

Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022 - 2023

May 2023

LLAIS CYNGHORAU CYMRU
THE VOICE OF WELSH COUNCILS



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

This document is also available in Welsh



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Contents

1. Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils	4
2. Executive Summary	5
3. Background	7
4. Matters arising during the report	8
5. Our Standards	11
5.1 Service delivery standards	12
5.2 Operational standards	16
5.3 Policy making standards	25
5.4 Record keeping standards	26
6. Conclusion	28
Appendix 1: Baseline data	29

1. Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

We are The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); a politically led cross-party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive. **Our ultimate goal** is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

Welsh Language Standards

The WLGA is fully committed to compliance with the Welsh language standards as set out by the Welsh Government under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These standards set clear expectations on the WLGA to provide services in Welsh, and to promote the use of the Welsh language through all our services and are available on the WLGA's website: <https://wlga.wales/welsh-language-standards>.

The Welsh language standards applicable to the Association fall under four categories:

- Service Delivery
- Policy Making
- Operational
- Record Keeping

This sixth Annual Report reviews the WLGA's compliance with the applicable Welsh language standards from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. This report is also available in Welsh.

2. Executive Summary

This report outlines how the WLGA has adhered to the Welsh language standards from April 1st 2022, to March 31st 2023. The Association is pleased to provide the Welsh Language Commissioner with a high assurance of compliance over this period. The WLGA has continued to promote the use of Welsh within the workplace and with external stakeholders.

In November 2022 the WLGA met with a Standards and Compliance Officer from the Welsh Language Commissioner's office who reported that the WLGA provided evidence of a very high degree of compliance with the standards and had made significant progress in this area over the last two years. Evidence was gathered from the self-assessment surveys, desktop research, the number of complaints or enquires involving the Association and information from the previous Annual Report. The WLGA also regularly spot check practices in relation to the Welsh language standards and support staff with regular advice and guidance on compliance. As a result, the next review by Standards Officers is likely to take place towards the end of 2024.

This year the WLGA have continued to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language at meetings, through correspondence and on social media. Moreover, the WLGA also supports councils with their Welsh language priorities through key groups such as WLGA Welsh language Cabinet Members and the Rhwydiaith network. The WLGA Welsh Language Cabinet Members meeting is chaired by the WLGA Welsh Language Spokesperson and provides elected member representatives from all 22 councils across Wales with an opportunity to discuss Welsh language policies. This year the 2021 Census data has been an important agenda item and members have met with officials to discuss and share best practice in terms of successfully implementing local and national policies. The WLGA has also continued to support the Rhwydiaith network over 2022-2023 which provides Welsh Language Officers from councils and WLGA associate members with an opportunity to discuss common challenges and solutions to help promote the language across local communities.

The WLGA are pleased to report that staff confidence levels in their Welsh language skills have increased over time. There have been increases in 'advanced skills' for listening, reading, speaking and writing in Welsh, for example the percentage of staff members reporting that they were fluent and able to conduct a conversation and answer questions in Welsh has increased from 10.9% in 2017 to 18.1% in 2023. Correspondingly, there are significant decreases in the number of staff who reported that they have 'no Welsh language' skills across all categories. The number of members of staff who reported they had 'no Welsh language speaking skills' in 2017 was 60.9% compared with 38% in 2023. The percentage of staff members confirming that they had received training to help develop their Welsh language skills during their time at the WLGA has also increased from 21% in 2022 to 26.4% in 2023.

The WLGA promotes formal learning opportunities to learn Welsh through a range of different courses as part of the 'Training and Development offer' available to all staff. This year one member of staff benefitted from completing an Advanced Welsh language course at Nant

Gwrtheyrn. The WLGA covered all costs and supported this member of staff by providing the time away from work during this weeklong residential course. There are also opportunities to continue practising Welsh language skills at work following any training.

During this reporting period the WLGA advertised a total of 20 new or vacant posts. Eighteen of these posts listed Welsh language skills as 'desirable' and a further 2 roles were advertised as having Welsh language skills as 'essential'. The WLGA conducted one job interview entirely in Welsh in Spring 2022 ensuring simultaneous translation was available to non-Welsh speaking panel members. Later in this reporting year there have been more challenges in recruiting staff with the necessary Welsh language skills, some roles for example have had to be advertised twice causing delays in recruitment before finding suitable appointees.

The WLGA keeps up to date records on the language preferences of staff members and stakeholders. The WLGA also keeps records of staff members' Welsh language skills, complaints and any policy making updates. The remainder of the Annual Report provides more detail on the processes and guidance in place to support all members of staff in fulfilling their Welsh language compliance responsibilities.

3. Background

The Welsh Language Commissioner undertook a review of the WLGA between November 2014 and February 2015. A Standards Report outlining the conclusions of the investigation was then produced for Welsh Ministers in May 2015 and shared with the WLGA.

In October 2015, the Welsh Language Commissioner highlighted the Welsh Ministers' full response to that report together with the proposed timetable for introducing Welsh language standards for the WLGA.

The Welsh Language Standards (No.2) Regulations 2016 came into effect on 16th of February 2016, and the Welsh Language Commissioner was then duly authorised to issue a notice to the WLGA requiring compliance with one or more of the standards. A period of consultation followed between 31st March 2016 to 26th May 2016. In response to further queries raised by the WLGA, the Welsh Language Commissioner issued a determination letter together with a revised compliance notice in May 2017.

In September 2018 the WLGA published the first Annual Report covering the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. This report is the sixth Annual Report covering the period between 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

The Annual Report is approved by the WLGA Spokesperson for the Welsh Language with a view to seeking endorsement of the full membership at a meeting of the WLGA's Executive Board.

