

Council
18 July 2024
Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner

Classification	Public
Purpose	For discussion
Issue	Under the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022, the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) is required to publish an annual report to the Welsh Language Commissioner on the ways in which it has complied with the Welsh Language Standards. This paper introduces the annual report for 2023-24 which is attached as an annex.
Recommendation(s)	To consider the first Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner and to agree that the report be published to GOsC's public website.
Financial and resourcing implications	The costs of implementing the Welsh Language Standards are provided for in the 2023-24 budget.
Diversity implications	The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the ways in which we have complied with the Welsh Language Standards, ensuring we treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. The report therefore takes into account the needs of Welsh speakers and those living in Wales.
Communications implications	The report will be published in Welsh and English once agreed by Council, and will then be submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner. We will promote the report externally across our channels in both Welsh and English, in accordance with the standards.
Annex(es)	General Osteopathic Council's Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner (December 2023 – March 2024)
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Key messages from the paper:

- In December 2023, GOsC implemented the new Welsh Language Standards in accordance with the compliance notice received from the Welsh Language Commissioner in June 2023.
- GOsC is expected to implement standard 20 (the provision of an online registration process available to registrants in Welsh) by 6 December 2024.
- The reporting period for GOsC's first Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner under the Welsh Language Standards covers 6 December 2023 – 31 March 2024.
- As of 31 March 2024, there are 163 osteopaths living and/or practising in Wales, and 43 students studying and/or living in Wales.
- As part of our compliance activities, we translated around 140,000 words across an estimated 60 documents and forms, as well as expanding the Cymraeg section of our website to provide more information about our organisation and our work in Welsh.

Background

1. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 is the legislation that created the Welsh Language Standards. The standards aim to promote and facilitate the Welsh language, and ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language in Wales.
2. GOsC is under duty to comply with the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022. We received a compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 6 June 2023 which outlined 67 standards, including policy-making, operational, service delivery and record-keeping standards. These standards supersede GOsC's previous Welsh Language Scheme, implemented in response to the Welsh Language Act 1993.
3. In our compliance notice, the Welsh Language Commissioner set an implementation deadline of 6 December 2023 for all but standard 20 which requires that applications to join our Register be facilitated and processed in Welsh in the same manner as applications in English. The deadline for this standard is 6 December 2024.
4. Progress is being made to implement this standard as part of GOsC's project to implement a new CRM system, which will ensure we have the system capability to process Welsh applications.
5. As part of the compliance notice, GOsC is required to publish an annual report to the Welsh Language Commissioner explaining the ways in which GOsC has complied with the standards with which we are under a duty to comply during that year.

6. The report must also include the following:

- the number of complaints that GOsC received during the year in question which related to compliance with the standards with which GOsC is under a duty to comply
- the number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question
- the number of new and vacant posts that you advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where:
 - Welsh language skills were essential
 - Welsh language skills needed to be learnt
 - Welsh language skills were desirable
 - Welsh language skills were not necessary

7. The reporting period for this first annual report to the Welsh Language Commissioner covers 6 December 2023 (the date on which the compliance notice took effect) to 31 March 2024 (the end of GOsC's financial year).

8. This report is published in place of the previous annual monitoring report which GOsC submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner each year as part of its Welsh Language Scheme.

Discussion

9. We are seeking Council's agreement to publish the report attached as an Annex. If agreed, the report will be published on our website in both Welsh and English, and promoted externally across our channels in both Welsh and English. The report will then be submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

10. As the reporting period for this report is shorter than a typical financial year, our approach has been to outline the compliance activities GOsC carried out in preparation for the implementation of the new Welsh Language Standards. The report also explains the ways we have continued to comply with the standards, for example when seeking feedback from Welsh stakeholders prior to publishing our consultation on Guidance on Professional Behaviours and Student Fitness to Practise.

11. The report details the numbers of osteopaths and osteopathic students in Wales as of 31 March 2024. We hope this can provide useful context for Council and the Commissioner regarding our decision to take an approach to implementing the standards that is proportionate to our size and reach as an organisation.

Recommendation: to consider GOsC's Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner and to agree to publication of the report to GOsC's website.



General
Osteopathic
Council

General Osteopathic Council's Annual Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner

December 2023 – March 2024

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Introduction

This annual report explains how the GOsC has sought to comply with the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022 between 6 December 2023 (the date on which our compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner came into effect) and 31 March 2024.

We are committed to treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, recognising the significance and history of the language and doing our best where possible to facilitate the use of Welsh across our services.

This report provides an overview of the activities we have undertaken to facilitate the use of Welsh both now and in the future. Our aim has been to take a proportionate approach to compliance with the standards, taking into consideration the size and reach of our organisation as well as the number of osteopaths and students currently living, studying and practising in Wales.

The activities outlined in this report follow on from our previous work to provide services in Welsh in accordance with our Welsh Language Scheme. This was superseded by the compliance notice we received from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 6 June 2023 which noted 67 standards. This helped us to understand how we might improve our Welsh language service provision, assess the impact of our decision making on those wanting to use Welsh and be clearer and more consistent in our communications about the services we provide in Welsh.

We continue to encourage feedback from Welsh speakers on the services and information we provide in Welsh. Any feedback we receive will be used to inform how we deliver our services and comply with the standards in the future. If you are a Welsh speaker and would like to contact us in Welsh, you are welcome to email us at: info@osteopathy.org.uk

About the GOsC

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) is the regulator for osteopathy in the United Kingdom, including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Osteopaths must be registered with the GOsC to legally practise osteopathy in the UK.

