



## Welsh Language Scheme

Annual Report

September 2007

# LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME - ANNUAL REPORT

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the first report prepared by the Legal Services Commission to the Welsh Language Board on the operation of its Welsh Language Scheme and progress against its Action Plan 2006. The Scheme, prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993, received the approval of the Welsh Language Board on 16 March 2006. It was formally launched at the Legal Services Commission, Wales Conference held in Cardiff on 13 July 2006. This report primarily focuses on activities undertaken in the period July 2006 to March 2007.
- 1.2 The Legal Services Commission is a non-departmental public body, accountable to the Ministry of Justice. Our duties and responsibilities are set out in the Access to Justice Act 1999 and our purpose is to help people obtain publicly funded legal and advice services that tackle real needs. Our work is focused on ensuring that people on low incomes have access to justice. The Legal Services Commission provides services in England and Wales, with the administration of legal aid in Wales conducted at offices based in Cardiff and Chester.
- 1.3 The Legal Services Commission Welsh Language Scheme outlines our commitment to the Welsh Language and fully supports the principle behind the Welsh Language Act 1993, to ensure that when providing services to the public in Wales to those who wish to use Welsh, they will be treated to the same high quality services as those who wish to use the English language.

## 2.0 MONITORING PROCESS

- 2.1 On the 1 June 2006 the Legal Services Commission appointed its first Welsh speaking Welsh Language Officer, with responsibility for the promotion and implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme.
- 2.2 Some of the actions highlighted under the Welsh Language Scheme required a review of current practices and the preparation of an Implementation Plan for full compliance with the Scheme within specified timeframes.
- 2.3 A list of key activities undertaken which demonstrate compliance with our Welsh Language Scheme has been compiled to evidence and monitor progress made to date.
- 2.4 Working with colleagues in the Wales office, the Welsh Language Officer has established procedures to monitor compliance with the requirements of the Legal Services Commission Welsh Language Scheme.
- 2.5 In addition, the LSC is required to submit a report to the Welsh Language Board on an annual basis providing details of our performance in the following areas:
  - Service Planning and Service Delivery
  - Dealing with the public in Wales

- The Organisation's Corporate Identity
- Publicity
- Recruitment and Staffing
- Implementing and Monitoring the Scheme

### **3.0 SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY**

- 3.1 In the development of new policies and procedures and when considering the impact of government policies and procedures, the Legal Services Commission ensures that equal status is given to the English and Welsh languages of our service-users through referral of proposed activities to the Welsh Language Officer. Guidance documents have been distributed to key personnel detailing Welsh Language requirements to be considered in the development of policies and procedures.
- 3.2 Project Team Leaders have referred queries on impact of actions required to implement new initiatives to the Welsh Language Officer, on an ad hoc basis. During the 2007-08 period, a formal Referral Form will be created for completion by Implementation teams and submission to the Welsh Language Officer. It is proposed that the Referral Form will demonstrate how the impact of new activities and our commitments under our Welsh Language Scheme (WLS) have been considered and will provide formal evidence of our process. The value of the introduction of a Referral Form will be reviewed as part of the regular monitoring process.
- 3.3 As an organisation the Legal Services Commission is committed to delivering an equally high quality of service to clients in English and Welsh. Our current performance targets and service standards are subject to regular review through the VOICE performance tool. Both English and Welsh services are included as part of our regular monitoring of performance targets and service standards. It is envisaged that the monitoring of both English and Welsh services will continue in its current format in 2007-08.

### **4.0 DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC IN WALES**

#### **4.1 FORMS**

- Our commitment under the Welsh Language Scheme is to provide those clients accessing Legal Service Commission services in Wales with the option of utilising forms in English, Welsh or bilingual format. A review of the civil forms used by the public was undertaken in August 2006 from which an implementation plan for the provision of forms in English, Welsh or bilingual format was drafted and reviewed in December 2006.
- It was envisaged that the most commonly used forms by the public in Wales, currently only available in English, would also be made available in Welsh or bilingual format for inclusion in the April 2007 Forms Masterpack update, with all remaining forms available in Welsh / bilingual format for inclusion in the Forms Masterpack update October 2007.
- The provision of forms in the required Omniform format has been slower than envisaged due to an underestimate in the time required to prepare forms and changes in staff. Whilst more than 80% of the required work has been undertaken to date, it is likely that the provision of all forms in Welsh / bilingual format will not now

be completed until July 2007. Monitoring the progress of the translation of forms, updating of information and their availability to clients and providers alike in accordance with our Welsh Language Scheme will continue in the 2007-08 period.