4. Matters arising during the report

Publicising the standards and WLGA compliance

In Autumn 2022 the WLGA met with a Standards Officer from the Welsh Language Commissioner's office. It was agreed at the meeting that the WLGA have continued to demonstrate a 'high assurance of compliance' over 2022-2023 and that the Association has made significant progress in this regard over the last two years. Several pieces of supporting evidence were gathered to support this conclusion including evidence from desktop monitoring exercises, self-assessment summaries and review meetings. The Welsh Language Commissioner's office defines 'high assurance' as follows:

High assurance of compliance	The organisation complies with all requirements at all times, in all circumstances, except for rare exceptions.
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The WLGA's website has a webpage dedicated to the Welsh language standards where users can access the WLGA Complaints Policy and a comprehensive document detailing 'Our Welsh Language Standards and how we comply with them'.

Both documents are available on the following webpage: <https://www.wlga.wales/welsh-language-standards>

Over the year the WLGA has continued to support staff by regularly sharing updates, links to key policy documents, practical tools and guidance on implementing the standards with all staff. New members of staff are instructed to familiarise themselves with these policies as part of their programme of induction. Internal spot checks are also completed as well as meetings with departments that have a key role in effectively implementing the standards, such as Human Resources, the Communications and Events team and the Central Administration Team. A member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) also provides regular updates on Welsh language policies and promotion strategies at SMT meetings. All staff are also encouraged to liaise with a lead Policy Officer whenever they require any further advice on implementing the Welsh language standards or wish to develop more strategies to promote the use of Welsh within their teams or with their networks.

The WLGA have a policy on 'Using Welsh in the workplace' and regularly promote opportunities for staff to use their Welsh language skills. One example is the monthly Coffi Cymraeg sessions which enable colleagues, particularly learners, to practise speaking Welsh and to develop their confidence and relationships with other Welsh speaking colleagues. The WLGA also promote initiatives such as 'Diwrnod Hawliau'r Gymraeg' and use other key dates such as St David's Day to celebrate the Welsh language and culture with staff.

This year, thanks to the development of the simultaneous translation function on Microsoft Teams, colleagues have also started transitioning over to use this facility which is more accessible to some council IT systems than previous arrangements. The WLGA have developed guidance documents and delivered some training to administrative staff to support them to establish this new way of working with Microsoft Teams in 2022.

As well as these general arrangements to support staff internally, the WLGA supports Welsh Language Cabinet Members and Welsh Language Officers, via the Rhwydiaith network, across all councils in Wales. The WLGA also supported the Leadership Programme for Councillors in Wales this year by developing training content on the Welsh language standards.

WLGA Welsh Language Cabinet Members

The WLGA supports councils through updates and quarterly meetings for Welsh Language Cabinet Members from across all 22 councils in Wales. These meetings are chaired by the WLGA Spokesperson for the Welsh Language. The Spokesperson also feeds into key Welsh language policy reviews, for example in Autumn 2022 representing local government by providing evidence on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee. This year Members also provided written evidence to the new Commission for Welsh Speaking Communities. The Chair of the Commission is invited to the next Cabinet Members meeting to share the latest updates on their programme of work and to give members a further opportunity to feedback on ideas that strengthen our language in communities across Wales.

WLGA Welsh Language Cabinet Members have engaged with senior Welsh Government officials this year to discuss other key developments in relation to Welsh language policy and Welsh language promotion including updates on; Cymraeg 2050, WESPs, the 10 year Welsh language education workforce plan, Arfor 2, the 2021 Census data, and councils are engaging with the WLGA to express their interest in hosting the National Eisteddfod and Urdd Eisteddfod for the next 5 year cycle.

Rhwydiaith

WLGA officers co-ordinate the Rhwydiaith network and support council's Welsh language officers by arranging meetings that enable members to learn from leaders in Welsh language policy. Meetings also offer members the opportunity to come together to discuss challenges and best practice for promoting the use of Welsh across different communities in Wales. During this reporting period the WLGA secured a range of guest speakers to share the latest updates with officers and supported with the administration for this network. Meetings included the latest updates on the following topics:

- A council shared useful information on the development of the 'Ogi Ogi' app for parents and young children. This free app focuses on promoting the benefits of bilingualism and using Welsh from the earliest possible stage. It holds over 400 links to information on pregnancy and parenting, including both local and national resources.
- Representatives from Welsh Government shared their Advocacy Strategy for using Welsh, specifically how to adopt a warm, inclusive and friendly approach to promoting Welsh in our communities: 'Y Strategaeth Eiriol'.

- Representatives from Welsh Government's Welsh Standards team also shared further information on their strategy 'Cymraeg, it belongs to us all' and the practicalities of mainstreaming Welsh in the workplace.
- The Rhwydiaith network has also received updates from Welsh Government's Statisticians from the Knowledge and Analytics Service, both in terms of helpful overviews of the Welsh language data sources available and regular updates on the latest 2021 Census data releases.
- An update from a Senior Regulations Officer from the Welsh Language Commissioner's office on key workstreams and the latest case history in terms of correctly interpreting Policy Making Standards.
- A presentation from 'Iaith: the Welsh Centre for Language Planning' on Language Assertiveness Training / Hyffordiant Cadernid Iaith.
- And finally, a session from the Centre for Digital Public Services on their best practice in improving user experiences of bilingual digital content.

Over the next year the WLGA will aim to support Welsh language officers to build links with universities by facilitating sessions between academic researchers and officers to better understand how current language research projects can help inform language promotion strategies.

Complaints

The WLGA received one formal complaint and a query relating to Welsh language compliance between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023.

