



Legal Aid
Agency

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Mr Lloyd Jones
By email only
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Dear Mr Lloyd Jones,

Welsh Language Commissioner's response to the Legal Aid Agency's Annual Monitoring Report 2016/17

Thank you for your letter of 25 October 2017.

Please find attached at annex A the Agency's response to the Welsh Language Commissioner's request for further information.

I hope this will address all the Commissioner's queries.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Shaun McNally
Chief Executive Officer Legal Aid Agency (CBE)

Annex A: Further information requested by the Welsh Language Commissioner's comments on the Legal Aid Agency's Annual Monitoring report on the Welsh Language Scheme – 2016/17.

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| General Information |
| Whilst the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) does have some contact with members of the public, most of this contact is through contract solicitors (providers) and within the terms of their contact there is a requirement for providers to bring Welsh language services to the attention of all clients in Wales. |
| Commissioners Comments: 7 - Criminal legal aid applications |
| <p>The number for on-line applications made in the Welsh language up to the end of March 2017 is noted. A large number of Agency's forms are available in Welsh on the gov.uk website, but they do not appear to be at all prominent on the Agency's Home Page.</p> <p>What steps has the Agency taken to try and ensure that Welsh Language Forms and on-line services are prominent enough to customers who wish to use the Welsh language?</p> |
| <p>The online application form for a criminal legal aid application is accessed via providers, as stated in our Welsh Language Scheme (page 6). Providers offer clients the form at the appropriate time and can offer these in Welsh.</p> <p>Whilst copies of the forms are available to download online (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asiantaeth-cymorth-cyfreithiol-ffurflenni-cymraeg-welsh-forms) we would not expect clients to access these documents independently as they would be provided to them by their provider.</p> <p>However, taking the Commissioner's comments on board, we accept that these forms were not prominently displayed. Unfortunately, editorial constraints have prevented the LAA making changes to our homepage/content listing on .gov and so we have improved the signposting for users of the Welsh form on the following page:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/topic/legal-aid-for-providers</p> <p>The LAA will shortly be making use of social media to tweet links to the forms translated into Welsh.</p> <p>The steps that the LAA have now taken to improve the visibility of Welsh language on-line client services are detailed below.</p> |
| Commissioners Comments: 8 – Telephone calls |
| <p>The report confirms that there has been a decrease of 40% in the number of calls received by the Welsh language line compared to 2015-16. This follows on from a further decrease in the previous year. It is noted that some of the decrease follows the introduction of digital process, and that there has been an increase in new methods that customers can access information and the contact the Agency.</p> <p>Does the Agency keep a record as to how many Welsh language contacts are made through the digital processes and the new methods of contacting the Agency?</p> |
| As noted above, whilst the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) does have some contact with members of the public, the majority of our contacts are from contract providers. Providers indicate in our digital |

system whether they or their clients wish to correspond with us in Welsh. The LAA's digital system records these requests, and this figure is validated with a manual count.

During 2016/17 the LAA received a total of 121 request to correspond in Welsh, see the table below for monthly figures.

| 2016/17 Volume of request for Welsh language correspondence | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|
| April | May | June | July | August | September |
| 13 | 10 | 18 | 8 | 13 | 13 |
| October | November | December | January | February | March |
| 4 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 3 | 25 |

The Commissioner is asked to note that there can be a number of items of correspondence on a single case. To date the LAA's digital system does not have a mechanism for recording the volumes of correspondence in Welsh. To address this the LAA has asked each caseworker to record each item of correspondence in Welsh to ensure that the LAA has a baseline to monitor going forward.

Commissioners Comments: 14 – Clients

The Agency's online service on gov.uk is referred to, which helps clients to diagnose whether their problem falls within the scope of legal aid. As with the above comment regarding criminal legal aid applications, it is not apparent from the Agency's home page, or from the initial page of this specific service that a Welsh language service is available.

What steps has the Agency taken to try and ensure that Welsh language on-line version of the 'Check if you can get legal aid' is prominent enough to customers who wish to use the Welsh Language?

Although the 'Check if you can get Legal Aid' Tool is able to be translated into the Welsh language the LAA accepts that it can do more to make clients aware of this service on the initial Start Page prior to clients accessing the tool itself. The Agency will amend the Start Page to ensure that the availability of this adaptation is more prominent to clients. In addition, the Agency will create a new Welsh translated page to provide further information on this tool.

We hope for the changes to be in place during December 2017.

Commissioners Comments: 16 - Language Training and Awareness

It is noted that the Agency is exploring suitable courses for your advanced language learners, including residential courses.

The Commissioner has received information from the National Centre for Learning Welsh regarding the 'Work Welsh' scheme. The information is attached with this letter, and we trust that the information will be of assistance to the Agency.

Thank you for the details of the 'Work Welsh' scheme. This is really helpful and something that the LAA will look to make use of to support and develop the skills of our Welsh language learners.