



**NORTH WALES
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY
WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME**

2005-2010

**prepared in accordance with the
Welsh Language Act 1993**

27/06/05

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DECLARATION

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality.

This Scheme sets out how the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

GENERAL NOTE

Simon Smith
Chief Fire Officer
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Cllr Trevor Roberts
Chairman
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

References to 'The Fire and Rescue Authority' and 'The Fire and Rescue Service' in this Scheme refer specifically to 'The North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority' and 'The North Wales Fire and Rescue Service', who are responsible for the provision of fire and rescue services in the six counties in North Wales.

References to 'bilingualism' in this Scheme refer specifically to the Welsh and English languages.

This Revised Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on [INSERT DATE].

FOREWORD TO THE REVISED SCHEME

This is North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's revised Welsh Language Scheme, which builds on our first scheme which we published in 1999.

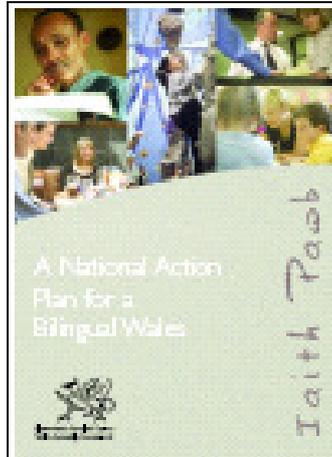
That first scheme was produced primarily as a policy document, and although it served its purpose well, we have become increasingly aware that its rather formal style tended to dampen its effectiveness as a means of driving improvement in the services we deliver.

As part of the work of revising this scheme, therefore, we have sought to produce a document that is both a public statement of policy and intent and a practical, accessible handbook for staff and Members. Although it is targeted mainly at the Service itself, we are eager to ensure that members of the public can easily access straightforward information about what they can expect from us.

A great deal has already been accomplished in relation to embedding bilingualism into the Authority's activities. Reports to the Welsh Language Board provide evidence of our continuing success. Our improvement plans should not, therefore, be thought of as reflecting a deficit in our previously planned activities.

Whilst making some reference to past achievements, a primary objective in compiling this revised Scheme has been to re-energise and add a new vigour to improvement activities. Above all, we have sought to give an honest and realistic account of how we propose to bring about the realisation of our vision for delivering services through the medium of both languages between now and 2010.

THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR A BILINGUAL WALES



Iaith Pawb, published by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2003

In February 2003 the Welsh Assembly Government published '*laith Pawb*', a strategic policy document and a '*national action plan for a bilingual Wales*'. This was the first ever national framework for action that had been planned at a governmental level for preserving, sustaining and promoting the Welsh language.

We, the Fire and Rescue Authority, support the aims of that framework and consider that our Welsh Language Scheme represents an important local contribution towards the realisation of that broader national strategy.

In November 2004, as part of a drive to "shrink and reform the quango state in Wales", the Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan MP, First Minister of the Welsh Assembly, announced changes to the Welsh Language Board that were designed to strengthen democratic accountability:

"The functions of the Welsh Language Board are largely governmental, most being concerned with policy and grant making. The Assembly Government now has in Iaith Pawb its own Welsh language policy and supporting staff. I have decided that the functions of the Board should be merged into the Assembly Government before April 2007.

The Board's regulatory function in overseeing the Welsh language schemes of all public bodies including ourselves will be undertaken by the establishment of an office of regulator or "dyfarnydd". This office will initially be set up on an advisory basis converting to a statutory basis when the legislative opportunity arises."

At the time of writing, the impact of this change is unknown.

PLACING THIS REVISED SCHEME IN CONTEXT

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority serves a rich diversity of communities, against a backdrop of significant natural and cultural heritage.

The six unitary authority areas of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham share a range of common features, but also have their own distinct profiles in a region that combines industrialised, closely populated and anglicised areas with rural and semi-rural Welsh heartlands.



WELSH USAGE IN NORTH WALES

According to the 2001 census information¹, out of the 641,286 people aged three years and over living in North Wales, 225,213 (35%) of them could either speak, read or write Welsh. An even higher number – at least 232,125 (36%) – said they were able to understand spoken Welsh.

