GOC Welsh Language Requirements Report 2022-2023

The following report sets out how the General Optical Council (GOC) has ensured its compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. It lays the groundwork for the new Welsh Language Standards, which will come into effect for the GOC on 6 December 2023.

Background

The Welsh Language Scheme was prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993. The Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board under section 14 (1) of the Act on 23 November 2009.

The GOC have adopted the principle that in conducting its public business in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. This Scheme identifies how the GOC will administer this principle when providing services in Wales.

The overall intent of the Welsh Language Scheme is to promote and facilitate the Welsh language and ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language in Wales.

1.   **Policy Impact Assessments**

1.1   Number and percentage of policies (including those that were reviewed or revised) where consideration was given to the effects the policy would have on the use of the Welsh language.

In the GOC's impact assessment template, which applies to all new or revised policies, Welsh language impacts are screened, and staff are asked whether the policy or parts of the process needs to be translated into Welsh. These impact assessments are being revised to ensure compliance with the new standards in 2023.

1.2   Example of an assessment deemed to have an impact on the use of the Welsh language and details of how the policy was amended as a result.

There are no examples of where an assessment was deemed to have an impact on use of the Welsh language and no amendments as a result.

2.   **Publication**

2.1   Number of publications available to the public
On the GOC website there are a total of 203 publications. These can be found on our website - https://www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/index.cfm

These publications can be broken down into the categories in the table below.

Corporate information and policies	51
Bulletins	5
Fitness to practise and hearings publications	73
Annual reports	7
Patient leaflets	1
Registration guidance, forms and reports	41
Equality and diversity publications	26
Guidance publications for professions, employers, and education and CPD providers	72
Policy and research papers	100
Whistleblowing reports	6
Joint regulatory statements on reflective practice	1
Covid-19 latest information incl. archive	34

This totals to 417 (excluding Welsh publications).

2.2   Number of publications available to the public in Welsh

On the GOC website 19 publications can be found in Welsh. These can be accessed via the Welsh language section on the website. Welsh resources | GeneralOpticalCouncil

In 2023, we will extend our translation of documents into Welsh considerably in order to comply with the new Welsh Language Standards. This will ensure that Welsh-speaking registrants and the public are treated no less favourably when they need to access our guidance and standards.
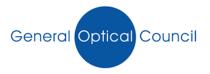
3.   Complaints

3.1   Number of all complaints received about the conduct of practitioners in Wales

In 2022-2023 there were 10 complaints received about the conduct of practitioners in Wales, one of which was opened formally, and all cases have since closed.

3.2   Number of complaints received in Welsh about the conduct of practitioners in Wales

During 2022-2023 the GOC received no complaints in Welsh about the conduct of practitioners in Wales.

3.3   Number of complaints received related to the Council's compliance with its Welsh language scheme

During 2022-2023 the GOC received no complaints related to the Council's compliance with its Welsh Language Scheme.

4.   **Website**

4.1   Percentage of the organisation's website that is available in Welsh

The GOC website has 660 pages, one of which is in Welsh, and has capability for more pages to be translated into Welsh.

4.2   Evidence relating to any plans to improve or increase the Welsh Language provision on the website

In order to meet the new requirements brought in by the Welsh Language Standards and to promote accessibility for Welsh speakers, a website plug-in which allows for English pages on the website to be translated and shown in Welsh is being integrated to the GOC website.

4.3   Evidence relating to the process used to ensure that existing content, updates and new content, complies with the requirements of the Welsh language scheme (if the process is different to that reported in 2020-21)
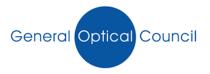
New processes are being developed to identify when new publications should be provided in Welsh and how to ensure timely translation and provision of these alongside their English equivalents. This will ensure that future documents uploaded to the website will comply with the requirements of the Welsh language scheme.

5.   **Promotion of Welsh Language Service**

5.1   Information about methods used to promote the organisation's Welsh language services and evidence of any subsequent increase in the public's use of the services.

Welsh language material is published on the GOC website and can be accessed via the publications page Welsh resources | GeneralOpticalCouncil

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the page had 429 views, 0.023% of the website's 1,834,186 total page views. It was the 277th most visited page on the website.

Where public facing, telephony services are being translated into Welsh and any relevant media has also been identified for translation by this service. Quotes have been acquired from telephony translation services and this work should be undertaken by the 6 December 2023 deadline.

5.2   Information about methods used to assess the quality of the organisation's Welsh language services (e.g. assessing the experience of existing/ potential service users)

The translation services GOC has procured have provided quality assurance measures, including ISO standards certification. Internal assessments will be put in place leading up to the 6 December 2023 to regularly assess the experience of existing and potential service users.

6.   Fitness to Practise Cases

6.1   Number of hearings held in Wales

During 2022-2023 there were no hearings held in Wales.

6.2   Number of hearings where a request was made by the witness to speak Welsh

During 2022-2023 there were no requests made by witnesses to speak Welsh.

