

## **Welsh Language Standards Report 25 January 2017 – 31 March 2017**

### **1. Introduction**

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued a compliance notice to ColegauCymru / CollegesWales on 25 July 2016.

This compliance notice outlined ColegauCymru's duty to meet the statutory Welsh Language Standards established by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This Measure awarded official status to the Welsh language, with an aim for the Welsh language not be treated less favourably than the English language.

The introduction of the Welsh Language Standards, which is a list of what organisations must do and deliver in Welsh, ensures that those in Wales who wish to live their lives in Welsh can do so. These standards create Welsh language linguistic freedom to use for individuals in Wales.

As part of the compliance process, the Welsh Language Standards require ColegauCymru to present an annual report, in relation to each financial year (April - March), that reflects on adhering to the demands of the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards. Provision is also included within the Standards concerning publishing and publicity of the Annual Report. This Report sets out the ColegauCymru's progress towards complying with the Standards between the 25 January 2017 and 31 March 2017.

ColegauCymru believes that it is responding to the Standards in a positive manner. All staff have received Welsh Language Awareness training and their Welsh language ability formally assessed as part of their roles at ColegauCymru. Regular updates on how to improve working practices accordingly, as well as promoting and facilitating Welsh language use are included as part of our weekly communication team briefings.

ColegauCymru is committed to encouraging the whole team to use the Welsh language skills whatever their ability, and in creating a bilingual working environment where use of Welsh is welcomed and encouraged. We also support learners and less confident speakers to use the language in a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

### **2. Background**

The Standards are a set of legally binding requirements that aim to improve the bilingual service that the people of Wales can expect to receive from a number of public and statutory bodies, including ColegauCymru / CollegesWales. ColegauCymru has a responsibility to provide bilingual services, to ensure the Welsh language is not treated any less favourably than the English language.

ColegauCymru / CollegesWales is required to comply with the following standards:

- Service Delivery
- Policy Making
- Operational
- Record Keeping

The Standards aim to:

- Make it clear to organisations what their duties are in relation to the Welsh language.
- Make it clearer to Welsh speakers about the services they can expect to receive in Welsh.
- Make Welsh language services more consistent and improve their quality.

A standards investigation was carried out in relation to ColegauCymru between November 2014 and February 2015 and a standards report outlining the conclusions of the investigation was produced for the attention of Welsh Ministers in May 2015.

Following agreement of the Welsh Language Standards (No. 2) Regulations 2016, laid before the National Assembly on 18 December 2015, ColegauCymru received notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner to attend a briefing session on the legislation. This briefing session was held in February 2016 and provided detailed guidance on the expectations and arrangements prior to compliance notices being issued under Part 4, Chapter 6 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

ColegauCymru received its draft Standards Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 31 March 2016, hence commenced the beginning of the consultation period that ended on 26 May 2016. There were two parts to the consultation: the first part dealt with the Commissioner wanting to receive further information and evidence in relation to specific Standards, and the second part was an opportunity for the organisation to raise any concerns if we were of the opinion that one or more of the Standards included were unreasonable or disproportionate.

We responded positively. Following regular dialogue with the Commissioner's staff, we received the final Standards Compliance Notice on 25 July 2016, with minor adjustments following dialogue to draft standards compliance.

### **3. Welsh Language Responsibility**

To support ColegauCymru in implementing the Standards, the Public Affairs Director took lead on this work across the organisation. Working with the whole team, this has made a difference to the progress we were able to make in meeting the Standards.

During the six months prior to the Imposition Date, 25 January, 2016, for most of the Standards, the Senior Management Team and the Public Affairs Director worked with the team across the organisation putting procedures in place to help staff understand their role in assisting ColegauCymru meet the Standards.

The team were required to attend a training session and desktop guidance notes were produced to assist with compliance. The main elements of the guidance notes dealt with the practical day-to-day implications of working to meet the Standards, such as how to answer the telephone; how to arrange meetings, taking participants language

choice into consideration; and recording the language choice of our members and contacts.

As with all compliance matters, ColegauCymru is committed to pan organisation responsibility, whilst day to day developments are managed by the Director of Business and Administration who will be the main contact.

#### **4. Vision for Welsh Language**

ColegauCymru's Welsh Language Scheme is still a working document that outlines the organisation's commitment to the Welsh language, and a copy is available on our website and internally.

ColegauCymru and the Welsh Language Commissioner have an excellent working relationship that sees them supporting each other in events, guest speaking opportunities, joint publicity and the promotion of the Welsh language in post-16 education.

The aim of such collaboration and partnerships has been to highlight and attract publicity around the importance of Welsh language skills in academic and vocational education, increasing provision of the Welsh/bilingual curriculum offer and the crucial role of further education colleges in supporting bilingual communities thrive and achieve economic sustainability.

#### **5. Developing our Welsh language learning offer – in accordance with Standard 123 & 145,**

ColegauCymru conducted a language skills audit in December 2016 in accordance with Standard 123. Of the ten staff, six are able to speak Welsh to the standard required for their roles at work, the other four are able to meet and greet.

All staff are offered Welsh language training to support business operations and individual development.

One member has attended an intensive five-day polish your Welsh course and another member of staff has attended the five-day intensive intermediate level course.

#### **6. Complaints – in accordance with Standard 141**

Service Delivery – ColegauCymru is subject to 64 Service Standards. No complaints have been received relating to compliance with the Service Standards.

Policy Making – ColegauCymru is subject to 9 Policy Making Standards. No complaints have been received relating to compliance with the Policy Making Standards.

Operational – ColegauCymru is subject to 42 Operational Standards. No complaints have been received relating to ColegauCymru's compliance with the Operational Standards.

#### **7. Recruitment – in accordance with Standard 148**

The number of new and vacant posts advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where –

- (i) Welsh language skills were essential: 0 post
- (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post: 1 post
- (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable: 0 posts
- (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary: 0 posts

All posts are advertised as either Welsh language skills essential or desirable. Where possible, we explain the level of skills required to match the responsibilities of the role.

## **Contacts**

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ColegauCymru welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English. We will respond to correspondence received in Welsh, in Welsh. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.

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