



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Annual Monitoring Report
April 2023 - March 2024



WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

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Introduction

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (MAWWFRA) recognises and values the rich diversity of our communities and the significance of our cultural heritage. We recognise that under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Welsh language has equal legal status with the English language, and we are committed to ensuring that in conducting our business, the Welsh and English languages are treated equally.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out a legal framework which imposes a duty on MAWWFRA to comply with a set of Standards relating to the Welsh language.

As an Authority, we continue to work within the Welsh Language Standards, using them 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 staff, most of whom are residents of mid and west Wales and who themselves reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their communities.

Despite the significant challenges we face, we recognise that to ensure we continue to provide an efficient and effective service to our communities, challenging and improving the way we work is important. We are always open to change and thrive on finding new and better ways of doing things. Through careful planning, we can consider what we want to do for the short, medium and long term to ensure we continually review our activities and build a representative workforce to help us deliver fully inclusive services, ensuring our staff and communities have access to our services in their language of need and choice.

Thank you,

Gwynfor Thomas.

Chair, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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Executive Summary

At Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS), we are clear that in the conduct of public business in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated equally. We take immense pride in our ongoing commitment to the Welsh language, and to increasing bilingual services and language choice for both our staff and our communities year on year.

Our vision is for an ambitious Welsh language service where all staff working for MAWWFRS will be able to understand and use a level of Welsh appropriate for their role.

Our mission is to provide a Welsh language service which goes beyond legislative compliance and reflects the communities we serve and the staff we employ, recognising their rights, meeting their needs, and contributing to their development. Our organisational values underpin this approach.

Taking our lead from the Welsh Government, we believe that Welsh belongs to us all whatever our linguistic background and that it is a vocational skill that all our staff should possess, at an appropriate level, according to their role and location, to enable us to develop, provide and promote appropriate Welsh language services.

This report 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 ongoing work to be done to ensure we recognise language needs and provide real language choices to both our communities and our staff. We have identified key actions within this report which we will prioritise for improvement over the next twelve months. These key areas will continue to build on the work we have undertaken this year to enhance the bilingual capacity of our Service.

We want to ensure we have the optimum number 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,

Roger Thomas.

Chief Fire Officer.

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Background and current situation

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued MAWWFRA 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 us, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates. MAWWFRA's Compliance Notice is available [here](#) on our website.

As part of the Compliance Notice, MAWWFRA 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. MAWWFRA's Implementation Plan is available [here](#) on our website.

Under the legislation, MAWWFRA is also required to publish an annual progress report made towards meeting and maintaining the Welsh Language Standards.

This annual report for 2023/24 is MAWWFRA's 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 an MAWWFRA level, accountability for the Welsh language lies with the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

Within MAWWFRS, the Executive Board has the highest management function and is led by the Chief Fire Officer. Within the Executive Board, the executive lead for the Welsh language lies with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, who has line management responsibility for the Corporate Communications and Business Development department.

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

The Welsh Language Officer has responsibility for implementing the Standards and for promoting and supporting the Welsh language from day to day.

Arrangements for approving this report.

This report was submitted to and approved by the MAWWFRA's Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 22 July 2024.

Complaints

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

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Matters arising during the reporting period.

The table below records actions taken and matters arising during 2023/24.