- The introduction of means testing for clients seeking criminal defence services in the criminal justice system in October 2006 resulted in new procedures for clients and court staff alike. New criminal legal aid application forms (CDS Forms) for use in the Magistrates' court were prepared and made available in Welsh and English in October 2006, although there was a slight delay in the Welsh forms being available for use. Required amendments to the format and content of CDS forms in January 2007 resulted in the revised forms being made available in both languages in January 2007. However, there was a slight delay in the Welsh forms being made available due to last minute changes that needed to go through the translation process. Procedures to ensure the simultaneous distribution of forms will be reviewed and closely monitored in 2007-08 to ensure equality in service delivery.

## **4.2 CORRESPONDENCE**

- To ensure parity of service in dealing with Welsh correspondence, in August 2006 the Legal Services Commission took steps to recruit and train a caseworker with English and Welsh written skills. Training has been provided in all aspects of work undertaken in the Customer Services Unit to ensure that English and Welsh correspondence is processed in accordance with set performance targets and service standards. To ensure that these are met, correspondence in Welsh is included as part of the monthly Quality Control of Correspondence procedures undertaken by Senior Caseworkers in the Wales office.
- Any requests received for correspondence through the medium of Welsh are recorded by way of a note on our Corporate Information System.
- Any e-mails received in the Welsh language are processed to the same time standards as English e-mails. Steps have been taken to utilise bilingual e-mail signatures.
- The Wales Communications Manager, who is also bilingual, has responsibility for ensuring that all Circular letters to the public are issued in bilingual format. Circulars issued are included as part of the monthly monitoring procedures undertaken by the Welsh Language Officer and this will continue in 2007-08.

## **4.3 TELEPHONE CALLS**

- The Legal Services Commission Welsh Language Scheme outlined our commitment to providing a Welsh telephone service for Welsh speaking users and a separate dedicated telephone line for Welsh calls was set up in July 2006. The following month a caseworker with English and Welsh language speaking skills was recruited. Training has been provided in all aspects of work undertaken in the Customer Services Unit to ensure that English and Welsh calls are processed in accordance with set performance targets and service standards.
- To advertise the additional service, bilingual posters were designed to advertise the separate dedicated telephone number and sent to all specialist contracted suppliers and quality marked organisations and included in outgoing post to clients generated in Wales offices for a specified period of one month.

- The Legal Services Commission entry in Yellow pages for its office in Cardiff has been revised to show details of the Welsh telephone service available
- To ensure that Welsh telephone calls are processed to the same performance targets and service standards as English calls, the monthly Quality Control of Telephone Calls includes all enquiries dealt with by the Wales office Customer Services Unit regardless of language used.
- All staff in the Wales office have received training on answering the telephone with a bilingual greeting. The provision of a bilingual greeting has been subject to a monthly spot check system since September 2006 and additional support provided if required. As new members of staff have been appointed to the Wales office training on the operation of the bilingual telephone service has been included as part of the induction process.
- All staff in the Wales office have received guidance on transferring calls when the client wishes to converse through the medium of Welsh and no Welsh-speaking member of staff is available.
- Bilingual messages have been recorded on the English and Welsh duty telephone lines. Out of hours messages have similarly been recorded bilingually on both lines. Monitoring procedures have been established to ensure that any updates to messages are recorded simultaneously to ensure parity of service to English and Welsh speaking callers.

#### **4.4 PUBLIC MEETINGS**

- When meetings are held in Wales to which the public are invited, a choice of language is offered. Bilingual invitations and notices publicising the event are sent to delegates and simultaneous translation facilities provided as demonstrated at the Legal Services Commission Wales Conference in July 2006. Bilingual conference packs issued to delegates included bilingual copies of the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme and summary leaflet, together with bilingual Community Legal Service (CLS) information leaflets.
- The Wales Communications Manager has responsibility for ensuring that where members of the public are invited to attend meetings arranged by the Commission in Wales, translation facilities are available where required.