In June the WLGA submitted an evidence paper to a Senedd Committee in English and this was later published on the Senedd's website. The WLGA acknowledge this mistake and apologised unreservedly to the member of the public who raised this complaint and ensured that a Welsh copy was sent to the relevant Senedd Committee as soon as possible thereafter. All staff were also sent a reminder of their duties to comply with the Welsh language standards, specially drawing their attention to the need to submit items in both languages to Senedd Committees, who in turn publicise evidence. The complainant was satisfied with our response.

In January 2023, one of the attendees of a focus group questioned why a meeting was not taking place bilingually and expressed their disappointment. The team apologised and explained that fewer than 10% of invitees had Welsh as their established language preference, which is why the meeting was not supported with simultaneous translation facilities on this occasion. A member of staff did then however offer to run a 1:1 meeting through the medium of Welsh with the person who raised this query the next day as a work around. The team discussed the information on language communication preferences available for ad hoc groups such as these and the learning points from this query. All WLGA staff were also contacted with key reminders on our policies for establishing language preferences. Staff were reminded of the importance of regularly checking and updating language preference records, as networks change over time.

5. Our Standards

The Chief Executive of the WLGA is responsible for ensuring that we follow the procedures the Association has set in place to monitor and ensure compliance with the standards. All members of staff also bear responsibility for ensuring that they comply with the standards, and in addition to copies of the WLGA's Welsh language standards, further comprehensive staff guidance has been issued as a reference and to assist in this regard. To maintain a high level of compliance all staff receive regular reminders and links to key policies and are encouraged to work with the lead Policy Officer on any further advice needed in relation to Welsh language matters.

The WLGA's Strategic Management Team welcome and encourage all queries and any ideas that improve the ways that we can support and enhance the use of Welsh, incorporating as appropriate any recommendations arising from the work of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The WLGA promotes Welsh language training for staff. Any member of staff who would like to use or learn Welsh can discuss this at any time with their line managers, and support is provided for those who wish to undertake training with the WLGA enabling time off from work to attend courses and/or payment of course fees (depending on the level of course being undertaken). Staff personal development and training needs are covered specifically as part of the WLGA's Staff Appraisal Scheme.

5.1 Service delivery standards

These standards relate to how the WLGA interacts with its' customers and stakeholders.

Written Correspondence

Where the preferred language of the person we're contacting is not known, all initial correspondence is bilingual, with Welsh placed first either on the left or above any English text. The WLGA records language preferences of individuals. When corresponding with groups of people, all correspondence is issued bilingually. If a group convened by the WLGA expresses a language preference, that language preference is recorded and then used thereafter.

Telephone Calls

The WLGA actively encourages staff to use their Welsh at work and has developed a specific policy on 'Using Welsh in the Workplace'. The WLGA main telephone number is operated by a fully bilingual member of staff.

Staff Guidance has been issued on the WLGA Welsh language standards which specifies:

- The verbal greetings to be used and the content of pre-recorded messages for both office and mobile phones with the Welsh language first
- How to deal with incoming calls, and contacting someone by telephone for the first time
- How to record language preferences

The Guidance anticipates that there may be staff who don't feel confident at this stage in their personal development to conduct a conversation fluently in Welsh and if that is the case, they may transfer the call to a colleague who has agreed to provide Welsh language support.

The exceptions to transferring such calls are:

- Where the caller requires specific advice, and no Welsh speaker has the required knowledge/understanding of the subject;
- Where the caller requires specific advice, and there is no Welsh speaker available.

Telephone calls are spot checked internally to maintain a high level of compliance and to support colleagues to maintain a good understanding of all key requirements.

Meetings

WLGA Staff Guidance also sets out what must be done when staff invite someone to a meeting, or when more than one person is invited to the same meeting. For individuals who wish to use Welsh in a meeting, the WLGA will arrange for simultaneous Welsh translation services to be available, unless the member of staff conducting the meeting with that individual speaks Welsh fluently. The WLGA will arrange for simultaneous Welsh translation

services for meetings involving ten or more people (including the WLGA's own staff) where a threshold of 10% of those attending that meeting wish to use Welsh. For meetings that are open to the public:

- All invitations are sent bilingually, with Welsh first
- Speakers are asked if they wish to use Welsh, and encouraged to do so
- Simultaneous Welsh translation is always provided
- The person chairing the meeting will tell everyone present that simultaneous Welsh translation services are available, emphasising that everyone is welcome to use Welsh
- Any signs are bilingual, with Welsh first
- Any publicity and advertising material is bilingual, with Welsh first
- Any booking forms are bilingual, with Welsh first

Events

The WLGA did not host any public events during this reporting period. All members of staff are aware of the WLGA Corporate Guidance that must be followed when hosting public events.

- All publicity is issued bilingually with Welsh first
- Booking forms, attendance lists and feedback forms are fully bilingual with Welsh first
- Speakers are asked if they wish to use Welsh and encouraged to do so
- Simultaneous Welsh translation is always provided
- The person chairing the event will tell everyone present that simultaneous Welsh translation services are available, emphasising that everyone is welcome to use Welsh
- All written material is provided in Welsh (i.e. Conference Programmes)
- Presentations are available in Welsh
- Staff attending events are encouraged to wear badges and lanyards which indicate that they are able to speak Welsh

Publicity, Signs and Materials

Publicity, Signs and Materials are covered by WLGA Corporate Guidance and in each instance the WLGA adheres to bilingual design principles. Where there is a Welsh and English version of any sign, the Welsh version is always positioned where it is likely to be read first, either above or to the left of the English version. All WLGA signs outside and throughout the building are fully bilingual with Welsh positioned to be read first.