Service Delivery Standards	Action taken during 2023/24
Standards 1, 4, 5-7	We continued to ensure that all departmental administration teams are familiar with guidance and resources available concerning these specific Standards relating to corresponding with individuals inside and outside the organisation.
Standards 8-17	<p>During 2022/23, issues were identified as part of a mystery shopper process, regarding the use of a consistent and bilingual approach to answering telephone calls, and a communication and engagement exercise was undertaken to ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities.</p> <p>All staff have been made aware of the requirement to consider the importance of language choice when dealing with telephone calls to and from members of the public, in addition to resources being shared internally on how to promote the use of Welsh at work.</p>
Standards 28-32	<p>All public meetings of the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority have been supported with a simultaneous translator. Further to an agreement with the Service's Executive Leadership Team, more reports have been presented in the medium of Welsh, increasing its use in this public forum.</p> <p>As part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, we produced a Multi-locations Procedure for the Authority, which is now included within the Constitution. This includes guidance concerning the use of simultaneous translation at full Authority and Committee meetings.</p>
Standards 32, 36, 58-60	<p>All publicly available materials and platforms have been produced and displayed bilingually including the Service website and corporate social media accounts.</p> <p>Any posters, leaflets, videos or other promotional materials have also been produced bilingual.</p> <p>Except for operational signs, all signs have been produced bilingual.</p>
Standards 49, 52, 53 and 54	<p>During 2023/24, the Service commenced an exercise to develop a new website.</p> <p>As part of this process, a full review of requirements has been undertaken to ensure it is fully compliant with</p>

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	<p>applicable Welsh Language Standards, as well as seeking opportunities to go beyond compliance and extend what is currently being offered through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>As a result of this, a new website will go live in quarter 1 of 2024/25.</p>
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Operational Standards	Action taken during 2023/24
Standard 124 - 130	<p>During 2022/23, the Service's Welsh Language Officers embedded themselves as part of the induction process for new Firefighter recruits.</p> <p>As a result of staff absence, this support ceased during 2023/24 but processes are now underway to resurrect it.</p> <p>Due to staff absence, other areas that were hoping to develop during 2023/24 that relate to this group of Standards have not been completed and so will be migrated to the 2024/25 reporting period.</p>
Standard 117 - 122	<p>During 2023/24 we continued to support the ICT department in ensuring compliance with the Welsh Language Standards as part of their project to develop a new Service intranet.</p> <p>Recognising that the intranet is still in its infancy and significant development is continuing to take place, the process of understanding what more can be offered with this new modern ICT system commenced and ideas and solutions developed, including a new site to promote the Welsh Language Standards and all associated advice, guidance and information, bilingual forms and a project to explore creating a Welsh language digital community for internal staff.</p>
Standard 124	<p>This year we have continued to ensure we assessed the Welsh language skills of our employees, recognising its importance in formulating a new Welsh Language Strategy during 2024/25.</p> <p>The outcomes of this exercise have been published within this document.</p>
Standard 129	<p>Recognising the importance of providing Welsh language training to all staff, considerable time and support have been provided to ensure they can access appropriate courses based on their skill set and learning needs.</p> <p>We continued to explore course options, offering both digital and traditional learning methods. All this provision is fully</p>

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	<p>supported financially and timewise through the Service to encourage staff to participate.</p> <p>Monitoring and promoting the Welsh language amongst our staff have been hugely successful this year. We have continued to support Welsh language and culture-related campaigns and undertook an event within our HQ to support St David's Day, which resulted in significant engagement from staff across the Service.</p>
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Policy Making Standards	Action taken during 2023/24
Standards 85-90, 92-94	<p>Following a wholesale review of the Service's governance process, we have taken the opportunity to consider our Welsh Language Impact Assessment tool to ensure that all strategic decisions being made by the organisation consider the Welsh language. As such, the tool has now been edited, updated and shared with the organisation.</p> <p>A new Welsh Language Strategy has been drafted during 2023/24 and will be submitted through the Service's governance process for final approval in 2024/25.</p>

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Actions to be taken during 2024/25 and beyond.

- We will work with the Welsh Language Commissioner’s team to support the designing and promoting Welsh language services project, improving how we design and promote our Welsh language services to increase their use.
- We will launch a new Welsh Language Strategy, recognising what we have learned since the introduction of the Welsh Language Standards and what our organisational aspirations are in supporting the uses and promotion of the language over the next 5 years.
- We will introduce Welsh development groups for staff across our Service, creating a network of support to facilitate the informal use of Welsh, enabling Welsh-speaking staff to use Welsh more often.
- We will work to help raise the Welsh skill level of staff that have a recorded level less than level 2 by offering support with development and assessments.
- We will undertake a wholesale review of Cornel Cymraeg site on our Service intranet, modifying advice guidance and information as required.
- We will revise our method for capturing Welsh language skills data to ensure we have a data set that accurately reflects our organisation and drives our future aims, objectives and ambitions.

