



Education Tribunal for Wales Welsh Language Standards Annual Report

April 2025 – March 2026

Contents

Foreword	1
Compliance Oversight Arrangements	2
Status of the Compliance Notice for an organisation which has changed its name	2
Compliance Assessment	2
Work undertaken in 2025-26	4
Forthcoming work 2026-27	5

Foreword

This is the Education Tribunal for Wales's ("the Tribunal") tenth annual report on its compliance with the Welsh Language Standards since the standards came into force on 30 March 2017. The focus of this report is the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) changed its name to the Education Tribunal for Wales in September 2021. However, for the purposes of the Welsh Language Standards the Tribunal will follow the same standards as set for SENTW.

The Tribunal has two parts, the secretariat and Judicial Office Holders. Both work together, during the appeal and claim process doing different tasks. Judicial Office Holders consist of:

- the Tribunal President i.e. the judicial lead;
- Tribunal Judges; and
- Specialist Members, with experience of children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and/or disabilities.

Judicial Office Holders are independent from Welsh Government. This means that their decisions cannot be influenced by anyone in Government or employed by the Government. The Tribunal membership consists of 17 Judges and 15 Specialist Members. Of these the tribunal has 7 Judicial Office Holders (4 Judges, 3 Specialist Members) with strong Welsh language skills and can convene a full panel (i.e. a Judge and 2 Specialist Members) that can hear and conduct a full hearing through the medium of Welsh. In this reporting period, two judicial office holders attended cross jurisdictional training on supporting the use of the Welsh Language in hearings. Three judicial office holders also reviewed and drafted revised wording that has been included in the Equal Treatment Bench Book on the use of the Welsh Language which is the guidance issued to all courts and tribunals across England and Wales.

The secretariat deal with all telephone and written enquiries. They are civil servants employed by Welsh Government and form part of the Welsh Tribunals Unit, who are responsible for administering six devolved tribunals across Wales. The secretariat provides an administrative support role and cannot influence the decisions made by the tribunal panel. The Tribunal secretariat team has one member who is fluent in Welsh, and the team is also able to have assistance from other staff within the wider Welsh Tribunals Unit, when necessary. The Head of Welsh Tribunals is also a fluent Welsh speaker.

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Compliance Oversight Arrangements

This Annual Report has been prepared by the Welsh Tribunals Unit and has been approved by the President of the Education Tribunal for Wales.

This annual report appears on the Tribunal's website, and the Welsh Language Commissioner has been notified of its publication.

Status of the Compliance Notice for an organisation which has changed its name

On the 31 March 2022, the Tribunal's President received a letter from the Deputy Welsh Language Commissioner confirming the status of the compliance notice for the Education Tribunal for Wales (the Tribunal), following a change in name from the Special Educational Needs Tribunal (SENTW).

The letter stated that as there has only been a change of name in this case, and as the functions of the Tribunal remain very similar to the previous tribunal, no further action is required. The compliance notice issued for SENTW remains in operation for the Tribunal.

Considering an organisation which changes its name after receiving its compliance notice under section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (Measure), a change of name of a person specified in Schedule 6 or Schedule 8 does not affect the implementation of the Measure in relation to that person.

Compliance Assessment

Service Delivery Standards

The tribunal ensures compliance with the service delivery standards by:

- The production of a bilingual brand to accompany the tribunal name.
- Providing staff with guidelines on responding to correspondence, telephone answering and e-mail messages.
- Letter templates offering Tribunal users an opportunity to receive correspondence in Welsh. Letters and emails from the Tribunal also include a standard sentence stating that correspondence is welcomed in Welsh, and that corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.
- All documents produced for the public are available in Welsh and English, including application forms and guidance documents. English versions of documents and forms produced by the Tribunal also include a standard sentence stating that they are available in Welsh, and that the public can submit information to the Tribunal in Welsh.

