



Welsh Language Complaints Guidance

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

What are complaints relating to the Welsh language?

These are complaints which relate to compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. The standards cover services delivered by the Council such as Welsh language telephone services or road signs being correctly translated.

Complaints relating to the Welsh language can be both:

- a) About the lack of Welsh or standard of Welsh used by the Council.
- b) About 'too much' Welsh or the use of Welsh in certain situations.

Complaints about the Welsh language do not come under the Council's corporate complaints policy. As such, complaints relating to the Welsh language are not recorded on the GovService complaints portal.

The Welsh Language Officer must be made aware of any complaints relating to the Welsh language. Teams and services may be able to deal with the complaint themselves and inform the Welsh Language Officer of the complaint and outcome; liaise with the Welsh Language Officer; or if appropriate, ask the Welsh Language Officer to deal with the complaint. This will all depend on the nature of the complaint.

Who can make a complaint relating to the Welsh language?

Complaints relating to the Welsh Language can be made by members of the public, residents, staff members, and other officials such as officers from the Welsh Language Commission.

How can complaints relating to the Welsh language be made?

Complaints can be made in a variety of ways:

- Directly to the Welsh Language Officer

- Through the Council's corporate complaints mechanism
- Via the Welsh Language Commissioner

Complaints can be made by email, letter, customer portal, or telephone. The Welsh Language Commissioner has their own contact information and online form. All correspondence from the Welsh Language Commissioner is made via email: letters, terms of reference, reports, and findings are all sent as PDF attachments.

How are complaints relating to the Welsh language recorded and monitored?

We must report on all complaints relating to the Welsh language in our annual Welsh Language Monitoring Report. This report goes to scrutiny and is published by 30 June each year.

Complaints relating to the Welsh language are included in corporate analysis and reporting. We share details of Welsh language complaints with the Customer Service team.

The Welsh Language Officer maintains a spreadsheet detailing all Welsh language complaints, actions, and outcomes.

What is the process for dealing with complaints relating to the Welsh language?

- **Complaints made directly to the Welsh Language Officer**

These are usually made by email from a member of the public or staff member.

- Log details in the Welsh Language Complaints spreadsheet.
- Respond to the complainant within 5 days to acknowledge the complaint.
- Contact the manager in the relevant service area/team with details of the complaint and ask for their comments. Give 10 days for response.
- Identify any actions to remedy the area of concern and let the manager/team know. Also remind of the Council's compliance notice and obligations under the Welsh Language Standards. Give a reasonable amount of time for completion, depending on the issues at hand – 10 days to a month.
- The manager/team may decide to take control of the complaint and deal with it through the Council's corporate complaints procedure. Request they report back the outcome of the complaint.
- Advise the complainant of outcome and action taken.

- **Complaints made through the Council's corporate complaints mechanism**

These are complaints made by members of the public through the Council's online complaints portal. They will be assigned to the Welsh Language Officer and come through as automated emails, from which the complaints portal can be accessed. Complaints may partially or wholly relate to the Welsh language.

- Log details in the Welsh Language Complaints spreadsheet.
- Respond to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within 5 days.
- Identify service area/directorate/team to which the complaint relates.
- Contact manager in the relevant team with details of the complaint and ask for their comments on the complaint. Give 10 days for response.
- Identify any actions to remedy the area of concern and let the manager/team know. Also remind of the Council's compliance notice and obligations under the Welsh Language Standards. Give a reasonable amount of time for completion, depending on the issues at hand – 10 days to a month.
- The manager/team may decide to take control of the complaint and deal with it through the Council's corporate complaints procedure. Request they report back the outcome of the complaint.
- Advise the complainant of outcome and action taken.

- **Complaints made via the Welsh Language Commissioner**

Anyone is welcome to raise a concern or complain to the Welsh Language Commissioner if they have not been able to receive a service in Welsh from us or if they are dissatisfied with how we have considered the Welsh language when making decisions or they do not think we have complied with the Welsh Language Standards. Sometimes the Welsh Language Commissioner's office themselves will initiate an investigation from their own findings.

1. The Welsh Language Commissioner will write to us saying they have received a complaint with a brief summary. They will ask us to confirm if the Vale of Glamorgan Council is responsible for the matter complained about; invite us to make any comments such as the accuracy of the allegations, circumstances at the time, actions or commitments we intend to take; and give our interpretation of relevant standards. We have two weeks to respond.

- Add the complaint to the Welsh Language Complaints spreadsheet.
- Identify the relevant team/service area and contact the manager.
- Advise of the complaint and ask for comments as per the Commissioner's letter.
- Respond to the Commissioner (post@cyg-wlc.cymru) – send as attachment.
- Save a copy of the response.

At this point, the Commissioner may decide that we have already taken appropriate action, and it would not be reasonable to pursue an investigation. Alternatively, they may take our comments into account to produce the terms of reference.

2. The Welsh Language Commissioner will then issue a draft terms of reference, which includes a summary of the complaint and why the Commissioner believes there has been a suspected failure to comply. This will also include the relevant standards they are considering in the investigation. This is usually around two weeks after the first comments were submitted.

- We are welcome to provide comments on the terms of reference. This could be not agreeing with a particular standard being included or providing more context to the matter being complained about.
- Any comments are taken into consideration.

3. Around three weeks later, the Welsh Language Commissioner will issue a letter with the actual terms of reference and an evidence notice. The evidence notices asks specific questions for us about the matter complained about. A calendar month is usually given to respond.

- Liaise with the team/manager to which the complaint relates to produce the response.
- Send back to the Commissioner (ymchwiliadau@cyg-wlc.cymru or the investigator's email address) as an attachment and save a copy.

4. Around 4-6 weeks later, the Commissioner will send a draft report and decision notice. This outlines the proposed determination and any further action the Commissioner intends to take.

This includes an executive summary of the complaint, standards, and decision along with the interpretation of standards and legislation.

The final section includes proposed required actions the Council must take.

- We have four weeks to give any comments on the draft report and decision notice. The Commissioner will consider the comments and if the draft report and decision notice is changed, the three-month time limit starts again.
- Send any comments as an attachment and save a copy.
- We do not have to give any comments if we do not contest the complaint, findings or actions.

5. Around 4-6 weeks later, the Commissioner will send the final report and decision notice. This may be unchanged from the draft versions or may have changes based on comments we have made.

The final report and decision notice will confirm if we have failed to comply with certain standards. The required actions mean we will not fail to comply in the future: the actions do not change the outcome of the investigation.

We have three calendar months to complete the required actions and provide written evidence that we have completed the actions.

- Create an action plan to complete the required actions and have regular check-ins to ensure the actions are being done.
- Liaise and communicate with team/manager to support. This can depend on what we need to do.
- Send the response as an attachment and save a copy.

Ensure the Welsh Language Complaints spreadsheet is updated at each stage.

With complaints made via the Welsh Language Commissioner, we do not liaise with the complainant at all. Occasionally, the team/department will be able to identify the complainant, or the Commissioner will provide details so we can provide certain evidence (e.g. a recording of a phone call).

All responses are sent directly to the Welsh Language Commissioner by the Welsh Language Officer.

Responses and comments are sent from the Welsh Language Officer. Other teams/officers will be involved in providing the information to form the responses but will not respond directly.

In some respects, the Welsh Language Officer acts as an intermediary between the Welsh Language Commissioner and the team/service area.

The Welsh Language Commissioner is keen to adopt a co-regulatory approach based on working with us to comply with standards, rather than a punitive approach.