

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Assembly Commission

## Bilingual Skills Strategy

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# The National Assembly for Wales Commission Bilingual Skills Strategy

## Introduction

The Official Languages Scheme committed us to bring forward a Bilingual Skills Strategy. This Strategy explains our approach and sets out five objectives to assist us in achieving our ambition to be recognised as a truly bilingual institution.

We value all our staff members, regardless of their degree of bilingualism, for the commitment they bring to the Assembly and their professional and parliamentary expertise. Our expectation is that they are all committed to the delivery of the highest standards of parliamentary support in both our official languages. Where barriers to this may exist, this strategy will help us to work towards removing them so that the Assembly demonstrates a continuous drive towards improving bilingual service delivery. Staff members already in post and new entrants will be given support if they wish to develop their language skills and we expect all managers to support requests from staff members who wish to develop their Welsh language skills in line with the business need.

Key to our achievement of this ambition is our commitment to developing the Welsh-language skills and confidence to use those skills of the people who work for the Assembly Commission. We recognise that investing in their bilingual skills is essential to ensure that the Commission can provide services in both of its official languages as outlined in the Official Languages Scheme.

This strategy draws upon the knowledge, experiences and best practice in the Welsh public sector over the last two decades, and upon the best advice available. It positions that knowledge in the context of the Commission's IIP Gold status and commitment to invest in significant learning and development opportunities for staff to help us achieve our goal of delivering outstanding parliamentary services.

# Legislative framework

The National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages Act) 2012 requires the Assembly Commission in the exercise of its functions to treat the official languages of the Assembly on a basis of equality. The Act requires us to publish a Scheme which must include a strategy for ensuring that the staff of the Assembly have, **collectively**, the language skills necessary to enable the Scheme to be implemented.

## The Strategy

The aims of the Bilingual Skills Strategy as outlined in the Official Languages Scheme are:

- to ensure that the appropriate people, skills and support are in place to enable the Commission to deliver on its statutory duty to enable anyone engaged in Assembly proceedings to do so in our official languages.
- to set out in a clear and transparent way the arrangements for planning, developing and managing the organisation's bilingual skills resource;
- to provide Assembly Members, their support staff and Assembly staff with a range of tuition and learning opportunities that enables them to develop their Welsh language skills in a way that is always tailored to the business need, and in so far as is possible, their individual needs.

This Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- That a bilingual service means a service of equal quality, accessibility and timeliness in both official languages
- That all staff members will be supported and encouraged to develop a level of skills in both languages suitable to their post, and to make use of those skills
- That linguistic ability for the purpose of work is considered a skill like any other
- That individual Service Area language plans will set out how each team will make the best use of those language skills within the team and beyond
- That we will think creatively about the ways in which we ensure teams and individuals can provide bilingual services beyond simply requiring staff members to learn or improve their Welsh language skills e.g. appropriate use of machine translation, professional text translation and/or interpretation.



# Raising Awareness

When the Assembly Commission recruits a new staff member, they may expect to receive appropriate support in order to gain an awareness of the Official Languages Scheme and to develop and understanding of the bilingual ethos and culture that exists at the National Assembly for Wales. This objective relates to raising awareness and understanding for new staff members. As part of the implementation of the Official Languages Scheme, all Commission staff members received tailored Official Languages training as a minimum.

**Objective - To provide awareness training to ensure that all staff members understand the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme as a whole, paying particular attention to specific Service Areas and posts**

The Official Languages Scheme requires all staff members to be fully committed to the implementation of the Scheme, and to respect the rights of Members, colleagues and the public to use either or both of our official languages. The Scheme also states an expectation that all members of staff will promote the Scheme's provisions and develop new services in accordance with the provisions of the Act and the Scheme. Current staff have received awareness training. All new staff members will receive awareness training to help them to understand the Scheme, its priorities and the responsibilities of individuals, teams and Service Areas.

## Actions

- All new staff members to receive awareness training as part of the new entrants induction programme
- OLS Team to develop a resource for awareness sessions for the new entrants induction programme

**Target:** Autumn 2015

## Existing Skill levels

Obtaining information regarding the Welsh language skills level of all staff members will provide Heads of Service with improved management information and enable them to plan for future service delivery in both our official languages.

