



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales  
Fire and Rescue Service

# WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

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Annual Report

April 2020 - March 2021

# **WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS**

## **ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority recognises and values the rich diversity of our communities and the significance of our cultural heritage. As such, we are committed to ensuring that in conducting public business in Wales, the Welsh and English languages are treated on the basis of equality.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out a legal framework which imposes a duty on Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, among other public bodies in Wales, to comply with a set of Standards relating to the Welsh language.

As an Authority, we have responded positively to the Welsh Language Standards, utilising the Standards to further progress our commitment and aspiration to provide services equitably to all areas of mid and west Wales.

We also acknowledge our duty towards our own staff, most of whom are residents of mid and west Wales and who themselves reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their own communities.

Over the last twelve months, in the face of the challenges and restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus Pandemic, it is extremely pleasing to note that we have continued to ensure that our staff and communities have access to our services in their language of need and choice.

Over the next twelve months we will continue to look for opportunities to further collaborate with our partners and other fire and rescue services across Wales to promote, encourage and support the wider use of the Welsh language in our workplaces to meet individual language need and to provide a real language choice for our communities.

Thank you

Elwyn Williams,  
Chair, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, we believe that in the conduct of public business in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated on the basis of equality. We take great pride in providing the highest level of commitment to the Welsh language, ensuring bilingual services and language choice for both our staff and our communities.

The last twelve months has without doubt been extremely difficult for the Service and our communities. We have had to respond to the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic, developing new and innovative ways of delivering our services, often with immediacy.

Whilst we are extremely proud of the services we have continued to provide; we cannot overlook the challenges the Pandemic placed on our ability to maintain our commitment to the Welsh language. Consequently, we commissioned a full review of our compliance against our Welsh Language Standards, which has informed the content of this report.

The report outlines the steps we have taken over the last twelve months to meet and maintain our compliance with our Welsh Language Standards. It provides details on the progress made in key service areas and notable achievements which will improve our capacity to deliver our services bilingually. However, it also recognises that while good progress has been made, there is more work to be done to ensure we recognise language need and provide real language choice to both our communities and our staff. We have therefore already identified key actions within this report which we will prioritise as key focus areas for improvement over the next twelve months.

These key areas will continue to focus on the work we have commenced this year to enhance the bilingual capacity of our Service. We want to ensure we have the optimum numbers of bilingual staff in key areas that reflect the language profile of our communities. We therefore remain committed to promoting bilingual workplaces and creating a positive environment for our staff and our communities to engage with us both formally and informally through the medium of Welsh.

Thank you

Chris

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Chris Davies, Chief Fire Officer QFSM

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### 3. BACKGROUND AND THE CURRENT SITUATION

Under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, in Wales, the Welsh language has equal legal status with the English language and must not be treated less favourably.

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service with its Compliance Notice, under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, on 30 September 2016. This notice sets out which Standards are imposed on Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Compliance Notice is available on our website.

As part of the Compliance Notice, the Authority was required, by 30 March 2017, to publish a document noting how it intended to comply at a corporate level, with the Standards – and what its internal processes were for oversight and monitoring implementation. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's Implementation Plan is available on our website.

Under the legislation, the Authority is also required to publish an annual report on progress made towards meeting and maintaining the Welsh Language Standards. This annual report for 2020/21 is Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's own evaluation of how we have complied with the Standards and how we have promoted and facilitated opportunities to use the Welsh language, ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language. This report is available, together with previous reports, [here](#) on our website.

#### **Accountability and responsibility for the Welsh language**

At [board level](#), accountability for the Welsh language lies with Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mansel Charles is the Fire Authority Champion for the Welsh Language.

Within Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, the [Executive Board](#), has the highest management function and is led by the Chief Fire Officer, Chris Davies. Within the Executive Board, executive lead for the Welsh language lies with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Roger Thomas, who has line management responsibility for the Corporate Communications and Business Development department.

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The Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development, Ceri Jackson, has strategic and operational responsibility for the Welsh language.

The Welsh Language Officer, Clare Grist, has responsibility for implementing the standards and for promoting and supporting the Welsh language from day to day.

Ceri Jackson [c.jackson@mawwfire.gov.uk](mailto:c.jackson@mawwfire.gov.uk) and Clare Grist [c.grist@tangcg.gov.uk](mailto:c.grist@tangcg.gov.uk) are the points of contact for discussing this report.

