



Welsh Language Scheme

Wales & West Housing

Welsh Language Scheme prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 (the Act) and the Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, March 2006.

This Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of the Act on 25/11/2010.

1.0 Opening Statement

1.1 Aim of the Scheme:

Wales & West Housing (WWH) has adopted the principle that, in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. This scheme notes how we will operate that principle in providing services to the public in Wales.

1.2 Objectives:

- to enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with WWH to do so through the medium of Welsh or English according to the personal choice of the individual,
- to ensure that the services available through the medium of Welsh are high quality services,
- to promote the use of the Welsh language in the community,
- to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the workplace.

1.3 WWH acknowledges that members of the public can express their opinions and needs better in their chosen language. It also acknowledges that enabling the public to use the Welsh language is a matter of good practice rather than a concession, and that denying them the right to use their chosen language could place them in a disadvantaged position. We will, therefore, offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with it, in accordance with the principle above.

For further information on our Welsh Language Scheme (the Scheme) please contact:

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2.0 Introduction

2.1 Background and corporate values

WWH is a charitable organisation controlled by a voluntary Board of Management. The organisation operates throughout 14 Local Authorities in Wales.

Our mission is to be the first choice for homes and services. There are three main aims:

1. To provide good quality accommodation.
2. To be an excellent landlord.
3. To develop and support communities to meet local needs.

Supporting these aims, we have developed a number of objectives – the things that we will do to achieve our aims and provide excellence to our customers. These are, in effect, our priorities based on what our residents and our staff have told us are important.

2.2 Our values are important to us. They reflect our culture, our whole ethos and are an integral part of the services we deliver.

Our values are to be: -

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| Fair: | balanced, giving praise where due and constructively critical. Inclusive in our approach, respecting the dignity and individuality of everyone. |
| Open: | open to change, committed to continuous improvement and learning. Transparent, honest and trustworthy. |
| Responsible: | professional, challenging existing arrangements, taking ownership of issues and using our initiative to see them through to resolution. |
| Supportive: | easy to deal with, approachable and accessible. Welcoming, caring, listening and responsive. |
| Efficient: | make the best use of resources and maximise the impact of our activities. |

2.3 Structure and area of operation

WWH has a Head Office in Cardiff and an area office in Flint, North Wales. We manage more than 9,000 properties across Wales from Cardiff in the south to Flint in the north, Ceredigion in the west and Powys in the east providing homes to over 17,000 people. The majority of our properties are managed on a rental basis, and while the largest proportion is general needs accommodation, approximately one third have been developed specifically for older people (over 55's).

The day to day running of WWH is the responsibility of the Directors' Team - the Chief Executive, the Finance Director and the Operations Director. Our Board of Management agree major decisions, such as those involving policy or strategic direction. Each Board member serves a 3 year term.

2.4 Service users

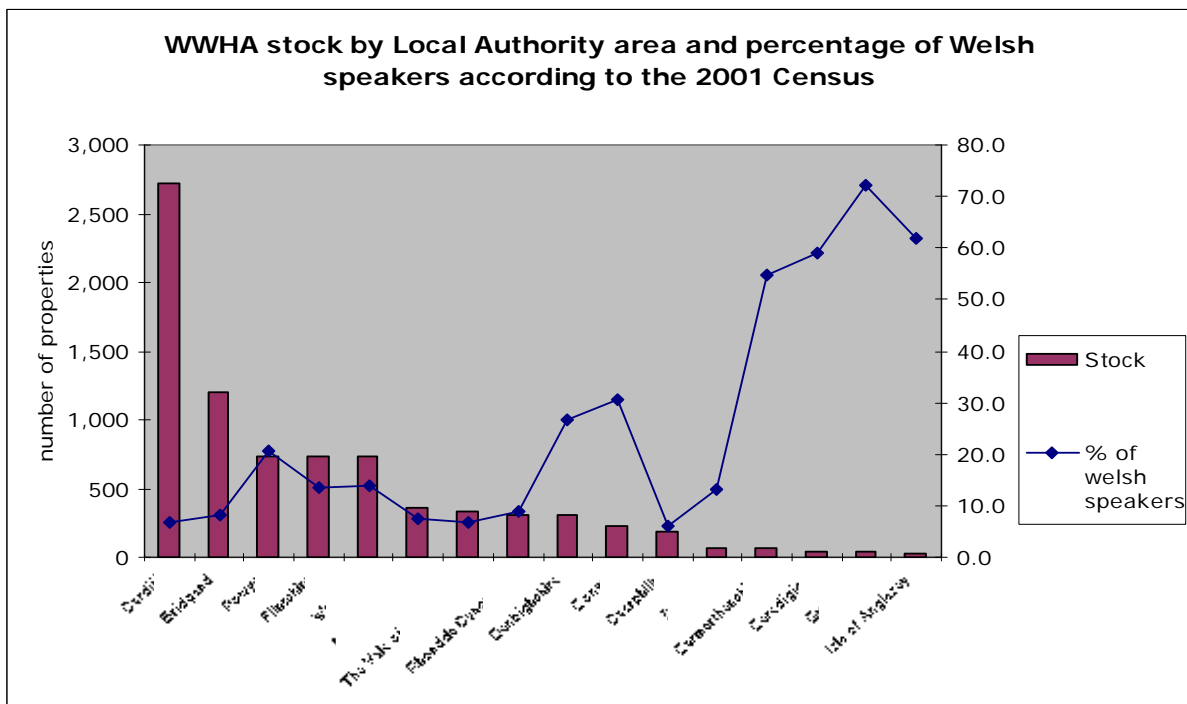
We offer quality homes and services to a diverse range of customers and work closely with our partners to develop and support local communities. Our customers include residents, housing applicants, local authorities, statutory bodies, voluntary agencies, community groups and individuals in the communities in which we operate.