#### **4.5 PERSONAL ATTENDANCES**

- Personal callers who wish to have a face-to-face interview know that they are able to do so in English or Welsh at our Wales offices.
- A review of reception areas was undertaken in July 2006 and posters advertising a Welsh-speaking service have been placed in the public areas of the Wales office. Bilingual notices are displayed in the reception area of our Wales offices. Posters and notices in public areas of offices in Wales are subject to regular review and will continue to be monitored.
- Members of staff in the Wales and Chester offices have received guidance on dealing with clients attending the office who wish to converse through the medium of Welsh. New members of staff in the Wales offices have also received training as part of their induction.

## **5.0 THE ORGANISATION'S CORPORATE IDENTITY**

- 5.1 The organisation is committed to using the English and Welsh versions of the Legal Services Commission logo when dealing with the public in Wales. Documents such as the *Welsh Language Scheme* and *Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales* published in 2006 displayed both logos.
- 5.2 Bilingual stationery is used when generating work to the public from the Wales office. From July 2006, the use of bilingual stationery was included as part of the monthly Quality control of correspondence process by senior caseworkers in the Wales Customer Services Unit.
- 5.3 Bilingual badges displaying English and Welsh logos for the use of Wales staff on public duties were commissioned in June 2006 and are widely used at out of office events. Personalised bilingual business cards are provided for staff attending public events.
- 5.4 Display materials at events including the Legal Services Commission Wales conference July 2006, Inside Justice Week in November 2006, House of Commons reception in January 2007 and NOMS Conference in February 2007 in Wales, are bilingual and show English and Welsh versions of the Legal Services Commission logos. At the Inside Justice event held at Aberystwyth University, the Welsh Language Officer for the college congratulated the Legal Services Commission on the extent of its bilingual display materials and information leaflets.
- 5.5 Certificates, upon request, and signs for display by Quality Marked organisations in Wales are available in Welsh and English.
- 5.6 Public display materials and resources will continue to be subject to regular monitoring by the Wales Communications Manager and Welsh Language Officer.

## **6.0 PUBLICITY**

### **6.1 PUBLICATIONS**

- In order to ensure an equality of service, the Commission aims to ensure that all materials intended for the public in Wales will be produced bilingually, preferably in one document. Through liaison of staff within the Wales office and Welsh Language Officer, all public documents originating in Wales are produced bilingually.
- The Welsh Language Officer produced an aide-memoire for Project Team Leaders giving guidance on when public documents required translation. The document was also distributed to Operations Managers in September 2006. The publication of documents not originating in Wales is referred to the Welsh Language Officer for guidance on an ad hoc basis. During the 2007-08 period, a formal Referral Form will be created for completion by document originators and submission to the Welsh Language Officer. It is proposed that the Referral Form will demonstrate how the impact of new activities and our commitments under our Welsh Language Scheme have been considered and will provide formal evidence of our process. The value of the introduction of a Referral Form will be reviewed as part of the regular monitoring process.

- Public information leaflets displayed in the Wales office reception area and at events to which the public are invited are available in bilingual format. Procedures have been established with the Community Legal Services Direct department based in London for updated materials to be forwarded to the Welsh Language Officer in the Wales office for review prior to bilingual publication. Monitoring of materials will continue in 2007-08.

## **6.2 INTERNET WEBSITES**

- The Legal Services Commission has 4 websites (LSC Website, CLS Direct, LSRC and the Recruitment site) and currently our CLS Direct website is available in English and Welsh. Text and information leaflets available for download by the public on the CLS Direct website are available in English and Welsh. During 2007-08 the Welsh Language Officer will review the procedures for updating Welsh CLS Direct information to ensure that this is provided simultaneously with English updates and where necessary, amend procedures.
- A review of the bilingual provision of information on our websites was undertaken in September 2006 and an Implementation plan for the provision of bilingual information prepared. Currently bilingual documents of interest to the public are available on our Wales office pages.
- No text is however currently available in Welsh. Work has been undertaken to revamp the layout of our website to make it easier for the public to access materials in English and Welsh. This is currently in development. Procedures have been written to ensure new materials requiring translation are referred to the Welsh Language Officer for consideration and progress will continue to be monitored during 2007-08. Staff in the Wales office Internet Team will update their IT skills so that bilingual updates to our Wales pages can be processed with the minimum of delay.

