



Legal Aid
Agency

Providing access to justice through working with others
to achieve excellence in the delivery of legal aid

Welsh Language Scheme

Annual Monitoring Report 2022-23 and 2023-24

25 February 2025



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Introduction

1. This is the Legal Aid Agency's (LAA) report on the operation of its Welsh Language Scheme based on activities undertaken for the period covered by the financial reporting years of 2022-23 and 2023-24.
2. This report is produced in line with the LAA's Welsh Language Scheme and the Ministry of Justice's updated Welsh Language Scheme approved by the Welsh Language Commissioner on 9 April 2018.
3. Throughout and after the pandemic, the LAA monitored the official guidance and advice published for England and Wales and has ensured that advice pertaining to Wales has guided and been incorporated into the LAA's approach to safeguarding the provision of legal aid services, including Welsh language support and service provision, to clients in Wales.
4. The provision of Legal Aid Services in the Welsh language is surveyed with those providers of legally aided advice. LAA Contract Managers will normally ensure providers of legal aid can offer a Welsh language service or have a process to which they can refer.

Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme

Tenders

5. 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. The 2022 Legal Aid Standard Crime Contract and the 2018 Legal Aid Standard Civil Contract maintain this requirement in line with the LAA's commitment to safeguard this provision in all current and future legal aid contracts for the delivery of advice to the public.

Publications

6. All published materials intended for the public in Wales will be produced in Welsh and English.

Performance Indicators

7. We monitor our performance against specific performance indicators (PI) agreed with the Welsh Language Commissioner. These are in relation to our frontline services, providing services through third parties, language training and awareness, IT and complaints.

PI 1 Frontline Services

Bilingual staff

8. In 2022-23 the LAA had six bilingual members of staff and two advanced learners. Of the six bilingual staff members, three were based in the Wales Customer Service Team along with one of the advanced learners, this amounted to approximately 26% of the team in 2022-23. In 2023-24 we have five bilingual members of staff and three advanced learners. Of the five bilingual staff members, three are based in the Wales Customer Service Team along with all three advanced learners, again this amounts to approximately 26% of the team. The Customer Service Team cover our frontline services (telephone, correspondence, applications) and assist with proof reading and ad-hoc translations. In addition, there are two bilingual staff from other departments based at the Cardiff office who can also support LAA Welsh language services if required.
9. We continue to receive positive feedback from our providers regarding our Welsh language frontline services, this is gathered informally through emails and provider visits.

Criminal legal aid applications

10. The application process for criminal legal aid applications 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 2023 we received one application in Welsh, which was a decrease of nine since the prior year. In the 12 months to 31 March 2024 we received three applications in Welsh, this is an increase of two since the prior year.

Telephone calls

11. We maintain monthly logs of the telephone calls received on the Welsh language telephone line, these calls include queries on both Civil and Criminal legal aid. Our analysis shows that from April 2022 to the end of March 2023, we received 185 calls, a decrease of 13.5% on the previous year. For comparison, during the same period we received a decrease of 4.17% in English Language calls. From April 2023 to the end of March 2024, we received 164 calls, a decrease of 11.35% on the previous year. For comparison, during the same period we received an increase of 2.68% in English Language calls.

Civil legal aid

12. In addition to recording the details of telephone interactions, we continue to record our digital interactions in the Welsh language. In the financial reporting year 2022-23, we received 64 requests via our Client and Cost Management System (CCMS) (our system for managing civil legal aid) in Welsh. In the financial reporting year 2023-24, we received 50 requests via CCMS in Welsh. We continue to monitor all transactions in Welsh.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Emails Received	54	5	0	3
Requests for Welsh language correspondence (CCMS)	138	63	64	50

PI 2 Providing Services through Third Parties**Face to face services**

13. Most of our front-line service is provided through our 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.

14. Contract Managers continue to proactively promote the Welsh language service as part of their routine provider activities in Wales, including during the annual visits programme to providers.

15. Welsh language services, such as our telephone line and bilingual forms (including Exceptional Case Funding Form ECF1 and ECF Inquest Form updated July 2022) are available upon request.

16. We have used X (formerly Twitter) to promote Welsh language services and to send tweets in Welsh. We had one Welsh tweet in 2022-23 promoting recruitment of Welsh Language Caseworkers. We had no Welsh tweets in 2023-24.

Telephone services

17. 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.
18. 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 continuing to expand the coverage of Welsh language support available digitally and are working alongside the Ministry of Justice's Legal Support Policy team to ensure onward signposting from the online service to third sector organisations is also available in Welsh.
19. 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. This service facilitates the deployment of an appropriate solicitor to the police station.

PI 3 Language Training and Awareness

20. All staff are allocated time for training and development. The LAA actively looks for innovative new ways to develop the skills of its advanced Welsh learners and seeks to identify appropriate learning opportunities. We also continue to discuss all learning and development opportunities with our staff in Cardiff, including whether there is a desire to undertake Welsh language training. When an individual expresses interest in developing Welsh language skills suitable training is identified to meet that need.

PI 4 Information Technology

21. Our IT system for civil legal aid matters, CCMS, is used by civil and family legal aid providers and others assigned to work on their cases for example advocates, clerks and costs lawyers. CCMS covers the whole process for certificated¹ civil and family legal aid work, from submitting legal aid applications to paying bills. Correspondence and any declarations requiring the signature of a client are available in Welsh on request. However, the ability of LAA digital products to support Welsh translations is not always straightforward as some of the legacy IT casework systems do not contain Welsh language translations. Despite this challenge letters will always be translated to Welsh upon request.

¹ Applications made to the Legal aid Agency for determination. There are levels of pre-work providers can do without seeking certificated work.

PI 5 Administering the Scheme

22. Responsibility for our Welsh Language Scheme remained with Corporate Services during the financial reporting years 2022-23 and 2023-24.
23. We received no complaints about our Welsh language services during the financial reporting years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Conclusion

24. I report that we have continued to successfully deliver an effective Welsh Language Scheme during the reporting period of 2022-23 and 2023-24 and have continued to provide a high standard of Welsh language services.

Jane Harbottle

Chief Executive, Legal Aid Agency



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