2.5 The Welsh Language

WWH owns or manages properties in 14 local authority areas throughout Wales. The greatest concentration of properties are in the Cardiff local authority area with over 3,000 properties. Bridgend has the second largest concentration of properties at over 1,100 properties. Gwynedd has the lowest concentration of stock with 38 properties.

Graph 1 shows our stock within each Local Authority represented by the bars in the graph. The line graph shows the proportion of the population that speak Welsh according to the 2001 census.

The graph clearly shows that our greatest volume of properties are in Local Authority areas where the proportion of Welsh speakers are generally less pronounced. However, the average percentage of the population who speak Welsh across the 14 Local Authority Areas where WWH operates is 17% indicating that we cover areas where there are large proportions of Welsh speakers, just short of the all Wales average of 21% as reported by the 2001 Census.



3.0 Planning and Delivering Services

3.1 Policies and initiatives

- 3.1.1 In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, we will assess their linguistic impact and make sure they are consistent with this Language Scheme and will ensure that the measures in the Scheme are implemented when new policies and initiatives are brought in.
- 3.1.2 We will consult the Welsh Language Board beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Language Scheme. This Scheme will not be amended without the prior agreement of the Welsh Language Board.
- 3.1.3 We will ensure that whoever is involved in the formulation of policies is aware of the Scheme and of our responsibilities under the Regulatory Code and the Welsh Language Act 1993.
- 3.1.4 Housing associations can contribute towards the development of the Welsh language on a local or community level and we will aim to ensure that our new policies and initiatives promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language whenever possible.

3.2 Service provision

- 3.2.1 We will ensure that as many of our services as possible are available in Welsh and we will inform the public when they are available.
- 3.2.2 We will carry out the commitments noted in the Scheme by implementing the following arrangements:
- organise the service team so that staff who can speak Welsh can deal with the public who speak Welsh;
 - enable officers from one office who can speak Welsh to assist another office when the need arises;
 - adopt systems or procedures which facilitate the provision of service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service;
 - employ professional translators;
 - raise awareness amongst staff of the Language Scheme;
 - consider the need to increase the availability of Welsh language skills by means of training and recruitment.

3.3 Services provided for the public by other organisations

Regulatory functions and third party services

- 3.3.1 Any contracts or arrangements made with a third party will be consistent with relevant sections of this Scheme.
- 3.3.2 We will encourage others in the community, including voluntary bodies and companies, to make use of the Welsh language.

Partnerships

3.3.3 WWH works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies. We operate on many levels when working with others:

- When WWH is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with the Language Scheme
- When WWH joins a partnership led by another body, our input to the partnership will comply with the Language Scheme and we will encourage other parties to comply
- When we are a partner in a consortium, we will encourage the consortium to adopt a language policy. When acting publicly in the name of the consortium, we will act in accordance with the Language Scheme.

3.3.4 We will ensure that officers are aware of the requirements of the Language Scheme when operating in partnership.

3.4 Quality standards

Services provided in Welsh and in English will be equal in quality and they will be provided within the same timetable.

4.0 Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 We welcome correspondence in Welsh.

4.1.2 All correspondence will be dealt with promptly and correspondence through the medium of Welsh should not in itself lead to delay.

4.1.3 When someone writes to us in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh (if a reply is needed).

4.1.4 All correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh or a meeting where it was established that Welsh is the preferred language of the person will be in Welsh.

4.1.5 If a separate Welsh and English language version of any correspondence must be published, our standard practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time and for the same price (if relevant).

4.1.6 We will keep a record of those persons who wish to deal with us in Welsh.

4.1.7 We will agree arrangements for correspondence and for arranging translation.

4.2 **Communication over the telephone**

4.2.1 We welcome telephone calls in Welsh and our standard practice is to ensure that the public can speak in Welsh or in English when dealing with us over the telephone.

