



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Increase the capacity of Welsh language skills among the workforce

Implement a long-term strategy to increase the percentage of the workforce with Welsh language skills

Date: October 2020

Over a number of years, North Wales Police has actively implemented leadership, recruitment and training arrangements that have led to a significant increase in the capacity to serve the public through the medium of Welsh.

THE BACKGROUND

This study highlights the arrangements that have enabled North Wales Police (NWP) to increase its capacity to provide services through the medium of Welsh. Changes observed between 2006 and 2019 include:

- increasing the number of staff able to speak Welsh (Level 4 and 5 on NWP's Welsh Language Ability framework) by 10%
- increasing the number of staff who can speak partly in Welsh (level 3 on the NWP framework) by 23%
- between 2006 and 2019 NWP's Welsh language ability figures have been completely transformed. In 2006 over half of staff (66%) were at levels 0, 1 and 2. In 2013 for the first time over half of staff (54.2%) were at levels 3,4, and 5. The current situation is that 71.2% of staff at levels 3 - 5.
- gradually removing the number of staff with no Welsh language skills from 11% to 0%.

WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

Many factors have contributed to this change, for example leadership, ambitious targets, and investment in operational support and training for staff. Almost 20 years

ago, NWP committed to transform into an organization that embraces the Welsh language and strives to continually evolve its Welsh language services.

NWP's first Welsh Language Strategy was created in 2001. The strategy had two main principles, namely:

- the Police want to treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality
- it aims to be a bilingual organization.

As part of the strategy, a series of strategic requirements have been developed to complement policing priorities, ensuring that the Welsh language is considered at the same level as the core mandate of the service, which is crime fighting and protecting communities.

The strategy has been revised a number of times over the years to reflect changes in legislation, for example the advent of the Welsh language standards, and changes in the governance of the Police. It is now a joint Welsh Language Strategy between North Wales Police and the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

The current strategy emphasizes NWP's strong desire to be a bilingual organization, and states that it continues to develop a policing approach that respects the Welsh language and culture and recognizes that Welsh speakers have the right to use the language when dealing with the Police. The Police continue to emphasize that there is a business benefit to the organization in promoting bilingualism, as it is an integral part of providing a quality service to the communities in North Wales. Offering services through the medium of Welsh and English is a statutory requirement and also helps the Police gain the confidence and support of the public which is so important in policing.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND LEADERSHIP

In order to promote structural change and implementation, from 2000 onwards work started seriously on the planning to increasing the language capacity of the police through the provision of language training in the workplace. Welsh language courses were already being arranged for staff by an external provider but, in order to focus more on this core element, it was decided to create a new post to be responsible for co-ordinating and providing staff language training - an innovative development at the time. Prior to that, the only posts directly related to the Welsh language in the Police were the posts of two full-time translators, and there was also one member of staff who, among his other responsibilities, was responsible for the Welsh Language Scheme.

As well as identifying and meeting staff training and language awareness needs, the new post holder was responsible for identifying the organisation's language priorities. It was decided to upgrade the post of Welsh Language Training Co-ordinator to the post of Welsh Language Adviser to give the work a higher status and reflect the wider remit. In order to give the role further status it was decided that the holder would work directly with the Deputy Chief Constable who had responsibility for the Welsh language portfolio.

By 2004 responsibility for the Welsh language had transferred to the Chief Constable at his own request, and he chaired meetings of the Police's Welsh Language Group. The personal commitment of the then Chief Constable, Richard Brunstrom, is widely recognized as a key contribution to ensuring that the organisation's bilingualism is promoted from the top, and taken seriously by the organization. For example, the Welsh Language and Local Government Working Group in 2016 said:

“Changing attitudes and behavior is often said to be slow work but the evidence suggests that best practice comes not from slow evolution but from purposeful decisions. [...] Changes in culture and practice within North Wales Police stem from the decisions of Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom [...] Positive leadership is transformational. ”

The Chief Constables and other Chief Officers who have followed Richard Brunstrom have all developed their own Welsh language skills, sending a clear message to all staff about the commitment to showing respect for the Welsh language. The current NWP Chief Officers lead on Welsh language matters in the Force and ensure that the work of delivering the Welsh Language Strategy and increasing the capacity of Welsh language skills among the workforce takes place. Such example and leadership are key in an organization with a 'command and control' structure.