- From March 2024, a new language preference question has been included within forms with a second non-mandatory question asking, “If you can speak Welsh and have indicated English as your language of choice, we would welcome feedback to identify the barriers to using the Welsh language in Tribunals”. Responses are monitored.
- Making sure there is an awareness that provision is in place to enable Welsh language hearings to be held and that an attendee can use Welsh in a hearing.
- The North Wales and virtual user group meetings were held bilingually, and the South Wales user group was held in accordance with the Tribunal Compliance Notice Standard, 25A.
- Every page of our website is available in Welsh and English. Decisions are issued and published, once anonymised, in the language of the case/hearing.
- There is provision for orders and decisions to be issued in both Welsh and English.
- The Welsh Government uses a telephone system through Microsoft Teams. The Tribunal uses this system to ensure that it complies with standards 8 and 9 by ensuring that Tribunal users will have the option of pressing 1 to speak with a member of the team in Welsh and pressing 2 to speak with a member of the team in English.

Use of our Services 2025-26

Total Applications Received	182
Applications Processed in Welsh or Bilingually	3
Total Hearings Held	157
Hearings Held in Welsh	12

Websites

Below is a breakdown of how many visits were made to the Welsh and English pages of the ETW Tribunal Website between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

	English	Welsh	Total
ETW Website Page views	3310	34	3344
SENTW Website Page views	435	16	451

Note: Figures provided do not include visits from users who do not accept cookies when on the site.

Policy Making Standards

The Tribunal exercises its statutory functions as set out by its governing legislation. The Tribunal does not have a remit to develop policy. However, we consider the impact of our operational decisions on the delivery of our services in Welsh.

Record Keeping Standards

The Tribunal's Compliance Notice (that details the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Record Keeping Standards that the Tribunal must comply with) has been published on the Tribunal's website: www.educationtribunal.gov.wales/sites/educationtribunal/files/2021-08/sentw-wls-compliance-notice.pdf. We keep a record of the number of complaints we receive, if any, relating to our compliance with the Standards.

Complaints

The Tribunal received no complaint about the implementation of the Standards during the reporting period.

Work undertaken in 2025-26

	Action	Progress
1.	The Education Tribunal for Wales (ETW) and Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) websites will be reviewed and opportunities to access Tribunal services through the medium of Welsh will be highlighted.	Objective on-going: The orange Welsh Language/Cymraeg logo has been placed on the home page of the ETW website. We are currently collaborating with the Web team to explore further ways to facilitate easy access to Welsh Language services online.
2.	Engage with service users to identify barriers to interacting with the Tribunals through the medium of the Welsh language.	Objective on-going: A process has been designed to capture information from users, with all application forms requesting that Welsh speaking applicants identify reasons why they may not have chosen to interact in Welsh with the Tribunal. Data has been collected since March 2024. The data received is reported to Judicial Leads on a quarterly basis. We will continue to collect and analyse data about this action.
3.	Identify improvements that can be made in 2025-26 to promote the use of the Welsh language in our tribunal proceedings.	Objective on-going: We have also identified further improvements that can be made to the Website, which will enable promotion of the Welsh language. We are currently working with our IT department to implement these changes.
4.	Prepare a Refresher Document to be circulated to all Tribunal Members outlining the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards.	Objective on-going: A Refresher Document has been prepared and will be circulated to all Judicial Office Holders during 2026-27.

	Action	Progress
5.	Measure Tribunal Staff compliance with the Welsh Language standards by completing a self-assessment	<p>Objective on-going: Due to pressures across the WTU during this period, the self-assessment was not undertaken during 2025-26.</p> <p>This will be undertaken during Autumn of 2026.</p>
6.	Update the assessment of Welsh language skills among Judicial Office Holders.	<p>Objective on-going: The Welsh Tribunals Unit assesses and updates Judicial office holders' language skills information on an ongoing basis. Information for any newly appointed Judicial office holders is recorded upon appointment and the language skills information held for all Judicial office holders is reviewed every six months.</p>

Forthcoming work 2026-27

1. Review meeting invitation templates to ensure they are held in accordance with the Tribunal Welsh Language standards Compliance Notice, 25 & 25A.
2. Make greater use of the orange work in Welsh logo on Tribunal forms and publications to promote and encourage the use of Welsh.
3. Measure Tribunal Staff compliance with the Welsh Language standards by completing a self-assessment.
4. Training for all Judicial office holders on the use of translation technology.