As from 1st January 2018 the WLGA has entered into a legal agreement with Conwy County Borough Council for the provision of Welsh/English translation services for:

- Translation of written documents from English into Welsh
- Translation of written documents from Welsh into English
- Establishment and management of a database of work being requested, being undertaken and completed; this database will endeavour to ensure that identical documents being submitted separately are not re-translated, and that similar

- documents can be identified and the translation needs evaluated to reduce duplication of translated work
- Proof reading of quality control of translated materials

This agreement is reviewed periodically and has been found to be operating well and in accordance with the contract. The Association's Risk Register also lists the agreement under 'business support'; the Risk Register is scrutinized by the WLGA Audit Committee as part of its remit.

Between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023 the WLGA had approximately 816,735 words professionally translated with our main provider, this is in addition to the in house translation of correspondence, documents and briefings that fluent Welsh speakers may have completed.

Website and Social Media

The WLGA's website and use of social media are covered by WLGA Corporate Guidance. The WLGA's website is bilingual and allows the user to toggle between Welsh and English language pages.

An exemption for certain documents is specified under Standard #36: <https://www.wlga.wales/welsh-language-standards> .

Posts to the WLGA's Twitter account are published in Welsh and in English as character limits don't usually permit bilingual tweets; the Welsh version is always published first. <https://twitter.com/WelshLGA>

Reception

The WLGA do not have a reception area or reception service since moving to a new shared office space with Data Cymru at One Canal Parade, Dumballs Road, Cardiff, in 2021. The office is not open to the public and most meetings with external stakeholders still take place virtually. Visits or in person meetings are by appointment only and under the new guidelines each officer leads on their respective meeting arrangements. All meeting arrangements take place in the visitor/s preferred language in accordance with the standards, e.g., from sending invitations, to greeting on arrival and conducting the meeting. For group meetings, invitations and papers are sent bilingually with the Welsh text placed before the English version. We offer a simultaneous translation service in line with our Service Delivery standards.

At the office there is a bilingual sign encouraging staff and visitors to speak Welsh. All members of staff are also asked to wear either a Welsh at Work lanyard or a badge to let visitors know that they can speak Welsh to promote its use in the workplace. Staff are also encouraged to display the *laith Gwaith* logo in their Microsoft Teams backgrounds to promote the use of Welsh when working from home.

Email signatures and automated messages

There are staff guidelines on the correct format for email signatures and automated messages and these are regularly spot checked. Email signatures are fully bilingual, with Welsh first and each signature emphasises that the WLGA welcomes correspondence in Welsh and in English and gives assurance that both languages will be treated equally. Staff are encouraged to add the Welsh at Work symbol next to their names on their email signatures where they are comfortable to do so.

This year the WLGA have developed a series of corporate Microsoft Teams background images including options for Welsh speakers and learners to use the appropriate Welsh speaker badge which has increased the number of conversations that take place in Welsh during working time. One Welsh learner felt this had supported their development and they have encouraged fellow members of staff to use these backgrounds via our Cymraeg Teams channel.



“I’ve found that this helps encourage others to start a conversation in Welsh and using this on-screen badge in meetings complements the ‘Dwi’n Dysgu Cymraeg’ reminder in my automatic email signature”.

Contracts

Staff guidelines stipulate that all published invitations to tender for contracts, and any accompanying documentation, should be available in Welsh. The WLGA welcomes related correspondence in either language. During this reporting period, the WLGA issued one public contract through Sell2Wales which was available in both languages.

5.2 Operational standards

These standards relate to the internal use of Welsh by an organisation.

Using Welsh at Work

The WLGA actively encourages staff to use their Welsh at work through the 'Using Welsh in the Workplace' policy. The WLGA have also developed comprehensive Staff Guidance to support staff in implementing our Welsh language standards and increase their use of Welsh at work including guidance on:

- Making and receiving telephone calls
- Holding meetings with individuals or groups
- Issuing and answering correspondence
- Using social media
- Protocol for translating documents
- Guidance on confirming and recording language preferences
- Policy Impact Assessment
- Technical help sheets e.g., how to create 'language preference questionnaires', how to translate and set proofing languages in Outlook and Word and how to enable translation via Microsoft Teams.

All staff have been asked whether they wish to receive documents, forms and correspondence relating to their employment in Welsh and their language choices are recorded. Staff language preferences are ascertained when first joining the WLGA and these preferences are reviewed on an annual basis via a survey. Should language preferences change at any point, then staff are encouraged to notify the Human Resources team so that all documents are provided in their preferred language.

Where available, Welsh language interfaces for software are made available, as are language packs and interfaces for Windows and Microsoft Word. Staff are actively encouraged to use Welsh language grammar and spell-checking software and use of Microsoft Translate however, guidance has been issued cautioning against over-reliance or complacency when using online tools in place of Translation Services.

Internal WLGA policies are available in Welsh and English.

Staff are encouraged to wear badges and lanyards which indicate that they are able to speak Welsh to promote the use of Welsh at work.

Training opportunities are offered to those members of staff who wish to learn, or enhance their Welsh language skills, and any staff member can raise such requests at any time with their line managers.

Since 2021 the WLGA has also offered staff the opportunity to meet virtually every month to practise their Welsh language skills. These optional Coffi Cymraeg sessions offer colleagues the opportunity to form relationships with other Welsh speakers and learners within the

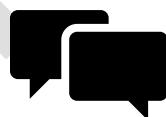
workplace so that they may practise their language skills and build their confidence levels. The feedback for these sessions continues to be positive and has motivated some learners to take additional steps to improve their Welsh language skills, for example a regular attendee also opted to complete a week's training at Nant Gwrtheyrn in August 2022, completing the Advanced 1 course. The WLGA paid for the course and provided the member of staff with the time away from work to complete the weeklong residential.

