



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Fire and Rescue Service

# Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023–2024

How the standards are met, and how opportunities to use Welsh in the workplace and throughout the Service are promoted and facilitated.

**Publication date: September 2024**

Mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn ar gael yn Gymraeg | This publication is available in Welsh

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# Annual Report on the Welsh Language in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

## Overview

This is North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (NWFRA) annual report on Welsh language Standards for 2023 - 2024. It evaluates our compliance with the Standards, and the ways in which opportunities to use Welsh have been promoted and facilitated, ensuring that the language was treated no less favourably than the English language during the year. It was prepared in accordance with Schedule 4 of the Welsh Language Standards (No. 5) Regulations 2016, to meet the requirements of standards 158, 164 a 170.

## Further information

This publication is available on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) website at [www.northwalesfire.gov.wales](http://www.northwalesfire.gov.wales). If you require it in another format and/or language, or have any questions about its contents, please contact us using the details below.

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**Calls and correspondence in Welsh and English are welcomed. Using Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.**



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## Related documents

Our compliance notice under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 is available on our [website](http://www.northwalesfire.gov.wales).

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# Introduction

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (NWFRA) recognises and values the diversity of our service area and the cultural and linguistic diversity within our communities. We are committed to our legal and moral duty to ensure that the Welsh language is treated with parity to the English language when conducting our business.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out a legal framework which imposes a legal duty on NWFRA to comply with Standards relating to the promoting, raising awareness, and facilitating the Welsh language within our fire and rescue service.

The Welsh language is an integral part of our core values and is essential to our People, Prevention, and Protection principles, which form part of our [Community Risk Management Plan 2024 – 2029](#). Our People principle commits to recruiting and developing a bilingual workforce to represent the demographic of our area. Our Prevention principle focuses on reducing risks to our communities by engaging with all people in North Wales and actively offering language choice. Additionally, our Protection principle involves engaging with North Wales businesses, many of whom communicate with us in Welsh.

## Accountability and Governance

Within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS), the Welsh language is governed as part of our organisational structure through the Welsh Language Governance Group, chaired by our Welsh Language Officer. The Welsh Language Officer, a member of the Corporate Communications department, has responsibility for implementing the Welsh Language Standards and promoting the Welsh language within the Service. The Welsh Language Governance Group reports to our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Committee chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO). The DCFO takes the executive lead on the Welsh language and has line management responsibility for the Corporate Communications department.

During 2023/2024, NWFRA has continued with efforts to implement the Welsh Language Standards and their requirements. This report details our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards; how we monitor, promote and develop the Welsh language within the Service; and the opportunities for future improvements. This report has been approved by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Committee and subsequently approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting in October 2024.

# Background

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993, requiring North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority to comply with a set of Welsh Language Standards which ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language.

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued fire and rescue authorities with their compliance duties on 30 September 2016. This document lists which of the Standards, as listed in full in the Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.5) 2016, the Authority must comply with, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

The Authority is required to publish its Welsh Language Standards annual report for 2023/24 by October 2024 and to publicise it appropriately.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that in conducting public business in Wales, the English and Welsh languages are treated equally. We recognise and value the rich diversity of our communities and the significant natural and cultural heritage.

The Authority also acknowledges its duty towards its staff, most of whom are residents of North Wales and reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their own communities.

By acknowledging our moral and legal duties to protect the cultural heritage of the area and meet the expectations of the local community, the Authority continues to work towards ensuring that we conduct our public business in both languages.

**The Authority's Implementation Plan is available to view using the link below;**  
**[The Welsh Language Standards](#)**

## The Welsh Language Standards

During 2023/24, the Authority continued to comply with the set of Welsh Language Standards issued in the [Compliance Notice of 30 September 2016](#). We also continue to work collaboratively with external language groups via the Welsh Language Officer, in addition to managing internal Welsh language governance via the Welsh Language Governance Group. This group has representation from throughout our fire and rescue and serves the purpose of;

- Co-ordinating between departments on Welsh language issues
- Scrutinising and offering guidance to improve any aspect of the bilingual provision of the Service
- Collaborating on how to resolve any challenges or complaints
- Ensuring that the Welsh language is being treated as favourably as the English language within the Service.

Welsh translation matters are contracted to an external company in order to help fulfil all obligations set by the Welsh Language Standards.

The Authority also continues to collaborate with colleagues at the other two Welsh fire and rescue services and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to share information on best practices and ensure a standardised approach.

# Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards

## Service Delivery Standards:

The Compliance Notice which lists these Standards can be seen on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service [website](#). These Standards relate to our public face and how we deal with our service users, whether in person, over the phone, or online, as well as any physical or online publications.

Arrangements have been made to meet the Service Delivery Standards that have come into force including the following:

### Standards 1,4, 5-7

During the past year, updated guidance on the correct bilingual correspondence procedure was added to the Welsh language page of the Service's intranet, Hwb Tân. This will also be included as part of a new internal use of our Welsh language policy which is currently being developed to help provide up to date guidance to staff.

### Standards 8-22

All staff are aware of the requirement to consider the importance of language choice when handling telephone calls with members of the public. Resources have been shared internally on how to promote the use of Welsh at work. Updated video guidance has been shared on the Welsh language page of the Service intranet, Hwb Tân, and will be included in our new Internal Use of the Welsh Language Policy. Although not main telephone lines, our individual fire stations also have guidance on answering the phone bilingually, with the emphasis on using Welsh first.

The Authority continues to recognise the value and benefit of offering language choice as a necessity in an emergency and operates a fully bilingual Control Room at the Joint Communications Centre (JCC) in St Asaph, even though there is no statutory requirement to answer 999 calls bilingually. The Authority's decision to go above and beyond the requirements of the Standards acknowledges the benefits in terms of safety in emergency situations when some callers prefer to communicate more effectively in Welsh as their first language.

Job vacancies in the Joint Communication Centre are advertised with a minimum of Level 4<sup>1</sup> Welsh language skills requirement to ensure a proactive active language choice is offered to any caller wishing to speak Welsh.

Data is collected on how many service users contact us in Welsh, for monitoring and evaluation purposes. As of 31 March 2024, 1,042 calls were handled in Welsh. These include 999 calls and reports of controlled burnings.

<sup>1</sup> The Service standard for Level 4 Welsh skills are as follows: Holding informal conversations in Welsh with fluency, reading and writing fluently with the aid of grammar and spelling software for accuracy.

The availability of this service is regularly promoted on the Service's social media accounts and at public events attended in order to raise external awareness.

Within the Joint Communications Centre, we have members of staff that act as Welsh Language Champions. They regularly arrange Welsh medium 'Paned a Sgwrs' sessions for their staff and for wider Service staff to help maintain the profile of the Welsh language and normalise speaking Welsh informally.

## Standards 28–32

In relation to ensuring the use of Welsh in meetings, all promotional correspondence is bilingual. To facilitate the right of attendees to use Welsh in our public meetings, interpretation is available for non-Welsh speakers. During our 2023 public consultation on our Emergency Cover Review, 17 public meetings were held across North Wales and online, with advertised translation facilities, bilingual presentations and information material available in all areas.

## Standards 33,34

Promotion of any public events we organise is done so bilingually, and these events are promoted on our corporate social media pages.

In the past year, we have organised events such as our Emergency Cover Review public consultation engagement events and fire station open days where all events were advertised and promoted with linguistic parity.

Our newly introduced BikerDown courses, aimed at promoting motor bike safety, are held monthly at Rhyl Community Fire Station from April to October and these are publicised bilingually across the Service's social media platforms and through a designated bilingual page on the website for motorcycle safety. Leaflets and posters distributed throughout North Wales in locations popular with motorcyclists are also bilingual.

## Standards 62–64

Service policy notes that staff with front facing positions must be fluent in the Welsh language (Level 4 skills and above). As of 31 March 2024, there are 89 members of staff occupying designated 'front facing' posts within the Service. This number is slightly lower than previous year (92) as a result of a restructure of posts.



# Operational Standards:

The Compliance Notice which lists these standards can be seen on the Service's [website](#). These standards relate to our internal use of Welsh. They place a duty on us to encourage the use of Welsh in our administration and to support our officers and councillors to use the language in their work.

Arrangements have been made to meet these Operational Standards, including the following:

## Standards 96–101

Staff have a right, which is regularly promoted and communicated internally, to receive any relevant correspondence in Welsh or bilingually. Relevant forms, relating to their employment are available bilingually and can be viewed on our Hwb Tân intranet. A record is kept of each staff member's preferred language to receive correspondence.