PEOPLE WITH AT LEAST ONE SKILL IN THE WELSH LANGUAGE

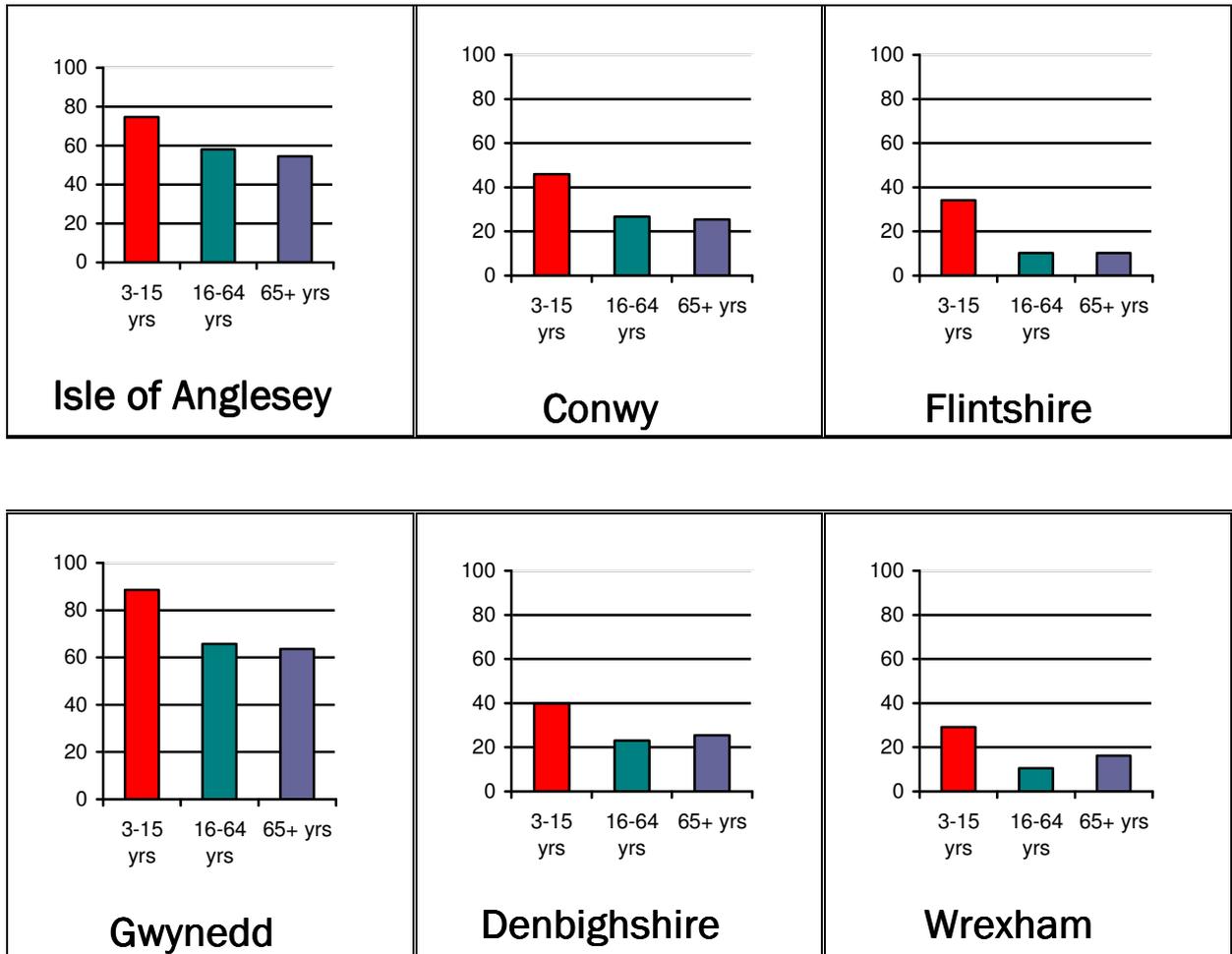
	All people aged 3 or over	Who understand spoken Welsh	Who speak Welsh	Who read Welsh	Who write Welsh	Who either speak, read or write Welsh
Gwynedd	112,800	77,966	77,846	72,276	69,264	79,184
Isle of Anglesey	64,679	41,220	38,893	35,510	33,246	39,885
Conwy	106,316	37,112	31,298	29,085	26,077	33,839
Denbighshire	90,085	28,146	23,760	22,431	19,858	26,119
Flintshire	143,382	24,630	20,599	20,611	17,687	24,364
Wrexham	124,024	23,051	18,105	18,386	15,280	21,822
Totals	641,286	232,125	210,501	198,299	181,412	225,213

¹ Census 2001: Report on the Welsh Language, Supplementary Table on Welsh Language Skills.

THE PROJECTED INCREASE IN THE USE OF WELSH

The number of people with Welsh language skills looks set to increase. According to the 2001 census², the highest percentage of Welsh speakers is not amongst the older generation, but amongst the youngsters. The same is true of all six counties. As a service, therefore, we need to be mindful of the fact that public demand for bilingual services will almost inevitably grow.

THE PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE AGED 3 OR OVER WHO SPEAK WELSH



Even in those areas bordering England that have the lowest percentage of 3 – 15 year olds who speak Welsh, percentages within individual community boundaries are still relatively high. In Flintshire, the percentage ranges between 29% and 46%. In Wrexham it ranges between 17% and 59%.

Furthermore, across the whole of Wales, 60% of the people in Wales who were questioned about their national identity in the Labour Force Survey 2001, considered their national identity to be Welsh, with an additional 7% considering their national identity to be Welsh and another national identity (most commonly British).

² Census 2001: Report on the Welsh Language, Table WLP01

THE AUTHORITY'S OUTLOOK ON BILINGUALISM

We in North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority pride ourselves on having taken the issue of language seriously over many years.

By acknowledging our moral and legal duties to meet public expectation and to protect the cultural heritage of the area, we also acknowledge that there are positive service benefits to be had from conducting our public business in both languages.

Saving lives and reducing risk are at the heart of the Authority's mission – the language issue is vital to its success.

We aim to provide services *equitably* to all areas of North Wales, taking into account the variations that exist between them.

We acknowledge our duty towards our staff too, the majority of whom are residents of North Wales, and who themselves reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their own communities.

IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME

Responsibility for the successful implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme rests with the Chief Fire Officer, who delegates its day to day management to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer with responsibility for Service Support.

An internal language working group (Gweithgor Iaith) has been set up to help drive the development of policies and procedures associated with this Scheme. The members of this group have not necessarily been chosen because of their role or position within the organisation, but more properly because of their interest in and enthusiasm for mainstreaming language issues.

THE DUTIES OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

The principal duties of the Fire and Rescue Authority are incorporated in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, namely:

- Promoting fire safety through the provision of information, publicity and encouragement to prevent fires and deaths and injuries by fire;
- Giving advice, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and on means of escape in the event of fire;
- Making provision for protecting life and property in the event of fires;
- Making provision for rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents;
- Responding to other emergencies or eventualities as required to protect people, property, or the environment.



CORPORATE AIMS

The Fire and Rescue Authority has developed a set of five corporate aims that summarise what it considers to be central to all its activities:

1. To prevent accidental and malicious fires;
2. To protect people from being killed or injured by fire and other hazards;
3. To protect the Community, businesses and the Environment from being harmed by fire and other hazards;
4. To find ways to improve in order to meet the expectations of the Community;
5. To operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, making the best use of the resources that are available.

