

This report is made in compliance with standards 152, 158, and 164 of the Welsh Standards Compliance Notice issued to the Valuation Tribunal by the Welsh Language Commissioner on 6 November 2017. It is made for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Original publication and subsequent variation of Compliance Notice

1. The Tribunal's original Compliance Notice was issued to it on 30 September 2016 with an effective date for all standards contained within it (except numbers 99 to 103, 122 and 145) of 30 March 2017. The effective date for the excepted standards just noted was set at 30 September 2017.
2. Following challenges made by the Tribunal, the Commissioner varied the original Compliance Notice by removing standards 64 and 67 altogether and removing the limitations originally placed against standards 65 and 65A. The Commissioner made her determination on 6 November 2017. A copy of the finalised Compliance Notice is available on the Tribunal's website.

How the Tribunal has complied with the different classes of standards imposed upon it

3. The Tribunal has the following classes of standards imposed upon it:
 - Service delivery standards
 - Policy making standards
 - Operational standards
 - Record keeping standards

Service delivery standards

4. The Tribunal continues in its efforts to comply with all the service delivery standards placed upon it. All the customer-contact features recorded in previous reports facilitating the use of the Welsh Language and promoting its use by service users remain in place. Full and immediate spoken language response at the first point of contact remains a problem due to the small number of fluent Welsh language speakers within a small workforce, in which staff turnover is rare. Unfortunately one of our fluent speakers left at the very end of this report year for another job; and a recruitment exercise, in which we hoped to find at least one replacement, came to an abrupt halt because of the national COVID-19 lockdown. The recruitment exercise had begun in January with the primary intention of increasing our workforce skills in other areas and with a secondary intention of increasing our strength in the Welsh language. However, because it did not complete at the end of March, we ended the period with decreased Welsh language capacity. The recruitment exercise (which was at the interview stage) will restart later in 2020-21. We anticipate that when it completes we will have more people available to deal with Welsh language contacts and enquires.

Policy making standards

5. As reported last year, policy-making is undertaken by the Tribunal's Governing Council (the VTW's governing body). The Governing Council requires the development of all new policies and the revision of current ones to take into account the impact of the policies themselves on the use of the Welsh Language and on opportunities to use the Welsh Language. An annexe noting the Welsh Language considerations the Governing Council has taken into account is added to all new and revised policies, so that it is clear that an assessment of Welsh Language impact has been undertaken. However, no new or revised policies have been discussed by the Governing Council this year.

Operational standards

6. The language preferences of staff and tribunal members are held on record. Two members of staff (out of 15) and 12 tribunal members (out of 93) have chosen Welsh as their preference for all applicable standards. No new member of staff was appointed during 2019/20; but one of the two with a Welsh Language preference left at the very end of the year. No new tribunal members were recruited this year, but some retired – including some with Welsh language preference. A fully bilingual recruitment process for new members of staff began in January. Dedicated inboxes for English and Welsh applications were set up which automatically acknowledged the receipt of applications in the chosen language, and also advised applicants in a similar way if they submitted their application out of time.
7. As recorded last year, Welsh Language spell-checking and grammar-checking software is part of the standard workstation build for all members of staff. It is also included as standard on laptops, including additional laptops which were issued at the commencement of the UK COVID-19 lockdown. All VTW staff therefore have continued to have access to these facilities whilst working at home.
8. The assessment the Welsh Language skills of our staff throughout this year is as follows: two were identified as fully proficient, one as high level, one as possessing good conversational skills, six as basic (upper), one as basic (lower), and four as very low or nil. The way in which these assessments map to the VTW's Welsh Language Skill Levels is shown in the Required Records table in Appendix A below. Appendix B shows the Welsh Language Skill Levels themselves. The Language Skill Levels chart was part of the job application pack issued earlier this year, and applicants were asked to give a personal assessment of their abilities based on this, when making their application. This was done so that candidates, who met all the essential requirements, could then be sorted by Welsh language ability.
9. The tribunal supports all requests for Welsh language training and encourages staff to undertake it. Several staff have pursued this in recent years but have reached points where they have decided to stop formal language training, at least for the being. One member of staff has continued to undertake external tuition and has been granted time away from the workplace for this. The two fully proficient Welsh speakers successfully completed a post-graduate certificate in Professional Translation during the year. The tribunal paid all course fees and allowed time off to attend training sessions at Aberystwyth University. These two members of staff undertook minor internal translation tasks during the year, for which they were paid a

small monthly allowance. The time spent on translation tasks is logged. Long documents are still sent to external translators when required.

10. The tribunal continues to have standard bilingual formats for email signatures and Out of Office messages where the Welsh language is likely to be read first. Email signatures indicate whether the sender is a Welsh language speaker or learner, as applicable. Welsh language speakers are encouraged to wear badges and/or lanyards to show that they can converse in the language.
11. Bilingual signs continue to be displayed in our offices, including temporary signs whenever they are erected. They are laid out so that the Welsh language is likely to be read first.