CREATE A CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR POLICE

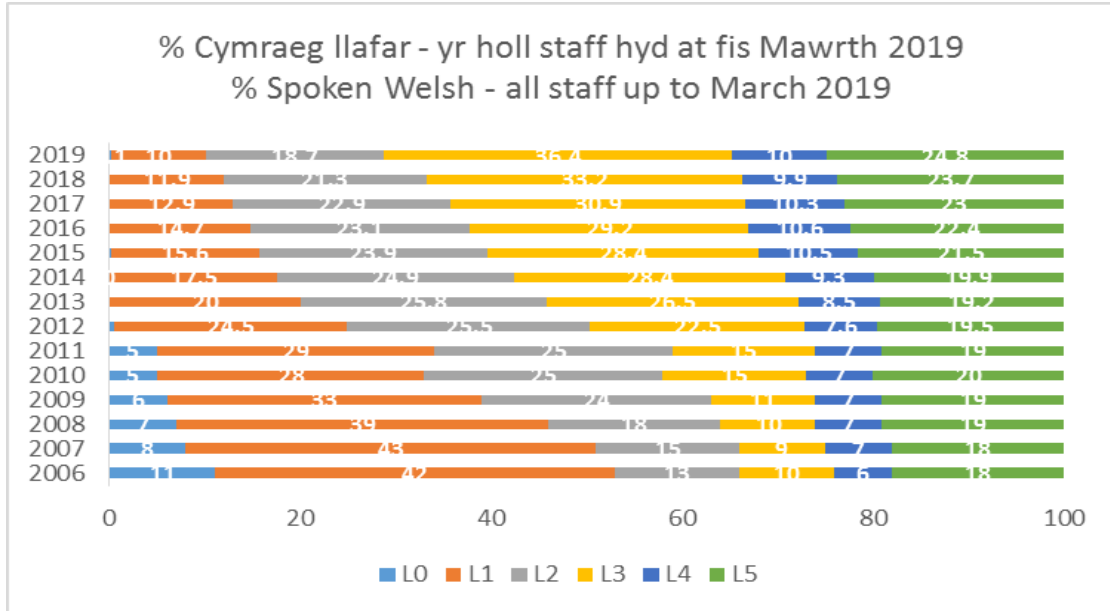
In 2003 the Police's Welsh Language Group decided that Welsh language capability should be recognized as a skill, alongside other policing skills.

The first step in the process was to try to understand and measure Welsh language capacity as reliable statistics on the linguistic ability of officers were not available. Although Welsh language ability existed in the workforce informally, English was effectively the 'official' language of the organization. Welsh language ability was recorded using words such as 'no', 'greeting', 'basic', 'sufficient', and 'fluent', which are very open to different interpretations. In the absence of guidance or external standard guidance on how to measure ability in Welsh as a skill in a structured, transparent and consistent way, it became clear to NWP that a new process needed to be established.

In 2003 an internal framework for measuring staff language skills was created. The North Wales Police Welsh Language Proficiency Framework includes levels of ability from 0 - 5 and is based on the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) framework. The framework includes a series of 'I can' statements for staff to self-assess their skills. This method of measuring ability formed the basis of the subsequent work to establish language protocols when appointing or promoting staff, and establishing a new structure of in-house language training courses.

Note: The [Commissioner's Code of Practice for the Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) states that organizations can use the National Center for Learning Welsh's Welsh learning level checker to assess staff Welsh language skills, and notes that CEFR levels may be used (which correlated with ALTE levels and levels of the Learning Welsh curriculum). The Commissioner is keen to see organizations assess staff skills consistently.