A WORD ABOUT THE FORMAT

For ease of reading and reference, this section has been set out in a standard format.

Our Principles

This is where we set out our fundamental beliefs, our guiding principles and our ultimate aims for the service.

Our guiding principles will obviously affect different aspects of the Service. These aspects can be grouped under the following headings:

- i) **POLICIES**
- ii) **SERVICE DELIVERY**
- iii) **OUR PUBLIC IMAGE**
- iv) **THE WORKFORCE**
- v) **THIRD PARTIES**

In relation to each of the five elements listed above, we examine:

A. How do we demonstrate that we already follow our principles?

To what extent are we succeeding? How do we already contribute to the realisation of our vision? What contributions do we make to the overall strategy for Wales?

B. What plans do we have for improvement?

To what extent are we still working towards success? Which tasks are still in progress, and which have we yet to embark on?

POLICIES

Our Principles

In order to deliver, improve and expand our services, we develop new policies and participate in work programmes, schemes and initiatives. From time to time, we amend and update our policies to take account of changed circumstances.

We believe that all our policies should be consistent with our Welsh Language Scheme, and that they should not in any way undermine it.

As well as ensuring that our policies follow the guiding principle that both languages are equal, we believe that, where reasonable and practicable, our policies should also actively promote and facilitate the use of Welsh.

In accordance with Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 the adoption of a new policy must not result in our having to make changes to any part of our Welsh Language Scheme, without having first consulted the Welsh Language Board on the proposed change.

1. Developing New Policies

We have already made arrangements to communicate information about our policies to all staff of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service through the internal SAPPOs¹ system.

Instructions are set out in the very first SAPPO - Section 1, No. 1 on the correct procedures for developing new SAPPOs. This includes a requirement to consider the implications for the Welsh language.

This requirement applies not only to policy development. When considering other initiatives, the implications for the Welsh language are to be routinely considered by the relevant individuals or group tasked with planning or participating in those initiatives. This therefore mainstreams the linguistic element to all new initiatives and policies.

Plans for improvement

Despite the awareness raising that has already been undertaken, we consider that there is now additional work to be done in ensuring that all our staff are sufficiently familiar with the content of our Welsh Language Scheme. We therefore commit to raising the profile of the Scheme generally and to drawing it to the attention of all members of staff who may become involved in developing policies or in other initiatives.

¹ SAPPO – Service Administrative Policy & Procedure Order

We will also raise the profile of the Scheme with the elected members of the Fire and Rescue Authority, especially with new members.

We will set out the legal obligations and our expectations under the Scheme, and draw attention to the practical advantages of acting in the spirit of the Welsh Language Act when delivering services to the people of North Wales.

We will make sure that staff are clear about whom to consult in relation to Welsh language matters as an integral part of the process of creating and delivering policies and schemes of work.

2. Reviewing Existing Policies

A system for reviewing SAPPO's is already set up to ensure that each one is re-examined after a specified period. The frequency varies according to the subject matter of the SAPPO, but is normally every three years.¹ As part of this review, any implications for the Welsh language and our bilingual policy must be taken into account.

Plans for improvement

We are aware that whilst concentrating on the specific content of any policy, we could miss an opportunity to introduce measures that would actively promote and facilitate the use made of the Welsh language.

Because we believe that the content of all our policies should be consistent with, and not undermine the Welsh Language Scheme, we will find ways to improve the process for reviewing policies to make sure that we neither miss an opportunity to improve in this way, nor risk contravening Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act.

¹ SAPPO No 1, Section 1

SERVICE DELIVERY

Our Principles

We acknowledge that members of the public - including elected Members of the Authority - have a right to choose whichever of the two languages to use when dealing with us, be that in the workplace, at home or out in the community.

The number of Welsh speakers is rising, and we believe that we should prepare for a rise in the community's expectations of us in terms of the services that are available to them in both languages.

We recognize that offering language choice to the public constitutes good practice, not a concession. We recognize that people express opinions and needs better in their chosen language.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to delivering a Service that is of the same high standard and quality in both Welsh and English.

1. Promoting fire safety through the provision of information, publicity and encouragement designed to prevent fires and to prevent deaths and injuries from fires.

Our existing policy is very clear in this regard – all publications and meetings (including interviews and campaigns in the media) which are for, or which involve the public are to be made available bilingually¹.

We strive to fill posts that incorporate an element of direct contact with the public with bilingual staff, and we have produced guidelines² on appointing staff to these posts. This commitment extends to members of staff who are involved in youth intervention programmes and specific preventive and rehabilitation work with offenders.

Bilingual officers are encouraged to wear a badge that makes it clear that they are able to communicate in both languages. As the duties of the fire and rescue service focus increasingly on the prevention of fires, more work will be undertaken in the community. Where we have staff who wish to learn Welsh, we can support them with their lessons.

We employ bilingual fire safety tutors. Materials for school pupils are prepared bilingually. Fire Safety presentations in schools are conducted in the language chosen

¹ SAPPO Section 1, No. 5

² Appendix to SAPPO Section 1 No. 7

by the school. Leaflets distributed as part of these Fire Safety presentations are made available in both languages.

Where we stage an event or visit in conjunction with other public or voluntary organisations, we encourage all participants to produce their own materials bilingually.

Plans for improvement

A large proportion of the workforce is made up of firefighters working the retained duty system, which requires that they live or work in close proximity to their fire station so that they can respond quickly to emergency calls as required. Understandably, because of the shortage of retained firefighters in some areas, it is inevitable that bilingual skills have not been ascribed the same level of importance for the recruitment process as physical and other attributes and being available to respond within the specified time.

Furthermore, we already employ many full time employees who come into contact regularly with the public as part of their work, but who cannot speak Welsh.

Therefore, over the next few years we will seek to increase the proportion of our workforce throughout North Wales who can speak Welsh, and to ensure that more individual members of staff have learnt sufficient Welsh to enable them to provide at least some of our services through the medium of Welsh.