Record keeping standards

12. The Tribunal has compiled the records it is required to compile under the standards applicable to it. Details of the records for the year are shown in Appendix A.

WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS - REQUIRED RECORDS

Standard number	Requirement	End of year result												
140	Number of complaints relating to compliance with standards	None												
141	Have copies of written complaints about compliance with standards been retained?	There were no written complaints, and so there are no retained documents.												
142	Have copies of other written complaints relating to the Welsh Language been retained?	There were no other written complaints, and so there are no retained documents.												
143	Is there a record of the steps taken to ensure compliance with the policy making standards?	Yes. A record is placed in an annexe at the end of each new or revised policy.												
144	Number of staff with Welsh Language skills as at the end of the year (and if recorded the relevant skill level)	1 Fully proficient <i>VTW level 5</i> 1 High level <i>VTW level 4</i> 1 Good conversational <i>VTW level 3</i> 7 Basic <i>VTW level 2</i> 4 Very low or nil <i>VTW level 1</i>												
145	The number (and percentage) of staff who have attended training in Welsh in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and interviewing Performance management Complaints and disciplinary procedures Induction Dealing with the public Health and safety 	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Recruitment and interviewing</td> <td>None (0%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Performance management</td> <td>None (0%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Complaints and disciplinary procedures</td> <td>None (0%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Induction</td> <td>None (0%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dealing with the public</td> <td>None (0%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Health and safety</td> <td>None (0%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Recruitment and interviewing	None (0%)	Performance management	None (0%)	Complaints and disciplinary procedures	None (0%)	Induction	None (0%)	Dealing with the public	None (0%)	Health and safety	None (0%)
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Induction	None (0%)													
Dealing with the public	None (0%)													
Health and safety	None (0%)													
147	Number of advertised posts this year? Has a copy of the assessment of the required Welsh Language skills for the post(s) been retained?	Three identical positions Yes												
148	The number of advertised posts categorised as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh skills essential Welsh skills need to be learnt Welsh skills are desirable Welsh skills are not necessary 	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>Welsh skills essential</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3*</td> <td>Welsh skills need to be learnt</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>Welsh skills are desirable</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>Welsh skills are not necessary</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>[* The requirement was that Level 3 was desirable, but if the candidate's ability was below this, skills needed to be learnt. See the extract from the Application Pack in Appendix C.]</p>	0	Welsh skills essential	3*	Welsh skills need to be learnt	0	Welsh skills are desirable	0	Welsh skills are not necessary				
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VTW Welsh Language Skill Levels

Language area	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Listening/Speaking:	Can say names correctly (including first names, surnames and place names). Can greet customers bilingually on phone, enable language choice at reception, and open & close conversation bilingually.	Can understand the gist of a conversation in moderately paced Welsh and be able to make an occasional contribution. Can understand and pass on simple messages on work-related, routine tasks and convey basic information.	Can understand & take part in Welsh conversations. Can offer advice to queries but may have to use English terms occasionally.	Can contribute effectively in internal & external meetings on work-related matters. Can understand different tones & dialect; able to argue for & against an idea or position; able to chair meetings and answer questions.	Can contribute fluently with confidence on all aspects of the individual's work and give advice of a technical nature where necessary. Can translate effectively for others.
Reading:	Can understand short workplace signs and labels. Can understand very short text on work related topics and simple instructions in plain language.	Can understand a significant amount of brief work-related documents given sufficient time and access to language tools.	Can understand most correspondence & work-related material. May have to use language tools for high level or technical vocabulary.	Can understand formal correspondence & reports.	Can understand reports, documents & articles related to normal work, including those of a complex linguistic nature.
Writing:	Can write place, personal names, job titles, names of external contacts, businesses and authorities. Can include simple Welsh phrases in messages to colleagues.	Can write short messages & emails to colleagues	Can prepare responses to most items of correspondence and write reports for internal use, with modest use of language tools.	Can produce business correspondence, formal reports, emails etc with occasional use of language tools. Can take good quality notes in meetings.	Can produce correspondence and notes to a very high standard with minimal use of language tools; able to take full detailed notes in a meeting with accurate expression. Can translate accurately with appropriate style and tone.

Extract from Person Specification in Job Application Pack

(Three identical posts – advertised January 2020)

Welsh language skill	Level 3 or above in the Tribunal's Welsh language skill table (see attached)	Desirable	At interview
	Where the applicant has low level proficiency in Welsh (levels 1 or 2 in the Tribunal's language skill table – [see attached]): A commitment to improve	Essential	At interview
	(Where the applicant has NO proficiency in the Welsh Language): A commitment to undertake Welsh language training	Essential	At interview