



The Law Society

Welsh language policy

Wales Office

April 2004

WELSH LANGUAGE POLICY	1
1. Statement	3
2. Introduction.....	3
3. New Policies And Initiatives.....	3
4. Serving The Public And Our Members	4
5. Publishing And Printing Material	4
6. Corresponding With The Public And Solicitors.....	5
7. Telephone Communication With The Public And Solicitors	5
8. Notices	5
9. Corporate Identity	6
10. Advertising And Publicity Activities	6
11. Open Meetings.....	6
12. Solicitors Records.....	6
13. Professional And Practice Advice To Solicitors	6
14. Professional Conduct Procedures	7
15. Law Society Council Elections	7
16. Implementing Our Welsh Language Scheme	7
17. Monitoring.....	8
18. Targets	8
19. Publishing Information	8
20. Publicising The Scheme	8

1. Statement

1.1. The Law Society is committed to fulfilling the purposes of the Welsh Language Act 1993. This scheme received the Welsh Language Board's full endorsement on the 24th of November 1999.

1.2. The Law Society has adopted the principle that, in the conduct of its public business, the English and Welsh languages will be treated on a basis of equality when providing services to the public in Wales.

1.3. In the preparation of this scheme, we have been guided by the advice of the Welsh Language Board.

1.4. The Law Society recognises that the effective use of the Welsh language in serving law and justice in Wales is a fundamental aspect of providing a quality service, as is the effective use of English.

2. Introduction

2.1. The Law Society is the statutory regulatory body for solicitors in England and Wales. Our functions are to both represent and regulate solicitors. The Law Society maintains the Roll of Solicitors. All solicitors providing services to clients must have a current practising certificate from the Law Society. The Law Society's main office is at Chancery Lane, London, with regulation based at Leamington Spa and education and training at Redditch. The Law Society employs approximately 800 staff in total. It has an office in Wales which was established in 1993. There are currently some 98 000 solicitors on the Roll in England and Wales with some 3500 whose address is in Wales.

2.2. This Welsh language scheme has been produced in recognition of the Society's public role in Wales. We serve the public indirectly through our role as the governing body for solicitors and our law reform activity. We also provide direct help, by handling complaints from clients, making referrals to solicitors, publishing information leaflets, and running schemes that offer access to legal services.

2.3. The Law Society is committed to recognising the culture and linguistic needs of Welsh-speaking clients and members of the public as part of our responsibility to serve law and justice.

2.4. The Law Society is reviewing its work in Wales in the light of the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales and will continue this as the Assembly develops.

2.5. The Law Society has regular contact with a number of bodies involved in the administration of justice in Wales. The Law Society will, as appropriate, co-operate with these bodies on Welsh language issues, support initiatives to improve Welsh language provision in legal services and ensure in discussions with others that, where relevant, due consideration is given to the Welsh language.

3. New policies and initiatives

3.1. Law Society Council members and staff will be made aware of the scheme and the implications for the Law Society of the Welsh Language Act.

3.2. In formulating new policies, standards and other initiatives, the Law Society will:

- Assess the linguistic consequences of any new policies, standards and other initiatives when formulating them.
- Ensure that the contents are consistent with, and do not undermine, the agreed Welsh language scheme.
- Not amend the scheme without reference to the Welsh Language Board.

- Ensure that the measures contained in the scheme are applied to new policies, standards and other initiatives when they are implemented.

3.3. New policies, standards and other initiatives introduced by the Law Society will:

- Recognise the use of the Welsh language where relevant to the service provided and continue to implement the principle of equality at every opportunity when dealing with the Welsh-speaking public.
- Refer to the importance of linguistic sensitivity in the provision of training or client services.
- Where they promote good practice by solicitors, will reflect the value of linguistic sensitivity in Wales.
- Emphasise the value for the public in Wales of the provision of services in the Welsh language.

3.4. When commenting on consultation and other documents published by other bodies, the Law Society will consider the Welsh language dimension. This will include reference to linguistic sensitivity in Wales with regard to the provision of law and justice.

4. Serving the public and our members

4.1. The Law Society is committed to delivering an equally high quality service in English and Welsh to those who require it. This commitment will be achieved by:

- For documents aimed at the public in Wales, providing these in Welsh and English.
- Setting specific standards relating to the provision of our services and dealing with the public in Welsh.
- Monitoring these standards and their implementation.

4.2. In delivering a service in accordance with the contents of this scheme, the Law Society will strive to ensure that its services will be carried out in English or Welsh as required by the individual Welsh speaker seeking the service.