Staff feedback 2022-2023



Original quote provided in Welsh: "Roedd y profiad yn Nant Gwrtheyrn wedi helpu i godi fy hyder pryd mae'n dod i ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y gweithle ac mewn sefyllfaoedd proffesiynol, yn enwedig pryd weithio gydag aelodau etholedig o dros Gymru. Dw i'n edrych ymlaen at fynd nôl rhyw bryd yn y dyfodol a gorffen lefel uwch, neu efallai gloywi!"

Translation: "The experience at Nant Gwrtheyrn helped raise my confidence when it comes to using Welsh in the workplace and in professional situations, particularly when working with elected members from across Wales. I'm looking forward to going back at some point in the future and finishing the advanced level, or maybe the Gloywi (refining) course!"



Original quote provided in Welsh: "Fel siaradwr Cymraeg mae'n bwysig i fi cael cyfle siarad Cymraeg yn gwaith. Mae ymuno â'r Coffi Cymraeg wedi fy helpu i gwrdd a pobl eraill sy'n siarad Cymraeg yn gwaith, ac mae'n lle gwych i wella fy Nghymraeg mewn amgylchedd anffurfiol, a dod i nabod fwy o fy cydweithwyr".

Translation: "As a Welsh speaker it is important for me to have the opportunity to speak Welsh at work. Joining the Coffi Cymraeg sessions has helped me meet other Welsh speaking people at work, and it's a great place to improve my Welsh in an informal environment, and get to know more of my colleagues".



To promote the use of Welsh in the workplace the WLGA have also supported campaigns such as "Mae gen i hawl/ I have a right" on Welsh Language Rights Day, this year we ran a series of new tweets from Welsh speaking members of staff from a range of different departments highlighting the importance of Welsh language skills in the workplace, for example:

“Rwy'n ffodus iawn i fod yn siaradwr Cymraeg rhugl, ac yn hynod falch o fy nhreftadaeth Gymreig ac yn credu'n gryf y dylid defnyddio Cymraeg yn y gweithle mor aml â phosib i annog staff di-Gymraeg i beidio ofni ceisio dysgu'r iaith. Rwy'n cefnogi fy nghydweithwyr di-Gymraeg gydag ymadroddion a sgwrs sylfaenol.”

“I am very fortunate to be a fluent Welsh speaker, and extremely proud of my Welsh heritage and a firm believer that Welsh should be used in the workplace as often as possible to encourage non-Welsh speaking staff to not be afraid to try and learn the language. I support my non-Welsh speaking colleagues with phrases and basic conversation.”

“Dwi'n falch iawn o allu ddefnyddio'r iaith Gymraeg yn y gweithle i cyfathrebu gyda fy nghydweithwyr yn CLILC ac gyda cydweithwyr cynghorau lleol, asiantaethau eraill ac ysgolion dros Gymru’.

#MaeGenHawl

‘I’m very proud to use the Welsh language at work with my colleagues in the WLGA and with colleagues from local councils, partner agencies and schools throughout Wales’.

#MaeGenHawl

The Cymraeg Microsoft Teams channel for staff is also used to help promote the Welsh language and culture within the organisation. Here staff are encouraged to share opportunities, articles, upcoming Welsh language events and recommendations. It is also a useful platform to remind all staff of training opportunities via the National Centre for Learning Welsh newsletters, the Coffi Cymraeg opportunities and ad hoc celebrations such as St David's Day activities in the office. In 2023 staff were invited to participate in a bilingual St David's Day quiz and had an opportunity to socialise in Welsh in person.

Welsh Language Skills of the Workforce

In March 2017 WLGA staff were asked to complete an online survey to establish a baseline audit of the Welsh language skills within the organisation ahead of the implementation of the new Welsh language standards. The results from this baseline assessment of WLGA Staff Welsh language skills are presented in Table 3, Appendix 1, for comparison with this year's data presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Audit of WLGA Staff Welsh Language Skills 2023
(72 responses).

Please tell us your Welsh language skill level for listening:	Response Percent	Response Total
No skills	42.25%	30
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh – ‘Ble mae...?’; ‘Ga i siarad â...?’	25%	18
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	1.41%	1
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	5.63%	4
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	7.04%	5
Able to understand all conversations involving work	19.40%	14

Please tell us your Welsh language skill level for reading:	Response Percent	Response Total
No skills	38.03%	27
Able to read basic words and phrases e.g. signs or short and simple notes	29.17%	21
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	2.82%	2
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	7.04%	5
Able to read the majority of material in own area	2.82%	2
Able to understand all material involving work	20.83%	15

Please tell us your Welsh language skill level for speaking:	Response Percent	Response Total
No skills	38.03%	27
Able to conduct a general conversation (greetings, names, sayings and place names)	30.55%	22
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	1.41%	1
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	1.41%	1
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	11.27%	8
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions, for an extended period of time where necessary	18.05%	13

Table 1 continued

Please tell us your Welsh Language skill level for writing:	Response Percent	Response Total
No skills	54.93%	39
Able to write basic messages – ‘Diolch am y llythyr. Dyma gopi o'r map.’	15.28%	11
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	1.41%	1
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	9.86%	7
Able to prepare the majority of written material related to the area of work, with some assistance in terms of revision	5.63%	4
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	13.89%	10

Thinking more about how you could use Welsh at work, would you be interested in the opportunity to do any of the following:	Response Percent	Response Total
Learn Welsh (speaking/writing/reading)	50.98%	26
Develop specific work related Welsh language skills (e.g. meet and greet or other work area specific language)	41.18%	21
Improve your spoken Welsh	39.22%	20
Improve your written Welsh	39.22%	20
Other (please specify):	9.80%	5

During your time at the WLGA have you received training that helps develop your Welsh Language skills?	Response Percent	Response Total
Yes	26.39%	19
No	73.61	53

Do you wish to receive any personal correspondence relating to your employment contract in:	Response Percent	Response Total
English	76.39%	55
Welsh	0.00%	0
Bilingually	23.61%	17

Comparing Welsh language skills patterns over time

Seventy-two members of staff completed the 2023 Welsh language skills audit making one person's response the equivalent of 1.4 percentage points. Overall, this is comparable to the baseline survey completed in 2017 and the 2022 survey where one person's response was the equivalent of 1.6 percentage points.

