

06/11/2008

Mr Simon Smith – Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Salesbury Road
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 OJJ

Dear Mr Smith,

MONITORING REPORT 2007/08 NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Many thanks for the above report. Detailed comments are attached to this letter, but there are a few matters to note beforehand.

First of all, I would like to commend the Authority on the submission of a comprehensive report following the format agreed with the Board. We believe that the report, in general, includes useful and specific information and that it shows progress in the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme during 2007/08.

We believe that elements of good practice are contained in the report. We especially welcome the Service's attitude towards skills and ensuring that it is an establishment that has the capacity to offer bilingual services.

The next step usually is for us to hold a feedback meeting in the near future, in order to discuss matters arising from the report and from this response. I will contact you soon to arrange a date.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the contents of this letter, you are welcome to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

GARETH SMITH
Government in Wales Unit

Cc. Colin Hanks, Deputy Chief Fire Officer;
Tracey Williams, Corporate Communications Manager;
Lois Jones, Translator/Welsh Language Tutor.

**North Wales Fire & Rescue Service – Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report
2007-08**

Welsh Language Board comments, November 2008

Section	Comment
1. Introduction	
page 2	We agree that drawing up the Language Skills Strategy, and creating the new post of Welsh Language Awareness Facilitator are significant developments, and we applaud the Service for doing so. Is this role to be a permanent one?
	It is also very good to see the Service increasing the organisation's Welsh language capacity by ensuring that staff have the ability to show basic language courtesy, even if they do not have language skills. This is another significant development that deserves praise.
	It must also be noted that there are praiseworthy developments in identifying training needs and inclusion of the Welsh language as an integral part of Individual Development Reviews. Also, it is good to see the service taking a corporate overview in sending out the questionnaire on linguistic competencies.
2. Management and Administration of the Scheme	
page 4	The information reported here shows that there is an effective system in place to implement the Welsh language agenda. It appears that there is a valuable combination of strategic guidance, as well as operational and practical support responsible for implementing the Scheme.
3. Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme	
	For sections regarding which no comments are made, we accept the information reported.
page 5. Promoting the Scheme internally	As already noted, we welcome the development of creating a new post, namely Language Awareness Sessions Facilitator. It is very good to see that the Service has ensured that its intranet is bilingual too.
page 5. Promoting the Scheme externally	It is very good to see that the website is entirely bilingual.
	We would like to hear more about the process of contracting services out please. What services are put out on contract? Are they services such as erecting signs only, or are face to face services also put out to contract? It is obviously very important to ensure that any partner providing services on behalf of the Service does so to a standard the Service would expect, and does so in accordance with the Service's Language Scheme. What monitoring arrangements do you have in place to check this? Would it be possible for us to receive a copy of the bilingual leaflet given to contractors, for our information, please?

	A system of written directions for external agencies and contractors: No information was reported against this task. Could you offer us an update, please?
Page 6 Provision of internal infrastructu re	We look forward to working with the Service and the other Services, in developing and implementing the Language Scheme and the Skills Strategy.
page 7. Making this happen	For information, and to assist you the Board's <i>Advice on Mainstreaming the Welsh Language</i> is available from our website, with hard copies also available upon request: http://www.byig-wlb.org.uk/English/publications/Pages/PublicationItem.aspx?puburl=/English%2fpublications%2fPublications%2f5147.pdf
page 7 - 8. Making this happen	We would like to receive a copy of the report of the external company that looked into the linguistic needs of different kinds of posts in the Service, if you are willing to share it with us, please. We are pleased to see this work taking place and are happy to offer support and observations if necessary.
General	We notice that a number of the completion dates for the Scheme's targets have changed from what is included in the Language Scheme action plan. We can see from the report that a great deal of work is taking place in respect of all elements of implementing the Scheme, and that much of the amending of targets is due to the Language Skills Strategy; therefore we can see why the targets have changed. Despite this, and as a matter of routine, we request that in future reports you note the Scheme's original timetable in the report, and then offer an explanation as to why the timetable should be amended.
4. Risk Assessment	
page 11	It is fair to say that there was a great deal of praise in the Board's report following the risk assessment, and we see from the work going on that the field of language skills is one in which the Service is working very hard. Recommendation 1: In noting that the work in respect of this recommendations is ongoing, is there any other work to be noted, or is the Language Skills Strategy and the work on the linguistic requirements etc meeting the need? Recommendation 2: Thank you for this update.
5. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Performance Targets	
P1 1	Is there a reason why language choice was not recorded for every incident?
PI 2	We applaud this work, and it is good to see a positive response to the questionnaire with a substantial number having been returned.
PI 3	It is good to see a robust step towards guaranteeing a Welsh service by making 'Welsh essential' for all the posts in the reception. How many posts are there? The indicator asks for the number and percentage please. What happened in appointing the applicant who did not have the skills? Were there any expectations or conditions regarding training?

PI 4	Fine, we accept this as training is taking place or about to take place. We look forward to seeing figures in the next report.
PI 5	We accept why this information was not reported this year, whilst work is in progress to set up the systems that will allow reporting in the future.
PI 6	We accept why this information is not reported this year, as the sessions are about to take place.
PI 7	We accept why this information was not reported this year, whilst work is in progress to set up the systems that will allow reporting in the future.
PI 8	We accept why this information was not reported this year, whilst work is progressing to set up the systems that will allow reporting in the future.
PI 9	Fine. We look forward to working within the Service on our complaints review that will be held very soon.
PI 10	Fine.
PI 11	We accept that this work is in progress.
PI 12	We request quantitative data in next year's report if possible, please.
Analysis of performance according to priority and target; and Publication of Information about Performance	
	We ask establishments as they report to provide information under the two titles above. Under the first, we ask you to summarise the performance of the organisation against the Scheme's targets and the priorities of the organisation. Then, under the second, we ask you to note what measures are in place to publish the information on performance that is included in the annual monitoring report. For example, it is the practice of a number of organisation to publish the report on their websites; some also use the establishment's publications or the local Welsh language press too.