



Ofcom's Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner

Our progress complying with the Welsh Language Standards 2023-2024

22 October 2024

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Overview

This document, our 7th Annual Report, sets out Ofcom's progress in complying with the Welsh Language Standards (the 'Standards'). As with previous reports, this report covers a reporting period - August 2023 to September 2024. We remain committed to promoting the Welsh language and enabling people to interact with Ofcom in their preferred language, whether that is Welsh or English. We have achieved this in a way that is proportionate and consistent with our existing duties.

Ofcom adopted the Standards set by the Welsh Language Commissioner (the 'Commissioner') in a compliance notice in January 2017. Ofcom received a revised [compliance notice](#), effective from 5 July 2024 following the Commissioner's determination of Ofcom's application to vary two of the Standards. The compliance notice provides the framework for our work in the Welsh language.

Ofcom's Welsh language progress in brief

Stakeholder engagement has once again been an important part of Ofcom's work in Wales this year. The Welsh language is seen and heard freely at our events and meetings. Encouraging Welsh speakers to engage with Ofcom in Welsh is an integral part of the way in which we go about our work.

Internally, Ofcom Wales colleagues worked closely with our legal team to implement 'Lunch & Learn' awareness sessions on the Standards and how they impact Ofcom's work. These sessions consisted of bespoke training delivered to the different teams across the organisation, which proved very successful. We also made amendments to our Welsh language impact assessment form and liaised with Ofcom's policy team in making information about the Standards that apply to policy making more accessible on our intranet.

Across the board, we have continued to monitor our services in the Welsh language to ensure compliance with the Standards. As part of our continued commitment to complying with the Standards, and in collaboration with colleagues in Ofcom's People & Culture team, we have made changes to our Disciplinary policy and Grievance Procedures.

We published a high volume of Welsh language documents throughout the period and ensured on-going compliance with the Standards by adapting our way of working in the team.

We continued to build on the good relationship with the Commissioner's officers and welcomed the opportunity to engage with the new Commissioner. Ofcom recently received the Commissioner's determination of its application to vary two of the Standards, 33 and 54, which have now been updated in the revised compliance notice. We acknowledge the collaborative approach the Commissioner took in reaching her decision.

1. About Ofcom

- 1.1 As the UK's independent communications regulator, Ofcom is delivering vital work that helps keep the UK connected and shapes the future of how we'll stay connected with each other. Our work covers everything from phones and broadband, through to TV, radio, the postal service, and wireless devices. We're also implementing regulation to keep people safe online.

Ofcom in Wales

- 1.2 While Ofcom's headquarters are in London, our duties come from the UK Parliament, and as part of that we ensure that we have an understanding of citizens and audiences across the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. We have a statutory duty to have regard to, among other things, the views, and interests of those who live across the UK. Our operations in the nations are led by Directors in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, and London. Our national offices can draw on the full resources of the whole organisation to tackle issues that affect one part of the UK.
- 1.3 The Ofcom Wales team is based in Cardiff and has a headcount of 8 full time roles, the majority of whom are Welsh speakers. More than 20 colleagues work from the Cardiff office covering all aspects of Ofcom's work across the UK. Welsh is heard throughout the working day and Ofcom continues to encourage colleagues in Wales wanting to learn to do so, with the organisation funding tuition where needed.

Engaging with the Welsh Language Commissioner

- 1.4 Ofcom has engaged constructively with the Commissioner's office for many years, ensuring that we have a thorough understanding of the Commissioner's requirements and clear dialogue on an ongoing basis. We appreciate the Commissioner's officers' willingness to collaborate, support and advise.
- 1.5 We attend information sharing sessions arranged by the Commissioner and found the 'Language Matters Roadshow' in Cardiff and the thematic online drop-in sessions particularly informative. We also attended the Technology, Digital Services and the Welsh language session in July.
- 1.6 In August Ofcom Wales colleagues met with the Commissioner and her officials at the National Eisteddfod at Ynys Angharad Park. This was an introductory meeting for Ofcom's new Director in Wales. At this meeting, among other things, we engaged in constructive discussions about Ofcom's commitment to the Standards and Ofcom engaging with stakeholders in Welsh and English at events across Wales.