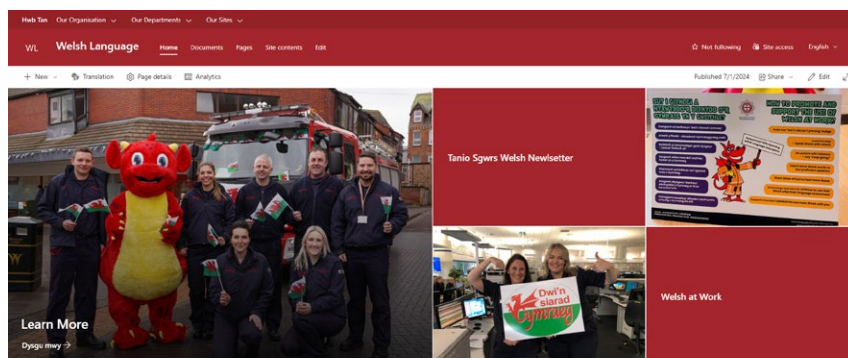
## Standards 102 –108

New and revised policies are published internally in both Welsh and English, with each policy required to have an associated integrated impact assessment to ascertain its impact on the Welsh language, as well as to identify and promote ways of creating a positive impact and avoiding negative impact. A new policy is also being developed on the Internal Use of the Welsh language.

## Standards 125 – 132

From January 2024, Welsh Language courses provided by Coleg Cambria have been available in-house to our staff. Our staff have previously attended courses facilitated via our partners North Wales Police, however, being able to offer these courses within our own Service has enabled more staff to attend.

Staff can also access the self-learning materials available on our Hwb Tân intranet Welsh language page as well as receive support from the Welsh Language Officer or a Welsh language champion. Conversation sessions are offered, including 1-to-1 sessions, to promote and support staff to develop their Welsh language skills.



Language Awareness training is offered in two ways; first face-to-face, usually for operational staff joining in groups. Secondly, an online module is provided through our LearnPro platform on language awareness.

The requirement to include the Welsh language on e-mail signatures and 'out of office' messages is promoted internally. Examples are available on our Hwb Tân intranet Welsh Language page along with relevant logos.



## Standard 143

Complaints are monitored and dealt with by the Human Resources (HR) Department and Business Support Unit. Complaints and letters of appreciation are reported annually to the Fire and Rescue Authority. No complaints were received during 2023–2024 in relation to the Welsh language. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has published a complaints procedure on our website and also has an internal policy for staff on how to raise a concern or complaint.

## Standard 147, 150, 151

As of 31 March 2024, 88.2% of our staff were able to demonstrate that they had Welsh language skills (Level 1 and above), 38.6% of whom were classed as fluent speakers (Level 4 and 5 skills). This has increased compared to 37% in the previous year.

In all, 97.9% of our staff had either a formal or self-assessment record for their Welsh skills.

Staff that have been employed for less than 12 months may not have been assessed as Service policy is such that they have until the end of their probationary period to achieve the minimum required Welsh skill level for their post. However, as of 31 March 2024, 98.7% of our staff with less than 12 months service have been assessed.

The Welsh language skills of each new member of staff is assessed either at an early stage where Welsh fluency is a part of their role, or later during their employment. Staff who do not possess Welsh language skills of a minimum Level 2 are required to develop these skills during their probationary period. Welsh skills are a part of the probationary requirements.

Self-learning resources are available in addition to further training courses in the event that staff are finding difficulty progressing their skills.





## Recent appointments and promotions

Welsh language skills of our staff during promotion and recruitment are tracked in order to identify the need for skills development.

During the period 2023-24, one operational member of staff was appointed below the required skills for the post. This member of staff is receiving Welsh language skills development support to achieve the required level by the end of their probationary period.

All filled vacancies for the Joint Communications Centre where Welsh fluency is required, are at the required minimum Level 4.

Within our corporate services functions, two roles where Welsh fluency Level 4 was required were filled during 2023-24. One was filled at the required Welsh skills level, and the second was filled below the Welsh skills level following three unsuccessful recruitment attempts requiring a minimum of Level 4 in Welsh. Support for staff that fall below the required category is provided to help them develop their Welsh language skills.

Within the Service leadership roles, there were two promotions during the year, with one member of staff meeting the language criteria and another receiving support on a one-to-one basis to develop their skills to achieve the criteria set for the post.