As part of our strategy for implementing the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), we will consider the desirability of bilingual skills for the effective performance of individual roles within the organisation.

Additionally, when the Service becomes involved in new initiatives and activities in North Wales, we will consider how, given the limitations outlined above, we can best do so bilingually.

2. Giving advice, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and on means of escape in the event of fire

As previously described in this section, our principles on linguistic matters cut across all our policies on appointing and developing staff. We endeavour to assign bilingual staff to those posts where there is direct contact with the public (face to face or on the telephone), and we have guidelines relating to appointing new staff to positions that necessitate regular contact with the public.

According to these guidelines¹, bilingual skills are essential for staff in posts where they are expected to meet and give advice or training to the public. Assistance in

¹ Appendix to SAPPO Section 1 No. 7

learning Welsh is available for members of staff who do not already have bilingual skills.

Nevertheless, because we cannot make absolute guarantees that the staff that members of the public come into contact with in the first instance will be bilingual, our policy is that we offer members of the public the choice of language for a future appointment, where this would be helpful. Our guidelines¹ give clear instructions on how to deal with correspondence, communication, meetings and appointments.

Plans for improvement

As part of our strategy for implementing the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), we will consider the desirability of bilingual skills for the effective performance of individual roles within the organisation. We will also seek to operate a suitably consistent and objective system of assessing linguistic ability.

We will set targets to increase the proportion of our staff who have the necessary bilingual skills as part of our annual target-setting process, with the aim of increasing the proportion of staff able to provide our services through the medium of both languages.

3. Making provision for protecting life and property in the event of fires

As well as preventing fires, we also respond to those that have already occurred. Our response to fire calls normally starts at the point of receipt of an emergency call by our Control Room. Trained bilingual control staff are always available to handle the call in either language, including providing survival guidance to trapped or distressed callers. Firefighters who deal with the fire itself work as a team, with each individual trained to the required standards. In certain circumstances, managers at a more senior level are called in to take strategic control of a situation.

Plans for improvement

The linguistic composition of firefighting crews and their directing officers has generally been a secondary consideration, except in relation to the fire prevention role. Recruitment and development policies for firefighters have primarily focussed on fireground skills and capability. In future, by promoting the operational advantages of bilingualism for those who deal with people at incidents, and by seeking to increase the overall proportion of operational firefighters with those skills, we are confident that the underlying language profile of the service will gradually change to such an extent that crews attending fire incidents have sufficient bilingual skills for dealing with people caught up in an emergency incident. Where we identify a serious deficiency of appropriate bilingual capability in one area that cannot be resolved through training, we will investigate whether we can re-distribute staff in order to correct the deficiency.

¹ SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

4. Making provision for rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents

The value of being able to communicate with people who are trapped in a vehicle in the language they are most comfortable with is clear. Victims can be reassured, calmed and kept informed during the process of extrication.

Plans for improvement

As already described in the section relating to firefighting crews, the availability of bilingual skills amongst crews responsible for rescuing people from vehicles needs to be increased. Our plans for this are as for staff involved in dealing with fires.

5. Responding to other emergencies or eventualities as required to protect people, property, or the environment

We respond to a wide range of non-fire emergency and non-emergency situations such as chemical spillages, flooding and rescues.

Plans for improvement

These are as described in previous sections on responding to fire incidents and road traffic accidents.

6. Public Relations

The public rightly expects a high level of openness and transparency from its fire and rescue service, and increasingly expects to be involved in decisions relating to the way it operates.

Over the years, the fire and rescue service has built up an excellent reputation, but we accept that this must not be taken for granted, and that maintaining good public relations are key to maintaining that excellent reputation.

- **Fire and Rescue Authority Meetings**

The majority of the Fire and Rescue Authority's meetings are open to the public, and all discussions may be held in either language. A simultaneous translation service is provided at all its meetings, so that speakers may choose which language they wish to use.

Generally, correspondence and written materials (paper-based or electronic) are distributed bilingually for meetings of the Authority and its sub-committees. However, in exceptional circumstances this is not possible (for example correspondence or information from an external source received in English only very shortly before a meeting). In these circumstances, it is likely that postponement of the meeting or of that particular discussion item would be deemed to be a disproportionate response.

Occasionally, draft documents or complex technical documents may be presented in English only for approval or discussion prior to the final compilation of a bilingual report.

However, we undertake to make every effort to keep these or other exceptional circumstances to a minimum.

- **Other public meetings**

The principle of treating the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality extends to all public meetings organised by or on behalf of the Authority or the Service. Guidance has been compiled for organising and holding public meetings¹.

- **Face-to-face meetings with individuals**

Guidance has been compiled for meeting and making appointments with members of the public². Where there are no members of staff available to discuss the matter in the preferred language of the member of the public, he or she may choose either to rearrange the appointment or to continue in his or her second language. Our aim is to be able to offer a genuine *choice* of two languages, not to insist that people opt for whichever language they consider would offer better access to services.

- **On the telephone**

Emergency Telephone Calls (999)

Through careful recruitment, development and allocation of staff, we aim to treat every emergency call according to standard procedures, irrespective of whether that call is conducted in Welsh or English. Normally, handling a call through the medium of either language will not affect the call handling time.

General Telephone Calls – Incoming non-emergency telephone calls are dealt with according to standard procedures, irrespective of whether they are received from a Welsh or an English speaker. First point of contact staff are required to give a bilingual greeting, with Welsh first.

Guidance has been compiled for staff who do not speak Welsh³ so that a Welsh-speaking caller will receive a polite explanation of the situation, and be offered a choice of how they would wish the call to proceed.

