



WITS

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service
Gwasanaeth Dehongli a Chyfieithu Cymru

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS)

Annual Report 2012-2013

WITS was created to provide interpreting, translating and language expertise to public and voluntary services on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis. With over 1500 interpreters and translators it caters for foreign languages, Welsh and British Sign Language (BSL) needs.

WITS is a product of the 2008 partnership work of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Cardiff Council and Gwent Police, supported by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) 'Making the Connections' programme.

WITS mission statements:

- ***Everyone has an equal right to access the public services***
- ***Public service staff need access to professional, trained and properly security checked interpreters in order for them to provide effective services***
- ***Public service use of language services must be effectively and efficiently managed***
- ***Interpreters should receive training in sector specific public service work***
- ***Interpreters should receive appropriate remuneration and support.***

"I am extremely impressed by the service provided by WITS. I have used them frequently, usually when setting up specialist clinics for children in Cardiff. The staff are friendly and efficient and can often give helpful advice about different languages and cultures. They confirm bookings promptly and there have been very few glitches. I enjoy dealing with them.

The interpreters I have booked have always been pleasant, helpful and punctual. I hope we will be able to continue to use this service as it is a huge improvement in my view on the somewhat ad hoc systems we had to use previously."

Clinic Clerk, Cardiff and Vale UHB

BENEFITS MANAGEMENT

WITS reports on a quarterly basis to the WITS Management Board formed of representatives from its 18 partner organisations. The Board objectively monitors performance towards agreed targets. It also considers growth options and oversees all financial decisions regarding rates etc.

2012-2013 Targets

- To provide interpreters and translators in line with clients' requirements on 98% of occasions.*
Achieved. Suitable interpreters and translators successfully completed assignments in line with booking requests on 99.3% of occasions.
- To continue to expand the service.*
Achieved. The new WITS partners represent the whole geographic area of Wales.
- To Deliver training courses to at least 150 interpreters every year.*
Achieved. In total, training was delivered to a further 196 interpreters this year.
- To provide accurate data on language requirements for each public body at the end of each year.*
Achieved. Quarterly and full year data has been provided to partners in line with their own specific requirements.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS DURING 2012-2013

This year has seen continued growth of the WITS partnership. As at April 2013 the following organisations now make up the partnership:

Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Cwm Taf Local Health Board
Powys Teaching Health Board
Public Health Wales
Velindre NHS Trust
Dyfed Powys Police
Gwent Police
North Wales Police
South Wales Police
Wales Probation
Cardiff Council
Carmarthenshire County Council
City and County of Swansea
Pembrokeshire County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
Torfaen County Borough Council

"Interpreters have been on time, courteous and helpful, clients and staff have commented on this. Booking is easy, I get a confirmation – can't really ask for more."

Booking Co-ordinator, Pembrokeshire Council

Most other public service organisation in Wales use the WITS language services on an ad hoc basis.

In addition to the above partners, WITS has also supplied interpreters and translators to over 100 other public service and voluntary organisations in Wales and England,

Throughout the year bookings have increased month by month as more organisations have begun to utilise the WITS services. We are now receiving an average of over 1600 bookings per month. There is continued evidence of increased use of linguistic services by WITS partners. This is in excess of any population growth and has been attributed to the improved level of service being provided by WITS compared to previous suppliers.

Improved access to public services has always been one of WITS' goals. The level of continued growth in bookings is evidence that this has been achieved. It is believed that the increase can be attributed to:

- repeat bookings from staff who have experienced the benefits of improved communication with clients by using the high quality WITS interpreters, and;
- public service staff finding the 24/7 WITS call centre process to be user friendly and helpful. The centre selects the most qualified interpreter suitable for each assignment, in accordance with client requirements. This standardised procedure replaces the ad hoc approach previously employed by partners organisations thereby improving the quality of service provided.

"I have always had an excellent service from the administrative staff. Even when I have requested an interpreter only hours before a patient's appointment they have always come through for me, and always with a friendly disposition. I have always found the interpreters that attend St David's Children's Centre to be very polite and engaging. Children's Centre, Cardiff and Vale UHB