Graph to show the linguistic change in NWP over recent years



Sgiliau llafar Cymraeg holl staff HGC	L0	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
2006	11.0	42.0	13.0	10.0	6.0	18.0
2007	8.0	43.0	15.0	9.0	7.0	18.0
2008	7.0	39.0	18.0	10.0	7.0	19.0
2009	6.0	33.0	24.0	11.0	7.0	19.0
2010	5.0	28.0	25.0	15.0	7.0	20.0
2011	5.0	29.0	25.0	15.0	7.0	19.0
2012	0.4	24.5	25.5	22.5	7.6	19.5
2013	0.0	20.0	25.8	26.5	8.5	19.2
2014	0.0	17.5	24.9	28.4	9.3	19.9
2015	0.1	15.6	23.9	28.4	10.5	21.5
2016	0.0	14.7	23.1	29.2	10.6	22.4
2017	0.1	12.4	22.1	32.0	10.3	23.1

2018	0.0	11.9	21.3	33.2	9.9	23.7
2019	0.1	10	18.7	36.4	10	24.8

In 2015 NWP created interactive language maps for the Police area as a workforce planning tool. The maps assist in monitoring the location of the Welsh language skills of staff and contribute to the decision on where police constables and PCSOs are deployed. There are two layers on the map with one showing the percentage of Welsh speakers in the community according to the latest census, the other showing the language levels of officers (constables and PCSOs) at each station. The information is regularly updated to ensure the content is accurate and current.

SETTING RECRUITMENT WELSH SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

The Police recognizes that the most effective way to improve the organisation's bilingual competence is by recruiting new staff who have good Welsh language skills from the start and who have the other necessary skills to carry out the role. Campaigns are being held to try and attract more job applications from Welsh speakers.

Since 2017, standard 136 requires NWP to assess the need for Welsh language skills for a new or vacant post, and categorize it as either a post where Welsh language skills are essential, where Welsh language skills need to be learned after appointment, where Welsh language skills are desirable, or where Welsh language skills are not required.

It is NWP's policy that all posts within the Police require some level of Welsh language ability, due to staff interaction with the public and their colleagues, and the aim of increasing capacity. In accordance with NWP's language skills policy, all posts require level 2 on the NWP framework as a minimum, prior to the appointment of staff, which means that Welsh language skills are essential or need to be learned for all posts.

As part of the purposeful language planning within the workforce, NWP has paid particular attention to recognizing the importance of the ability to demonstrate basic language courtesy in Welsh as part of every job. An integral part of the Police's language skills policy work was to make Welsh language ability a condition of appointment and promotion.

In 2004 NWP undertook an analysis of comments and complaints from the public and their elected representatives about the implementation of the Welsh Language at the time. The vast majority concerned staff's lack of ability to understand and say Welsh names and place names and addresses properly over the phone or in person. It was decided to create a process to improve the situation for the future. In 2005, the Police introduced a new recruitment condition, 'Protocol Level 1', which meant that all applicants for posts with North Wales Police, both officers and staff, were expected to be able to demonstrate verbal Welsh language skills to Level 1 on a framework NWP (basic language courtesy) before they are offered a job. This was done on the basis of:

- that the ability to understand and say place name and addresses is a matter of health and safety for both staff and the public

- that the ability to say people's first names and to greet and answer a greeting or farewell is an integral part of linguistic courtesy in a bilingual area
- that Welsh speakers in the Police deserve the same respect and courtesy from their colleagues as is given to the public.

Since 2008 new non-Welsh speaking staff must have at least a level 2 spoken Welsh language skills on the NWP framework before joining. They will then need to reach at least level 3 before the end of their probationary period. To assist new staff to achieve this level an 8 day course to teach level 3 Welsh oral skills on the NWP framework will be provided as part of initial training. New Welsh speaking Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will also receive language improvement courses in order to develop their confidence to be able to use written and spoken Welsh when performing their duties.

Any job advertised will go through the Police's 'Welsh language matrix' process to record what level of Welsh language ability between level 2 and 5 is necessary to fulfill the post in question. A series of questions are used to decide which level is appropriate. These include questions about:

- the job location
- how much contact the role has with the public including young people
- whether the post holder will have to make presentations to the public
- the nature of communications with external and internal service recipients and the frequency of contact with other bodies operating through the medium of Welsh.

Following this process and any further necessary discussions to confirm that the level is appropriate, the agreed level will be specified in the job description and will be a condition of appointment. If the post holder does not have that level of competence in Welsh it becomes a contractual condition that the individual develops the necessary language skills within a specific period with the support of the organization.

PROMOTION PROTOCOL

NWP's Welsh language skills policy provides a practical framework for managers and staff to implement in order to achieve the aims and aspirations set out in the joint Welsh Language Strategy.