### **Arrangements for approving this report**

This report was submitted for discussion at directorate meetings and then submitted to the Service Leadership Team meeting for approval in July 2021. Following Service Leadership Team approval, it was submitted to the Authority's Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Complaints**

Compliments, comments and complaints about the Welsh language can be made [here](#).

## **4. MATTERS ARISING DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD**

### **Coronavirus Pandemic**

On the 23 March 2020, Welsh Government introduced a raft of measures and restrictions across Wales as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The measures were wide ranging, affecting both the personal lives of Service employees as well as the way in which the Service operated.

Throughout 2020/21, the Service has successfully responded to the challenges posed by the Pandemic, remaining operational throughout and ensuring key, critical services have continued to be delivered to the communities of mid and west Wales.

### **Staffing**

During the period April – October 2020, there were significant challenges as there was no Welsh Language Officer in post and the Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development was on maternity leave. The new Welsh Language Officer took up her post in October 2020 as the Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development returned to her role. Consequently, the activities outlined below all took place between October 2020 and March 2021.

### **Self-regulation - Welsh Language Standards Compliance Review**

A full Welsh Language Standards Compliance Review was undertaken between December 2020 and January 2021, with each Head of Department asked to review compliance by providing a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating and supporting comments against each of the relevant Standards for their department.

The Corporate Communications and Business Development department reviewed each of the returns and collated the RAG status returned for each of the Standards. This analysis showed a number of inconsistencies between departments and areas of potential non-compliance.

It became clear from the comments made within the Welsh Language Returns that not all Standards categorised as 'red' were non-compliant, but in some instances were not actually relevant to the department's business. Each Department has interpreted the

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Standards differently; consequently, there is a significant difference in relation to which of the Standards each Department interpret to be applicable to them.

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Consequently, the Corporate Communications and Business Development department has agreed and commenced the following actions, which will continue throughout 2021/22:

- Liaise with each Head of Command / Division and Head of Department to provide initial dialogue in relation to the comments made within the compliance returns – highlighting areas of concern which require addressing (red and amber categories).
- Determine an action plan to prioritise (based on risk), how we plan to address non-compliance, particularly those areas which require process / procedural changes.
- Develop guidance documentation for internal publication which will raise awareness and address some of the non-compliance (red and amber categories), which require addressing.
- Consider the implications of the Command to Divisional Restructure and the realignment of the Operational Risk Management Department, which may require additional support in addressing the compliance responses provided.
- Conduct a mystery shopper exercise to ensure we remain compliant with the Standards which we have stated that we are compliant with (green category).
- Undertake a three-month review of translation services to examine efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the current tone and voice used for a range of formal and informal communication. This will also provide an opportunity to review the accessibility of the material we currently publish in both Welsh and English and identify how improvements can be made.

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## Service Delivery, Operational and Policy Standards

The table below records action taken during 2020/1 and our plans for actions to be taken in 2021/2.

Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Service delivery standards</b>		
Correspondence 1, 4, 5-7	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.  Reviewed guidance and developed new draft guidance.	Consult with departments to finalise draft guidance.  Work with all departmental administration teams to provide training on correspondence guidance.
Telephone calls 8-10, 12-18, 20-22  Meetings 24, 25/A/D  Interviews to assist with enquiries 26/A, 27/A	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Consult with departments, develop new guidance, supporting resources and training as required.
Public meetings 28-32	Fire Authority meetings were held using Microsoft Teams during Covid-19 restrictions. The Commissioner's guidance on <i> Holding Bilingual Video Meetings </i> was used, together with discussions with other organisations to ensure that simultaneous translation was provided effectively for these meetings.	Review effectiveness of simultaneous translation when face to face meetings are resumed.
Public events 33-34	Public events were suspended due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.  Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Consult with departments, develop new guidance and supporting resources as required.

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Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Service delivery standards</b>		
Publicity & advertising 35,36  Public documents 38, 45-47  Forms 48/A/B	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Review current tone and voice used in both Welsh and English to ensure that language is not too formal and enables effective engagement with the public.  Raise awareness across all Departments around the timeframe required for requesting translation and the need to track change previously translated material, as opposed to re-translating full texts time and time again.
Website 49, 52, 53  Apps 54	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review and made minor amendments to website.	Raise awareness within Departments that whilst the Corporate Communications and Business Development department is responsible for managing the Service's external website, they are responsible for the content appropriate to their roles and remit and need to ensure that the content is current and correct.  This process needs to take into consideration the requirement to translate new content and the timeline required for this work to be undertaken.

