



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 This was superseded by the compliance notice we received from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 6 June 2023 which noted 67 standards.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