

July 2020

**Update to the Welsh
Language Commissioner:
2019/2020**

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) prior to 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.

This paper sets out how LeO has met its obligations under the terms of its Scheme when delivering its services in Wales from June 2019 to May 2020. This is the ninth year of the Scheme's operation.

What we do

The Legal Ombudsman scheme was set up by the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) under the Legal Services Act 2007. Users of legal services are able to access an independent and impartial Ombudsman scheme to resolve disputes involving their lawyer. We are the single body for all consumer legal complaints. From January 2015 until April 2019 we also accepted complaints about claims management companies. This jurisdiction has now transferred to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

The OLC is accountable to Parliament through the Lord Chancellor and is an arm's length body of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). LeO also has a direct relationship with the Legal Services Board (LSB) which has various functions overseeing the Office for Legal Complaints.

The relationship between the OLC, the MoJ and the LSB is set out in a tripartite operating protocol agreed between the bodies, which sets the framework for how the relationship will operate with our partner organisations. This is available from our website: <http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>

Contacts and complaints sent to us for investigation

Over the reporting period LeO received three complaints where the person identified themselves as a Welsh speaker.

We corresponded with one Welsh MP. None of these requested that we correspond in Welsh.

Our Welsh 'general information' section on the LeO website has received 224 unique page views over the last year. Unique page views refer to the number of individual users instead of simply number of clicks. The average time spent on this page was 1 minute 15 seconds.

People can send their complaints to us via an online tool which has a questionnaire and complaint form in Welsh. In the last year these pages were visited as follows:

Customer Assessment Tool – 19 visits

Complaint form page - 5 visits

Our response to the Welsh Language Act requirements is proportionate to the level of contacts we receive in the Welsh language. We keep this under regular review and will update our language requirements if anything substantive changes.

Publications

Each year we publish annual data about the complaints we investigate. This year we produced specific information about complaints made by people from Wales. This data can be found [here](#).

Our Annual Report and Accounts for 2018/19 was translated into Welsh, and the intention is to do the same for this year's report and make it available on our website.

Speaking events

Last year one of our ombudsmen spoke at a Legal Network Wales event. This is a relationship we have built on, and this year we were invited to attend a further three events for Legal Network Wales events for legal professionals in Swansea, Cardiff and Aberystwyth. We also held our own Complaints Handling course for legal professionals in Cardiff this year which was attended by 25 people.

Monitoring and complaints

We continue to monitor our Welsh language provision in order to ensure its compliance with the requirements of the Scheme.

The External Affairs team has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Scheme and will continue to monitor our progress in delivering it.

Where new corporate policies and initiatives may affect our Scheme, LeO will consult the Welsh Language Commissioner.

When considering any new policy changes, consideration is given to any impact and implications that the policy may have on the Welsh Language Scheme.

Conclusion

The Legal Ombudsman continues to take its statutory obligations towards Welsh language provision seriously. We will continue to assess how we may best serve the interests of Welsh service users.

For more information on information contained in this paper please contact the External Affairs team at support@legalombudsman.org.uk.