

Welsh Language Skills Strategy

Delivering an effective Welsh language service in Wales

Our Welsh Language Skills Strategy outlines how we will maintain a sufficient bilingual workforce in order to provide an effective Welsh language service in Wales.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is committed to delivering an effective Welsh language service in Wales, in line with the commitments made in our [Welsh Language Scheme 2019-22](#).

Providing a meaningful service in Wales, that treats the Welsh Language no less favourably or on an equal footing to those services provided in English, requires a skilled workforce that can work bilingually. To maintain this skilled bilingual workforce, we must attract and retain Welsh speaking staff across all FSA in Wales teams and professions as well as offer existing staff the opportunity to participate in training to develop or improve their Welsh language skills.

Our Welsh Language Skills Strategy will help us to manage and plan staff language skills. It covers the following key areas:

- Improving the bilingual services we provide
- Determining the Welsh language skill level (reading, writing, listening and speaking) required for teams and posts across the FSA in Wales
- Recruiting individuals with the appropriate level of Welsh language skills for all post being advertised
- Promoting and celebrating a bilingual workplace ethos, both internally and externally, with the view to attracting and retaining bilingual staff
- Increasing opportunities for staff to develop their Welsh language skills and build their confidence.

Our aim is to ensure that our Welsh language service meets the requirements outlined in the [Welsh Language Measure 2011](#), as they may become directly applicable to the FSA in the future. It should also contribute to Welsh Government's ambitious target of reaching a [Million Welsh Speakers by 2050](#) and honour the FSA's commitment to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, [A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language](#).

Implementing our Welsh Language Skills Strategy

The Strategy is a key tool for managers who are recruiting to the FSA in Wales and should be used when designing and implementing workforce plans.

To ensure that this language strategy is applied consistently, all new FSA in Wales managers will attend an introductory Welsh language awareness session. The Welsh Language Unit will deliver subsequent refresher sessions for all managers as and when needed.

Actions required for implementation

To implement this strategy effectively, the FSA in Wales must undertake the following actions. This work will be led by the FSA's internal Welsh Language Unit, with support from the Director of the FSA in Wales and Human Resources.

Ensure all recruitment managers in Wales are aware of the Welsh Language Skills Strategy and the aims and requirements within.

Define and clearly communicate the internal Welsh language skills required to successfully implement the FSA's Language Scheme. Efforts to recruit bilingual staff should be focussed on these key roles and areas:

- **Business Support Officer** – a public facing role requiring bilingual skills. This is a permanently bilingual role with speaking, reading and listening skills required at level 4 on the [ALTE framework](#) and writing skills at level 2 and above. This role does not require re-assessment each time it becomes vacant.
- **Welsh language ability within the Communications team in Wales (at least one fluent member of the team)** – to ensure an effective and efficient Welsh language Communications service, again with speaking, reading and listening skills required at level 4 on the [ALTE framework](#) and writing skills at level 3.
- **Welsh language ability across all wider teams (at least one fluent member in each team - level 4 speaking, listening and reading and level 2 writing)** – to ensure that the public (which includes the general public, local authorities, the media, food businesses and others for whom we provide a service) can engage with the FSA in Wales on any matter of concern in their language choice (Welsh/English), as is their right.
- **Internal Welsh Language Unit** – although not specifically referred to in the Welsh Language Scheme, the nature of all posts within this Unit requires Welsh skills of the highest quality (level 5) for speaking, reading, listening and writing.

FSA's Welsh Language Unit to conduct a baseline survey of Welsh language skills across the FSA in Wales to determine the existing internal Welsh language capability and identify any gaps in service. This survey should then be carried out on an annual basis to ensure an accurate overview of internal Welsh language skills over time.

Identify options for closing any skills gap identified. This should be done via recruitment when opportunities arise, and via training and upskilling, as outlined in the [Developing Welsh language skills](#) section of this strategy.

Ensure Welsh language capacity across all teams in Wales:

- When a position becomes vacant, or when a new post is created, the Recruiting Manager/Team Leader will liaise with the Welsh Language Unit prior to any kick-off

conversations with HR.

- If there is no existing Welsh language capability within the recruiting team, this vacant role will immediately become a Welsh essential role and the Recruiting Manager, guided by the Welsh Language Unit, will advertise the vacant post and target Welsh speakers (using Welsh language recruitment sites such as Lleol.cymru). The level of skills required for reading, writing, listening and speaking will be determined by the Welsh Language Unit in line with the requirements of the post.
- However, in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear and justified need to fill a specialist/technical post and recruitment for a Welsh language candidate has failed, the Director in Wales has the discretion to override the above Welsh language skills requirement.
- Recruiting Managers and HR Business Partners should ensure that recruitment materials appropriately emphasise the Welsh language skills required, with reference to the [ALTE Framework](#). This should be considered when preparing the candidate pack and any advertising materials.
- We acknowledge that many Welsh speakers feel that their skills are not sufficient to use in their work. Reference to the [ALTE Framework](#) can provide reassurance to potential candidates that they have the exact level of skills required.

