

Further to my letter dated 7 October 2014, I am now in a position to respond to your request for information set out in your letter dated 3 October 2014.

I should clarify that the right of access under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is to recorded information held by a public authority, and that we are under no obligation to create information in order to respond to requests made under the FOIA.

My response to each of your questions is set out below:

1. *It is said to be vitally important that we equip our young people with skills which translate to the workplace: what evidence do you have that “employers value and want” workers who are bilingual in English and Welsh?*

We hold some information that is relevant to your request. As part of our Welsh Language Scheme, we carry out a language preference survey with our audited bodies every three years. The most recent survey was carried out in 2012, and some of those audited bodies informed us that their language of main business is both English and Welsh. These bodies were:

Arts Council of Wales

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Care Council for Wales

Carmarthenshire County Council

City and County of Swansea Council

Conwy County Borough Council

Denbighshire County Council

Estyn

Flintshire County Council

General Teaching Council for Wales

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Coleg Menai, Coleg Llandrillo)

Hywel Dda Health Board

Isle of Anglesey County Council

Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales

Mid and West Wales Fire Service

National Assembly for Wales

National Museum Wales

Natural Resources Wales

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Public Health Wales

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

South Wales Fire and Rescue Services

Sport Wales

The National Library of Wales

Wales Probation Trust

Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Three audited bodies set out that Welsh was their language of main business. These were:

Ceredigion County Council

Gwynedd Council

Snowdonia National Park Authority

For completeness, I should also mention that the Welsh Government were not participants in the language preference survey because the size of the organisation and the variety of activities undertaken by the Welsh Government meant that the survey was not the most appropriate method for understanding their language preferences. Instead, we met with the Welsh Government to discuss this matter.

Our Welsh Language Scheme is on our website and sets out that the Wales Audit Office will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality, and commits to carrying out certain tasks bilingually. As such, and also because many of our audited bodies conduct business bilingually, we need some of our staff to be bilingual. In fact, it is sometimes essential to recruit staff members who can speak Welsh. For example, the following is an extract from the recruitment pack for the recruitment exercise we recently carried out for Performance Auditors:

*While the ability to communicate in Welsh, both written and orally is desirable for the roles, the Wales Audit Office considers Welsh language skills to be essential for one of the roles. For this role, though the post holder will not need to write complex reports in Welsh, the successful candidate will have the ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and written, through the medium of Welsh, as well as understand and interpret Welsh documents.*

2. *For every aptitude and ability, 50% of the population is – by definition – below average: what evidence do you have that a person with below average language skills has the capacity to be bilingual?*

We do not hold recorded information that meets the description of this request.

3. *Welsh Medium Education is a unique feature of Education in Wales: what evidence do you have that it is NOT this extra burden of the bilingual programme that is crippling our young people in the PISA tests?*

We do not hold recorded information that meets the description of this request.

4. *The Government says that it is committed to achieving best value for money in all public services: what evidence do you have, with particular reference to deteriorating PISA standings, that such fine words are anything more than just empty rhetoric?*

We hold a large amount of information obtained from the Welsh Government, some of which makes reference to PISA standings, but we do not classify information we obtain in the course of the exercise of our functions according to “empty rhetoric” criteria, and therefore we do not hold recorded information that meets the description of your request.

5. *Public spending is funded by private wealth creation: what evidence do you have that, in Wales, the business of creating wealth is carried out in Welsh? (Is Welsh the language of Export, of Finance and of Investment?)*

We do not hold recorded information that meets the description of this request. I take your question in brackets to be a rhetorical question, but for the avoidance of doubt, we do not hold recorded information that meets this description.

I have not applied any exemptions, however if you wish to complain about my handling of your request, please email or write to me.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ian Phillips