5. Publishing and printing material

5.1. The Law Society will ensure that the following documents are available to the profession and the public in Wales in English and Welsh via bilingual or separate language versions.

Type of Document	Main Audience	Example
Publications promoting Law Society Schemes	Public	Lawyers for your Business
Public Information Leaflets	Public	Working with your Solicitor
Publications explaining the Complaints Procedure	Public	Office for the Supervision of Solicitors Complaints Resolution Form
Careers Information Material	Secondary & Higher Education Students	Becoming a Solicitor
	Careers Advisers	
Law Society Directories	Public	Volume 7 Wales (Bilingual Guidance Notes)

	Advice Organisations	
Law Society Forms	Solicitors	Enquiries to Local Authorities (CON 29)
	Public	
Law Society Certificates/ Circular Letters/Forms	Solicitors	Practising Certificates

Timing - Documents in categories 1 - 5 will be available from the commencement date of the Law Society Scheme. Documents in categories 6 and 7 will be phased in over a three year period starting from the commencement date of the Law Society's Welsh language scheme.

5.2. Decisions about publications will be taken on a case by case basis, following consultation with the Law Society office in Wales, which will take into consideration the target audience and the purpose of the publication.

5.3. When the Law Society publishes Welsh and English language versions of a new publication or an updated version of an existing publication, they will be issued simultaneously and made equally accessible. This will include material published on the Law Society's Internet Website.

6. Corresponding with the public and solicitors

6.1. The Law Society welcomes correspondence in English and Welsh, whether from members of the public or solicitors. The Law Society does not send circular or standard letters to the general public in Wales so it makes no commitment to do so in the Welsh language.

6.2. The Law Society will reply to letters written in Welsh in Welsh and letters written in English in English.

6.3. The Law Society will initiate correspondence in Welsh with those who are on a database for the receipt of material in the Welsh language.

6.4. Where there is face-to-face or telephone communication in Welsh and the recipient requires subsequent correspondence in Welsh the Law Society will respond through its office in Wales.

7. Telephone communication with the public and solicitors

7.1. Telephone calls to the Law Society office in Wales are welcomed in Welsh or English.

7.2. If no Welsh speakers are available at the initial point of contact, the Society can arrange for its office in Wales to return telephone calls to Welsh callers. Where the call is of a specialist nature and no Welsh speaker is available the caller will be offered the option of continuing in English or following up the enquiry in writing in Welsh.

8. Notices

8.1. The Law Society will ensure that items in its weekly magazine The Law Society Gazette which are specifically about or for practitioners in Wales - such as details of Law Society events in Wales - will be published in English and Welsh.

8.2. The Law Society places public notices and job advertisements in the press in Wales periodically. All such notices that appear in Wales will be in Welsh and English.

9. Corporate identity

9.1. The Law Society will adopt a bilingual corporate identity in Wales via its office in Wales, and will produce bilingual headed paper. The Law Society's full name will also appear in Welsh on all Welsh language or bilingual publications and advertisements.

10. Advertising and publicity activities

10.1. The Law Society occasionally produces publicity material for and embarks on advertising or marketing campaigns aimed at the general public in Wales. If the Law Society were to undertake such activity specifically in Wales, material would either be in a bilingual format or participants/ recipients would be offered a choice of language.

10.2. The Law Society will ensure that its exhibition and public information stands in Wales will be bilingual.

11. Open meetings

11.1 The Law Society will ensure that members of the profession and the general public who attend its open meetings or Roadshows / seminars / conferences in Wales will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English. In order to assist with arrangements, the Law Society will when issuing notice state that the rights of persons attending to speak in the language of their choice, Welsh or English, will be respected and invite anyone proposing to attend to say in advance which language they propose to use.

12. Solicitors records

12.1 The Law Society will:

- Establish and regularly update a database of solicitors who would like to receive their practising certificates in the Welsh language as well as in English.
- Ask all those who have been admitted on the Roll of the Law Society for the first time or renewing their registration whether they wish to be issued with their admission and practising certificates in the Welsh language as well as in English.
- Provide a bilingual version of the initial registration form for Law Society student members.

12.2 The Law Society wishes to ensure that solicitors may, if they wish be issued with key professional documents in Welsh.

13. Professional and practice advice to solicitors

13.1. The Law Society is unable to guarantee that its Professional Ethics Advisory Service and Practice Advice Service will be staffed by people able to answer telephone calls in Welsh. We will instead ask callers whether they wish to submit their question or concern in writing in Welsh and give an undertaking to reply in Welsh. Where the matter is urgent we will ask the caller to contact our Office in Wales who will act on our behalf as an intermediary. These services are not available to members of the public.