All posts that aren't deemed 'Welsh essential' in accordance with the procedure above are to include Welsh as a desirable criterion (no level specified) to further strengthen the Agency's commitment to ensuring a bilingual workforce.

New members of staff should be encouraged by their managers and supported by the Welsh Language Unit to reach level 1 (basic linguistic courtesy), meaning that staff can pronounce names and establishments in Wales. This will be covered in the Welsh language induction session for new starters in Wales.

Monitor and report on the implementation of the Strategy and include in Annual Monitoring Reports to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Developing Welsh language skills

To further strengthen the FSA's commitment to developing a bilingual workforce and provide a comprehensive Welsh language service across all teams and disciplines, the FSA in Wales will ensure sufficient availability and promotion (via the Welsh Language Unit) of training and development opportunities for staff.

Training and development opportunities will include:

- The Director for Wales will encourage all managers to support employees wishing to undertake Welsh language training, providing that this is both reasonable and practical.
- Subscribing to the [Work Welsh \(learnwelsh.Cymru\)](#) provision and materials offered by the National Centre for Learning Welsh and promoting these at every available opportunity and via the relevant platforms available to us.
- Line Managers will encourage new staff to undertake the [Work Welsh Welcome](#) introductory course to build courtesy Welsh language skills. Basic courtesy Welsh language skills are now a requirement for all Welsh Government posts, in line with the aims for civil servants in Welsh Government's [Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#) strategy. As a Government department operating within Wales, we at the FSA in Wales should endeavour to do the same.
- Promoting all other support and learning opportunities offered by the [National Centre for Learning Welsh](#) and signpost individual staff to the most appropriate or relevant options according to their needs/requirements. This includes courses at all levels for all abilities,

including 'gloywi' refresher training for fluent speakers.

- Promote less formal forms of learning which staff can undertake at their own pace (for example [Say Something in Welsh](#) and [Duolingo](#) – this list is not exhaustive).
- Provide a network for staff wishing to learn Welsh to engage with other learners and Welsh speakers through the internal Clwb Clebran.
- Promote the Civil Service Local Coffi Cwtsh as a social support network for staff wishing to learn, practice or use their Welsh language skills.
- Promote other relevant Welsh language learning and development opportunities as and when they arise on relevant internal platforms.
- Outline and signpost all opportunities listed above in the tailored induction session offered to all new starters by the Welsh Language Unit.

ALTE framework - overall Welsh language skill levels

The FSA in Wales uses an ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) framework to assess Welsh language skills internally.

A key tool for Welsh language skills recruitment, an ALTE framework is a way of measuring language skills according to the types of communication tasks that a person can achieve in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

This framework is commonly adapted by public sector organisations in Wales and is a widely recognised skills framework. It's based on recognition of what individuals can achieve linguistically (in Welsh in this context) and provides a good reference point for employers.

Description of overall Welsh language skill levels

Level 0 – Awareness

You can:

Recognise some short, simple words as being Welsh and even guess the meaning of some words when read or heard, provided the person is talking very slowly or the words are read in an explanatory context. Upon hearing simple words numerous times, you can repeat them and can also even write some short words. Although you may not consider these skills to be of much use in the workplace, the language is far from being alien to you and you have a firm grounding from which you can develop your skills.

More importantly, you have a strong awareness and understanding of the bilingual environment in which the Food Standards Agency in Wales operates, the need to treat both languages equally, and you demonstrate sensitivity towards the needs of Welsh speakers. You are aware of what you can do to ensure both languages are treated equally and to meet the linguistic needs of all stakeholders, for example, use of appropriate translation services, making use of colleagues' language skills.

Level 1 – Entry

You can:

Understand and use familiar everyday expressions if the speaker is talking slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. Introduce yourself and others and can ask and answer questions about basic personal details, for example, where someone lives, works, what they like doing, things they have and what they did. Understand very short texts where people are giving basic information about themselves or others, for example, on forms. Pass on a simple message or make a simple request, for example, by e-mail.

Level 2 – Foundation

You can:

Understand sentences when people talk slowly about everyday situations, for example, basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment, and what they have done or would do. Hold a basic conversation with someone else on a common everyday topic, for example, work, hobbies, preferences, things which have happened or future plans. Understand messages about everyday things and basic letters/emails. Write short notes to friends/colleagues, for example, to pass on a message.

Level 3 – Intermediate

You can:

Understand the main points when someone talks about common or everyday topics, or when things to do with work are discussed, for example, in conversation, or in a small group meeting. Hold an extended conversation with a fluent speaker on a familiar topic to do with everyday life, for example, hobbies, travel or immediate work-related topics. Describe experiences and events, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. Understand straightforward short articles or emails on everyday topics to do with work. Write a letter/email on most topics, asking for things, giving information, inviting someone or organising an event.

Level 4 – Advanced

You can:

Usually follow most conversations or discussions, even on topics you're not familiar with, unless someone is speaking with a strong unfamiliar accent, for example, in a conference. Talk confidently with fluent speakers on familiar topics related to everyday life or work, and can express your views, engage in discussion, and speak at length about general topics, for example, in a meeting, or in a one-to-one situation. Understand most correspondence, newspaper articles and reports aimed at fluent Welsh speakers with the aid of a dictionary, and scan through long texts to find detail. Write short articles, reviews or reports on a variety of subjects of a general nature, or which are work-related, and respond accurately to most types of correspondence from internal or external sources.