# Monitoring, promoting and developing the Welsh language within the Service

Monitoring and promoting the Welsh language among staff is delivered internally in a variety of different ways. The services available in Welsh for the public are also promoted and highlighted through external campaigns

- The Welsh Language Champions scheme offers an allowance to members of staff who are part of the scheme to reward their commitment to promoting the Welsh language within their departments or fire stations. Welsh Language Champions are located across the service area and across functions. They help to promote the use of Welsh at work, to support staff with Welsh language assessments, and also to promote Welsh language activities to other staff. The Welsh Language Champions are required to submit a quarterly task form noting their achievements in order to receive their allowance and this provides an insight of the promotional work carried out between staff.
- Earlier this year, three members of the Service Leadership Team, including Deputy Chief Fire Officer Stewart Forshaw, Area Manager Anthony Jones, Head of Planning and Performance, and Executive Assistant Lisa Allington, all successfully completed the Welsh Level 3 course provided by North Wales Police and Coleg Cambria. We have now ensured that courses are carried out internally to facilitate staff being able to develop their Welsh skills.
- The Welsh Language Champions were encouraged this year to use more Welsh within their departments or fire stations by making use of the new Welsh word of the day resource. A whiteboard helps facilitate this which encourages staff to share examples of how the words are used in the workplace.
- The 'Welsh Wednesday' monthly bulletin shares information about the Welsh language to staff, including opportunities to learn Welsh and how to increase the use of Welsh on a day-to-day basis. Also included within is a section reminding staff of key Welsh Language Standards and ways they can ensure compliance e.g. bilingual e-mail signatures and out of office messages. The analytics from the recent year show that this bulletin, in Welsh and English, receives an average of 242 unique openings and 169 unique clicks to further information contained within.

Additionally, a quarterly 'Tanio Sgwrs' newsletter in Welsh with an English glossary is sent to staff that contains information about our Welsh Language Champions, Welsh learners in the Service, and other relevant information.



**Tanio Sgwrs** Rhifyn 4 Hydref 2023

**Neges gan y Swyddog Iaith Gymraeg**  
A message from the Welsh Language Officer  
**Natalie Jones**

**Hellw a chroeso i rifyn Hydref 2023 a Tanio Sgwrs.**  
Hefi, cawn wybod mwy am un o'n hynddiarys iaith Gymraeg - bechgyn, sy'n un o'n Diffodlwyf Tân yng Nghaerdydd. Cawn hysbysu i chi am yr hysbysuon wedi deffnyddio y ddalen yma - [Llysoedd Dydd](#).

**Hi and welcome to the Autumn 2023 edition of 'Tanio Sgwrs'.**  
We'll also find out more about one of our Welsh Language Champions bechgyn - one of our firefighters at Holyhead. Find out more about the Champions at this link - [Llysoedd Dydd](#).

**With i chi ddiarfen, defnyddiwch y bocs geirfa ar y dde (it helps also find geirfa - to search for the more unfamiliar words - if you see a letter in brackets [ ] it means the word has mutated).**  
Arfonwch unrhwyb sylwadau neu awgrymodau o beth hoffech weld ym y rifyn yr oedoch.  
[natalie.jones@nwf.gov.wales](mailto:natalie.jones@nwf.gov.wales)

**As you read the newsletter, use the vocabulary box on the right-hand side to help you with the more unfamiliar words - if you see a letter in brackets [ ] it means the word has mutated.**  
Please send any comments or suggestions of what you'd like to see in the next Winter issue.  
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Hyff! Hyff!

**Mae'r rifyn yma'n cynnwys**  
**This edition includes:**

- Beth sydd new enw
- Digwyddiadau Difyr
- Holli Hwyrddw
- Yn y Newyddio

- During December 2023, the Service took part in a national [social media campaign](#) to promote Welsh Language Rights Day and promote our commitment to language choice, both internally and in our communities. Our staff featured in videos promoted on social media to highlight that people have a choice to use Welsh with us when accessing our services. For promotion internally, a video was produced to highlight what the Welsh Language Standards mean for our staff.



- The Welsh Language Officer took part in a [bilingual promotional video](#) to encourage Welsh speakers to apply for a Business Support Administrator post that required fluency in Welsh. The importance of confident Welsh language skills is imperative to this role as it involves dealing with people and local business owners that choose to use Welsh when engaging with us. The video also featured our current staff and by demonstrating their Welsh ability, prospective applicants had a better understanding of the level of Welsh required for the post.

- St David's Day celebrations in 2024 included promoting this Welsh cultural day to staff.

This year silk daffodils were provided for staff to wear, bringing us together as a Service to celebrate. Crews and staff also came together to take part in the St David's parade in Wrexham town centre.



- Engagement with staff during Welsh national events is a key part of promoting our commitment to language choice. A Welsh quiz was held on St David's Day for staff, which included the opportunity to win a Welsh produce hamper. This sees engagement with staff throughout the Service and results in greater engagement with Welsh language pages of internal communications.

