

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

An annual update is required to the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC), which replaced the WLB in 2012. This report covers the period from April 2018 to March 2019.

### **Welsh Language Skills**

There are currently 146 Welsh speaking WWH staff with varying degrees of fluency working in WWH, with over 50 staff who are first language Welsh speakers.

All staff members have completed a self-assessment of their Welsh language fluency level in both spoken and written skills. 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**

22 members of staff have been learning Welsh during the last year. Five of these staff have been attending night classes and the remaining staff continue to utilise various resources including the six month pilot with "Say Something in Welsh", attending intensive courses, apps and books.

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 the 'Say Something in Welsh' pilot. All members have been advised that WWH will support them to learn Welsh.

WWH supports learning and developing the use of the Welsh language. In addition to continuing the Association's commitment to support learners in a traditional environment, 21 new and existing learners have joined the six month pilot with 'Say Something in Welsh'. This is an online language course which promises that all committed learners will be confident Welsh speakers in six months with weekly on-line tasks and group video calls. The pilot commenced in August 2018 and was funded by WWH. Initial feedback on the course has been positive with the majority of learners stating that the method of learning suits their preferred learning style. Respondents who completed a self-assessment of their Welsh language confidence levels pre-

commencement and during learning reported a significant increase in confidence levels.

To promote a bilingual workplace a review of the current Welsh language section on the staff intranet has now been completed. The 'Learn Welsh' tile has been given a prominent position on the intranet and once accessed it provides details of all learning opportunities including information on the new 'Say something in Welsh' pilot. In addition, it provides details of all Welsh speakers within the Association which assists informal mentoring, useful resources, activities and opportunities to support and to 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 to support "Ras yr Iaith" and "Shwmae Su'mae" day – a national Wales-wide event to promote using Welsh. These activities included:

- A dress down day with a red theme
- St David's day quiz
- Posters displaying facts and information on traditions and history of Wales
- A list of Welsh speakers published
- Staff encouraged to try out a few phrases with our phrase of the week
- Bilingual PowerPoint slides at staff roadshows and conference
- Bilingual annual report and accounts
- Bilingual business plan
- Bilingual programme and slides at the MAD awards
- Bilingual tweets
- Bilingual website

Other initiatives to promote the Welsh language include:

- 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 also 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 and so that other people can start a conversation with them in Welsh.
- Bilingual GCE briefing which periodically provides updates on legislative developments and developments which may impact on how the Association delivers services externally and internally.
- InTouch residents' magazine produced bilingually and distributed to all residents in west Wales, and to other Welsh speaking residents in the rest of Wales.
- Sponsorship of a school to attend the 2018 Brecon and Radnorshire Urdd National Eisteddfod.

- A review of the Welsh language content in the corporate induction programme which now includes references to the Welsh Language during the two day induction sessions.

### **Communication in Welsh**

78 residents have stated that they wish to communicate with WWH in Welsh and have identified their preferences in relation to written, spoken or both.

WWH continues to gather information in relation to language preference as part of resident profiling. WWH currently holds 71% of language preference data for residents. During the past year all residents in west Wales were contacted, either in person or via the mail. A third of all households responded and the information was duly recorded. The development and roll out of a mobile working app (Resco) that enables officers to work offline will assist with future gathering of information across the Association. Data collected in relation to preference for Welsh written and verbal communications is available for all staff to view on the Dynamics database and the Qlikview internal reporting system. Correspondence initiated by WWH is in the language preference of the resident (where a resident profiling questionnaire has been completed, or where preference details have been captured) except correspondence in the west, which remains bi-lingual and will continue until full preference information has been obtained for these residents. Within the spring 2019 edition of InTouch, residents were encouraged to contact WWH should they prefer information in Welsh.

WWH continues to welcome calls and communication in Welsh. Although uptake on the main WWH contact number (0800 052 2526) has historically been very low, numbers have increased since the west office telephone line was diverted to the WWH main telephone line in July 2017. All in-hours calls from callers selecting the Welsh option are diverted to first language Welsh speakers in the west Wales office and the Customer Service Centre. When callers contact the main WWH telephone number, the first front end message is bilingual and asks callers to press button two if they wish to communicate in Welsh or press button one for English. This is the second complete year of data since its inception in July 2017 and during the period April 2018 to March 2019, the absolute numbers of calls handled via the Welsh option increased from 1,498, during April 2017 to March 2018, to 1,766 from April 2018 to March 2019. These Welsh calls account for 1.4% of all in-hours calls handled during the period, which is identical to 2017-18.

WWH uses the services of professional Welsh translators in addition to utilising designated staff. The translation process has also been reviewed following the publication of the WLC's advice document, 'Bilingual Drafting, Translation and Interpretation'. As a result of the review, translation requests are now made via a designated email to ensure a timely delivery of service. By having specific members of staff responsible for the translation service it is possible to record existing translated text. This will assist in preventing duplication of translation work with amendments to

short pieces of text being undertaken internally. The new translation process has been communicated within the GCE briefing and is available on the staff intranet.

There are currently 1,121 residents on the mailing list for bilingual copies of InTouch. InTouch is also available in Welsh on the WWH website.

The review of the WWH website is now complete, and is fully bilingual and mobile friendly. Since the bilingual website became live on 18 September 2018, it has been viewed by external visitors in English 257,190 times and Welsh 1,636 times, with 73 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. To accompany the website, WWH launched a Facebook page to share news and jobs and an Instagram account to highlight our new developments. These new social media channels sit alongside the existing Twitter account and are also bilingual.

The GCE monthly briefing was redesigned in September 2018. The new look format was based on existing technology which has received positive feedback and can be viewed in Welsh or English. The percentage of staff viewing the Welsh version fluctuates month on month ranging from 0.3% to 12.5%. During March 2019, 1.9% (six out of 309) of staff viewed the Welsh version.

To ensure that personal callers to all three offices are aware that they may opt to communicate in Welsh, posters are displayed in all receptions advising this.

The internal and external protocols on the Welsh language have been in place since September 2017. The protocols, which are available on the staff intranet, provide guidance on how WWH delivers Welsh language services both internally and externally. The protocols reviewed all internal and external practices, including language preference and skills audit, recruitment, HR related documentation and procedures. 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 2018-19, there were 88 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.