This year's data shows that staff Welsh language skills are more advanced than they were within the Association during the time the baseline data was collected in 2017. Overall, there are significant increases in the more 'advanced skills' categories for listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Correspondingly, there are significant decreases in the number of staff who reported that they have 'no Welsh language' skills across all categories. For speaking skills for example, the percentage of staff members reporting that they were fluent and able to conduct a conversation and answer questions in Welsh has increased from 10.9% in 2017 to 18.1% in 2023. Likewise, the number of members of staff who reported they had 'no Welsh language speaking skills' in 2017 was 60.9% compared with 38% in 2023. On the whole, the percentage of staff with basic and routine skills has also increased slightly, though generally the most notable patterns of improvement are evident in the extreme ends of the scale (fluency or decrease in 'no skills') over the last 6 years. This data suggests that more Welsh speakers have joined the WLGA over the last few years and that staff confidence levels in their Welsh language skills have increased.

Figure 1 shows the pattern of increases in advanced Welsh skills levels for WLGA staff since the baseline survey in 2017, as well as the increase between 2022 and 2023 staff responses. Figure 2 shows the pattern of decreases in the percentage of staff members reporting they have 'no Welsh language skills' over time.

Figure 1
Staff Welsh Language Proficiency: Percentages of advanced skills over time

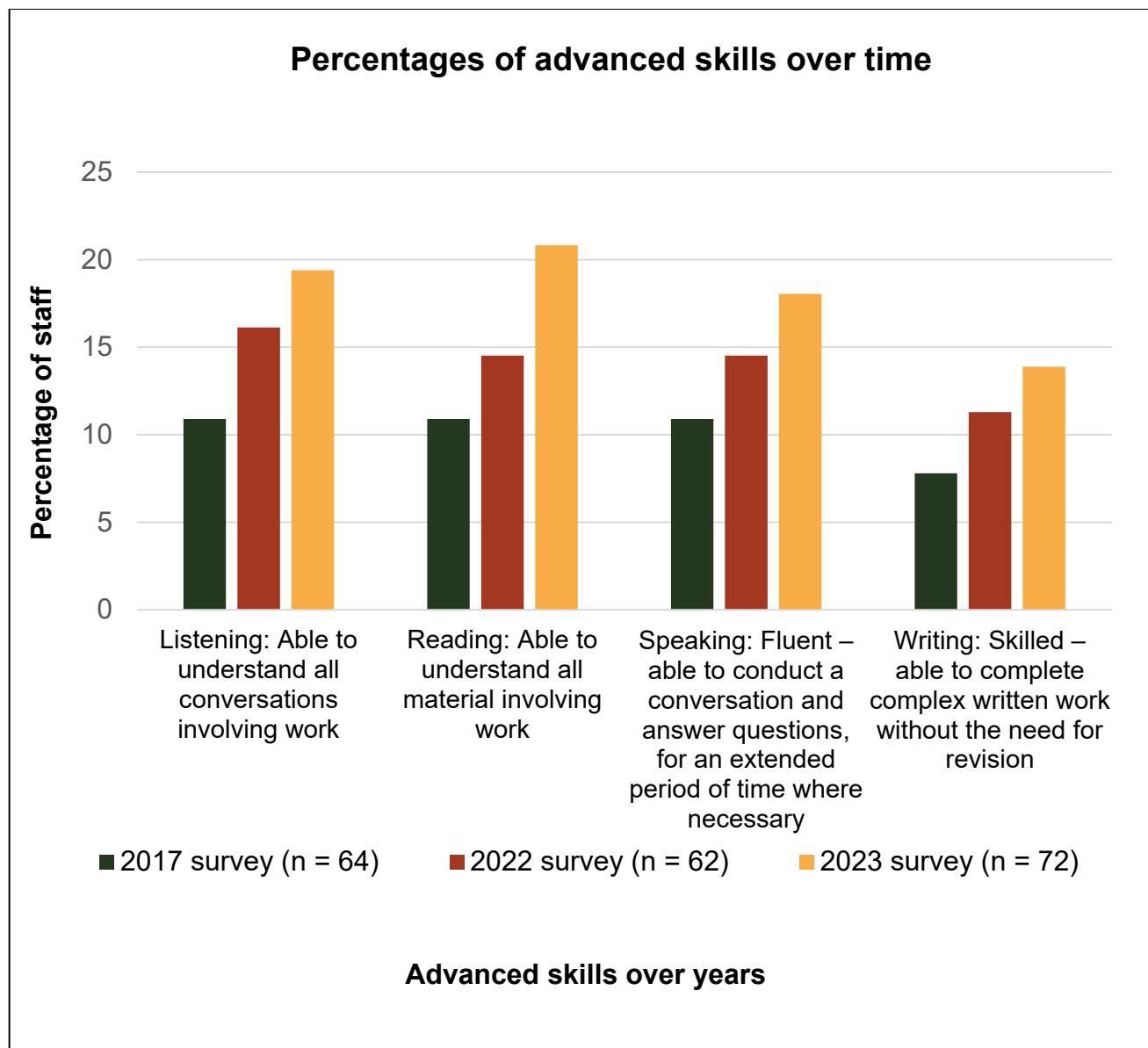
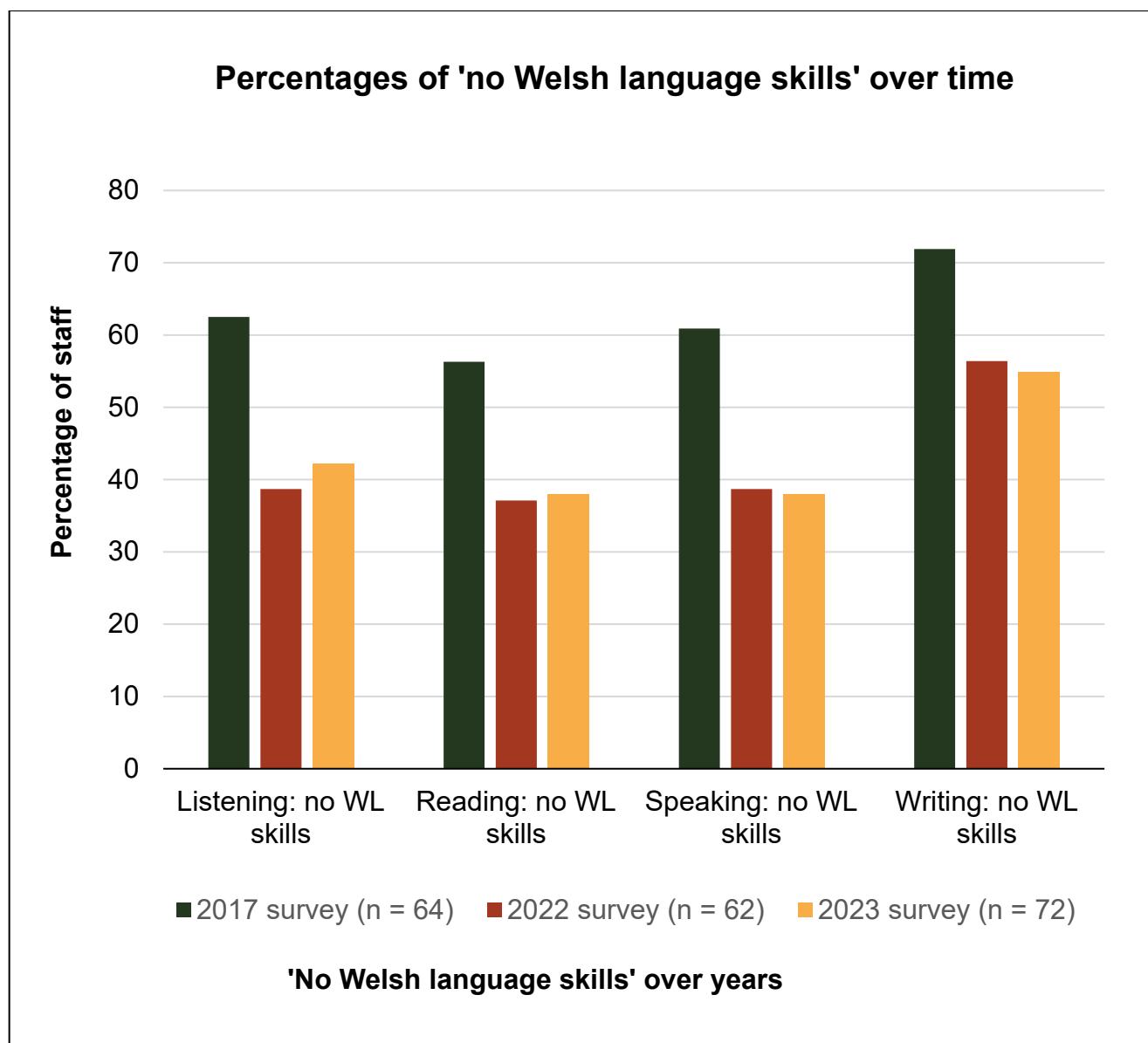