2. Our approach

- 2.1 Ofcom seeks to treat the Welsh and English languages equally, where it is appropriate for us to do so. When providing a service in the Welsh language, we ensure that the Welsh language is treated on the same basis as English in Wales. This applies to:
- a) the visual presentation of material.
 - b) when and how the material is published, provided or exhibited; and
 - c) the size, position, and prominence of the material in any public place and its publication format.
- 2.2 We encourage colleagues across the organisation to think about the Welsh language, the Standards and the needs of Welsh language speakers at the outset of, and throughout, their projects.
- 2.3 We aim to innovate in our communications, and always welcome and encourage greater engagement from Welsh speakers. This includes inviting a range of external Welsh speaking contributors to take part in our stakeholder events, producing Welsh language interactive content, creating engaging Wales related content on social media and encouraging Welsh language speakers to make use of the language during some of our hybrid events. The Welsh language is also heard during Ofcom's Chief Executive's message to all staff during 'Good Morning Ofcom', held every Monday morning and broadcast to all Ofcom offices across the UK. The Ofcom Wales team hosted its own Welsh version, 'Bore da Ofcom' in June and used it to promote Ofcom's work in the Welsh language.

Compliance – Service Delivery Standards

Our progress over the year

Application to vary Welsh Language Standards

- 2.4 The Commissioner wrote to us in July with her determination of our application to vary standards 33 and 54. Ofcom's rationale for applying for the variation to the Standards was the increase in our use of social media, the consequent increase in the number of followers on our social media platforms, and the available resource enabling us to produce Welsh language material and content equivalent to that produced in English.
- 2.5 The Commissioner's determination of our application to vary Standards 33 and 54 requires Ofcom produces social media content and publicity and advertising material in Welsh where such material is relevant to Wales only or where the text or subject matter or audience expectations, suggest that it should be produced in Welsh.
- 2.6 Ofcom has been issued with a revised compliance notice and an action plan will be submitted for approval to the Commissioner on how we propose to comply with the Standards going forward.

Social Media Associate

- 2.7 Our Welsh Language Social Media Associate has progressed Ofcom's Welsh language social media content and we have established a Welsh medium presence on various social media

platforms, creating bespoke content relevant to Wales and of particular interest to Welsh speakers.

- 2.8 Content is posted several times a week and progress is being made on promoting our Welsh language social media channels to increase the number of followers. Our interaction was particularly strong during 'Dydd Miwsig Cymraeg' (Welsh Language Music Day) and on St David's Day when we published a reel on the theme of 'Gwneud y pethau bychain' ('Do the little things').

Welsh Language Helpline

- 2.9 The Standards relating to service delivery set out what we are required to do with Ofcom's dedicated Welsh language helpline 0300 123 2023 in terms of managing the calls and promoting the number. During the year we have made improvements to the way the calls are managed. Calls are now routed through Teams to a group of Welsh language speakers between 09.00 – 17.00 Monday-to-Friday, with Ofcom Wales' Office Manager being the first responder. Calls to the line vary in nature but are mainly calls from consumers experiencing issues with connectivity, primarily in rural parts of Wales. The Ofcom Wales team has provided advice as appropriate and has received feedback from callers, commending the Welsh language service provided and the quality of advice and support available.

Stakeholder events in Wales

- 2.10 As outlined in Ofcom's Plan of Work 2024/25, we have continued to engage widely with our stakeholders in Wales to fully understand their priorities and concerns. We strive to ensure that stakeholders have the best opportunity to engage with colleagues across Ofcom on all relevant programmes of work and that they can do this in English or Welsh.
- 2.11 During the year we have hosted stakeholder engagement events on Ofcom's Plan of Work 2024/25, as well as on Ofcom's Media Nations 2023 report to share the findings of our research with a cross section of industry stakeholders. We hosted a roundtable discussion on proposed changes to the postal Universal Service Obligation and colleagues from across Ofcom joined the Wales team for a media literacy event in Cardiff.
- 2.12 As required by the Standards, simultaneous translation was available at these events, English and Welsh versions of presentation slides were shared, and invitations for the events were bilingual. Our stakeholders in Wales are welcomed to our events bilingually and encouraged to use the Welsh language during the Q&A sessions. Ofcom has also hosted several hybrid events with colleagues in Wales working closely with Ofcom's Communications team.