Voice Mail and Answering Machines – Guidance has been compiled⁴ for staff leaving automatic messages for anyone who might try to contact them by telephone when they are not available to answer the call. Standard greetings on answering machines in receptions and on other first point of contact numbers will be bilingual, with Welsh first. The language of greetings recorded on answering machines on the extension numbers and/or mobile phones of individual officers will depend to a large extent on

¹ SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

² SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

³ SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

⁴ SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

their own personal choice or linguistic skills. However, all members of staff are encouraged to leave bilingual messages, and assistance will be provided for anyone who is unsure about the correct terminology to be used.

- **Correspondence**

Guidance has been compiled¹ for corresponding with members of the public by letter, which ensures that anyone who sends us a letter in Welsh or English will receive a response in that language. Also, if the letter is sent following a conversation, the letter will be in the language of the conversation, unless otherwise requested.

If it isn't obvious which language is desired, the correspondence will be bilingual.

The Fire and Rescue Service's headed notepaper contains a sentence indicating that members of the public are welcome to write to the Authority in Welsh or English. Wording appears bilingually on the Authority's standard printed stationery.

- **Electronically**

We are adopting new ways of using technology to deliver services. When introducing new electronic systems, we will seek to ensure that means of communication are available in both languages.

Services provided to the public via the Authority's website will be treated according to the same linguistic criteria as services provided via any other means.

- **Consulting with the public**

From time to time we conduct opinion surveys to gauge the public's view of our services. Public opinion surveys will be conducted bilingually.

Plans for improvement

Assessing our own success or otherwise in the field of public relations can be problematic in terms of measuring and recording individual interactions with members of the public, and in the past this has unfortunately tended to focus too much on quantitative counts of failures or deficiencies (such as from complaints). We plan, therefore, to increase our use of appropriate qualitative assessments to establish just how effectively we perform in this regard.

¹ SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

PUBLIC IMAGE

Our Principles

Our public image as an Authority that operates bilingually helps us to reach the people we serve. Our main aim is to keep people safe, and by communicating effectively at all times in both languages, we can improve our accessibility to our communities.

In our opinion, we have a responsibility as a public service to reflect the community we serve, so that we can provide excellent services throughout the area.

The Authority's image and corporate identity will be bilingual at all times.

The public image of the fire and rescue service in the UK is changing, predominantly in areas relating to a) a diverse workforce that reflects the community it serves, and b) doing more to prevent fires.

The public image of our service as a bilingual service impacts on both these aspects. A high proportion of the people who live and work in North Wales conduct their day to day lives bilingually. Presenting a monolingual public image would be strange and unpalatable to many of those people.

- **Signage**

All signs produced by the Service are bilingual. Guidance is issued on the bilingual requirements to all agents who are involved in producing these signs.

- **Vehicle Livery**

The Service's vehicle livery is bilingual, with Welsh words appearing above or (to the reader) to the left of the English. Guidance is issued on the bilingual requirements to relevant vehicle livery suppliers.

- **Publications for the public in Wales**

Guidance has been compiled¹⁴ on producing publications for the public in Wales. All publications and printed material for the public in Wales will be bilingual.

Usually, bilingual publications are printed back to back. Occasionally, however, it may be more appropriate to publish two separate versions – one in each language (e.g. educational books for schools).

In cases where there is no choice but to publish Welsh and English versions separately, both versions must be distributed simultaneously, and both must be made

¹⁴ SAPPO Section 1 No. 5

equally available. Both versions will carry a statement indicating that the document is also available in the other language.

Where a document produced by the Authority is priced, the price of the Welsh version must not be higher than the price of the English version, and the price of a combined bilingual version must not be higher than the price of the same document in just one language.

In the unlikely event that we publish for distribution to the public in Wales a particularly complex technical document that does not lend itself to being translated (e.g. relating to computer systems or equipment), it will be distributed in the original Welsh or English version but it must be accompanied by a summary of the content in the other language.

When we distribute publications on behalf of another organisation or agency, we make every effort to ensure that they are made available in both languages.

- **Other miscellaneous materials**

Items such as invitations, posters, cheques, licences, cards, menus, timetables, receipts, invoices, maps and vouchers are all bilingual.

- **Uniforms**

The Service's uniform livery will be bilingual, with the Welsh version appearing above or (to the reader) to the left of the English version.

- **Advertising and Publicity**

All public activities organised in Wales by the Authority (e.g. exhibitions, campaigns, conferences) are conducted bilingually unless the Authority agrees to comply with a specific bona fide request to conduct the activity through the medium of one language only.

This will extend to advertising the public activity itself, messages about the activity on information boards, banners, badges, balloons, etc., including electronic messages.

- **Official and public notices in Wales**

We ensure that the Authority's official public notices and job advertisements appear bilingually, with Welsh and English side by side, whether that is in the press, in an electronic format, on message boards or otherwise.

We ensure that the Welsh and English versions are equal in format, size, quality, clarity and prominence, with the Welsh version placed either above or to the left of the English version.

Plans for improvement

We acknowledge that from time to time we could do more to promote our bilingual public image, particularly when it comes to short-lived local initiatives, and particularly in anglicised areas. We will therefore strengthen the guidance we provide for personnel in this regard, to reinforce what it is that the service expects of them.

The information we provide for contractors and others also needs to be revamped and updated in order to re-emphasise the importance of our bilingual public image.

More people now use the internet for research and to make contact – we will therefore continue to find ways to improve the effectiveness of our website in promoting our public image as a bilingual organisation.

THE WORKFORCE

Our Principles

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's aim is to offer its services to members of the public in North Wales in either Welsh or English according to their preference, where it is practically possible to do so.

To this end, North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ensuring that sufficient staff with the necessary bilingual skills are available to meet the demands of its own Welsh Language Scheme.

1. Human Resources Strategy

Guidance has been compiled¹⁵ for determining which posts are deemed to have Welsh language skills as an 'essential' or a 'desirable' requirement. Both statistical and qualitative information will be used when considering the number and distribution of posts that feature bilingual skills.