Figure 2
Staff Welsh Language Proficiency: Percentages of 'no WL skills' over time



Staff training

Staff are encouraged to discuss opportunities for developing their Welsh language skills with their line managers. The WLGA has registered for the Work Welsh scheme operated by The National Centre for Learning Welsh. The WLGA publicises a range of opportunities for members of staff to learn Welsh on the Training and Development shared area. These opportunities range from online taster courses to intensive residential courses through the Work Welsh programme: <https://learnwelsh.cymru/>

In the 2023 Staff survey 26.39% of staff surveyed confirmed that they had received training that helps develop their Welsh language skills during their time at the WLGA. As mentioned previously, the WLGA also supported one member of staff to complete the Advanced 1 residential course at Nant Gwrtheyrn in 2022.

Recruitment

Between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023, the WLGA advertised 20 posts. Two were advertised as having Welsh as an essential skill and the remaining 18 listed Welsh as a desirable skill.

One job application was received entirely in Welsh this year and this candidate completed their interview and interview tasks in Welsh (Welsh language skills were deemed desirable but not essential for this post). Other job applications were partially submitted in Welsh.

Recruiting staff for 'Welsh - essential' roles has been particularly challenging during this reporting period and these roles have had to be re-advertised.

New members of staff are given a comprehensive Staff Induction, which includes familiarisation with the WLGA's guidance on compliance with the Welsh language standards.

