



Comisiynydd y  
Gymraeg  
Welsh Language  
Commissioner

# Improving governance and skills to prepare for standards

Creating cultural change by putting in place structures and processes to recognise the importance of Welsh language services

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In preparation to comply with Welsh language standards, South Wales Police put in place governance and accountability measures, training and skills requirements that would improve its services for Welsh speakers.

## BACKGROUND

The Welsh Language Standards (No. 5) Regulations 2016 set out the new requirements for police forces in Wales in relation to the Welsh language. On 30/09/2016, South Wales Police received a compliance notice which required it to begin complying with standards from 30/03/2017; it implemented a Welsh language scheme until 30/03/2017.

At that point, although there were areas of good practice (especially written materials, and services in communities where more people speak Welsh as a first language) the Force felt that there was a lack of awareness across the organisation of the importance of delivering Welsh language services to Welsh speaking communities. It also identified that the number of Welsh speakers in its workforce was too low to comply effectively with the standards, partly due to recruitment difficulties, and that training resources were limited.

The force was eager to ensure that its processes and practices would enable full compliance with the new legislation, and had identified key areas for improvement.

## ACTION TAKEN – GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A **new governance structure was designed** in order to deal with the implementation of the standards and the desired cultural change. A **tactical board was set up** to discuss the practicalities of implementing the standards; this was **supported by a strategic board**, which also considered the wider organisational needs. The Strategic Board, which reported into the Force's governance structure, was chaired by the new Assistant Chief Constable, who was passionate about improving Welsh language services.

Resources needed to be invested in order to enable compliance, and this could not be provided without sufficient evidence. The work of the tactical group and strategic board provided the required evidence to Chief Officers to invest resources and commit to embedding the Welsh language across the organisation.

A number of work streams were set up to implement the practical changes required to comply with the standards. Streams included service delivery, correspondence, meetings, reception areas, interviews, complaints, announcements, HR & Training, communications, procurement, policy making and record keeping. The streams were led by specific business leads, who used a consultative approach in developing changes to working practices.

Two new policies were developed: the Welsh Language Policy, which provides an overview of the processes in place to ensure compliance with the standards; and the Welsh Language Skills Policy, which has been developed to recognise Welsh as a skill alongside other policing skills. Because the policies were developed in a collaborative manner, no further issues were raised during internal consultation on the policies.

## ACTION TAKEN – UP-SKILLING THE WORKFORCE

The Force introduced new training for all staff. This included:

- classroom-based level 2 Welsh language classes, firstly for staff going through the promotion processes, and then for all staff, (complying with standards 127 and 128);
- Welsh language media training.

The Force ensured that the timetable for Welsh language training fitted in with operational requirements, meaning that front line policing was not affected.

Standard 134 in the Force's compliance notice states that it must assess the need for Welsh language skills and assign one of four categories to the post (such as 'Welsh essential' or 'Welsh desirable'). The Force now uses a standard matrix to profile every role in the organisation, based on the nature of the role as well as the linguistic make-up of the local community.

All new appointees (with the exception of volunteers, contractors and agency staff) are expected to have attained at least Level 1 in Welsh, which is a condition of their appointment, and to achieve Level 2 within 12 months of their appointment. All internally advertised roles require at least Level 2 for appointment, and require that the level defined by the role profile be reached within 12 months.

## OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES

The Force reports that its efforts have been successful and led to positive outcomes, including:

- an increase in the number of officers / staff who receive Welsh language training, with good feedback from attendees;
- greater awareness of the Welsh language across the Force;
- more staff wanting to be involved in Welsh-language activities, such as the Eisteddfod and media training;
- more staff using Welsh in the office and in communities;
- greater engagement with Welsh-speaking communities, for example at the National Eisteddfod and through social media.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE TRANSFERABLE TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS?

The Force feels that other organisations preparing to comply with Welsh language standards could benefit from:

- adapting governance structures and assigning and delegating responsibilities to ensure readiness for compliance, with leadership from the top;
- using a standard matrix in assessing the Welsh-language requirements of vacant posts, and putting in place minimum requirements for all staff;
- recognising the importance of Welsh-language services to Welsh-speaking communities and acting to improve services accordingly.

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## THE COMMISSIONER'S VIEW

Effective preparation in advance is essential so that organisations are ready to comply with Welsh language standards from the imposition day on. In the case of South Wales Police, this preparation involved a frank analysis of its current strengths and weaknesses. It went on to implement changes in key fields.

Its focus on governance highlights the importance of ensuring that an organisation has committed to a plan and that appropriate structures are in place for accountability and

responsibility. It went about improving its Welsh language provision in a way that ensured that the changes were interlocked with the organisation's current processes and practices.

Its focus on workforce skills shows that an organisation's people are its most important resource, able to make significance difference to people's experiences. Making basic Welsh an essential requirement for all staff members is a positive step that, in addition to assuring the public that the organisation is committed to the Welsh language, is an effective way of raising awareness within the force of the importance of Welsh language services. Making improving Welsh language skills part of the promotion process is a clever way of incentivising officers to move to another level.