Plans for improvement

The aim of our general strategy is to ensure that all members of staff of the Fire and Rescue Service are fully aware of their duties, and are able to:

- a) contribute to the realisation of the Authority's vision of delivering services in the language choice of the public; and
- b) act in accordance with the principle that when conducting public business in Wales, the Welsh and English languages will be treated on the basis of equality.

Our ultimate aim is to be able to offer a genuine choice of language at every meeting, based on public preference rather than officer availability.

Information, advice and training on our Bilingual Policy and Welsh Language Scheme will be available to all, and we anticipate that raising the profile and improving access to the Scheme will contribute to this. We will ensure that all members of staff, whatever their role, are made aware of the requirement to adhere to the principle of treating both languages on the basis of equality when conducting public business in Wales. Failure or refusal to follow the guidelines will be brought to the attention of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer with responsibility for Service Support. Wilful refusal to comply will be dealt with according to the Authority's standard disciplinary procedures.

In order to achieve the aim of delivering services in the preferred language of the public, we will develop a linguistic skills strategy to ensure that the necessary linguistic skills are available within the workforce. The primary aim of the strategy will be to

¹⁵ SAPPO Section 1 No. 7

ensure that sufficient employees with bilingual skills are available to fill those posts where contact with the public forms part of their regular duties. One element of the strategy relates to issues of succession, in order to avoid lack of skills in the future.

New software will allow us to monitor the allocation of staff who have the skills to provide services in both languages, thereby enabling us to rectify more easily any current or potential future shortfall.

Monitoring the linguistic profile of the service will be an integral part of implementing the framework of the Welsh Programme for Improvement – including the processes of Integrated Risk Management Planning and Best Value review. Reports will be submitted regularly to the Authority, including statistical and descriptive information on the linguistic profile of the service and its performance. This is in addition to the regular updates to the Welsh Language Board.

2. Appointing and promoting staff

Linguistic ability is regarded as a skill like any other skill for appointing staff. Members of staff involved in the recruitment process have access to guidance¹⁶ which sets out the Authority's recruitment policy.

The ability to speak Welsh is considered to be an 'essential' or a 'desirable' skill for some posts. In this context, 'essential' means that the ability to speak Welsh is absolutely necessary, and 'desirable' means that although it would be an advantage to appoint a Welsh speaker, it is not absolutely necessary.

In a situation where two candidates applying for a post for which the ability to speak Welsh would be 'desirable' have the same qualifications and experience, the ability to speak Welsh will be considered as an additional skill. In the event of appointing a person who does not have the bilingual skills desired for the post, the successful applicant will be encouraged to learn Welsh.

The ability to speak Welsh is considered to be a qualification equal to any other essential skill required for anyone employed in a post deemed 'Welsh essential'. Should there be difficulty in appointing a Welsh speaker with the necessary skills for such a post, a condition will then be set for the successful candidate to learn Welsh to the required level within an agreed period of time.

Plans for improvement

Although we encourage staff to learn Welsh, we will explore the possibility of introducing new requirements for at least some posts whereby successful non-Welsh speaking applicants for a 'Welsh desirable' post would be required to commit to achieving a pre-defined level of competence in Welsh within an agreed timescale.

¹⁶ SAPPO Section 1 No. 7

3. Other miscellaneous

- **Job advertising in the press**

We will endeavour to ensure that jobs vacancies that appear in newspapers and on websites appear in or on the most appropriate for that post in that they are the most likely to attract suitable applicants. Normally, job adverts will appear bilingually, but occasionally they may appear in Welsh only, for example where the job is designated 'Welsh essential' and the advert appears in a Welsh language newspapers or websites.

- **Recruitment campaigns**

Recruitment campaigns will be conducted bilingually.

- **Job fairs/careers conventions**

The Authority welcomes Welsh and English speakers as employees. We try to convey this to prospective employees at jobs fairs and careers conventions by having bilingual staff on hand to speak to members of the public.

- **Learning Welsh**

We endeavour to maintain an appropriate distribution of bilingual employees by encouraging existing staff in posts where it was deemed that the ability to speak Welsh is an essential skill to learn Welsh; or by relocating staff, on a voluntary basis, wherever possible.

Plans for improvement

Job descriptions will be drawn up to reflect the bilingual skills requirements of particular posts.

As part of the work of developing a linguistic skills strategy, we will determine which internal grouping (e.g. management group or a specified committee) would most effectively oversee the various tasks associated with the strategy in future. One of the duties of this grouping will be to identify any reduction in the proportion or number of staff who have bilingual skills, and to ensure that the Service takes steps to rectify the situation.

Learning Welsh will form part of the Service's development programme. Priority will be given to those members of staff who come into regular contact with the public, and their progress in learning the language will be regularly assessed.

Where an identified need exists, the Service's Development Manager will arrange for members of staff to receive vocational training courses through the medium of Welsh, where these are available. This relates particularly to members of staff in specialist posts, who will be encouraged to attend seminars and courses in their own particular subject area through the medium of Welsh.

THIRD PARTIES

Our Principles

The Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ensuring (through contracting arrangements) that agents or contractors, when providing services to the public in Wales on our behalf or under our supervision, satisfy those elements of this Scheme that relate to their work.

