

The Wales & West Housing (WWH) Welsh Language Scheme was approved by Board in September 2010 and had subsequent approval from the Welsh Language Board (WLB) in December 2010.

An annual update is required by the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC), which replaced the WLB in 2012. This report covers the period from April 2019 to February 2020.

### **Welsh Language Skills**

There are currently 175 Welsh speaking staff in the Association, with varying degrees of fluency. Over 50 staff are first language Welsh speakers.

All staff members have completed a self-assessment of their Welsh language skills both spoken and written. Fluency levels of new employees are captured as part of their pre-employment checks. Both spoken and written skills have been recorded separately on the Association's HR system, Cascade. By capturing the data in a central portal, staff are able to update fluency levels as they change. This will also assist with the identification of staff who are confident or able to assist in practical ways such as translation or interpretation.

In addition, there are a number of Board members who have varying degrees of Welsh language knowledge.

### **Welsh Language Training**

26 members of staff have been learning Welsh during the last year. Two of these staff have been attending night classes and the remaining staff continue to utilise various resources including 'Say Something in Welsh' and attending intensive courses, apps and books. The two staff attending night classes successfully passed their entry level examination and have progressed to the foundation level.

A number of Board members are also learning Welsh with a mixture of classes, apps and other media being used and two Board members have enrolled on 'Say Something in Welsh'.

WWH has supported learning and developing the use of the Welsh language through an online app. During 2018-19, 23 new and existing learners joined the six month pilot 'Say Something in Welsh'. The online language course, which promises that all committed learners will be confident Welsh speakers in six months, includes weekly on-line tasks and group video calls. The pilot commenced in August 2018 and was funded by WWH. Of the 23:

- 6 members of staff successfully completed the 6 month option, 4 of which have enrolled on to the 12 month follow-on course 'In at the Deep End' and advanced learning material;
- 9 members of staff extended their learning to a 12 month option; and

- 8 members of staff chose not to continue.

Feedback from the six people who completed the course has been positive with the majority stating that the method of learning suited their preferred learning style. The people who completed a self-assessment of their Welsh language confidence levels pre-commencement and during learning reported a significant increase in confidence levels. On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020, the second round of training was launched. Initial expressions of interest have been received and learning will commence during 2020.

To promote a bilingual workplace a 'Learn Welsh' tile continues to be given a prominent position on the front page of the intranet and, once accessed, it provides details of all learning opportunities including information on 'Say Something in Welsh'. In addition, it provides details of all Welsh speakers within the Association which assists informal mentoring, useful resources, dates and details of Welsh cultural and internal events, phrase of the week, a bilingual template for out of office emails and activities and opportunities to support and increase confidence levels in using the Welsh language.

### **Promotion of the Welsh Language**

There have been a number of instances where Welsh has been promoted including St David's Day, Welsh lunches at all three offices with the use of a video link, announcements to promote and celebrate Santes Dwynwen and "Shwmae Su'mae" Day – a national Wales-wide event to promote using Welsh. There has also been a Welsh language 'Bake off' event, posters displaying facts and information on traditions and history of Wales as well as many instances where material has been produced bilingually such as the GCE's monthly briefing note to all staff, the annual report and accounts and the presentation materials for staff meetings and conferences.

The Welsh language has also been promoted in the following ways:

- The promotion of Welsh language services by using the Iaith Gwaith brand which identifies Welsh language speakers. The email footer showing that correspondence is welcomed in both Welsh and English is included on all Welsh language speakers' external emails. In addition, Iaith Gwaith badges and lanyards are offered to all staff who are learning or fluent so they can be recognised so that other people can start a conversation with them in Welsh.
- Bilingual GCE briefings which periodically provide updates on legislative developments and changes which may impact on how the Association delivers services externally and internally.
- Partnered with Menter Iaith in West Carmarthenshire to distribute their 'Welcome Pack' which is a directory for learning Welsh to new residents in Carmarthenshire.
- Partnered with Menter Iaith in Pembrokeshire to assist with providing childcare provision whilst resident training sessions were undertaken during the half term break. This promotes the work that Menter Iaith undertakes.

