

The General Medical Council

Welsh Language Scheme

Prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993

THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL

WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

The Welsh Language Scheme of the General Medical Council received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under Section 14(1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on 29/06/05.

Principle of equality

The General Medical Council is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

The General Medical Council has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business it will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality.

This scheme sets out how the General Medical Council will implement this principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

1. INTRODUCTION

The GMC adopts the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality. This scheme sets out how the GMC intends to give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

The GMC is a Registered Charity (Number 1089278). The GMC was established under the Medical Act (1858) and is the regulator of the medical profession. Its purpose is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the community by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine. The GMC has legal powers to ensure the professional standards that the public expects of doctors continue to be upheld. The GMC has the power to strike doctors off the Register when necessary and therefore prevent doctors from practising medicine, and operates in the interests of the public.

Doctors must be registered with the GMC to practise medicine in the UK. To register with the GMC, they must have a recognised medical qualification. The medical register shows who is properly qualified to practise medicine in the UK. The electronic register containing approximately 200,000 doctors is updated daily.

The current President of the GMC is Sir Graeme Catto. The governing body of the GMC, the Council, comprises some 35 members. This body is made up of:

- 19 doctors elected by the doctors on the register;
- 14 members of the public appointed by the Privy Council;
- 2 academics appointed by educational bodies - the universities and medical royal colleges.

The GMC is based at Regents Place, 350 Euston Road, London, NW1 3JN. It has an office in central Manchester, which deals with registration and fitness to practise issues. The GMC's Edinburgh office deals with relations with the Scottish Parliament, Executive, media and other stakeholders. The GMC has opened an office in Cardiff Bay in order to further develop our relationship with the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government, the media and other stakeholders.

The publication of a Welsh Language Scheme (the scheme) by the GMC incorporates some new working practices in serving the public in Wales and formalises its language policies as required by the Welsh Language Board. The scheme includes a timetable for meeting new targets of service.

The GMC undertakes to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the measures set out in this scheme and will not alter the scheme without the approval of the Welsh Language Board.

Further information on this Welsh Language Scheme can be obtained from: Ms Natalie Drury, Head of Welsh Affairs, GMC Wales, Regus House, Falcon Drive, Cardiff Bay, CF10 4RU.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2.1 The GMC will ensure that in the following areas the principles of equality with regard to Welsh and English speaking people in Wales will be applied:

- service planning and delivery;
- dealing with the public;
- GMC's public profile.

3. SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

New policies and initiatives

3.1 In formulating new policies and initiatives, the GMC will:

- assess the linguistic effect of any new policies, initiatives and advice and ensure they are consistent with this Welsh Language Scheme;
- ensure that no new policy or initiative will undermine the Welsh Language Scheme;
- take every opportunity to implement the principles of full equality whenever the opportunity presents itself;
- consult with the Welsh Language Board in advance regarding proposals which affect the scheme;
- not alter the scheme without prior agreement from the Welsh Language Board;
- ensure that all measures contained in the scheme are applied to new policies and initiatives when they are implemented.

4. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Within its remit of protecting patients and guiding doctors the GMC works in partnership with a number of stakeholders in order to:

- promote high standards of medical education;
- foster good medical practice;
- deal firmly and fairly with doctors whose fitness to practise is in doubt;
- maintain an up-to-date register of qualified doctors.

4.2 The GMC works in partnerships with medical colleges, NHS Wales and other organisations and agencies within the public and private sector. The GMC works on many levels when working with external organisations.

4.2.1 When the GMC joins or forms a partnership it will ask prospective partners, where appropriate, about their Welsh Language Scheme, Welsh language policies or the means by which they operate bilingually.

4.2.2 Within any partnership the GMC will offer advice and support to the other partner organisation on their use of the Welsh language.

4.2.3 When the GMC joins a partnership in which another body is leading, the GMC's input to the partnership will reflect the GMC's Welsh Language Scheme and the GMC will encourage the parties to comply with the spirit of the scheme.