4.2.2 In order to achieve the aim of treating the Welsh and English languages on an equal basis, we will take the following steps to enable Welsh speakers to deal with us in Welsh over the telephone:

- provide an internal directory of Welsh speakers to whom calls can be transferred
- provide staff with guidelines on how to deal with telephone calls from Welsh speakers and ensure that they are familiar with the arrangements

4.3 **Public meetings**

4.3.1 When we hold public meetings, including conferences and other similar events, those present will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English. There will be circumstances in which it will be appropriate on the basis of information, to hold all the activities bilingually, in Welsh only or in English only.

4.3.2 When there are Welsh speakers among those invited to attend, or if it is known that Welsh speakers intend to be present, translation facilities should be arranged where applicable.

4.3.3 As well as translation equipment, we will assess the need for members of staff who speak Welsh to be present to welcome the public and to deal with their inquiries. Our staff will make their language abilities evident at meetings, for example, by greeting people bilingually and using the Welsh Language Board's "Iaith Gwaith" badges if available.

4.4 **Other meetings**

4.4.1 We welcome meetings with the public in Welsh or in English, but due to the shortage of Welsh speakers, cannot guarantee a face to face meeting in Welsh. In such circumstances we will politely explain the situation and offer other options, such as organise translation or proceed with the meeting in English.

4.4.2 When we arrange or attend a face to face meeting with the public, we will find out their chosen language at the first opportunity and, wherever possible, we will ensure that a qualified member of staff who speaks Welsh deals with those who note that their chosen language is Welsh.

4.4.3 If it is obvious that there is a consistent demand for face to face meetings through the medium of Welsh, and that we are failing to meet that demand, we will consider taking action such as training or appointing bilingual staff.

4.5 **Communicating with the public in other ways**

4.5.1 We will consider the best ways of meeting the needs of Welsh speakers in whichever way we deal with the public.

4.5.2 We are committed to enabling the public to deal with us in Welsh through electronic communication, on line or other media.

5.0 The public face of WWH

5.1 Corporate identity

We are committed to developing a bilingual corporate identity and we will aim to adopt a bilingual public image during the lifetime of this Scheme.

5.2 Signs

5.2.1 When we renew or re-erect any signs we will ensure that the new versions are totally bilingual. Signs erected for the first time will be totally bilingual

5.2.2 The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.

5.2.3 It will be our standard practice to provide bilingual signs, but on occasions when Welsh and English signs are provided separately, they will be equal in terms of form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

5.2.4 There are processes in place to ensure the accuracy of text, and we will co-ordinate and review this carefully, especially when work is contracted out.

5.2.5 When developing a new housing estate or other accommodation, we will suggest a name that is consistent with the heritage and history of the area.

5.3 Publishing and printing materials

5.3.1 We will produce our key strategic documents or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form.

5.3.2 Our standard practice will be to provide bilingual publications but on some occasions for practical reasons, we will publish separate Welsh and English versions. In such cases, we will distribute the versions at the same time as each other. They will also be equally as readily available and both versions will include a message noting that a version is available in the other language.

5.3.3 When a document is published which has a price, the price of a Welsh version of the document will be no higher than the price of the English version.

5.3.4 We will ensure that staff and those with responsibility for printing are aware of the policy and procedures for publication.

5.3.5 We will explore opportunities to co-operate with other bodies in producing work for publication which is similar or the same.

5.3.6 Key documents will be available in a bilingual form on our website.

5.3.7 We will ensure that Welsh text in our publications is of a high standard and that the tone is appropriate for the target audience.

5.4 **Forms and explanatory material**

5.4.1 We will produce bilingual forms when it is reasonably practicable and appropriate under the circumstances.

5.4.2 When we produce bilingual forms, our standard practice where possible will be to produce bilingual forms with both languages appearing together in the same document.

5.4.3 In some cases (perhaps due to the complexity of a form) production of a bilingual version will not be practical, and separate Welsh and English versions may be more appropriate. In such cases, the Welsh and English versions should:

- be published at the same time
- be equally as easy to obtain in offices and other distribution centres
- be distributed together, and
- include a message which confirms that the form is also available in the other language.

5.4.4 We will try to establish the chosen language of members of the public by including a "language choice" question on the first form in a series. Once the chosen language of an individual is known, we will distribute material in Welsh, English, or bilingually from then on, as appropriate.

5.4.5 We will ensure that consistency of terms is a regular practice in the preparation of forms.

5.5 **Press releases**

Press releases are a prominent part of our public face and we will therefore publish them bilingually when appropriate under the circumstances.

5.6 **Marketing and publicity campaigns**

Our marketing campaigns will comply with the relevant sections of this Scheme.