Publications

- 2.13 Ofcom published its documents of interest and relevance to our Welsh audience bilingually; these included [Ofcom Annual Report on the BBC 2022-23](#), [Ofcom's Plan of Work Consultation](#), [Connected Nations 2023](#), [The future of the universal postal service](#), [Report: Future of TV distribution](#), [Reconsultation: Channel 4 Licence Renewal](#), [Review of local media in the UK](#), [Media Nations Wales 2024](#).
- 2.14 Alongside these publications, many of our accompanying documents such as forms, news releases, press statements [and updates texts sent to subscribers] are made available in Welsh where required by the Standards. We have also worked closely with colleagues in

Ofcom's Communications team to publish our News Centre pieces in Welsh. These news articles are published on the Ofcom website alongside some of our key publications and provide consumers with the relevant information concisely. Examples of recent News Centre pieces include: [New ten-year public service broadcast licences for Channel 3 and Channel 5](#), [Ofcom sets gold medal standard at Paris Games](#) and [Marking 50 years since Ceefax - the 'horse-drawn internet'](#).

Website migration

- 2.15 In accordance with the Standards, we ensure that the text of all pages of our website that are relevant to Wales only, or are already available in Welsh, are available in Welsh and are fully functional. Recently, Ofcom launched a new version of its website and we engaged an experienced external agency to migrate the Welsh language pages of the website, ensuring consistency with the English text where relevant.

New signage at the Cardiff office

- 2.16 The Standards require us to ensure that, when we erect a new sign, any text displayed on the sign must be displayed in Welsh and if the same text is displayed in Welsh and English, the Welsh language text must be treated no less favourably than the English language text. During the year, new signage has been erected at the Ofcom Wales office in Welsh, English and braille. The signage leads with the Welsh language text, for example 'Storfa/Storeroom', 'Gofynnwch i'r staff am help/Please ask staff for help', and 'Cegin/Kitchen', consistent with the requirements of the Standard 58.

Compliance – Policy Making

Our progress over the year

Promoting the standards to colleagues

- 2.17 Standard 121 states that we must designate and maintain a page (or pages) on our intranet which provides services and support material to promote the Welsh language and to assist staff to use the Welsh language. We work closely with Ofcom's policy colleagues to promote the standards which relate to policy making and the importance of taking into consideration Ofcom's Welsh language requirements in projects, where relevant. The Ofcom intranet has become an open-access repository of useful guidance and tools, providing information and advice to colleagues involved in policy making, research and publications. Additionally, the Policy Profession circulates a regular newsletter to Ofcom colleagues, and we have provided short articles in the newsletter highlighting our policy making standards.
- 2.18 During the year, colleagues from the Wales team have worked closely with colleagues from our legal team to deliver internal training sessions on the Standards. Five sessions were held earlier in the year for the Online Safety Group, Spectrum, Standards and Enforcement, Network and Communications and Ofcom's Culture & People team. The purpose of these sessions was to raise awareness and help inform new colleagues in particular about the Welsh language and the Standards. We've also streamlined our Welsh language impact assessment form, taking the opportunity to promote it to relevant teams as part of our bespoke training sessions across the organisation. This form requires colleagues to take the needs of Welsh language speakers into consideration.

‘Bore da Ofcom’

- 2.19 The Ofcom Wales team create opportunities to promote our work in the Welsh language to colleagues across the organisation. ‘Good Morning Ofcom’ is an all-colleague fifteen-minute session with our Chief Executive every Monday morning and was hosted in the Ofcom Wales office in June. Called ‘Bore da Ofcom’, it was dedicated to promoting Ofcom’s work in the Welsh language, highlighting use of the Welsh language in Ofcom’s day to day operations and the importance of considering which Standards are likely to be in scope at the start of projects.

Compliance – Operational

Our progress over the year

- 2.19 Standards 95 requires Ofcom to ask individuals being offered a new post whether they wish to receive the contract of employment or contract for services in Welsh (and to provide the contract in Welsh where this is requested). The Standards also require Ofcom to ask its employees if they wish to receive particular documents in Welsh and to do so where that is the employee’s wish.. In accordance with these requirements, Ofcom colleagues can choose the language in which they would like to receive certain Ofcom documents. For example, there is now a 'Cymraeg, Welsh' option in Workday (a cloud-based application used by Ofcom for finance and human resource management) which allows colleagues to opt in to automatically receive documents in Welsh where this is their preference (previously, this process was managed manually by an individual’s line manager).
- 2.20 Standard 123 states that we must assess the Welsh language skills of our colleagues. The approach taken by Ofcom is a self-assessment framework endorsed by the National Centre for Learning Welsh’s (NCLW) Learn Welsh Level Checker. Our September 2024 assessment of the Ofcom Wales team (with 2 vacancies) is as follows:

