

<p>Response by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in response to the Welsh Government Consultation: Interpreting Welsh Law: an interpretation act for Wales</p>

I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Welsh Government's consultation on 'Interpreting Welsh Law: an interpretation act for Wales'.

As Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), I investigate complaints made by members of the public who believe they have suffered hardship or injustice through maladministration or service failure on the part of a body in my jurisdiction, which essentially are all those organisations responsible for delivering public services devolved to Wales, these include:

- local government (both county and community councils);
- the National Health Service (including GPs and dentists);
- registered social landlords (housing associations); and
- the Welsh Government, together with its sponsored bodies.

I am also able to consider complaints about privately arranged or funded social care and palliative care services. In addition, I consider and investigate complaints that members of local government bodies have broken their authority's Code of Conduct for Members. I am independent of all government bodies.

I can only respond to a consultation based on evidence from PSOW casework; therefore rather than answer the specific consultation questions I will provide general comments based on PSOW's experience which may be helpful to the Welsh Government's consideration of an interpretation act for Wales.

Due to the nature of our work, the interpretation of law in Wales is of utmost importance to PSOW as we need to ensure that bodies in our jurisdiction are accurately applying the law. Interpreting the law correctly is paramount to this.

Interpretation Acts are already in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland so for consistency across the devolved nations it seems eminently reasonable to develop one for Wales. This argument is strengthened by the fact that Welsh legislation is already issued bilingually and court proceedings can take place in Welsh or English, but the 1978 Act is only enacted in English so developing a Welsh Language Interpretation Act is essential to ensure that there is no ambiguity introduced through the translation of terms.

The body of Welsh legislation is ever growing, and the introduction of primary law making powers in Wales places an impetus on a review of the current English Language Interpretation Act and this will provide the ideal platform to develop a Welsh Language version concurrently.