

July 2022

Update to the Welsh Language Commissioner: 2021/2022

Introduction

The Welsh Language Act 1993 established a duty for public organisations providing services in Wales to produce a Welsh Language Scheme (the Scheme). The Scheme produced by the Legal Ombudsman (LeO) was prepared under the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and in consultation with the Welsh Language Board (now the Welsh Language Commissioner) prior to publication.

It describes how, when providing services to the public in Wales we will give effect to the principle that we treat the English and Welsh languages equally, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.

The Scheme was prepared in accordance with Sections 12 to 14 of the Act and in accordance with guidelines issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner under Section 9 of the Act. The Scheme came into effect on 11 May 2011.

This paper sets out how the Legal Ombudsman met its obligations under the terms of its Scheme when delivering its services in Wales between April 2021 to April 2022. This is the eleventh year of the Scheme's operation.

What we do

The Legal Ombudsman scheme was set up by the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) under the Legal Services Act 2007. Users of legal services are able to access an independent and impartial Ombudsman scheme to resolve disputes involving their lawyer. We are the single body for all consumer legal complaints.

The OLC is accountable to Parliament through the Lord Chancellor and is an Arm's Length body of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The OLC also has a direct relationship with the Legal Services Board (LSB) which has various functions overseeing the Office for Legal Complaints.

The relationship between the OLC, the MoJ and the LSB is set out in a tripartite operating protocol agreed between the bodies, which sets the framework for how the relationship will operate with our partner organisations. This is available from our website: <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>

Contacts and complaints sent to us for investigation

In 2021/22 we corresponded with two Welsh MPs.

The Welsh 'general information' section on the Legal Ombudsman website received 104 unique page views. Unique page views refer to the number of individual users instead of simply number of clicks. The average time spent on this page was 56 seconds.

People can also use the website to send their complaints to us via an online tool. This consists of an initial complaint checker to make sure it is something we can investigate and an online complaint form. Both are available in Welsh.

In 2021/22 these received:

Complaint checker – 63 unique visits

Complaint form - 4 unique visits

Completed complaints – 2

Complainants are also able to download a Welsh language version of the complaint form and send this to us.

Complaint correspondence - we translated 4 documents into Welsh relating to complaint forms.

Our response to the Welsh Language Act requirements is proportionate to the level of contacts we receive in the Welsh language. We keep this under regular review and will update our language requirements if anything substantive changes.

Publications

Our Annual Report and Accounts for 2020/21 ([Reports and plans | Legal Ombudsman](#)) was translated into Welsh, and the intention is to do the same for this year's report and make it available on our website.

We will also translate this commissioner's report into Welsh and publish it on our website.

Speaking events

In previous years we have held events in Wales to talk to the legal profession about our services. In 2020/21 due to the ongoing restrictions from Covid and a lack of resource in the team, events were online for the most part and dependent on available resource. We attended five in person events and eight online events across England. At the end of 2020/21 we visited one firm based in Wales to deliver 121 training following a request from the Director.

Since January we have started re-engaging with our Welsh contacts to discuss possibilities for future engagement activity with the hope to deliver events in 2022/23.

Monitoring and complaints

We continue to monitor our Welsh language provision in order to ensure its compliance with the requirements of the Scheme.

The External Affairs team has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Scheme and will continue to monitor our progress in delivering it.

Where new corporate policies and initiatives may affect our Scheme, LeO will consult the Welsh Language Commissioner.

When considering any new policy changes, consideration is given to any impact and implications that the policy may have on the Welsh Language Scheme.

Conclusion

The Legal Ombudsman continues to take its statutory obligations towards Welsh language provision seriously. We will continue to assess how we may best serve the interests of Welsh service users.

For more information on information contained in this paper please contact the External Affairs team at support@legalombudsman.org.uk.