

Our ref: ATISN 15709
Date: December 2021



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Dear

ATISN 15709

Thank you for your request which I received on 24 November 2021.

I have set out my response to the questions you submitted at Annex 1 of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex 1

1. Has the Welsh Government made any estimate of number of Welsh people currently with the language ability to qualify for attainment in "courtesy Welsh"?
 2. Has the Welsh Government made any estimate of number of study hours required to bring an Anglophone of reasonable intelligence to the point where he or she can speak or write "courtesy Welsh" to sufficient attainment?
 3. At the date the policy was implemented, how many civil servants were already in post where any new job applicant for a similar post would be required to demonstrate "courtesy Welsh"?
 4. For civil servants already in post at the time of the introduction of the policy change, and where "courtesy Welsh" would be required of a new job applicant, what steps if any, will be taken to require the civil servants already in post to qualify in "courtesy Welsh"?
 5. For any job applicant or current civil servant required to qualify, what would be the result of a failure to attain proficiency in "courtesy Welsh"? What appeal process is in place or anticipated?
 6. The letter of 25th October 2021 claimed that 30% of Welsh people speak Welsh, while Welsh Government currently records that about 11% are fluent speakers, of the group of 30%, what proportion does the Welsh government consider qualify, without more, in "courtesy Welsh"?
 7. To what extent, if it all, will any consultants engaged by the Welsh Government be required to demonstrate "courtesy Welsh" if they are already engaged, or such ability to sought from any new consultants who may seek an engagement in the future?
 8. Does Welsh Government consider that a pass at GCSE in Welsh, in Welsh for non-Welsh speakers, is sufficient to qualify for "courtesy Welsh"?
 9. Are the Welsh Government aware of any members of the Senedd who do not have "courtesy Welsh"? Advise of such members.
 10. To what extent, if at all, does the Welsh Government anticipate requiring persons engaged in the fire service, the police or the health service to demonstrate an ability in "courtesy Welsh", taking account of persons already in post and any job applicants following the change of policy?
1. We hold data on the Welsh language skills levels of Welsh Government employees according to the following matrix.
 - 0 – No skills
 - 1- Entry level/ Beginners
 - 2- Foundation level
 - 3- Intermediate (GCSE equivalent)
 - 4- Advanced (A level equivalent)
 - 5- Proficiency

(i) Understanding by listening

0	No skills	
1	Can understand parts of a basic conversation	
2	Can understand basic conversations about everyday topics	
3	Can understand routine work-related conversations	
4	Can understand most work related conversations	
5	Can understand all work-related conversations	

(ii) Understanding by reading

0	No skills	
1	Can read some basic words and phrases with understanding	
2	Can read simple material on everyday topics with understanding	
3	Can read some routine work-related material with support e.g. dictionary	
4	Can read most work-related material	
5	Full understanding of all work related material	

(iii) Speaking and being understood

0	No skills	
1	Can hold a basic conversation in Welsh	
2	Can hold simple work-related conversations	
3	Can converse in some work-related conversations	
4	Can converse in most work-related conversations	
5	Fluent	

(iv) Writing and being understood

0	No skills	
1	Can write basic messages on everyday topics	
2	Can write simple work-related correspondence	
3	Can prepare routine work-related material with checking	
4	Can prepare most written work in Welsh	
5	Can prepare written material for all work-related matters	

We consider courtesy level Welsh to sit between level 0 and level 1 on our skills matrix. According to our records, approximately 54% of Welsh Government employees already have language skills at levels 1-5. We do not hold equivalent data for the Welsh population.

2. We have looked at best practice in other public sector organisations in Wales who have already introduced courtesy level Welsh as a mandatory requirement for their staff and new recruits. The training courses put in place in other organisations, for individuals who cannot demonstrate the necessary courtesy level Welsh skills upon recruitment, are one-off courses that last on average between 2 and 3 hours. Courtesy level Welsh is attained by the end of the course.
3. The Welsh Government employs approximately 5800 members of staff.
4. The pilot programme to introduce courtesy level Welsh will be run for new recruits in the first instance. Upon a thorough evaluation of the pilot, we will then consider introducing courtesy level Welsh to all our current employees.
5. All new recruits will be supported to attain the required level. However, as with other mandatory training that Welsh Government employees are required to undertake (e.g. GDPR training, procurement, financial and information management training) any requests to vary the requirement will be considered on a case by case basis, by means of a discussion with individuals and their line managers. Sufficient support and time will be provided to ensure that the employee can demonstrate courtesy level skills within the required timeframe. In other organisations already implementing a mandatory courtesy level Welsh programme for new recruits, the skill must be attained within the probationary period, i.e. within 6 months of appointment. Feedback will be provided by the tutor of the courtesy level course to line managers, and any individual who requires further support will receive individual coaching in order to attain the required level. We do not envisage any individual failing to achieve the required level, but we will consider the appeals process is in place for other mandatory training requirements and replicate processes already in place within the organisation. Two other organisations who have introduced this requirement for their new recruits report to us that no individual in either organisation has yet failed to attain the required courtesy level Welsh requirement.
6. We do not hold records of the specific language skills of the general population.
7. Consultants working for the Welsh Government are not currently eligible to be included in our Welsh language training policy.
8. A GCSE pass demonstrates skills levels at a much higher level than courtesy level Welsh. As our skills matrix shows above, a GCSE pass is equivalent to level 3 Welsh language skills. Courtesy level Welsh falls between levels 0 and 1.
9. We do not hold records of the Welsh language skills levels of Members of the Senedd.
10. Internal HR policy is a matter for individual organisations. In addition, policing is not a devolved matter. However, we are aware that courtesy level Welsh is already a requirement for the employees of South Wales Police, as we consulted with the force on their practices as we developed our internal use of Welsh strategy, 'Cymraeg. It belongs to us all'. More information on the practices and skills policy of South Wales Police is available in their annual report on implementing the Welsh Language Standards 2020-2021: [c21-0156 cymraeg welsh-language-standards-report-2021.pdf \(south-wales.police.uk\)](#) We are also aware that North Wales Police adopted a similar policy many years ago, and their requirements now go beyond courtesy level Welsh.