4.2.4 When the GMC is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with the Welsh Language Scheme.

4.3 Supporting measures

The GMC will ensure that all staff who draw up policies, guidance notes and advice notes are aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the GMC's scheme.

Senior management within the GMC are responsible for implementing aspects of the scheme relevant to their responsibilities and for ensuring that their staff deliver services in line with this scheme.

Papers of relevance to Wales, submitted for approval to the GMC's governing body and council, will include as standard practice a note on compliance with this scheme.

5. THE STANDARD OF SERVICE IN WELSH

5.1 The GMC will:

- ensure equality of service delivery standards in Welsh as in English;
- set standards for providing services and dealing with the public in Welsh;
- ensure consistency in the standard of the Welsh language service provided by the GMC;
- monitor the standard of service and its implementation.

5.2 Supporting measure

The GMC will include details of the standards of Welsh language service in the annual report.

6. SERVICE DELIVERY

6.1 Protecting patients and guiding doctors lies at the heart of the GMC's work. In discharging these functions and responsibilities in Wales the appropriate use of Welsh and English will be a prime consideration.

6.2 Complaints against doctors

The GMC deals with the public directly through the legal powers awarded by Parliament to investigate any complaints received, whether it is from a member of the public or from another doctor, or from a public authority such as a local health board, an NHS trust or the police. Such complaints may be submitted in Welsh or English.

6.3 Guidance

The GMC will ensure that all publications intended for the public will be available bilingually in Wales. The GMC regards the Welsh language as an integral part of its equal opportunities agenda and of all the guidance it prepares for the public in Wales.

7. THE GMC'S OWN CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC IN WALES

7.1 The GMC will promulgate good practice in terms of linguistic sensitivity in communicating with a wide range of audiences in Wales.

7.2 In delivering its services in accordance with the contents of this scheme, the GMC is committed to offering services to the public in the language of their choice be that English or Welsh.

7.3 In order to achieve this, the GMC will:

- establish the language of choice at an early stage;
- arrange for the services to be provided direct or by interpretation in the language of choice;
- produce an internal directory identifying staff members and public affairs consultants who speak Welsh and are willing to handle enquiries;
- ensure that staff with responsibility for handling enquiries in Welsh are identified on all bilingual literature, including the GMC website;
- ensure that all GMC staff are made aware of the GMC's Welsh Language Scheme and how communication with Welsh speakers will be handled and by whom.

7.3.1 The GMC will seek to meet the requirements of members of the public regarding their language choice where this has been established.

7.3.2 Where complaints are of an extremely urgent and complex nature the GMC maintains the right to decide on the most expeditious means of handling such complaints, be that in Welsh or English, in order not to unduly prolong fair process for either the complainant or the doctor.

The following sections deal with the various types of contact with the public.

7.4 Written and electronic communication

7.4.1 The GMC welcomes correspondence in both Welsh and English. This will be stated on any publicity materials intended for distribution in Wales and on the GMC's website.

7.4.2 Letters in Welsh will be answered in Welsh within the same time period as correspondence in English.

7.4.3 For correspondence received in English, the GMC will automatically reply in English unless requested otherwise.

7.4.4 The same principles will apply to correspondence received via e-mail.

7.4.5 In instances where the GMC initiates circulars or standard correspondence with the public in Wales it will do so bilingually.

7.5 Telephone communication

7.5.1 Members of the public who call any one of the GMC's UK offices and indicate that they wish to conduct their conversation in Welsh will be directed to an appropriate Welsh speaking member of staff.

7.5.2 In circumstances where a Welsh speaker is not immediately available the caller will be offered the choice of a Welsh speaker returning the call as soon as possible, of sending a letter (which will be replied to in the language of the correspondent) or continuing the call in English.