5.3 Policy making standards

These standards require organisations to consider what effect their policy decisions will have on the ability of persons to use the language and on the principle of treating Welsh no less favourably than English.

WLGA Staff are expected to follow detailed guidance provided by the WLGA Policy Impact Assessment Tool.

The section of the WLGA Policy Impact Assessment Tool which relates specifically to the requirements of the WLGA Welsh language standards is reproduced below:

How will this policy impact on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language, and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?		
What positive or negative effects will this have?	What could be formulated or changed so that it would have positive or increased positive effects?	What could be formulated or changed so it would not have adverse effects or decreased effects?

Internal WLGA policies are subject to the same assessment.

5.4 Record keeping standards

These standards make it necessary to keep records about some of the other standards, and about any complaints received by an organisation. These records will assist the Welsh Language Commissioner in regulating the organisation's compliance with standards and are available to the Commissioner on request.

Records in relation to complaints

The WLGA received one formal complaint and a query relating to Welsh language compliance between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023, please see page 10 for a full outline.

Copies of all complaints are kept, whether or not they relate to the standards to which the WLGA is under a duty to comply.

Records in relation to Policy Making

The internal Performance Review policy was consulted on during this period, as with all HR policies, members of staff are encouraged to share their language preferences. If a member of staff wished to complete a Performance Review through the medium of Welsh, line managers would support this. We are aware of at least 2 Performance Management meetings that took place entirely in Welsh this year.

The WLGA's Policy on Awarding Grants is based on Local Authority policies and forms part of WLGA Financial Regulations. This was approved by the WLGA Audit Committee in 2022 and is available on the WLGA website.

Records in relation to employee Welsh Language Skills

Staff are surveyed at the end of the financial year to record current Welsh language skills and records will be kept by the Human Resources team. Please find the survey results for 2022-2023 in Table 1 within the 'Welsh Language Skills of the Workforce' section of this report.

Records in relation to training courses attended by employees

Staff were asked whether they had completed any training to develop their Welsh language skills in the annual survey and 7 members of staff had done so between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023. Five members of staff had decided to engage with a range of different courses outside of their working time, this was a mixture of online learning opportunities offered by the National Centre for Learning Welsh and in person lessons through their local authority.

One member of staff completed a weeklong residential course to develop their Advanced skills, this was paid for by the WLGA and took place during working time.

Another member of staff considered the informal support received by colleagues and their line manager as an important part of their Welsh language skill development over the last year.

Records in relation to Welsh Language Assessments for new or vacant posts and how they were categorised

The Association assesses the language needs of each new or vacant post. Table 2 summaries the number of new or vacant posts that fall into each of the WLGA's four Welsh language skills categories for all posts advertised between April 1st 2022 and March 31st 2023.

Table 2 – Welsh language categorisation for all new or vacant posts in 2022-2023.

Welsh language skills category	Number of posts advertised
Essential	2
Needs to be learned	0
Desirable	18
Not necessary/specified	0
Total new or vacant posts advertised in 2022-2023	20

6. Conclusion

The WLGA has continued to promote the Welsh language and build on opportunities for partners, stakeholders and internal staff to use Welsh this year. The WLGA are pleased to be able to provide the Welsh Language Commissioner's office with a high assurance of compliance with our language standards, as agreed in the Autumn review meeting.

As outlined in the 'Matters arising during the report' section, the WLGA have also continued to support Elected Members and officers who are responsible for supporting and promoting the Welsh language across communities in Wales via key groups and networks over 2022-2023.

Supporting members of staff to develop their Welsh language skills and practise regularly is also an important priority for the Association. In the 2023 Annual Survey, one member of staff reflected that "*since starting their employment with the WLGA they had seen a notable improvement in visibility and the internal use of Welsh*". Staff are keen to maintain an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere at work that encourages staff to move along the Welsh language learning continuum and to use their Welsh skills as often as possible.

Appendix 1: Baseline data

Table 3 – Baseline Audit of WLGA Staff Welsh Language Skills March 2017.
(64 responses)

3a: Welsh Language Skills Levels for Listening	No.	%
No skills	40	62.5
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh - 'Ble mae ...?', Ga I siarad â ...?'	8	12.5
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	3	4.7
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	3	4.7
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	3	4.7
Able to understand all conversations involving work	7	10.9

3b: Welsh language Skills Levels for Reading	No.	%
No skills	36	56.3
Able to read basic words and phrases, e.g. signs or short simple notes	13	20.3
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	3	4.7
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	3	4.7
Able to read the majority of material in own area	2	3.1
Able to understand all material involving work	7	10.9

3c: Welsh language Skills Levels for Speaking	No.	%
No skills	39	60.9
Able to conduct a general conversation (greetings, names, sayings and place names)	11	17.2
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	1	1.6
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	2	3.1
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	4	6.3
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions for an extended period of time where necessary	7	10.9

Table 3 continued

3d: Welsh language Skills Levels for Writing	No.	%
No skills	46	71.9
Able to write basic messages – 'Diolch am y llythyr. Dyma gopi o'r map.'	5	7.8
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	2	3.1
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	2	3.1
Able to prepare the majority of written material related to the area of work, with some assistance in terms of revision	4	6.3
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for Revision	5	7.8

Staff were asked to think about how they could use Welsh at work, and whether they would be interested in opportunities to learn, develop and improve their skills.

3e: Thinking about how you could use Welsh at work, would you be interested in the opportunity to do any of the following:	No.	%
Learn Welsh (speaking, writing, reading)	27	49.1
Develop specific work-related Welsh language skills (e.g. meet and greet other work area specific languages)	27	49.1
Improve your spoken Welsh	17	30.9
Improve your written Welsh	16	29.1
Other (please specify):	4	7.3