## **6.3 PRESS NOTICES and ADVERTISING**

- When advertising in Wales the Legal Services Commission will deal with both languages on the basis of equality. Press notices where the subject matter is of particular interest to the public in Wales are issued bilingually. Links have been made and procedures established between the Commission's press office and Wales Communications Manager to ensure the simultaneous release of bilingual notices.
- Liaison between the Wales Communications Manager and Welsh Language Officer ensures that bilingual press notices are issued to the press and broadcasting media, bilingual or Welsh only adverts are produced where appropriate and publicity campaigns are communicated bilingually. Any new exhibits and displays for the public in Wales will continue to be produced in bilingual format.

## **7.0 RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING**

- 7.1 The Legal Services Commission is committed to ensuring that sufficient Welsh speaking staff are employed to provide a comprehensive Welsh language service to the public in Wales. A review of bilingual skills of staff in post in all offices was completed by August 2006, and a review of Welsh language skills requirements for staff in Wales and Chester offices undertaken.

- 7.2 An initial linguistic skills strategy for staff requirements regarding essential Welsh language skills has been drawn up, focusing on current bilingual skills, where skills need to be developed and training requirements in line with business needs identified. An implementation plan for the development of Welsh language skills has been drawn up and is subject to regular review.
- 7.3 The Welsh Language Officer has responsibility for encouraging staff to learn Welsh or improve Welsh language skills. A review of the availability of Welsh language courses for Business Welsh was undertaken and following liaison with Cardiff University Welsh Language Unit, a tailored Welsh improvers working Welsh course was highlighted for 4 Welsh improvers in the Wales office. The bi-weekly sessions started in January 2007 and will continue to run until July 2007.
- 7.4 A Welsh learners group was established in-house in October 2006 and due to interest amongst staff, a second group was started in February 2007. Currently 15 members of staff regularly attend the weekly sessions, which continue to be run by the Welsh Language Officer.
- 7.5 Recruitment advertisements for staffs in the Wales office that are placed in Wales based newspapers are issued bilingually as illustrated in the recruitment for a Wales Director. The Welsh Language Officer will continue to monitor advertisements and notices to check for use of correct format. Currently it is only the advertisements that are available bilingually. In 2007-08 further work will be undertaken on producing Welsh application forms and assessment procedures.

## **8.0 IMPLEMENTING and MONITORING THE SCHEME**

- 8.1 The implementation and monitoring of the Welsh Language Scheme is undertaken by the Welsh Language Officer on a regular basis.
- 8.2 Members of the public are advised that any complaints about a failure to comply with the requirements of the Scheme should be addressed to the Quality Manager at the Wales office. No formal complaints have been received to date. However, two queries have been raised regarding the availability and distribution of Welsh / bilingual forms. The procedures for simultaneous distribution of Welsh/bilingual forms as they become available will be subject to detailed review in 2007-08.
- 8.3 Our Welsh Language Scheme was officially launched at our LSC Wales conference in July 2006. Bilingual copies of the Scheme and a leaflet summarising the key elements of the Scheme and how copies of the full versions can be obtained were distributed to all conference delegates and subsequently to all members of staff in the Wales and Chester offices, contracted providers, quality marked providers and all other interested parties. Copies were also made available on the Wales pages of the Legal Services Commission website.
- 8.4 Copies of the Certificate of approval of our Scheme by the Welsh Language Board are displayed in the reception areas of all Legal Service Commission offices in England and Wales.

## **9.0 SUMMARY**

- 9.1 The Legal Services Commission has made a good start in the implementation of its Welsh Language Scheme and progress continues to be made. Procedures have been put in place to monitor activities to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Scheme and these will continue to be reviewed. A number of areas have been highlighted for further development over the next 12-month period to improve service delivery to clients in Wales.
- 9.2 The Legal Services Commission continues to be committed to its Welsh Language Scheme.