



Cymraeg

Annual report on our compliance
with the **Welsh Language Standards**

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2023–24

GMC's Annual Report on our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards 2023-24

This Annual Report sets out how we have complied with the standards included in the compliance notice issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner. In accordance with the requirements of standard 66, the report covers the period from 6 December 2023 to 31 March 2024.

About us

We are the independent regulator of doctors in the UK. We work with doctors, their employers, their educators and others to:

- set the standards of patient care and professional behaviours doctors need to meet.
- make sure doctors get the education and training they need to deliver good, safe patient care.
- check who is eligible to work as a doctor in the UK and check they continue to meet the professional standards we set throughout their careers.
- give guidance and advice to help doctors understand what's expected of them.
- investigate where there are concerns that patient safety, or the public's confidence in doctors, may be at risk, and take action if needed.

Our Cardiff office was established in 2006 as part of our continued commitment to engage with and support doctors and the health system in Wales. Our Wales team engages with doctors, patients, employers, medical students, educators, and stakeholders across the country.

Our work as a regulator in Wales is overseen by our Council. Council plays a crucial role in setting our strategic goals, and in maintaining our focus on supporting the medical workforce in delivering good patient care. More information about our work in Wales can be found in our most recent [Wales national report](#).

Introduction

Since 6 December 2023 our work has been subject to the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022 for healthcare regulators. On this day, we published our external compliance guide and launched our internal compliance guide for colleagues. Colleagues from across the organisation worked throughout 2023 to develop guidance, processes, and tools to facilitate compliance.

This report covers the first three months of compliance where we focused on implementing internal guidance, supporting teams, and raising internal awareness of the Welsh language and our obligations under the standards. This work was supported internally by a cross-organisation project board, our Senior Management Team Sponsor for the Welsh Language, and the Welsh Language Standards Manager working within the GMC's Wales team. This work was also supported by our interactions with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office and a forum bringing together other regulators subject to Regulations no.8 dedicated to sharing ideas, challenges, and good practice, which we convene and chair.

We remain committed to enhancing our Welsh language provision in line with the compliance notice issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner. The compliance notice includes all standards relevant to our work and can be found on [our website](#). Compliance helps us improve the level of Welsh language services that people in Wales can expect to receive from us. The standards also provide an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to working responsively and sensitively as a four-country regulator, while also strengthening our relationships across Wales.

We welcome the Commissioner's more proactive approach to 'co-regulation' with a focus on working with organisations to help improve the quality of Welsh language services for Welsh speakers to use. We look forward to working more closely with the Commissioner as we continue to implement and embed our approach to compliance with the standards.

Our approach

Our approach to the standards is underpinned by two key principles:

- We strive to dedicate a reasonable and proportionate amount of operational and knowledge resources to cater for the needs of Welsh language speakers, supporting our staff in achieving this task.
- In considering how to meet the standards, we also balance our responsibility to comply with other legislative responsibilities as defined in the *Medical Act* and the *Public Sector Equality Duty*.

Not all aspects of our work are in scope of the standards. However, when a service is in scope, we are committed to applying a principle of equality by not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English. Maintaining internal awareness and engagement with the standards is key to embedding our approach. The project team and Welsh Language Standards Manager were on hand to answer queries and offer advice following launch of the internal compliance guide. They facilitated briefing sessions for key teams and presented at team meetings and away days.

In February 2024, we commissioned an independent review of the processes established to manage ongoing compliance with the standards. The review noted several positive observations including:

- Significant effort and activity were undertaken by the project team and the relevant workstreams to ensure that the GMC could demonstrate compliance with the Standards by the implementation date of 6th December 2023.
- A comprehensive amount of guidance was produced and typically included background information, the relevant standards for each piece of guidance, processes to be followed and details of those to be contacted for further information.
- Colleagues recognised the importance of this work to demonstrate fairness in line with equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and the GMC's role as a four-country regulator.

Below you will find an overview of how we complied with the standards across different areas of work during the reporting period.

