



Shaun McNally CBE
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by e-mail:
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25/10/2017

Dear Mr McNally

Welsh Language Commissioner's comments on the Legal Aid Agency's Annual Monitoring report on the Welsh Language Scheme – 2016/17

Thank you for sending the Legal Aid Agency's (Agency) annual monitoring report on the Welsh language scheme for the above period.

The Welsh Language Act 1993 established the principle that, in the conduct of public business and administration of justice in Wales, the English and Welsh language should be treated on the basis of equality. Welsh language schemes explain which services are provided in Welsh in accordance with this principle, and the Commissioner is responsible for regulating their implementation.

After considering the content of the Agency's report, the Commissioner has decided to provide the following comments on some of the matters noted. Additional information is also requested on some of those matters.

Section in the report	Commissioner's comments/ Request for additional information
7 – Criminal legal aid applications	The number of on-line applications made in the Welsh language up to the end of March 2017 is noted. A large number of the 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 Homepage. What steps has the Agency taken to try and ensure that

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	Welsh language forms and on-line services are prominent enough to customers who wish to use the Welsh language?
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 processes, and that there has been an increase in new methods that customers can access information and 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>
14 – Clients	<p>The Agency's online service on gov.uk is referred to, which helps clients to diagnose whether their problem falls within scope of legal aid. As with the above comment regarding criminal legal aid applications, it is not apparent from the Agency's Homepage, or from the initial page of this specific service that a Welsh language service is available.</p> <p>What steps has the Agency taken to try and ensure that Welsh language on-line version of 'Check if you can get legal aid' is prominent enough to customers who wish to use the Welsh language?</p>
16 – Language Training and Awareness	<p>It is noted that the Agency is exploring suitable courses for your advanced language learners, including residential courses.</p> <p>The Commissioner has received information from the National Centre for Learning Welsh regarding their 'Work Welsh' scheme. The information is attached with this letter, and we trust that the information will be of assistance to the Agency.</p>

We would ask you to provide the additional information requested above by **24 November 2017**.

Yours sincerely,

Alun Lloyd Jones

On behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner

copy: Shelley Cooper