5.7 **Official notifications, public notifications and staff recruitment advertisements**

5.7.1 Our official and public notices will be bilingual when it is appropriate under the circumstances. They will be equal as regards form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

5.7.2 Our staff recruitment advertisements will be bilingual for posts where Welsh language skills are required.

5.7.3 Information packs, such as job descriptions and person specifications will be prepared in Welsh and in English for every post where Welsh language skills are essential.

5.7.4 Advertisements for posts for which Welsh language skills are essential will appear in Welsh in all publications, with an explanatory note in English for English or bilingual publications.

6.0 Implementation and review of the Scheme

6.1 Staffing

6.1.1 We will make arrangements to ensure, to the extent that it is reasonably practical, that workplaces which have contact with the public have access to staff with appropriate Welsh language skills to enable those workplaces to provide a service in Welsh. The degree to which this is necessary or possible will vary, depending on the service and on the area.

6.1.2 We will respond to any lack of skills by means of our recruitment and training, or by considering the possibility of relocating staff internally.

6.1.3 We will set Welsh language requirements (desirable or essential) on some posts, by considering the following factors:

- The amount and frequency of contact with the public
- The current ability of the office to deliver a face to face service through the medium of Welsh
- The expertise of the post, i.e. skills in the Welsh language could be vital in some specific fields
- If it is a post in a specific area, then an assessment of the number/percentage of Welsh speakers in the area.

6.1.4 In assessing our staffing needs, we will provide for a possible increase in the demand for services through the medium of Welsh as schemes are implemented and as Welsh speakers respond to the offer of service in Welsh.

6.1.5 We will increase resources for implementing the Language Scheme in a sensitive way by encouraging and supporting all staff members to take part. We will develop skills in the language as well as a supportive attitude towards providing bilingual services. Non-Welsh speaking staff should not feel under threat, and those wishing to learn Welsh should not be prevented from practising it. We will treat language skills in a similar way to any other skills which need to be developed in the workplace.

6.2 Recruitment

6.2.1 When it is desirable or essential that an applicant should possess skills in the Welsh language, this will be noted clearly in the qualifications section of the post and in advertisements. We will also note the level of competence necessary for the post, for example "to be a fluent Welsh speaker".

6.2.2 If an applicant who cannot speak Welsh is appointed to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is considered essential then the ability to learn the language up to a specific level of skill, within a reasonable period of time to be agreed, will be one of the conditions of appointment. Progress towards the target will be monitored regularly.

6.3 Welsh language training

6.3.1 We will support this Language Scheme by encouraging and supporting members of staff to learn Welsh or to improve their skills in Welsh.

6.3.2 We will plan our training programme carefully and concentrate resources on those parts of our service where there is frequent communication with Welsh speakers, or where there are linguistic requirements to the post.

6.3.3 It is useful that learners know of colleagues who can speak Welsh and we will encourage staff to try to help those who are learning.

6.3.4 Dictionaries and electronic material will be available to help members of staff who are learning Welsh.

6.4 **Vocational training**

Human resources managers and staff who have responsibility for training will assess the need for specific Welsh language vocational training for staff.

6.5 **Administrative arrangements**

6.5.1 This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of WWH. The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Language Scheme and all of WWH's members of staff have a responsibility to know how to implement the Scheme effectively.

6.5.2 Managers will have responsibility for implementing those aspects of the Scheme which are relevant to their work,

6.5.3 We will nominate an existing member of staff to be responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the work of the Scheme from day to day.

6.5.4 In order to promote the use of Welsh in the workplace we will provide resources such as dictionaries, Welsh terminology software and other Welsh medium software for staff.

6.6 **Reviewing the implementation of the Scheme**

6.6.1 The Head of Performance Improvement has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme.

6.6.2 Monitoring this Scheme will be a continuous and structured activity. This will include monitoring the following fields:

- compliance with the Scheme
- quality of service – to look at complaints and at the front line service
- management and administration
- adequacy of linguistic skills – based on commitments 6.1-6.4
- mainstreaming

6.6.3 We will use our standard complaints procedure to record and deal with complaints about this Scheme and will ensure that it will be possible to monitor specific complaints about the Scheme.

6.6.4 The Chief Executive will report to the Board annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Board. The report will follow a format agreed with

the Board and will include information about the nature of any complaints and improvement suggestions received from the public in respect of the Scheme.

6.7 Publication of information

We will include a statement in our annual report noting where members of the public can obtain a copy of our annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Board.

6.8 Publicity

- 6.8.1 We will ensure that members of the public who deal with WWH know about this Scheme and its contents, and how they can conduct their dealings with us in Welsh.
- 6.8.2 Our methods of publicising the Scheme and its contents will follow our usual corporate publicity arrangements, and will include ensuring that the Scheme is published in a prominent location on our website.
- 6.8.3 We will ensure that WWH staff and agencies are familiar with the measures included in the Scheme in order to ensure that attention is paid to the measures whenever appropriate.