Communications and engagement

We are committed to facilitating opportunities to use Welsh and enabling people to interact with us in their preferred language. We demonstrate this commitment by:

- Responding to Welsh language correspondence without delay, with detailed guidance available for colleagues who don't speak Welsh.
- Offering our *GMC news for students*, *Connect and change*, and *Medical Associate Professions community of interest* newsletters bilingually. We sent out a total of eight newsletter editions during the reporting period, with 22 individuals opting to receive these in Welsh or bilingually.
- Adopting a global approach to email correspondence by adding the wording '*You are welcome to contact us in Welsh. We will respond in Welsh, without this causing additional delay*' bilingually to the footer for all emails going to external recipients.
- Making the active offer to use the Welsh language at our UK-wide patient roundtable, our biannual Wales UK Advisory Forum meeting, at two meetings as part of our proactive

education quality assurance processes, and for meetings with patients as part of our fitness to practise processes. The Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS) made five active offers to registrants in Wales to use the Welsh language in correspondence and during legal proceedings. The offers were not taken up, but we will continue to promote and make the active offer.

- Implementing templates to ensure all publications include the active offer to correspond with us in Welsh, that we will respond in Welsh without this causing additional delay.
- Developed a toggle function on our website to enhance user experience when accessing bilingual web pages.

Supporting doctors

Most of the standards our work is subject to are aimed at members of the public. However, some standards apply directly to doctors. During the reporting period:

- The updated version of *Good medical practice* came into effect on 30 January 2024. This is our core guidance that sets out the principles, values and standards of care and professional behaviour expected of all doctors registered with us. This was already available bilingually before we were subject to the Welsh Language Standards. We know that doctors in Wales work within a bilingual context. The updated GMP and all pieces of more detailed guidance are available bilingually on our website.
- Made the active offer for doctors to use the Welsh language in meetings and scheduled telephone calls relating to our fitness to practise processes.

Raising awareness

We are committed to embedding a culture which is inclusive and welcoming of the Welsh language. We know that raising and maintaining awareness across the organisation helps our work to comply with the standards. During the reporting period we:

- Launched a digital learning module on Welsh language awareness, focusing on its history and its role in Welsh culture, and what the Welsh Language Standards mean for the GMC. All new and existing staff are required to complete this module.
- Asked colleagues to declare existing Welsh language skills, self-assess these skills if they had any, and promoted opportunities to learn Welsh. At the end of March 2024, 43 colleagues declared Welsh language skills with most declaring awareness or entry level proficiency in listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. 4 colleagues declared proficient levels with 2 based in the Cardiff office.

- Launched updated Equality Impact Assessment templates and guidance including Welsh language considerations to support compliance with the policy making standards.
- Delivered bespoke, interactive briefing sessions for key teams, setting out the background to the standards and focusing on what they mean for colleagues in practice.
- Published articles on our staff intranet showcasing the work of colleagues across the organisation in developing guidance, tools and processes to facilitate compliance.
- Advertised eight vacancies across two recruitment campaigns, all stating Welsh language skills as desirable. There were a total of 123 vacancies during this period: 115 with no Welsh language requirements.

Collaboration

The Commissioner's vision for co-regulation aligns with our commitment to collaboration, one of the five core organisational values underpinning everything we do. We welcome the shift towards working with organisations to share knowledge and good practice. During the reporting period we:

- Convened and chaired three Welsh Language Standards Joint Regulators Forum meetings. We co-chaired the Forum with the Nursing and Midwifery Council throughout 2023 and it is dedicated to sharing ideas, challenges, and good practice in complying with the standards.
- Built on our positive relationship with colleagues at the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, responding to the stakeholder perception survey and attending the Language Matters Roadshow.
- Engaged with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to understand what opportunities are available for colleagues to develop Welsh language skills.

Complaints

We did not receive any complaints during the reporting period which related to our compliance with the standards. Members of the public can raise a complaint, send a compliment or comment about our work, including on our Welsh language provision, via our [Complaints and feedback](#) web page. This includes bilingual guidance on our complaints and feedback process, and the comments, compliments and complaints form is available bilingually and in easy read versions.

Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
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Textphone: **please dial the prefix 18001** then
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You are welcome to contact us in Welsh. We will respond in Welsh, without this causing additional delay.

Mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hyn achosi oedi ychwanegol.

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