- As part of wider celebrations, two staff workshops to promote the Welsh language among staff and partner agencies were held during February and March 2024, one in Wrexham at Tŷ Pawb and one on Anglesey at the Menai



Science Park in Gaerwen. These 'Tanio Sgwrs' workshops were accessible to staff throughout the Service providing an opportunity to find out more about the Welsh language as a modern and thriving language in places beyond the workplace.

Guest speakers included Stephen Rule (Doctor Cymraeg) who is a Welsh author and teacher, Professor Llusern, a local Welsh entertainer who also works in Welsh language promotion in the Flintshire area, and Sasha Wanasky, a researcher from Bangor University who is working on Welsh language speech recognition development.

These opportunities gave staff an insight into wider Welsh language initiatives as well as a chance to use Welsh with colleagues. Partner organisations attended and were able to share examples of how they promote the Welsh language within their organisations.



- A 'Contribution to the Welsh language' award in our annual Community Awards Ceremony is presented to a member of staff that has shown dedication to the Welsh language. In 2023, the award was presented jointly to members of staff from the Joint Communications Centre. Two Welsh Language Champions have worked diligently in the Joint Communications Centre to ensure that staff can speak Welsh with each other informally by holding virtual 'Paned a Sgwrs' opportunities.

- One of our primary means of engaging with the community is through conducting Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs) in their homes. The number of SAWCs conducted through the medium of Welsh has risen in slightly during 2023-24 to 1,852, compared to 1,802 in 2022-23. There was however a decrease in the percentage of Welsh checks as a proportion of all checks to 9.3%. The percentage of Welsh SAWCs in the previous year was 10.1%. In comparison with previous years, it is noted that the take up of the offer of a SAWC in Welsh is gradually decreasing yearly.

To help improve on the number of checks conducted in Welsh, more targeted efforts are being introduced to promote the availability of SAWCs in Welsh, paying particular attention to highlighting language choice with the agencies that make SAWC referrals to the fire and rescue service. On our online referral form, a question specific to language choice for the visit has been added. Further work is being carried out with our partner agencies to ensure language choice is being offered by all third parties. Home Safety Support staff will also receive input on the active offer for Welsh language services as part of their development day training sessions, delivered by the Welsh Language Officer.

- We have also worked in partnership with Welsh television producers at Rondo in collaboration for a storyline on the popular soap 'Rownd a Rownd'. Operational and Corporate staff featured in episodes as part of the storyline, which was vital for sharing prevention messages, promoting recruitment, and showing that we are a bilingual Service committed to raising the profile of the Welsh language internally with our staff and with the wider community.

This follows on from a previous episode featuring our staff which highlighted the importance of smoke alarms and the dangers of candle fires.



- Members of our Fire and Rescue Authority joined with representatives of our Staff Networks and the Service Leadership Team for a seminar focusing on culture in February. This focused on highlighting the steps we are taking to cultivate the best possible culture within our organisation and raising awareness of where we are as a Service in terms of our cultural journey. There was an opportunity for Fire and Rescue Authority members who hold us to account to let us know of any additional work they may like us to carry out. As part of the session, Service Staff Network leads provided updates on their work as well as a presentation on our commitment to the Welsh language - all of which are crucial to our culture. This was a great way to keep Authority Members informed on the promotion of the Welsh language within the Service and what work is being done.

# Welsh Language Development

The Training and Development Department maintains a record of the Welsh courses attended by our staff and all the assessments they have undertaken and keeps records of the results on an internal recording system.

Following a Welsh language assessment, the ability of staff is subsequently recorded onto the iTrent system used to record internal staff information such as leave requests and timesheets.

Welsh courses are now facilitated internally through Coleg Cambria and are available on request.

Welsh language development sessions with the Welsh Language Officer are also available up to Welsh Level 3. These can be arranged on a group or 1-2-1 basis.

## Future Opportunities for Improvement

The following priorities have been identified as opportunities moving forward:

- In July 2024 we will see the new Welsh language courses for level 2 and 3 Welsh available at Rhyl Community Fire Station.
- Identifying staff that have Welsh skills recorded at Level 0 and 1 and liaising with them, offering support to develop further.
- Introducing a new policy on the internal use of the Welsh language to help staff ensure they are complying with Welsh language standards.
- Further staff recognition for success in achievement following attendance on Welsh language courses.
- Liaising with external agencies to ensure they are considering language choice when making referrals for safe and well checks.