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Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Service delivery standards</b>		
<p>Social media 55-56</p>	<p>Completed Welsh language standards compliance review and departmental review of how to improve our engagement with the public in both Welsh and English.</p> <p>As part of this review, we began the process of considering different options for posting on social media – bilingually on one corporate account, posting twice on one corporate account, or creating two separate corporate accounts – one English language and one Welsh language.</p>	<p>Review current tone and voice used in both Welsh and English to ensure that language is not too formal and enables effective engagement with the public.</p> <p>Continue with engagement analytics and review.</p> <p>Ensure all Departments who have social media accounts understand that Standard 56, in relation to replying to correspondence received in Welsh, does apply to them and that they should consider bilingual correspondence on their social media channels as best practice.</p>
<p>Signs 58-60</p> <p>Reception services 61,64-5</p> <p>Notices 66,67</p> <p>Tenders 73,74/A,75,77</p>	<p>Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.</p>	<p>Consult with departments, develop new guidance and supporting resources as required.</p>

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<p>Promoting services 78-79</p> <p>Corporate identity 80</p>		<p>Request that all Departments promote any Welsh language services they offer and also assist the Corporate Communications and Business Development department in promoting Welsh language services across the Service.</p>
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Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Service delivery standards</b>		
Education courses 81	We developed a new character <i>Sbarc</i> to be used in Community Safety education programmes. A key focus was ensuring that the character and resources worked bilingually and as effectively in both languages.	Continue to support Community Safety in the development of bilingual educational resources in respect of <i>Sbarc</i> and Staywise Cymru.
Public address messages 82	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Consult with departments, develop new guidance and supporting resources as required.
<b>Policy making standards</b>		
Policy making standards 85-90, 92-94	The Welsh Language Officer attended the Welsh Language Commissioner's workshop on the Policy Making Standards on the 21st October 2020. As a result of attending this workshop and reading the Policy Making Standards Good Practice Advice Document, it became apparent that Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service was incorrectly including the Welsh language as a characteristic within its Equality Impact Assessments. The Welsh language aspect was subsequently removed from the Equality Impact Assessment process, and a new Welsh Language Impact Assessment Tool was developed.	The Welsh Language Impact Assessment Tool was approved by the Strategic Leadership Team in April 2021. It is now a requirement that this assessment tool is considered in any papers being drafted for decision making purposes. The Welsh Language Officer will receive a copy of each draft Welsh Language Impact Assessment and advise on compliance with the Welsh language standards and whether any adjustments or improvements need to be made.  The new tool will facilitate more detailed analysis and reporting.

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Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Operational Standards</b>		
Welsh language policy 95	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Review Welsh language policy.
Contracts and employment correspondence 96-101	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Raise awareness across the Service as to what services are available in the Welsh language and where resources can be found.  Remind Departments that Managers have a role in knowing the language preferences of their staff and ensuring staff know what services are available to them.

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Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Operational Standards</b>		
Publishing policies in Welsh 102-108	Completed Welsh language compliance review.  Welsh language requirements highlighted through development of Welsh language impact assessment process.	Review existing policies to ensure full compliance.
Complaints by and against staff 109/A, 110, 112  Disciplinary process 113/A, 115-6	Completed Welsh language compliance review.	Ensure guidance on internal complaints, grievances and disciplinary matters includes reference to Welsh language requirements and is shared with Department Heads / appropriate Managers.
Providing computer software and interfaces 117  Intranet 119, 121-2	Completed Welsh language compliance review.	Ensure bilingual interfaces and software solutions are made available to staff as required.  Support the ICT department in ensuring compliance with the Welsh language standards as a revised intranet is developed.
Welsh language skills 124  Training delivery in Welsh 125-6  Welsh language lessons, training for managers and Welsh language awareness 127-129  Induction 130	See Record Keeping standards below.	See Record Keeping standards below.

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Email signatures and contact details 131-2	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Consult with departments, develop new guidance and supporting resources as required.
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Standards Group	Action taken during 2020-2021	Action to be taken in 2021-2022
<b>Operational Standards</b>		
Staff badges 133/A	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Raise awareness within all Departments as to the availability of badges.
Recruitment 134/A, 135/A/B, 137-8	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Raise awareness within all Departments that new and vacant posts must be assessed regarding Welsh language requirements.
Workplace signs 140/1	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Develop a library of temporary signage, which are pre translated and can be utilised by Departments.
Workplace announcements 142	Completed Welsh language standards compliance review.	Consult with departments, develop new guidance and supporting resources as required.