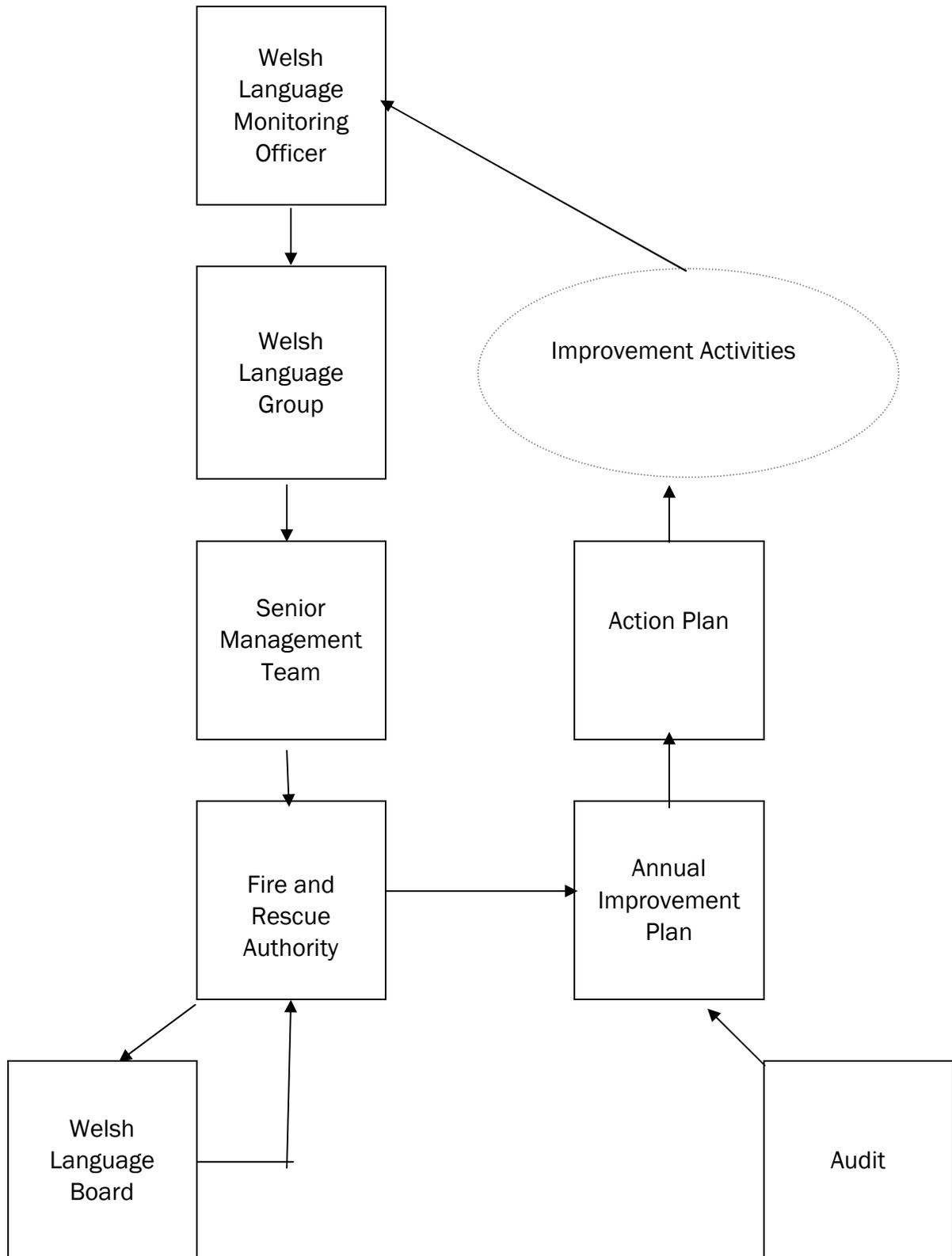
Any contract or arrangement made with a third party on our behalf for the delivery of services to the public in Wales (contractors, partnerships etc.) must be consistent with the terms of this Scheme. This includes services contracted out. Any requirements in relation to the Welsh language are stated in tendering documents and contracts.

Plans for improvement

As part of our strategy for communicating our expectations to external organisations that undertake to provide services for us, we will compile and issue written guidance to external agencies and contractors, drawing their attention to the requirements of this Scheme.

Although we recognise that it may not be realistic or feasible in every case, we will encourage third parties who erect their own company signs when working on fire service premises to use bilingual signs.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT VIA THE SCHEME



A SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE ISSUES

1. Monitoring

The Authority's Welsh Language Scheme will be routinely monitored.

We will:

- a) ensure that all members of staff receive guidance and instructions on the implementation of the Scheme;
- b) ensure that the Service's performance is monitored against the Scheme;
- c) ensure that a regular update is submitted by the Authority to the Welsh Language Board.

The responsibility within the Service for monitoring performance against various aspects of the Scheme will be passed to the most appropriate group or individual, as determined from time to time by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support). Monitoring and reporting will form part of the Service's overall performance management framework.

Results and regular updates will be formally reported at suitable intervals to the Senior Management Team and the Fire Authority, as part of a continuous process. Reports will include identification of any weaknesses, problems, complaints or obvious deficiencies that have become apparent with regard to the operation of the Scheme, and any actions that have been taken or planned to address them.

Complaints or problems associated with the operation of the Scheme will be logged and summarised in the regular update to the Welsh Language Board.

As a minimum, the following aspects will be monitored and reported:

- the proportion and number of staff who have bilingual skills (to the designated standard);
- the proportion and number of posts designated as 'Welsh essential' that are filled by staff with bilingual skills (to the appropriate standard);
- the proportion and number of posts designated as 'Welsh desirable' that are filled by staff with bilingual skills (to the appropriate standard);
- the number of complaints received from sources other than staff or their representatives regarding linguistic matters;
- the number of complaints received from staff or their representatives regarding linguistic matters;
- performance against any specific targets adopted as part of the performance management framework.

Statistical analyses of the linguistic profile of successful and unsuccessful applicants, recruits and leavers will also be undertaken inasmuch as internal human resources systems are capable of collecting and reporting this data.

Timed action plans setting specific targets on meeting the requirements of the Scheme will be drawn up and regularly updated. The principal aim of specific targets will be to enable the Service to provide a consistently high standard of bilingual services in all areas of North Wales.

2. Publishing Information

Relevant information about the Authority's performance as a bilingual authority will feature in its corporate publications to the public.