14. Professional conduct procedures

14.1. The Law Society will provide a full service in Welsh and will offer a choice of language to the solicitor against whom an allegation has been made. This will include:

- Translation of papers
- Contact with respondents
- Simultaneous translation during any discretionary hearings

14.2. The Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal is independent of the Law Society and responsible for its own arrangements .

15. Law Society Council elections

15.1. In accordance with the Law Society's current Guidelines for Constituency Elections where all or part of a constituency is in Wales, candidates seeking nomination may publish a Welsh language version of their statement. Alternatively, a Welsh language section can appear in a statement.

16. Implementing our Welsh Language Scheme

16.1. In employing staff, the Law Society will be aware of the advantages of having Welsh-speaking members of staff especially for its office in Wales but will not be committed to employing someone solely for that skill. Linguistic ability will be one of a number of skills considered in staff appointments. Where linguistic ability is considered essential or desirable for any post, this will be specified when recruiting to that post. In the case of 'essential', the ability to communicate through the medium of Welsh will be a requirement. In a situation where two candidates for a post where Welsh is 'desirable' have equal qualifications and experience, the ability to communicate through the medium of Welsh will be considered an additional skill.

16.2. The Law Society will establish its minimum ratio of staff who are able to communicate through the medium of Welsh in order to be able to comply with the scheme.

16.3. Training support will be provided for staff who would like to learn Welsh.

16.4. The Law Society will establish written procedures and where necessary, provide training for staff in matters covered by the scheme such as dealing with Welsh speaking callers and Welsh language correspondence.

16.5. Guidance on the Welsh Language Scheme will be delivered where appropriate through:

- Staff handbook and information sheets
- Induction training
- Investors in People

16.6. The officer responsible for the Welsh Language Scheme will be the Director of Communications, although all managers will have responsibility for implementing aspects of the scheme relevant to their departments and directorates.

16.7. The Law Society will ensure that the external translators and interpreters it uses are appropriately qualified and able to provide a high quality and efficient service.

16.8. Third parties providing services to the public on behalf of the Society, and consultants, designers and printers producing materials on our behalf will be issued with copies of this policy together with guidance as to what is expected of them.

17. Monitoring

17.1 The Law Society has established an internal task force (namely the Law Society Welsh Affairs Working Party) to monitor all aspects of the scheme, including:

- New policies, procedures and publications.
- Response times for Welsh correspondence and returned telephone calls.
- Simultaneous translation services.
- Law Society events in Wales.
- The introduction of publications, forms and other published material in Welsh.
- The incident and nature of any complaint relating to the Law Society's Welsh Language services.
- How well the Law Society is encouraging and facilitating the use of Welsh by other participants in the law and justice system.

17.2. The Communications Directorate will monitor the implementation of the Welsh language scheme and survey compliance annually. Reports to the Law Society's Welsh Affairs Working Party will be made from time to time. An annual report will be sent to the Welsh Language Board, which describes progress in implementing the measures in the scheme against the approved timetable and standards, and which analyses the number and nature of any complaints and suggestions for improvements received from the public and the profession in Wales.

17.3. Complaints about aspects of the scheme's implementation will be considered as part of the Law Society's normal complaints procedure. The Law Society will welcome and record suggestions for improvements. A public leaflet setting out the key provisions of the scheme will explain how members of the public can make their views known and how the Law Society will deal with them.

18. Targets

18.1. The Law Society will liaise with the Welsh Language Board to ensure that the targets set out in the scheme are met.

19. Publishing information

19.1. A section of the Welsh language scheme will be included in the Law Society's annual report with effect from one year after the implementation of the scheme. This will contain information comparing performance with standards set out in the Welsh language scheme. Where the published standards and targets are not being met, the report submitted annually to the Welsh Language Board will explain the reasons and the steps being taken to rectify matters.

20. Publicising the scheme

20.1. The Law Society will publish a bilingual leaflet for the public in Wales describing the key provisions of the scheme. This may be a joint publication with other appropriate statutory bodies in Wales.

20.2. The Law Society will ensure that, when the scheme receives endorsement from the Welsh Language Board, all those on the Roll will be made aware of the fact through an article in the weekly legal journal, the Law Society Gazette.

20.3. The Law Society will publicise details of its Welsh Language Scheme on its internet site www.lawsociety.org.uk.

21.Contact

21.1 The Law Society contact for comments on and suggestions for this scheme is Sion Ffrancon, The Law Society Office in Wales, 5th Floor, Capital Tower, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff CF10 3AG or **wales@lawsociety.org.uk**