**Objective - To assess the Welsh language skills of every staff member.**

In order to achieve the Commission's ambition to provide a comprehensive and valuable range of bilingual services, the Assembly Commission needs to map the existing Welsh language skills of all staff members. The information will be used to identify our strengths and areas for improvement, to outline corporate training requirements and to assess the impact of investment in training. This will also inform future decisions on language skills requirements for new or vacant posts. Line Managers will use the information to inform discussions on training for the PMDR review meetings, and to encourage staff to develop language skills and confidence in Welsh.

### Actions

- OLS Team in collaboration with Human Resources Team to develop and conduct an appropriate language skills audit
- Heads of service to utilise the information to update individual Service Area language plans

**Target:** April 2015

# Language skills for delivering bilingual services

In order to be recognised as a truly bilingual organisation, the Assembly Commission is committed to ensuring that Service Areas, teams and individual staff members have the appropriate level of language skills to deliver services in both our official languages.

## **Objective - To provide appropriate solutions, including support and training, to better align bilingual capacity to the language requirements for individual posts or teams**

Based on the results of the Language Skills Audit and the updating of Service Area language plans, line managers and Heads of Service will identify any disparities between the skills levels required, and those that exist within each team. Targeted and timely support will be provided to individuals or teams where bilingual capacity needs to be further developed to meet requirements. Training requirements will be outlined as part of the PMDR process. TRS also provide a range of services to assist with the delivery of bilingual services including proof reading, a quick turnaround service for urgent work, grammar refresher sessions and a mentoring system to help less confident Welsh speakers to work bilingually.

For any new posts, or when vacancies arise, line managers and Heads of Service should consider the bilingual capacity within the team to determine the language requirements for the vacancy. Support and guidance is available to assist.

## **Objective - To review our method of determining the Welsh language skills required for posts as part of the recruitment process**

In order to ensure that Welsh language skills levels for posts and teams are set consistently and allow us to achieve the goal of providing exemplary bilingual services, a simple determination matrix will be developed in collaboration with the Human Resources team and in consultation with Commission staff and TUS. The matrix will allow Heads of Service to assess the Welsh language skills requirements for individual posts taking into account the language skills of the team and the service. The matrix should be used to populate and update the individual Service Area language plans.

## **Actions**

- PMDRs to clearly outline any training needs in relation to Welsh language skills in order to deliver our responsibilities in both official languages
- A full range of support, including translation resources and technological tools to be developed and provided for staff according to the needs of the post or team.
- HR and Scheme Manager to develop a Matrix for approval by Management Board following consultation with TUS.
- All Line Managers and Heads of Service to receive guidance on the use of the language skills matrix when developed.

**Target:** Matrix to be developed by Summer 2015

# Learning Welsh or Improving Welsh language skills

Welsh learners further enhance the organisation's bilingual culture and ethos and can make a significant contribution to the delivery of bilingual services. The Assembly Commission expects all staff members to demonstrate a commitment to delivering more and exemplar bilingual services. In return, the Assembly Commission will support and encourage all staff members to develop and improve their bilingual skills.

**Objective - To provide suitable training and opportunities for all staff members who wish to develop or improve their Welsh language skills.**

The Official Languages Scheme requires all Management Board members to encourage staff to make use of language tuition provision in accordance with business needs. Staff members will be encouraged to further develop their Welsh language skills, or to gain confidence to use existing language skills to improve the bilingual services offered and to address instances where provision falls below the required standards.

## Actions

- Current Welsh language tuition provision to be reviewed
- Ongoing enhancements to the provision of more creative and non-classroom based learning solutions to be further developed
- Options for the provision of accelerated learning opportunities and up-skilling for fluent, but less confident Welsh speakers to be further developed and promoted
- PMDRs to clearly outline Welsh language skills development opportunities for individuals

## Review

This Strategy will be formally reviewed annually in conjunction with the review of the Official Languages Scheme. The objectives relating to the language needs of teams and Service Areas will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as part of our normal business activities.