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2012-2013

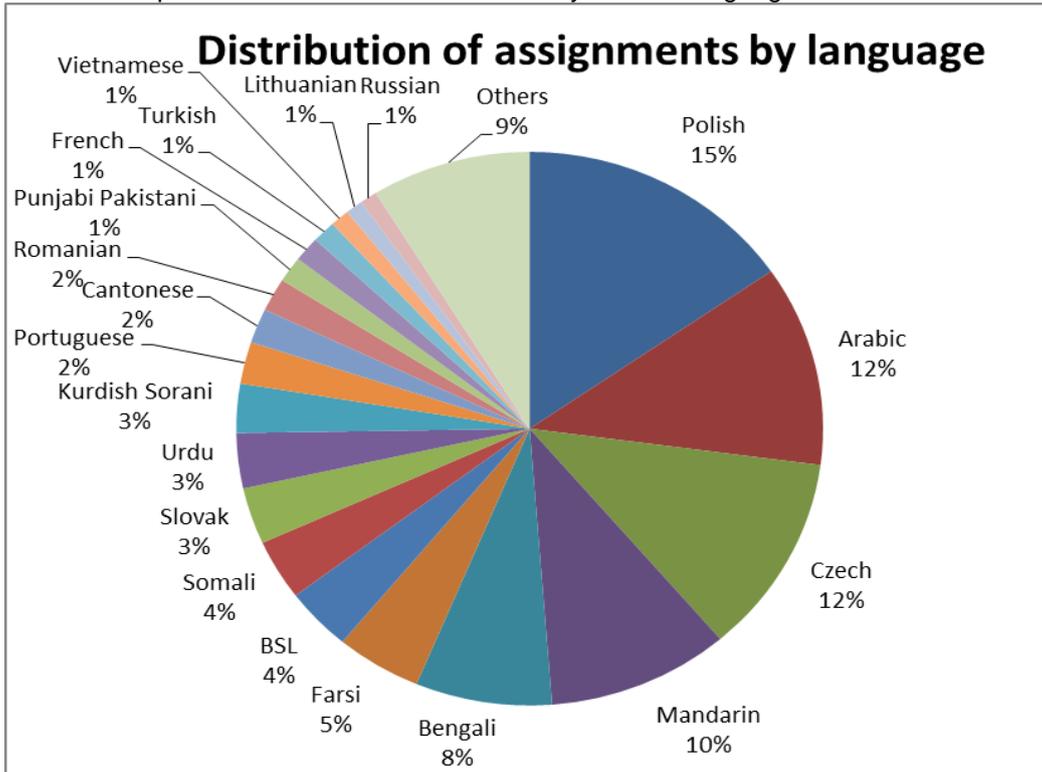
Our monthly bookings have increased from 992 in April 2012 to 1,619 in March 2013, indicating a continued steady growth in assignments over the 12 months.

During this period we provided interpreters and translators for 15,883 assignments in 73 languages, (a 34% increase in bookings over the previous year).

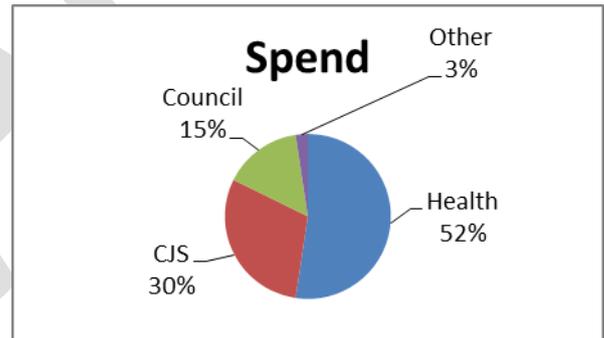
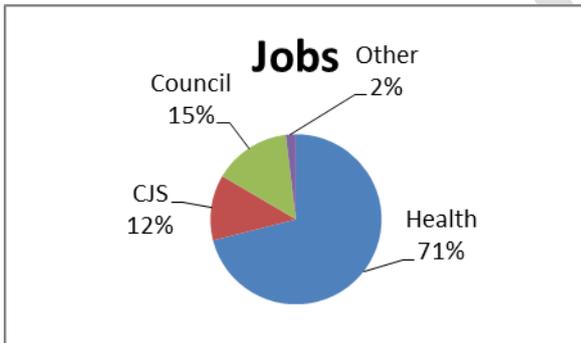
We delivered a 99.3% successful fulfillment rate. We were only unable to allocate an interpreter on 74 occasions.

**"I have found that I have been using the same 2 interpreters. I have found both very professional and helpful at our appointments. Booking of interpreters is also an easy process and I have found this very prompt and again a professional service."
"I am very happy for the service that I have used to date." Probation Service Officer, Cardiff**

The below pie chart shows the most commonly needed languages across all sectors:



This charts show only slight variations from the previous year. Most noticeable is the increase in the need for Czech, Slovak and Romanian as opposed to the decreased requirements for Lithuanian and Hungarian.



The above charts show that almost three quarters of all WITS assignments are in the Health Sector. However due to their short duration compared to police and Probation jobs, the cost of those assignments accounts for only 52 % of the overall income of WITS.

EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

“Fantastic, thank you that’s an excellent service. I felt XX(interpreter) was exceptional in her manner and wider clinical and language skills yesterday,”
Speech and Language Therapist. Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

WITS is experiencing a continuous growth in work loads, (up 34% this year). As a result the WITS Management Board makes appropriate changes to prices to reflect the not for profit status of WITS. Charges to partner organisations have been reduced annually for the last three years and at the same time payment rates to interpreters and translators have been increased.

Consequently, the average cost of a health service assignment has reduced by almost 38% since WITS began in 2009.

In addition to the cashable efficiency savings there has also been evidence of the other benefits. WITS has received regular feedback from front line staff in partner organisations expressing their gratitude at the amount of time freed up for them by WITS operators taking over the hard work of sourcing and booking interpreters, particularly when they are needed at short notice.

“I have used WITS for a large volume of translation work over the last 18 months. The translations have been from victims all over the world....China, Vietnam, Japan, Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland etc. I have received a very good service from WITS. The process is really simple, I don’t have to track down an authorised translator and get costing etc, just send an e-mail and the work is completed. Detective Constable, Specialist Crime Operational Support, South Wales Police

“the service I have received has been second to none, someone always comes back to me straight away to acknowledge my email, and then confirms as soon as possible.” Epilepsy/Learning Disabilities, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB

The greatest financial savings have been achieved by Police Forces, where there was previously an unmanaged employment of professional interpreters from throughout England.

| Police Forces | South Wales | Gwent | Dyfed Powys |
|--|--|--|--|
| Cashable Saving delivered this year | 55% reduction* on peak spend pre WITS (2006-2007) | 56% reduction* on peak spend pre WITS (2008-2009) | 47% reduction* on peak spend pre WITS (2008-2009) |

(* Calculated on the actual costs for every job which occurred between 1/4/2012 and 31/3/2013)

INTERPRETER TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

Historically there was always a shortage of professionally qualified interpreters in Wales resulting in increased costs through employing interpreters from all over England. The existing professional qualifications of the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) or the Metropolitan Police Test are both set and run by the Chartered Institute of Linguists in London. The exams have proven to be cost prohibitive to interpreters living in Wales who have reduced employment opportunities compared to their counterparts in England.

WITS aims to reverse this situation through recruitment of local bilingual people who can be trained to become interpreters. WITS has provided language assessments and free introductory training throughout the whole of Wales so that local interpreters can gain experience and income, whilst preparing for full professional qualifications.

Prior to the creation of WITS in November 2009 there were 22 professionally qualified foreign language interpreters living in Wales who had passed police security checks, they covered 15 languages between them. As a direct result of this training provided by WITS and Cardiff University there are now 47 qualified foreign language interpreters living in Wales who have passed police security checks, they cover 21 languages between them.

WITS training includes the Code of Conduct for professional interpreters. WITS regards compliance with the code as an essential step towards professionalising the service. Throughout the 15,833 assignments last year, we only received a total of 70 complaints. The largest single area of complaint related to failing to attend (in total 43 complaints). All complaints resulted in written warnings or suspensions of interpreters in line with WITS robust disciplinary procedures.

WITS is now developing new sector specific training courses for interpreters in the fields of social care; maternity, and; mental health.

“I found the service prompt and efficient, very straightforward, easy to understand and no problems encountered.”

Patient Services Assistant, Welshpool Hospital, Powys THB

ACCOUNTS 2012-2013

| | |
|---|------------|
| Turnover | £1,224,589 |
| Payments to Interpreters | £877,634 |
| Administrative Expenses | £272,124 |
| Profit / (Loss) | £74,831 |
| Corrected Previous Balance (at 31/3/12) | £78,386 |
| Current Balance Profit / (Loss) | £153,217 |

WITS is a not-for-profit partnership of public services, consequently the £74,831 'surplus' is utilised for reinvestment as directed by the WITS Management Board. For example:

- charges for partner organisations were reduced from 1st April 2013
- Increases to interpreters payment rates are still being considered.
- loans are made available for WITS interpreters for legal and for health sector interpreting courses at Cardiff University, and for joining fees for the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) of newly qualified interpreters.

The surplus also provides the necessary reserves to allow WITS to meet monthly running costs and wage bills for interpreters whilst awaiting payments from partners and other customers.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY AHEAD

The WITS Management Board continue to consider options for the future development of the WITS service, in line with national developments in this field. Under consideration are:

- Consideration of the Community Interest Company (CIC) model as the potential business platform for WITS to become a stand alone service.
- expansion of the service, including areas in England
- development of business specific software to further increase efficiencies.
- monitoring European developments in video interpreting.
- monitoring of software options for improved availability of BSL for the deaf community.