- During the reporting period the Association sponsored a number of groups and events, which totalled nearly £19,000, to assist with the delivery and to promote the Welsh Language: -
  - Sponsored the Clwb Miliwn, the project's aims are to support the Welsh Government (WG) 'Million Speakers' goal by encouraging grass roots growth, support efforts of community groups to use more Welsh in the workplace and support face to face communication, offer practical advice to allow individuals and groups to take positive action locally and build a financial fund and administer small grants to support the vision to increase the use of Welsh within local communities.
  - Sponsored a number of Cylch Meithrin groups which has assisted towards running costs, equipment and fund raising events, all of which supports the service and provides care for children through the medium of Welsh within our communities.
  - Sponsored the Tregaroc event, a Music Festival in Tregaron, Ceredigion. Tregaroc provides local musical performers with an opportunity to promote local and Welsh entertainment which assists with educating and inspiring people
  - Partnered with Menter Iaith, West Carmarthenshire by sponsoring the award winning Gŵyl Canol Dre in Carmarthen.

### **Communication in Welsh**

A small number (76) of residents have stated that they wish to communicate with the Association in Welsh and have identified their preferences in relation to written, spoken or both. In addition, there are 1,077 residents who receive bi-lingual copies of In Touch.

Information continues to be gathered in relation to language preference as part of resident profiling. Language preference data is held for 72% of residents and this can be updated easily by staff via Resco, the mobile working app, or updated directly on the Dynamics database. Language preference is available for all staff to see and correspondence initiated by WWH is in Welsh or English as indicated by the resident where preference details have been captured. All correspondence in the West is sent bi-lingually and will continue until full preference information has been obtained for these residents.

WWH continues to welcome calls and communication in Welsh. When callers contact the main WWH telephone number, the first front end message gives people a choice of language. All in-hours calls that select the Welsh option are diverted to first language Welsh speakers. The volume of calls requesting Welsh has reduced from 1,766 in April 2018 to 1,106 in March 2019. The Welsh language calls account for 0.95% of all in-hours calls.

WWH uses the services of professional Welsh translators in addition to utilising designated staff who respond and prioritise any work in line with the Association's needs. All proof reading is undertaken internally and by a different translator to have

an independent opinion which ensures that every piece of work is consistent and that standard terminology is used. The translation procedure has been introduced following the publication of the WLC's advice document, 'Bilingual Drafting, Translation and using Welsh face to face'. The new procedure was communicated within the GCE briefing and is available on the staff intranet.

The WWH website is fully bilingual and mobile friendly. Between April 2019 and 1 February 2020 it has been viewed by external visitors in English 83,269 times and Welsh 1,559 times, with 115 users viewing the website via a Welsh web browser. The Welsh Language Scheme document and the Welsh Language Annual Monitoring report are both available on the website. The Association also uses a number of social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to share corporate messages, news and jobs in Welsh and English. A review of the Castell Ventures and Cambria Maintenance websites (subsidiaries) has been completed and the work to produce bilingual versions of these websites will commence during 2020.

The internal and external protocols on the Welsh language have been in place since September 2017. All internal and external practices, including language preference and skills audit, recruitment, HR related documentation and procedures, were reviewed during 2019. As part of the review all automated responses to group/team emails are now bilingual. The protocols which are available on the staff intranet provide guidance on how WWH delivers Welsh language services both internally and externally. The protocols build on the approved Welsh Language Scheme with greater use of Welsh in both internal and external documents. All signs in WWH offices are bilingual.

Following a review of the guidance and self-regulation checklist issued by the WLC the number of new and vacant posts during the reporting year has been included within the 2019 annual update. During April 2019 and February 2020, there were 61 new or vacant posts advertised, all of which were advertised bilingually. All categorised the Welsh language as being desirable in the role profiles and no roles during this reporting period had a specific requirement for Welsh language.

### **Complaints**

No complaints were received in relation to the Welsh language during the period.