The policy reminds staff that NWP recognizes that the ability to speak Welsh is a skill, alongside other policing skills. It states that all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to meet the requirements of speaking / writing in Welsh, and to maintain and use their Welsh language skills in the workplace. The policy recognizes the role of leadership in encouraging, supporting and promoting the use of Welsh in the workplace and in providing a Welsh language service.

The ability to demonstrate the linguistic courtesy in Welsh is embedded in NWP's leadership agenda. Following work to extend the Welsh language ability of managers and senior staff, the following requirements have now been established in the Police's Welsh Language Promotion Protocol:

1. All staff and officers at senior ranks (police and volunteer officers at the rank of Chief Inspector and senior police staff on salary scale PO (C) and above) are expected to have reached level 3 by the end of their probationary periods.
2. Staff applying for promotion (either moving to the next rank for police officers, or applying for a higher-level job in the case of staff) are required to demonstrate level 2 capability as part of their application.
3. Any promoted staff are required to agree to achieve level 3 within 12 months of promotion.

INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS AND THE CONFIDENCE TO USE IT

The Police provides in-house Welsh language training, tailored to police requirements, to assist staff in achieving these goals. It also requires all staff to take advantage of the training and development opportunities offered to them, and to demonstrate a determination to achieve the required level.

All language courses at NWP respond to the requirements of their Welsh Language Capability Framework to assist staff to move from one level to the next. These Welsh language courses have been developed and implemented in conjunction with Coleg Cambria, the outsourced training provider. The content of the courses focuses mainly on developing spoken Welsh skills for the needs of the workplace. Bespoke tests have been created to assess attainment.

Regular attention is given to ensuring that staff are able to maintain and use their Welsh language skills. Part of this is considering ways to encourage more use of Welsh in the workplace. A network of Welsh Language Champions has been established amongst staff in all departments and across the area to support this work.

CONTINUOUS REVIEWING AND DEVELOPMENT - REVIEWING HOW TO ATTRACT WELSH SPEAKERS TO APPLY FOR JOBS

NWP is continuing to review and evolve its arrangements to increase the Welsh language skills of its workforce. With the foundations now in place, NWP sees the possibility for the Human Resources Department to experiment with new approaches to upskilling the workforce.

Following feedback from applicants, NWP found a pattern that individuals who met the language criteria for posts requiring level 4 or higher Welsh language skills did not apply, due to a lack of confidence in their Welsh language skills. As Welsh language skills are required to provide a number of front-line services, for example in the communications center, NWP in 2019 experimented with how it communicates the need for Welsh language skills when advertising jobs to encourage more applications.

The adverts began to describe what the post holder is expected to be able to do through the medium of Welsh, as well as referring to the level required in the job description. For example, for a role in the Communications Center, it was explained that everyday

Welsh speaking skills were required when dealing effectively with telephone inquiries, and that the ability to write in Welsh was not required.

Following the introduction of these changes in advertising, one specific recruitment campaign saw an increase in the number of applications from applicants who met the linguistic criteria. NWP acknowledges that there are many factors that influence the success of recruitment campaigns, but the superficial evidence and anecdotal feedback suggest that these softer methods of communicating language needs in job advertisements are successful in attracting applicants who are Welsh speakers. As a result, it is intended to do something similar for job adverts that also have lower language requirements.

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COMMISSIONER'S OPINION

NWP leadership has shown a strong vision and commitment to providing services through the medium of Welsh for almost two decades now. I would like to see more leaders of organizations operating in Wales committing in the same way by setting a clear vision and investing sufficiently to make that vision a reality.

NWP understood early on that the most effective way to be able to offer services through the medium of Welsh is to increase the number of staff able to speak Welsh. They have achieved this by collecting detailed data on the linguistic skills of the workforce, robust recruitment and promotion policies, and support for staff to improve their skills. Although few other organizations in Wales have command and control structures as police forces have, all organizations can learn from the systematic approaches NWP has taken to increase the Welsh language skills capacity of the workforce. The investment in such detailed workforce planning meant that compliance with Welsh language standards in 2017 had come naturally to the organization; and that now enables them to focus on evolving and innovating further by experimenting with new methods of attracting Welsh speakers into the jobs that are really needed.