Our overarching objective is to protect the public, maintain public confidence in osteopathy and promote proper professional standards and conduct for osteopaths.

Our responsibilities include:

- keeping a Register of all osteopaths permitted to practise
- working with the public and the osteopathic profession to promote patient safety by registering qualified professionals and setting, maintaining and developing standards of osteopathic practice and conduct
- helping patients with concerns about an osteopath, and removing from the Register any osteopaths who are unfit to practise
- assuring the quality of osteopathic education
- setting the requirements for osteopaths in relation to their continuing professional development

As of 31 March 2024, there are 163 osteopaths living and/or practising in Wales, and approximately 160 students studying and/or living in Wales including 43 students in their final or penultimate years of study. Swansea University is currently the only osteopathic education provider in Wales.

The GOsC is a small organisation with less than 30 members of staff and our office is based in London, England. We are governed by our Council which has a statutory requirement to include at least one Welsh member (a person based wholly or mainly in Wales who may be lay or osteopathic) to help us consider and support the needs of Welsh osteopaths, patients and Welsh members of the public when making strategic regulatory decisions.

We currently do not have any Welsh speaking members of staff. In an organisation-wide staff day in January 2024 we explained to our colleagues that GOsC would arrange and fund Welsh language lessons any staff members that choose to learn Welsh.

During the same event, we encouraged every member of staff to familiarise themselves with the standards and to consider the needs of Welsh speakers throughout their work. The feedback from this session was positive, with staff members actively engaged in discussions about how the standards might be applied throughout their work and interactions with osteopaths, patients and the public.

Our compliance activities

In preparation for our compliance notice taking effect on 6 December, we made several changes across our services and core functions to improve our Welsh language provision. This included changes to processes in our registration, regulation, professional standards, communications and IT functions to ensure we can meet the needs of Welsh speakers looking to engage with GOsC, where possible.

To meet the needs of Welsh speakers and meet the requirements of our compliance notice, we arranged to translate documents and forms that would support, for example:

- an osteopath wanting to provide their statement as part of a fitness to practise investigation in Welsh
- a witness attending a fitness to practise hearing in Welsh
- a student applying to join our Register in Welsh
- a member of the public using the Welsh section of our website to find out about the GOsC and what we do, and perhaps looking to raise a concern about an osteopath.

We translated around 140,000 words across an estimated 60 documents and forms, as well as expanding the Cymraeg section of our website to provide more information about our organisation and our work in Welsh. We also amended our automated telephone system to include a message in Welsh for those who may be looking to speak to a member of our team in Welsh.

As well as documents and forms, we also made sure that all our patient-focused resources are available in Welsh from our website. We published a Welsh version of our [Visiting an Osteopath animation](#) for osteopathic patients to allow osteopaths in Wales to communicate effectively with their patients before an appointment.

Since the compliance notice has taken effect, we have launched our new student ebuletin which we send out in Welsh and English to students in Wales (students in England receive the ebuletin in English). We have also promoted our Welsh language services across our communication channels, including our monthly ebuletin, student presentations and social media.

In December 2023 we published [our Fitness to Practise annual report in Welsh](#) for the first time. As of 31 March 2024, plans are also being made to publish [our new Strategy towards 2030 in Welsh](#).

We have also published several consultations, including a consultation for our Guidance on Professional Behaviours and Student Fitness to Practise. As part of our communications for each consultation, we are inviting responses in Welsh. Once finalised, the guidance itself will also be published in Welsh on our website.

To ensure we are taking a suitable approach with our provision for students in Wales, we consulted with an education provider and Welsh speaker from Swansea University. This helped us to understand what the expectations of their students might be regarding the information GOsC provides to them. We plan to continue engaging with Welsh speakers wherever relevant and possible.

We also reviewed our Equality Impact Assessment form to understand how we might ensure that assessment and consideration of the impact of our policy decisions on opportunities to use the Welsh language is embedded without our governance processes. As part of this, we also updated our Council and Committee paper templates to encourage colleagues and non-executive members to actively consider the Welsh Language Standards throughout their work and decision making.

Further information about our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards

The number of complaints GOsC received from December 2023 – March 2024 that relate to GOsC's compliance with the standards:	None
The number of employees who have Welsh language skills as of 31 March 2024:	None
The number of new and vacant posts that GOsC advertised (excluding governance/non-executive posts) where Welsh language skills were essential:	None
The number of new and vacant posts that GOsC advertised (excluding governance/non-executive posts) where Welsh language skills were essential:	None
The number of new and vacant posts that GOsC advertised (excluding governance/non-executive posts) where Welsh language skills were essential where Welsh language skills needed to be learnt:	None
The number of new and vacant posts that GOsC advertised (excluding governance/non-executive posts) where Welsh language skills were desirable:	None
The number of new and vacant posts that GOsC advertised (excluding governance/non-executive posts) where Welsh language skills were not desirable:	2

How to contact us in Welsh

Queries in Welsh can be sent to GOsC by email or post and will receive a written response in Welsh without additional delay. Queries sent to us through any of our social media channels (Facebook, Twitter/X or LinkedIn) will also receive a response in Welsh. We usually aim to respond to emails and contact through social media within 5 working days.

As we do not currently have a Welsh speaking member of staff, we are unable to answer phone calls in Welsh. If you would like to contact us about our Welsh language services or the content of this annual report, you can do so by emailing info@osteopathy.org.uk