## Record keeping standards

### Complaints

The table below shows that no complaints were received during the current reporting period.

Standards Group	Complaints received directly
Service delivery standards	0
Policy making standards	0
Operational standards	0

The Service's Compliments, Comments and Complaints procedure will be reviewed during 2021/22 to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. The Welsh Language Standards Compliance Review undertaken in 2020/21 identified that we are not currently fully compliant with our duty to specify clearly how we intend to deal with complaints regarding our compliance with the Standards, nor how we will provide training for our staff in dealing with those complaints. We will also review our internal grievance policy in relation to the complaints process regarding compliance with the operational standards.

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## Employees' Welsh language skills

A mandatory Welsh language skills survey was designed and carried out in the first quarter of 2021. 670 responses were received, a response rate of just over 50%. This was a very good response for an organisation with many retained firefighters who work a variety of part time hours and when in work have operational competencies which must be prioritised.

The data for 2020/21 appears in Appendix A.

During 2021/22, we will work to improve this response rate and will support the Commissioner's wish to see greater consistency in terms of recording employees' Welsh language skills to facilitate the collection of data on the bilingual workforce, by basing future surveys on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

## Training

### Welsh language skills

The Service worked with North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and *SaySomethinginWelsh* to develop new flexible Welsh language learning opportunities, suitable for both operational and support staff. 13 staff signed up for the pilot scheme launched on 1st April 2021.

We continued to support staff in a variety of *Dysgu Cymraeg* courses and registered for the 2021-22 *Cymraeg Gwaith* programme.

### Providing training in Welsh

The Welsh Language Standards Compliance Review highlighted significant challenges in achieving full compliance in providing training opportunities in Welsh. Advice was sought from our Compliance Officer to ensure that we were able to deliver induction training on an equal basis in both Welsh and English and induction forms were reviewed to ensure that all were available in Welsh.

A large programme of IOSH Working Safely / Managing Safely and NEBOSH training was undertaken in early 2021. Although the issue of Welsh medium training was raised with providers, this was not resolved in sufficient time to be able to offer the opportunity to undertake this training in Welsh. In 2021/22 we will review our duty and ability to provide health and safety training opportunities in Welsh in the context of our role as an emergency service.

As a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic, training programmes throughout 2020/21 were prioritised for risk critical courses. As a result, several courses relating to the categories below were not undertaken. However, these areas will be reintroduced during 2021/22 and numbers will be recorded appropriately.

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Type of training	Number who attended the Welsh version	Number who attended the English version	Percentage that attended the Welsh version
Recruitment and interviewing	0	0	0
Performance management	0	0	0
Complaints and disciplinary procedures	0	0	0
Induction	1 Welsh induction conducted with employee. No formal training provided to carry out inductions.		
Dealing with the public	0	0	0
Health and safety	0	680	0%

### New and vacant posts

Category	Number of posts categorised	Percentage of posts categorised
Essential	2	4%
Desirable	49	96%
Need to learn Welsh	0	0%
No Welsh skills required	0	0%

### Supplementary Standards

The annual report for 2019/20 was produced and published as required, but we did not comply with our duty to publicise the report. A copy was published on our website, but due to Coronavirus restrictions, it was not made available to the public within our Headquarters reception area.

For 2020/21, we will publish a press statement, social media video, website and intranet reports which will link the publication of this report to the launch of our 'Defnyddia dy Gymraeg gyda ni' campaign. In the light of the Coronavirus pandemic, it will not be appropriate to display a hard copy within our Headquarters reception area or in our Fire and Rescue stations. We will, however, display a notice advising individuals how to request a personal copy of the report by email or post.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

As outlined within the body of this report, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, supported by its governing body, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, is committed to increasing compliance levels with its Welsh Language Standards.

As a Service, we are proud of the significant steps we have already taken to improve our bilingual service provision for our service users, staff, stakeholders and members of the public. However, we recognise that there is room for improvement in many areas, which we will address during 2021/22.

Further actions to be taken have already been identified within section four of this report, which outlines matters arising from the Welsh language standards compliance review undertaken earlier this year. An overarching Welsh Language Action Plan will be developed for 2021/22 to ensure that these actions are achieved.

It is intended that the overarching action plan will become a live document to track our overall compliance with the Welsh Language Standards; and will be a means by which to monitor the progress made in key service areas, with a focus on those which have been identified as requiring further improvement.

