consider Welsh Language provision within any new policies and procedures that are being implemented.</p>
<p>Internet Websites (para. 32)</p> <p>2. Community Legal Advice Website – will be available in both English and Welsh languages</p> <p>We will also undertake a full review addressing the bilingual provision of information on our websites.</p>	<p>Implementation plan in place to meet this.</p> <p>We will undertake a full review addressing the bilingual provision of information on the LSC website and devise an action plan to increase the bilingual content of this site within 6 months of</p>	<p>Action completed</p> <p>Since the last report, our website content is now contained on the Justice.gov.uk website. Where appropriate, we publish information bilingually e.g. legal aid forms aimed at the public.</p>

LAA Scheme – Agreed Actions	LAA Scheme - Initial Timetable	Progress during 2013-2014
	implementation of the scheme.	
<p>Publications (para.30) 3. All published materials intended for the public in Wales will be produced bilingually in one document unless the size or complexity of the document dictates the need for separate Welsh and English versions.</p>	<p>Already implemented and ongoing for documents originating in Wales. We will ensure that all other published materials meet this requirement where reasonable and practicable to do so. Within 6 months of the scheme being adopted we will review all publications for the public and prepare an implementation plan.</p>	<p>Action completed We continue to publish the Agency's Annual report bilingually. We will give consideration to the translation of any additional documents that we publish in the future as a result of our change to the Legal Aid Agency.</p>
<p><u>Measures for dealing with the public in Wales (para. 26)</u> 4. We will consult with our contracted suppliers in Wales to identify what additional bilingual services we should provide and, where it is reasonable to do so, we will implement those services.</p>	<p>We will carry out a survey of our providers within 3 months of the implementation of this scheme to establish what additional bilingual services they would require and where reasonable to do so we will draw up an action plan to implement those services.</p>	<p>Action completed. We continue to maintain the existing Welsh language provision in the Legal Aid Agency.</p>
<p>Correspondence and Personal Attendances (paras 15 & 25) 5. We will maintain a current record of the names of individuals and organisations that have expressed a wish to receive written correspondence through the medium of Welsh.</p>	<p>We will introduce a system to establish language choice at the first point of contact and record the preference for future use by ensuring that files and records are clearly marked. We will also introduce a system to record the details of individuals and organisations who have expressed a wish to receive correspondence</p>	<p>The procedure is in place. Where people contact the Agency through the medium of Welsh we continue to record their details centrally.</p>

LAA Scheme – Agreed Actions	LAA Scheme - Initial Timetable	Progress during 2013-2014
	through the medium of Welsh. Both within 6 months of the implementation of this scheme.	
<u>Implementing, monitoring and publishing this Scheme (para. 47)</u> 6. Suggestions for improvement to our services in Welsh are also welcome and will be considered as part of our monitoring process.	We will introduce a system within 6 months of the implementation of this scheme to consult with Welsh speaking visitors to our offices regarding our Welsh language services in order to establish any suggestions for improvement. Provision will be made to implement these suggestions where it is reasonable to do so.	Action completed. We continue to advertise our Welsh language services in our reception area as well as publicising our Welsh language telephone number on correspondence and via a recorded message on the English service.

Mainstreaming the Welsh Language

In order to ensure that Welsh language provisions are considered at the earliest opportunity, prompts have been included within our standard equality impact assessment documentation relating to the implementation of MoJ policy. These will be considered at the outset of any new policy implementation initiatives.

Responsibility for our Welsh Language scheme will transfer to our Central Governance team during 2014/15. This will provide greater opportunity for earlier consideration of Welsh language requirements during the implementation of new policies and projects.

Welsh speaking staff continue to have access to Cysgliad and Welsh Microsoft on our internal IT system.

Our contracts with providers specifically contain clauses regarding the provision of Welsh language services to legal aid clients in Wales as a matter of course. We have run several tender processes for the letting of new contracts during this review period and are due to retender our crime contracts during 2014/15.

Performance Indicators

PI 1 Frontline Services

We currently have 2 bilingual staff dedicated to our Welsh language services full time which amounts to 8% of the customer services team in Wales. They cover the Welsh language line and also assist with proof reading and ad hoc translations. In addition, we have a further 2 bilingual staff in different departments within the Wales office who can also cover the Welsh language services if required.

We regularly receive positive feedback from our providers regarding our Welsh language front line services including recent feedback from one provider that this was the best service provided by the LAA.

We maintain monthly logs of the telephone calls that we receive on the Welsh telephone line. During April 2013 to the end of March 2014, we received 837 calls, a decrease of 95 calls on the previous 12 months. This may be a result of the reduction in legally aided work since the introduction of LASPO and a similar effect can be seen on call volumes to the English service.

PI 2 Providing Services Through Third Parties

All of our legal aid contracts with our face to face providers include specific requirements that they have the ability to provide a Welsh language service in Wales. Firms comply either by employing Welsh language speakers or have procedures in place to provide a Welsh language service through referral to Welsh speaking solicitors should a client so request.

Additionally, we fund telephone advice through Civil Legal Advice contracts. Clients accessing this service are able to speak to Welsh speaking operators.

PI 3 Language Training and Awareness

All staff are allocated time for training and development. 4 members of staff are currently pursuing Welsh language training provided by HMCTS to improve Welsh language skills. This has been an invaluable resource that we have been able to participate in. During the coming year, some of our existing Welsh speaking staff are also intending to participate in conversation classes run by HMCTS to increase their confidence in the use of spoken Welsh.

PI 4 Information Technology

Our new IT system for civil legal aid matters is being rolled out during the course of 2014. Correspondence and any declarations requiring the client's signature are available in Welsh.

PI 5 Administering the Scheme

We have received no complaints regarding our Welsh language services this year. We continue to receive positive feedback regarding our frontline Welsh services as outlined above.

Conclusion

We are pleased to report that we have been able to continue to provide a high standard of Welsh language services during the current climate. We remain committed to our Welsh language obligations and look forward to issuing our new scheme during early 2014/15.

Matthew Coats
Chief Executive, Legal Aid Agency