7.5.3 The main contact number for the GMC office in Wales will be answered bilingually.

7.6 Public meetings

7.6.1 In the event of a GMC meeting aimed at the public in Wales we will ensure that these meetings will cater for individuals who prefer to communicate through the medium of Welsh.

7.6.2 Notices of every public meeting will be bilingual. The GMC will seek to encourage members of the public to exercise their right to linguistic choice at such meetings. To facilitate this and for operational reasons, the notice will invite members of the public who wish to attend to notify the GMC of their language choice.

7.7 Non-public meetings

7.7.1 Private meetings with members of staff, stakeholders and members of the public in Wales will be available through the medium of Welsh. The GMC will ensure that suitably qualified staff are available in order that Welsh language meetings/interviews can take place. All written material relating to individual interviewees will be available bilingually.

7.8 The website

7.8.1 The GMC will create a Welsh gateway to all their translated material on the website based on Welsh Language Board guidance. The translated material will consist of:

- Information on the GMC in Wales – including contact details;
- Guidance for members of the public will be available in English and Welsh and will provide information on, for example, how to make a complaint or raise a concern about a doctor, how to search the register of doctors and how to make a 'Freedom of Information' enquiry;
- All press releases relevant for a Welsh audience will be available bilingually;
- Search facilities will be available both in English and Welsh;
- A list of all publications available in Welsh in the Freedom of Information section;
- The GMC Wales area on the GMC website will have a Welsh language home page: <http://www.cmc-cym.org/> and an English language home page: <http://www.gmc-uk.org/wales/>.

8. THE GMC'S PUBLIC FACE

8.1 Corporate identity

8.1.1 In Wales, the GMC's public image and corporate identity incorporates the Welsh and English language.

8.1.2 This is reflected in the corporate name, address, stationary, letterheads, fax headers, business cards, compliment slips, signage, identification badges and publications intended for a Welsh audience.

8.1.3 All material will be equal in size, quality, legibility, and prominence in both languages in Wales. All staff will be made aware of the GMC's bilingual corporate materials and information relating to this will be included in the staff handbook.

8.1.4 The name of the GMC in Wales is 'Y Cyngor Meddygol Cyffredinol' (CMC).

8.1.5 A Welsh language logo for the GMC will be used in conjunction with the English language logo for the GMC.

8.1.6 Any office of the GMC in Wales, which has information signs in areas where the public has access, will ensure the signs are fully bilingual and that both languages have equal prominence and legibility.

8.2 Bilingual publications

8.2.1 The GMC will produce single bilingual documents where possible, and where this is not possible a separate language document will be issued simultaneously with details of how to obtain the separate English or Welsh versions appearing on both.

8.2.2 Should a priced document be issued in bilingual format it will not be greater than a single language version of that document.

8.2.3 Should single language priced documents be produced for the public in Wales the Welsh version of a document will not be greater than the price of the English version.

8.2.4 GMC staff, contractors, designers and printers will be given written guidelines on how to prepare bilingual publications based on Welsh Language Board guidelines.

8.3 Other information

8.3.1 Any other information directed at the public such as corporate leaflets summarising the GMC's activities in Wales, the section on Wales in the GMC's annual report and consultation documents for distribution in Wales will be published bilingually.

8.4 English only publications

8.4.1 The following will be published in English only, except where a report is of particular interest for the public in Wales:

- guidance and other technical or specialised material aimed at professionals and not aimed directly at the public;
- management documents and any other documents not directly aimed at the public.

8.5 Press releases

8.5.1 For professional conduct hearings featuring Wales based doctors, press releases announcing hearings and statements on decisions taken by the GMC pertinent to the public will be issued bilingually.

8.5.2 The GMC will endeavour to ensure that a GMC representative is available to be interviewed in Welsh where appropriate.

8.6 Advertising and publicity activity

- 8.6.1 The GMC will conduct advertising and publicity activities in Wales bilingually, in a way that treats the two languages on a basis of equality.
- 8.6.2 When recruiting staff where fluency in Welsh is a desirable requirement of the post, recruitment adverts appearing in the UK and Wales press will be bilingual, but in Welsh only in Welsh language publications, and will be of the same size, format, legibility and prominence.

9. SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC IN WALES ON THE GMC'S BEHALF

- 9.1 The attention of third parties will be drawn to what is expected of them in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and their role in implementing sections relevant to their work.

Performance against the contract will be monitored for compliance.

10. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE SCHEME

10.1 Linguistic skills strategy

- 10.1.1 As part of its human resource planning, the GMC will adopt a linguistic skills strategy in relation to its work in Wales. The aim of this strategy will be to enable the GMC to deliver its services in Welsh effectively and efficiently.

The following measures are part of that strategy:

10.2 Staffing

- 10.2.1 The GMC will seek to ensure that a sufficient proportion of bilingual staff are in post to ensure the satisfactory delivery of its Welsh Language Scheme. The GMC will encourage its staff to use their linguistic skills to further the implementation of the scheme. It will:
 - 10.2.2 Identify areas or posts within the GMC where the ability to speak and write in Welsh is essential or desirable, ascertain what level of Welsh is required and formulate job descriptions accordingly.
 - 10.2.3 Conduct an audit to establish how many of its current staff and council members speak or are learning Welsh (and their levels of proficiency).
 - 10.2.4 Rectify any shortfalls as opportunities arise through recruitment, training or voluntary transfer.
 - 10.2.5 Ensure that divisions within the GMC, which are in contact with the public, have access to bilingual staff.
 - 10.2.6 Ensure that all staff/GMC members have an internal directory of Welsh speakers, so that non Welsh speakers can access them as quickly as possible. The directory will have information on how to access Welsh speakers together with an indication of their level of expertise.

- 10.2.7** Ensure through special training programmes that all members of staff are made aware of its implications and other obligations with regard to the implementation of the scheme.
- 10.2.8** Will provide all GMC staff throughout the UK with a synopsis of the scheme and its significance for the GMC's general policy with regard to service delivery.
- 10.2.9** Ensure that language awareness and sensitivity training is provided for GMC staff who have contact with members of the public in Wales.
- 10.2.10** Ensure that all new staff/members are made aware of the GMC Welsh Language Scheme at their induction meeting and all staff will have information relating to the scheme included in their staff handbook

10.3 Learning Welsh

- 10.3.1** GMC staff that wish to learn Welsh will be encouraged and supported to do so.
- 10.3.2** Priority will be given to staff members who work in positions where bilingual skills are most needed or under represented.

10.4 Recruitment

- 10.4.1** The GMC's Head of Welsh Affairs will act as a Welsh language corporate adviser in all matters, including recruitment.
- 10.4.2** In its recruitment advertising the GMC will seek to encourage applications from those with fluency in Welsh and English.
- 10.4.3** When recruiting staff where fluency in Welsh is a desirable requirement of the post:
- job specifications, job packs and application forms will be produced bilingually;
 - job applications can be made in English or Welsh and will be processed within the same timescale in both languages;
 - all appointments will be made in accordance with equal opportunities policies and employment legislation;
 - part of the interview to be held through the medium of Welsh.

10.5 Publicising the scheme

- 10.5.1** All staff and members will be informed of the GMC's Welsh Language Scheme and how it will be implemented. Information will be made available to new staff at their induction and included in all copies of the staff handbook. Information will also be available through staff briefings.

10.5.2 The GMC will publicise its Welsh Language Scheme to members of the public, medical colleges, doctors and others with an interest in the work of the GMC in the following ways:

- on the GMC website;
- forwarding a copy of the GMC's Welsh Language Scheme to all trusts, local health boards, medical colleges, the Welsh Assembly Government, the National Assembly for Wales;
- provide bilingual leaflets for the public in Wales for use in conferences, exhibitions and meetings.