Assessment criteria	NCLW Level	Total
Speaking skills	1 (Entry)	1
	2 (Foundation)	
	3 (Intermediate)	
	4 (Advanced)	2
	5 (Proficiency)	3
Listening skills	1 (Entry)	1
	2	
	3	
	4	2
	5 (Proficiency)	3

Assessment criteria	NCLW Level	Total
Reading skills	1 (Entry)	1
	2	
	3	
	4	2
	5 (Proficiency)	3
Writing skills	1 (Entry)	1
	2	
	3	2
	4	
	5 (Proficiency)	3

2.21 In line with the requirements of Standards 126 and 127, Ofcom continues to provide opportunities during working hours to receive basic Welsh language lessons and for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers. One colleague in the Ofcom Wales team is currently attending Welsh language lessons to improve their skills.

Recruitment

2.22 When assessing the requirements for a new or vacant post, Ofcom must assess the need for Welsh language skills and categorise it accordingly. Four posts became vacant during the reporting period and were categorised accordingly, with Ofcom applying more than one category to a post where we considered it appropriate to do so. Applications were invited in Welsh and English as part of these recruitment campaigns, and bilingual adverts and accompanying role specifications were also issued with translations made available for candidates and interview panel members as required.

Ofcom's Advisory Committee for Wales

2.23 The Advisory Committee for Wales advises Ofcom about the interests and opinions, in relation to communications matters, of persons living in Wales. The Committee chair and three of the other five non-executive members are Welsh speakers. Ofcom's Board member for Wales, the Content Board Member for Wales and Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales attend the Advisory Committee meetings in their capacity as members of their respective Boards. The Welsh language is heard and spoken naturally throughout the meeting with simultaneous translation made available for members. The Committee's minutes are approved by the main Ofcom Board and are published in both Welsh and English on Ofcom's website. The Advisory Committee for Wales offers comment as appropriate on consultations undertaken by Ofcom and strives to ensure that its responses to Ofcom consultations and accompanying correspondence are made in English and Welsh where appropriate.

Compliance – Record Keeping

Our progress over the year

Complaints

2.24 A summary of complaints received by the Commissioner relating to Ofcom’s compliance with the Standards is included below.

Brief overview of complaint	Result/Findings
Complaint in relation to the advertisement of Ofcom’s Wales Director post. (Operational: Standards 132 & 132A).	The Commissioner decided not to investigate on the basis that we had adequately justified our position and explained our actions. For example, we explained that we had applied more than one category of Welsh language skills to this post and the Commissioner was satisfied that a skills assessment had been completed for this position. The Commissioner decided not to conduct an investigation and no action was needed.
Complaint in relation to Ofcom’s linguistic assessments of operational and non-operational positions (Operational: Standards 132 & 132A).	The Commissioner decided not to investigate this complaint on the basis that Ofcom had explained that we had assessed the language skills required for the posts before advertising them (which we do when executive and non-executive positions become vacant). No action was required.
Total: 2	

Our focus for the year ahead

- 2.25 As stated in our Plan of Work 2024-25, Ofcom is fully committed to ensuring that consumers, stakeholders and colleagues in Wales can engage naturally with Ofcom in English and Welsh. We strive to do this in line with our existing duties. A focus area for the next reporting period will be to further our work in engaging with and building understanding among colleagues across the organisation about their responsibilities in relation to the Standards, for example, bespoke training sessions for teams and 'lunch and learn' drop-in sessions for colleagues. Our approach to date has been well received and we look forward to reporting on progress next year.
- 2.26 We will implement the action plan in respect of the revised Standards 33 and 54, following approval by the Commissioner.
- 2.27 We also conduct an open tendering process for Welsh translation services during the next reporting period, when the current contract comes to an end.
- 2.28 As part of our external engagement, we will look to host an 'off site' bi-lingual event within a Welsh speaking heartland as part of our work to explain Ofcom's role in Wales and to hear first-hand about the communication experiences of people in Wales.
- 2.29 We have established a good working relationship with the Commissioner and her office, and we will continue to collaborate with them and play our part in helping to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

3. Contact details

If you wish to contact us regarding the Standards or the content of this annual report, please email us at: Rhys.Llewelyn@ofcom.org.uk