



Legal Aid
Agency

Working with others to achieve excellence in the delivery of legal aid

Welsh Language Scheme

2018/19 Report

November 2019



Welsh Language Scheme Report 2018/19

Introduction

1. This is the Legal Aid Agency's report on the operation of its Welsh Language Scheme (WLS) based on activities undertaken for the period April 2018 to March 2019.
2. This report is produced in line with the framework for monitoring and reporting agreed with the Welsh Language Board in September 2010.

Compliance with the WLS

Tenders

3. Our contracts with providers contain a requirement regarding the provision of Welsh language services to legal aid clients in Wales as a matter of course. We implemented a new civil contract in September 2018 and have given notice that the existing crime contract will be extended by a further year to March 2021. We continue to maintain this requirement in legal aid contracts for the delivery of advice to the public.

Publications

4. All published materials intended for the public in Wales are produced bilingually. These include the Legal Aid Agency's Annual Report 2018-19 and the Director of Legal Aid

Casework Report 2018-19. These are available online.

Performance Indicators PI 1 Frontline Services

Bilingual Staff

5. In the last 12 months we have recruited two Welsh speakers to replace two that left. We currently have four bilingual members of staff and one advanced learner dedicated to our Welsh language services. The Operations Manager for the Cardiff office is also an advanced learner. This amounts to approximately 25% of the customer services team in Wales. They cover our frontline services (telephone, correspondence, applications) and assist with proof reading and ad-hoc translations. In addition, we have a further two bilingual staff in different departments within our Cardiff office who can also support the Welsh language services if required.
6. We continue to receive positive feedback from our providers regarding our Welsh language frontline services.

Criminal legal aid applications

7. Since 2014 we have processed all criminal legal aid applications, work

previously undertaken by Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). The application process includes an online Welsh language application form to ensure that our clients can continue to apply for Criminal Legal Aid in Welsh and receive all related correspondence in Welsh if they choose to. In the 12 months to 31 March 2019 we received one application in Welsh.

correspondence (CCMS)		
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Telephone calls

8. We maintain monthly logs of the telephone calls that we receive on the Welsh language telephone line. Our analysis shows that between April 2018 to the end of March 2019, we received 165 calls, an 8% increase on the previous year. For comparison, during the same period we received a 1.3% reduction in English Language calls.

Civil Legal Aid

9. In addition to recording the details of telephone interactions, we continue to record our digital interactions in the Welsh language. Between April 2018 and March 2019, we received 101 requests via our CCMS system (our system for managing civil legal aid) in Welsh and 18 emails. We will continue to monitor all transactions in Welsh.

	2017-18	2018-19
Emails Received	10	18
Requests for Welsh language	163	101

PI 2 Providing Services through Third Parties

Face to face services

- 10. Most of our front-line service users are provided through contracted providers. Legal aid contracts with face-to-face providers include specific requirements that ensure providers can provide a Welsh language service in Wales. Firms comply by employing Welsh language speakers or having procedures in place to provide a Welsh language service through referral to a Welsh speaking provider within the same procurement area where such provision is available.
- 11. Contract Managers continue to pro-actively promote the Welsh language service as part of their annual provider activities in Wales.
- 12. We have reviewed arrangements with all our providers in Wales to establish what Welsh speaking staff they have and the demand that they have received for Welsh language services. We promote our Welsh language services, such as our telephone line and bilingual forms (where applicable).
- 13. A survey of our providers in Wales identified over 60% employ one or more Welsh speakers. Those who do not currently employ a Welsh speaker are all (bar one) based in the south

east of Wales, where demand for Welsh services is lower. Other providers in this area do employ a Welsh speaker and we therefore consider that there is sufficient alternative provision available. Our next survey is planned for 2020.

14. We have used Twitter to respond to provider queries in Welsh.

Telephone services

15. We continue to fund the Civil Legal Advice (CLA) Service which is a national telephone advice line service providing specialist legal advice in Debt, Education, Housing, Family and Discrimination. Clients accessing the initial telephone triage service can choose to communicate in Welsh. Contracts were re tendered and came into effect in October 2019, including tightened requirements for the provision of Welsh Language. The new contractor has three Welsh speaking operatives to ensure coverage.

16. The LAA's 'Check if you can get legal aid' digital online service on Gov.UK is available in Welsh and supports clients to diagnose whether their problem falls within scope of legal aid and if they are likely to be financially eligible to receive public funding. If appropriate, they will be offered a call back, using Welsh Language interpreters, from Civil Legal Advice to progress their case. We are currently working to improve the way our Welsh

customers can access this service from Gov.UK.

17. Where clients are detained in police custody and require legal advice, they can request a Welsh-speaking solicitor when the custody officer contacts the LAA's Duty Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC). This service facilitates the deployment of an appropriate solicitor to the police station.

PI 3 Language Training and Awareness

18. All staff are allocated time for training and development. We are actively looking to develop the skills of our advanced Welsh learners and are exploring suitable courses for them. We also continue to discuss all learning and development opportunities with our staff, including whether there is a desire to undertake Welsh language training. All staff have regular one-to-one meetings where training and development is discussed. When any individual wishes to develop skills in Welsh we would identify suitable courses to meet that need.

PI 4 Information Technology

19. Our IT system for civil legal aid matters is used by 1600 legal aid providers, including approximately 250 barristers' chambers. Correspondence and any declarations requiring the client's signature are available in Welsh.

PI 5 Administering the Scheme

20. Responsibility for our Welsh Language Scheme remains with the Secretariat team in the Corporate Centre during the reporting period 2018/19.

21. We have received no complaints about our Welsh Language services during 2018/19.

Conclusion

22. We are pleased to report that we have successfully implemented our Welsh Language Scheme this year and have continued to provide a high standard of Welsh language services.

Jane Harbottle
Chief Executive, Legal Aid Agency



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