3. Publicity for the Scheme

The name and contact details of the person delegated by the Chief Fire Officer to implement the scheme will be made known to the staff, the public, and any agent or contractor working on behalf of the Authority.

The Authority will clearly state in all informative documents distributed to the public on a regular basis, that members of the public are welcome to contact the Service in Welsh or English. A similar statement will appear on the Service's website.

It will also be made known to the public visiting exhibition stands (*e.g. Fire Safety exhibitions*), open days, roadshow events and any other public event organised by the Service, that they are welcome to contact the Service in their preferred language.

4. Translation

The Service employs its own full-time Welsh Translator for translation work, to support specific initiatives and to advise on bilingual design matters and proof-reading.

External translation services will be commissioned to meet occasional large translation workloads.

Simultaneous translation services will be made available at public meetings.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support), or as otherwise directed by the Chief Fire Officer, will be responsible for implementing and supporting the scheme.

CONTACT DETAILS

Comments or enquiries about this scheme or our bilingual policy, should be sent to:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Support
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Ffordd Salisbury
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ

Tel: 01745 535250

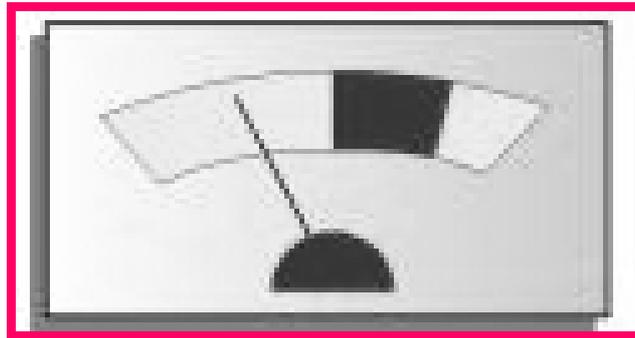
E-mail: po.acfo@nwales-fireservice.org.uk

SUMMARY OF OUR PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Action	Page	Responsibility	Review date
Promoting the Scheme Internally			
Find ways to raise the profile of the Scheme through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness training; and • access to advice and guidance 	10	ACFO(SS)	July 06
Promoting the Scheme Externally			
Continue to find ways to improve the effectiveness of our website in promoting our public image as a bilingual organisation.	20	Corporate Communications Manager	July 06
Compile guidance to external agencies and contractors, drawing their attention to the requirements of this Scheme. This to include strong encouragement to third parties working on fire and rescue service premises to erect bilingual signs	24	Corporate Services Manager	December 05
Update the information we provide for contractors and others in order to re-emphasise the importance of our bilingual public image.	24	Estates Manager	December 05
Develop a system whereby written guidance relating to our Welsh Language Scheme is routinely issued to external agencies and contractors.	24	Corporate Services Manager	December 05
Providing the Internal Infrastructure			
Clarify responsibilities in relation to providing a source of advice and guidance for matters relating to Welsh language.	11	Translator	December 05
Determine which service grouping would most effectively oversee the various tasks associated with the linguistic skills strategy in future, including the maintenance of an adequate proportion of staff who have bilingual skills.	21	Gweithgor Iaith	July 06
Making it Happen			
Increase the take-up of appropriate advice and guidance when developing policies and schemes of work. This to include identifying ways to actively promote and facilitate the use of Welsh.	11	Translator	July 06
Strengthen the guidance provided for personnel in relation to promoting our bilingual public image, to reinforce what it is that the service expects of them.	10	Translator	December 05
Develop a linguistic skills strategy, linked to the IPDS strategy, to ensure that the necessary linguistic skills are available within the workforce to deliver services in the preferred language of the public. This strategy to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarifying the desirability of bilingual skills for the effective performance of individual roles • issues of succession, in order to avoid lack of 	21	Development Manager & HR Manager	July 06

Action	Page	Responsibility	Review date
<p>skills in the future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> finding ways to increase the proportion of the workforce who can speak Welsh (including through suitable targets) ensuring that staff have sufficient knowledge of Welsh to provide at least some of our services through the medium of Welsh operating a suitably consistent and objective system of assessing linguistic ability. 			
Explore the feasibility of introducing new requirements for at least some posts whereby successful non-Welsh speaking applicants for a 'Welsh desirable' post would be required to commit to achieving a pre-defined level of competence in Welsh within an agreed timescale.	22	HR Manager	July 06
Find ways to make certain that job descriptions are developed that reflect the bilingual skills requirements of particular posts (as opposed to generic roles).	23	HR Manager	July 06
Ensure that learning Welsh is included in the Service's development programme.	23	Development Manager	December 05
Introduce regular assessments of Welsh language skills for staff in identified priority posts.	23	Translator	July 06
Continuous Self-awareness			
Introduce systems to identify serious deficiencies in bilingual capability within employee groupings, and clarify the procedure for resolving shortages through training or re-distribution of staff.		DCFO	July 06
Increase our use of appropriate qualitative assessments to establish just how effectively we perform in Welsh in the field of public relations.		Corporate Communications Manager	July 06
Develop a system of monitoring the linguistic profile of the service which forms an integral part of Wales Programme for Improvement.		Corporate Planning	July 06
Ensure that regular reports are submitted to the Authority, including statistical and descriptive information on the linguistic profile of the service and its performance. This is in addition to the regular updates to the Welsh Language Board.		ACFO(SS)	July 06

LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



- ▶ The proportion and number of staff who have bilingual skills (to the designated standard);
- ▶ The proportion and number of posts designated as 'welsh essential' that are filled by staff with bilingual skills (to the appropriate standard);
- ▶ The proportion and number of posts designated as 'welsh desirable' that are filled by staff with bilingual skills (to the appropriate standard);
- ▶ The number of complaints received from sources other than staff or their representatives regarding linguistic matters;
- ▶ The number of complaints received from staff or their representatives regarding linguistic matters;
- ▶ Performance against any specific targets adopted as part of the performance management framework.