11. MONITORING THE SCHEME AND REPORTING PERFORMANCE AGAINST STANDARDS

11.1 The GMC will prepare internal progress reports regarding the implementation of the scheme and submit them to the GMC members for Wales every quarter.

11.1.1 The members will receive an annual compliance report, which will achieve the following aims:

- measure whether the GMC is complying with the scheme;
- measure if the scheme is being appropriately managed;
- analyse its performance on a departmental and corporate basis, in order to ensure consistency;
- assess and consider key themes in scheme implementation;
- recognise any fundamental weakness and set up an action plan, which will include a timetable to deal with them.

11.1.2 A copy of this report will be sent to the Welsh Language Board on an annual basis.

11.1.3 In the third year of the scheme's implementation the GMC will prepare a comprehensive evaluation report that will assess and evaluate performance in implementing the scheme since its inception.

11.1.4 This report will:

- provide an overview and thematic analysis of compliance and performance over the first three years of the scheme, from two perspectives, service delivery and scheme management;
- outline priorities for the following three years, together with a revised timetable for implementing the measures in the scheme. At this time, the GMC will revise and update the Welsh Language Scheme, as appropriate.

11.1.5 A summary of the report will be published on the GMC website.

11.2 Supporting measures

The GMC will establish a Welsh language implementation and monitoring group.

The group will:

- 1) Ensure that any policies, procedures and publications are compatible with the scheme.
- 2) Ensure appropriate reference is made to the scheme within corporate literature such as the annual report.
- 3) Publish a leaflet outlining the GMC's Welsh Language Scheme and services.
- 4) Publish a press release announcing the launch of the scheme.
- 5) Ensure the delivery of bilingual services on the basis of equality.
- 6) Prepare written guidelines on how to draw up bilingual publications.
- 7) Monitor times for responding to Welsh correspondence.
- 8) Monitor the introduction of bilingual publications.
- 9) Monitor the quality of the translation service and the arrangements for meetings and interviews.
- 10) Monitor the corporate identity of the GMC in Wales.
- 11) Monitor the frequency of and response to complaints regarding the bilingual policy or aspects of implementation.
- 12) Incorporate within the GMC's complaints policy and procedures provisions for complaints about the use of the Welsh language to be made.
- 13) Monitor achievements against the timetable in the scheme.
- 14) Monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements made to deliver GMC services in Welsh.
- 15) Review the scheme on an ongoing basis.
- 16) Produce an annual report outlining the progress on implementing the scheme against the approved timetable and standards. The report will also analyse the number and nature of any complaints and suggestions for improvements received from the public.

TARGETS FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME

Unless otherwise stated below the measures in the scheme will become operational from the date the scheme is approved.

Target	Timetable
1. Ensure new policies, procedures, press release and publications relating to the public in Wales are produced bilingually.	Ongoing
2. Compile a list of professional interpreters to provide simultaneous translation for meetings in Wales.	Spring 2005
3. Prepare written guidelines on how to draw up bilingual publications.	Summer 2005
4. Provide guidance and full training to GMC staff/members operating in Wales on the implications of the scheme and linguistic sensitivity.	Ongoing
5. Provide <i>CySill</i> (Welsh spell and Grammar checking package) for staff to produce Welsh language literature.	Spring 2005
6. Amend relevant policies and procedures to reflect the requirements of the GMC's Welsh Language Scheme.	Ongoing
7. Ensure reference to this scheme is included in staff handbooks.	Ongoing
8. Ensure reference to this scheme is included in the annual report.	Ongoing
9. Ensure that all GMC staff/members who operate in Wales are provided with personal copies of the scheme.	Summer 2005
10. Establish a Welsh language implementation and monitoring group.	Summer 2005
11. Monitor implementation of the GMC's Welsh language scheme.	Ongoing
12. Produce an annual report to the Council.	Autumn 2005 and annually thereafter
13. Ensure the Welsh Language Scheme is fully implemented.	Winter 2005