

UPDATE TO THE WELSH
LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER
2023/24

July 2024

About the Office for Legal Complaints and Legal Ombudsman

The Legal Ombudsman (LeO) was established by the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) under the terms of the Legal Services Act 2007 (the Act). The Act also established the Legal Services Board (LSB) to oversee the regulation of the legal profession in England and Wales. Both the OLC and the LSB are arm's-length bodies of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). LeO's work supports and aligns with the regulatory objectives.

[LeO's website](#) gives more detail about how it is governed and organised, including LeO's structure and leadership and the OLC's meetings and committees.

LeO has two core roles. It resolves complaints about providers of legal services that haven't been resolved to customers' satisfaction – as quickly and informally as possible. LeO covers the majority of legal services provided in England and Wales. The rules and limits about what complaints LeO can help with are set out on its [website](#). From 1 April 2023, a number of changes to these rules took effect.

The second vital part of LeO's work is sharing learning and insight from the complaints it sees. This promotes better complaint handling, prevents future complaints and helps drive higher standards in legal services.

The OLC has now consulted on and published a new strategy for LeO, which will run from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027. It has also consulted on and published its Business Plan and Budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the new strategy.

Introduction

The Welsh Language Act 1993 established a duty for public organisations providing services in Wales to produce a Welsh Language Scheme (the Scheme). The Scheme produced by the Legal Ombudsman (LeO) was prepared under the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and in consultation with the Welsh Language Board (now the Welsh Language Commissioner) before publication.

It describes how, when providing services to the public in Wales, we will give effect to the principle that we treat the English and Welsh languages equally, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.

The Scheme was prepared in accordance with Sections 12 to 14 of the Act and in accordance with guidelines issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner under Section 9 of the Act. The Scheme came into effect on 11 May 2011, so this is the thirteenth year of its operation

This update sets out how the Legal Ombudsman met its obligations under the terms of its Scheme when delivering its services in Wales between April 2023 to April 2024.

Recognising the Legal Ombudsman's operations have changed significantly since the Scheme was put in place, LeO has engaged with the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner about the process for updating the Scheme for future years. This is now in train and future years' updates will reflect the revised Scheme, as approved by the OLC Board and agreed with the Commissioner.

In the meantime, for the period April 2023 to March 2024 the Legal Ombudsman is reporting on the same basis as previous years.

Our presence in Wales

Since 2022 the Legal Ombudsman has had a hub office in Wales, within Ministry of Justice estate in Cardiff. At the end of March 2024 we had 13 Cardiff-based employees, out of a total of 307 people working for us.

In March 2024 we commissioned research into public awareness of our service. This found that:

- 69% of the public in Wales said they had heard of us when prompted (68% for England and Wales as a whole).
- 2% of the public in Wales could name us unprompted as the organisation that can help with complaints about legal providers (3% for England and Wales as a whole).

Contacts and complaints

In 2023/24 a consumer indicated that they were a Welsh speaker (by ticking a box as part of our process) in 3 new complaints we accepted and 4 complaints we resolved.

People can use our website to submit their complaints to us. We have an initial complaint checker to make sure the issue is something we can investigate, as well as an online complaint form – which are both available in Welsh.

In 2023/24 we received:

- 63 unique visits to the Welsh complaint checker.
- 6 unique visits to the Welsh complaint form.
- 1 new complaint submission in Welsh.

Complainants are also able to download a Welsh language version of the complaint form and send this to us. Since October 2023, the Welsh complaint form was downloaded 5 times; changes to third-party analytics during the year mean that 12 months' data isn't available.

We have the facility to translate complaints correspondence into a wide range of languages, but did not translate any into Welsh in the last year. More information is provided below about the other content we translated, including our publications and pages on our website.

We corresponded with 1 Welsh MP, although this correspondence was in English rather than Welsh.

Our response to the Welsh Language Act requirements is proportionate to the level of contacts we receive in the Welsh language. We will review our approach as part of updating our Scheme.

Publications

Our Annual Report and Accounts for 2022/23 was translated into Welsh and published on our website. This process will be followed for the 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts (the publishing of which was delayed this year due to the General Election). We will also translate this update into Welsh and publish it on our website.

In 2023/24 we made a number of changes to our website to improve people's experience of using it and engaging with our service. Where pages with key information were updated, we translated this information into Welsh, to ensure that Welsh-speaking consumers have the same quality of experience.

The Welsh 'general information' section on our website received 99 unique page views (from individual users). The average time spent on this page was 31 seconds.

Speaking events

In 2023/24 we attended one face-to-face event in Wales – Legal Wales' annual conference in Cardiff – which was attended by a range of parties involved in the Welsh legal system. At that conference we took the opportunity to share details of the services we offer in the Welsh Language under our Scheme, as well as details of complaints we had received from users of legal services in Wales (irrespective of the language we corresponded in). We also ran 11 online events which were open to Welsh legal providers to attend; we don't run events for the general public.

Monitoring, feedback and complaints

The Legal Ombudsman is engaging with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office about updating our Scheme, with a view to having a revised Scheme in place in time for next year's update.

In the meantime, we continue to monitor our Welsh language provision to ensure its compliance with the requirements of the Scheme. Where new corporate policies and initiatives may affect our Scheme, LeO will consider the potential implications and consult the Welsh Language Commissioner as appropriate. LeO's wider policies and strategy for ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in respect of our people and our customers – including the EDI strategy published on our website – extend to our commitments around the equal treatment of the Welsh language are relevant to our duties under our Scheme.

LeO has a [defined process](#) for dealing with concerns about the standard of service we have provided in individual cases. This could include failing to meet individual accessibility needs, such as corresponding in a different language, including Welsh. Complaints about LeO's service should be directed to the relevant LeO case handler the case in the first instance, and will be escalated in line with our process.

Any other questions, feedback or complaints about LeO's Scheme and compliance with it should be directed to the Communications, Engagement and Impact team at support@legalombudsman.org.uk.