6.3   Number of hearings in which evidence was presented in Welsh

During 2022-2023 there were no hearings in which evidence was presented in Welsh.

7.   Language Awareness Training

7.1   Number and percentage of the organization's new staff (i.e. new in the past 12 months) that received Welsh language awareness training.

In the past 12 months no new staff have received Welsh language awareness training.

7.2   Number and percentage of the organization's entire workforce that has received Welsh language awareness training since the training was introduced.

No staff have attended the training on Welsh language. The GOC is currently reviewing the training package it provides and all staff will be asked to attend awareness training in Winter 2023.

8.   Self-regulation

8.1   Details of the arrangements and procedures the organisation has adopted to enable it to self-regulate effectively.

A Welsh Language Implementation group has been developed and meets fortnightly to ensure compliance with the standards. This group is monitored by GOC SMT via risk management processes.

Inclusion of questions about Welsh language in our standard impact assessment screening tool ensures that staff remain conscious of the need to think about Welsh language requirements.

Processes to ensure ongoing internal self-regulation are being developed ahead of the 6 December 2023 deadline to ensure continued compliance and assess new and existing arrangements and procedures.

8.2   User Feedback:

The GOC has a consultation hub to gather feedback from the public and registrants on how the GOC operates. Examples of items for consultation are policy and guidance. Through consultation the GOC can ensure that it upholds its responsibilities of public protection, by promotion of high standards of education, performance and conduct amongst opticians. This consultation hub can be found at https://consultation.optical.org/ If requested the questions for the consultation would be provided in Welsh.

The GOC has complaints procedures on the following: fitness to practise complaints about GOC registrants, consumer complaints about GOC registrants, illegal practice complaints about non-registrants, and corporate complaints. Each have a different process depending on the type of complaints. The process for each type of complaint is published on the GOC website, including a Welsh version of the Corporate Complaints Policy. https://optical.org/en/publications/cymraeg/

Additional complaints forms for making complaints about GOC registrants can also be found on our Welsh language page https://www.optical.org/en/utilities/cymraeg/index.cfm

8.3   Internal Assurance About Performance

As part of the GOC's project and policy impact assessments and reviews, all items are screened to check whether they need to be published in Welsh, ensuring the GOC complies with the Welsh Language Standards.

Both internal and external policies have robust review processes, where policies are reviewed by the Policy Review Group. The group's members are representative from across the GOC, including Standards and Legal. This ensures the GOC complies with standards, the law and responsibilities as a health regulator.

9.   Leadership and Strategic Planning

The Council is the governing body of the GOC, and Council members are the charity trustees. They are collectively responsible for directing the affairs of the GOC, ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivers public benefit.

All Council members share the same duty of public protection and oversee the full range of regulatory processes.

The primary functions of Council are:
- to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- to promote and maintain public confidence in the professions regulated under the Optician Act 1989;
- to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions; and
- to promote and maintain proper standards and conduct for business registrants.

Our Council is comprised of 12 Council members, of whom six are registrants and six are lay members. Membership is drawn from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is a statutory requirement that the Council includes a member from each of the devolved nations. For the purposes of complying with the legislation, this role for Wales is fulfilled by Lisa Gerson, Registrant Member.

Our governance structure consists of four non-statutory committees (Audit, Risk and Finance, Investment, Nominations and Remuneration) and four statutory committees (Companies, Education, Registration and Standards). The four statutory committees (sometimes referred to as Council committees) meet collectively as an Advisory Panel.

To exercise its powers, Council delegates certain responsibilities to committees with clearly defined authority and terms of reference.

The GOC's Council approve the strategy and budget of the GOC on the advice of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

SMT comprises the Chief Executive and Registrar, Director of Change, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Regulatory Operations and Director of Regulatory Strategy.

SMT are responsible for the operational leadership and management of the GOC. In their respective positions they ensure we deliver our statutory duties, advise Council on the strategic direction of the GOC, prepare budgets for Council approval and manage strategic risks.

Responsibility within SMT for compliance with corporate, charity and equality law, and with our Welsh language obligations rests with the Chief Executive, supported by Governance.

Operational Expertise by a Specific Individual or Team

The Policy team is responsible for a range of policy issues by analysing, researching and making evidence-based recommendations, taking into account external developments and the wider regulatory context. This would include taking account of specific needs, requirements and issues from the devolved nations including Wales.

The Governance team is responsible for supporting the Chief Executive & Registrar, Council and SMT in the day-to-day running of the GOC providing relevant information, advice and guidance, and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation. The team covers Corporate Governance, Compliance, Membership Support, Governance Policies, Information Governance, EDI and Business Planning and Assurance.

The Communications Team additionally support our Welsh Language Scheme by managing the Welsh language page of the website.

The GOC has appointed an EDI Manager, who reports to the Head of Governance and has responsibility for Welsh language compliance. Their role helps us ensure that our members, employees, and workers are aware of how their responsibilities will be changing under the new Welsh Language Standards in 2023. They do this by supporting the implementation of the new Standards and providing training.