The Service remains committed to ensuring equality for the Welsh language and Welsh speakers and will continue to promote, support and encourage the use of Welsh within the Service and our communities at every opportunity.

For further information on the details of this report, or for further information on Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's implementation of the Welsh Language Standards, please contact Clare Grist, Welsh Language Officer by emailing [c.grist@tangcg.gov.uk](mailto:c.grist@tangcg.gov.uk)

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## Appendix 1

### Welsh Language Skills Survey Results

A mandatory Welsh language skills survey was designed and carried out in the first quarter of 2021.

670 responses were received, a response rate of just over 50%. This was a very good response for an

organisation with many retained firefighters who work a variety of part time hours and when in

work have operational competencies which must be prioritised.

Personnel were asked to record their level of Welsh language **understanding**, along with the level of

understanding they would like to reach. The results are included in the table below.

Level	Current Level	Desired Level
<b>Level 0</b> - You cannot understand simple enquiries, personal information or instructions.	229	91
<b>Level 1</b> - You can understand simple enquiries, personal information or instructions.	151	82
<b>Level 2</b> - You can understand people talking slowly about everyday situations and someone giving instructions or asking you or others to do something.	67	81
<b>Level 3</b> - You can understand information about common or everyday topics and people speaking clearly when making announcements or when on spoken media.	43	113
<b>Level 4</b> - You can understand most conversations and discussions even if the subject is unfamiliar and differences in formal / informal Welsh and dialects.	72	110

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<b>Level 5</b> - You can understand all conversations and discussions between others, on all sorts of topics and all kinds of spoken Welsh, including lectures or complex discussions.	108	193
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Personnel were also asked to record their level of Welsh language **speaking** ability, along with the level of Welsh speaking ability they would like to reach. The results are included in the table below.

Level	Current Level	Desired Level
<b>Level 0</b> – You cannot say place names and signs correctly or greet and introduce others or give and receive personal details.	141	75
<b>Level 1</b> - You can say place names, personal names and signs correctly or greet and introduce others or give and receive personal details.	249	95
<b>Level 2</b> - You can make or respond to simple enquiries, give or respond to simple information and instructions and hold a short conversation exchanging straightforward information.	83	99
<b>Level 3</b> - You can take part in most conversations or meetings turning to English for discussion or when giving detailed information.	43	106
<b>Level 4</b> - You can contribute effectively to most work meetings, hold a conversation comfortably and exchange information turning to English for technical terminology.	80	118

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<b>Level 5</b> - You can express yourself fully and precisely, even when discussing complex issues and adapt your language style to the audience or context.	74	177
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Personnel were asked to record their level of Welsh language **reading** ability, along with the level of Welsh language reading ability they would like to reach. The results are included in the table below.

Level	Current Level	Desired Level
<b>Level 0</b> - You cannot read short sentences, basic signs, simple instructions or information.	192	93
<b>Level 1</b> - You can read short sentences, basic signs, simple instructions or simple information.	198	100
<b>Level 2</b> - You can read short messages and understand some basic emails.	66	76
<b>Level 3</b> - You can understand most messages concerning day to day work and guess the meaning of a word if the subject is familiar.	58	118
<b>Level 4</b> - You can read most correspondence and scan long texts to find details and understand most articles and reports with the aid of a dictionary.	71	112
<b>Level 5</b> - You can read and understand nearly all written texts with ease, only occasionally using a dictionary, read long	85	171

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texts, reports and articles to find relevant details and understand formal and informal writing.		
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Personnel were asked to record their level of Welsh language **writing** ability, along with the level of Welsh language writing ability they would like to reach. The results are included in the table below.

Level	Current Level	Desired Level
<b>Level 0</b> - You cannot open and close an e-mail or write personal names, place names and job titles.	262	112
<b>Level 1</b> - You can open and close an e-mail and write personal names, place names and job titles.	171	103
<b>Level 2</b> - You can write a short message to a colleague and write a short message to arrange an appointment.	82	98
<b>Level 3</b> - You can write a message on most topics and write relatively accurately on most familiar topics.	65	131
<b>Level 4</b> - You can produce correspondence of all types.	48	91
<b>Level 5</b> - You can write extended messages, reports or other types of writing in a style appropriate to the reader, write in formal or informal Welsh as necessary and write with a high degree of accuracy on a wide range of topics.	42	135

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Cyfathrebu Corfforaethol  
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Corporate Communications and  
Business Development

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