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Record Keeping Standards

Complaints

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

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

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Employee Welsh Language Skills

The data for the 2023/24 financial year appears in the tables below.

A mandatory Welsh language skills survey was designed and conducted in the first quarter of 2024.

443 responses were received. 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 Welsh Language Ability	Desired Welsh Language Ability
None - You have no understanding at any level.	6%	0%
Level A1 (Entry) - You can recognise some basic everyday greetings for example, bore da, diolch, if the person is talking very slowly.	37%	12%
Level A2 (1) - You can understand simple enquiries, personal information or instructions.	13%	10%
Level B1 (2) - You can understand people talking slowly about everyday situations and someone giving instructions or asking you or others to do something.	6%	7%
Level B2 (3) - You can understand information about common or everyday topics and people speaking clearly when making announcements or when on spoken media.	7%	14%
Level C1 (4) - You can understand most conversations and	12%	14%

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discussions even if the subject is unfamiliar and there are differences in formal / informal Welsh and dialects.		
Level C2 (5) - 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.	15%	25%
Other/Unknown	0%	15%

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 Welsh Language Ability	Desired Welsh Language Ability
None - You have no speaking at any level.	8%	0%
A1 (Entry) – You can repeat some basic, simple words upon hearing them often.	27%	11%
A2 (Level 1) - You can say place names, personal names and signs correctly or greet and introduce others or give and receive personal details.	23%	11%
B1(Level 2) - You can make or respond to simple enquiries, give or respond to simple information and instructions and hold a short conversation exchanging straightforward information.	9%	9%
B2 (Level 3) - You can take part in most conversations or meetings turning to English for discussion or when giving detailed	6%	13%

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information.		
C1 (Level 4) - You can contribute effectively to most work meetings, hold a conversation comfortably and exchange information turning to English for technical terminology.	13%	17%
C2 (Level 5) - You can express yourself fully and precisely, even when discussing complex issues and adapt your language style to the audience or context.	11%	22%
Other/Unknown	0%	15%

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 Welsh Language Ability	Desired Welsh Language Ability
None - You have no reading skills at any level.	11%	0%
A1(Entry Level) - You can recognise some basic, short Welsh words. You can also guess the meaning of some words when they are in an explanatory context.	31%	12%
A2(Level 1) - You can read short sentences, basic signs, simple instructions or simple information.	16%	9%
B1(Level 2) - You can read short messages and understand some basic emails.	6%	7%
B2(Level 3) - You can understand most messages concerning day to day work and guess the meaning of a word if the	8%	14%

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subject is familiar.		
C1(Level 4) - You can read most correspondence and scan long texts to find details and understand most articles and reports with the aid of a dictionary.	13%	13%
C2(Level 5) - You can read and understand nearly all written texts with ease, only occasionally using a dictionary, read long texts, reports and articles to find relevant details and understand formal and informal writing.	13%	24%
Other/Unknown	0%	17%

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 Welsh Language Ability	Desired Welsh Language Ability
None - You have no writing skills at any level.	18%	0
A1(Entry) - You can write a short Welsh word with minimal assistance.	33%	13%
A2(Level 1) - You can open and close an e-mail and write personal names, place names and job titles.	13%	8%
B1(Level 2) - You can write a short message to a colleague and write a short message to arrange an appointment.	8%	12%
B2(Level 3) - You can write a message on most topics and write relatively accurately on most familiar topics.	12%	18%
C1(Level 4) - You can produce correspondence of all types.	6%	12%

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C2(Level 5) - 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.	6%	15%
Other/Unknown	0%	19%

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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 continues to be room for improvement, which we will address during 2024/25.

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 Llew Davies, Welsh Language Officer by emailing llew.davies@tancgc.gov.uk

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