Level 5 – Proficiency

You can:

Understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Speak at length about complex issues, present arguments, and lead discussions. Summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Express yourself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, adapting your style according to the audience, for example, in an informal or formal context.

ALTE framework - individual Welsh language skill areas

Our skills matrix is based on the Association of Language Testers in Europe's (ALTE) model

Level 0 – Awareness

Speaking

I can repeat some basic, simple words upon hearing them often.

Listening

I can recognise some basic everyday greetings for example, bore da, diolch, if the person is talking very slowly.

Reading

I can recognise some basic, short Welsh words. I can also guess the meaning of some words when they are in an explanatory context.

Writing

I can write a short Welsh word with minimal assistance.

Level 1 – Entry

Speaking

I can use some familiar everyday expressions, for example, bore da, diolch. I can also pronounce names of places, people and organisations. I can talk about basic personal things in an informal situation, for example, interests, family, work, what you did yesterday. I can also talk about basic topics, for example, the weather, time, prices.

Listening

I can understand everyday expressions and very basic phrases if the speaker is talking slowly. I can understand conversations about basic personal information, for example, where someone lives, works, what they like doing, what they did. I can guess what is being said when someone is giving details about events, such as time and place.

Reading

I can understand very short phrases and can guess what some notices mean. I can understand short texts where people are giving basic information about themselves or others. I usually find details, such as time and cost, in advertisements or notices.

Writing

I can write very simple phrases or sentences about yourself or others. I can also pass on a simple message or make a simple request, for example, by e-mail.

Level 2 – Foundation

Speaking

I can hold a basic conversation with someone on a common everyday topic, provided the other speaker helps. I can ask and answer questions on familiar topics, for example, work, hobbies, preferences, things which have happened or future plans.

Listening

I understand when people talk about everyday situations, for example, personal information, work, what they have done or would do, provided they talk slowly. I can understand when people ask me or others to do something, and when they're asking about future plans, for example, requesting a meeting.

Reading

I understand messages about everyday things, and some very basic letters or e-mails, for example, asking for something, or asking to pass a message on. I can also understand short pieces of texts or very simple books, for example, books for children.

Writing

I can write a short note to a friend or colleague, asking for something, thanking them or explaining something, for example, absence from work. I can also write a short text about a familiar topic, for example, personal experience, or work-related experience.

Level 3 – Intermediate

Speaking

I can hold an extended conversation with a fluent speaker on a familiar topic, for example, interests or work. I can express a view and exchange information on a range of topics to do with everyday life, for example, hobbies, travel or immediate work-related topics.

Listening

I understand information being given about common or everyday topics, or when things to do with work are being discussed, for example, in conversation, or in small group meetings. I usually understand the main message and details, provided people speak clearly, for example, when announcements are made or when listening to news bulletins.

Reading

I can understand straightforward short articles on everyday topics of interest, or to do with work. I can guess what words mean from the context, when the topic is familiar. I understand most e-mails and work-related documents.

Writing

I can write a letter on most topics, asking for things, giving explanations, describing experiences, inviting people, or organising an event. I can write fairly accurately on most familiar topics, for example, related to interests or work-related.

Level 4 – Advanced

Speaking

I can talk confidently with fluent speakers on familiar topics related to everyday life or work. I can express views, engage in discussion, and speak at length about general topics, for example, in a meeting, or in a one-to-one situation.

Listening

I usually follow most conversations or discussions, even on topics I'm not familiar with. I understand most TV and radio programmes intended for first language Welsh speakers, unless the speaker has a strong, unfamiliar accent.

Reading

I understand most correspondence, and scan through long texts to find details. I understand most newspaper articles and reports aimed at first language Welsh speakers, with the aid of a dictionary. I can understand novels and other texts, provided they are not written in a very formal or very colloquial style.

Writing

I can write a short article, review or report on a variety of subjects of a general nature, or which are work-related, with fairly accurate grammar. I can also write detailed and well-structured texts, which are appropriate for the reader. I respond accurately to most types of correspondence from colleagues or external contacts.

Level 5 – Proficiency

Speaking

I express myself fully and precisely, even when discussing complex issues. I adapt my language style according to the audience, for example, when speaking in a formal context or talking to friends. I can speak at length about a complex issue, present arguments and lead discussions.

Listening

I can easily follow all conversations and discussions between others, on all sorts of topics. I understand all kinds of spoken Welsh, including lectures or complex discussions.

Reading

I can read and understand almost all written Welsh texts with ease, with only occasional references to a dictionary. I can read long texts, for example, reports, articles, to find relevant details and understand almost all styles of writing, for example, formal or informal.

Writing

I can write extended texts, reports, articles, minutes or other types of writing in a style appropriate to the reader. I can write in formal or informal Welsh as necessary. I can write with a high degree of grammatical accuracy on a wide range of topics.

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