



FAMILY HOUSING ASSOCIATION (WALES) LTD

WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

Prepared under the

WELSH LANGUAGE ACT 1993.

Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd, 43 Walter Road, Swansea. SA1 5PN
Tel: 01792 460192. Fax: 01792 473726.
www.fha-wales.com email info@fha-wales.com

Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd has adopted the principle established under the **WELSH LANGUAGE ACT 1993** that in the conduct of public business it will, to the best of its ability, treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality.

This Scheme sets out how we will give effect to that principle when providing services to people who need housing in Wales.

The Association undertakes to consult the Welsh Language Board if any proposal is planned which would directly affect this scheme.

Objectives:

To enable everyone who uses a service or who has contact with the Association to do so through the medium of Welsh or English according to their personal choice.

To ensure a service of high quality, whether in Welsh or English.

This scheme was approved by The Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of the Act in

WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME CYNLLUN YR IAITH GYMRAEG

INTRODUCTION

Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd has been a provider of social housing in Wales since 1975. We currently offer housing and support services in Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Neath/Port Talbot. We manage over 2000 good quality, affordable homes and meet the needs of a wide range of people, including families, older people, single people, the homeless and those experiencing mental ill-health. As of 2006, our properties are split geographically as follows:

Swansea	69%
Neath/Port Talbot	1%
Carmarthenshire	30%

Statistics from the local authorities in these areas show that the percentage of Welsh speakers varies from approximately 18% in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot to 55% in Carmarthenshire. Figures from the 2001 Census show that 20.8% of the Welsh population speak Welsh.

With a main office in Swansea, a Care and Repair agency in Ammanford and workbases throughout the area, we employ over 160 staff.

The Association is controlled by a voluntary Board of Management which delegates responsibility for day-to-day matters to the Chief Executive and two Directors.

As a Registered Social Landlord, we use grants allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government. In addition, private finance is sourced from banks, building societies and other financial institutions.

PROVIDING SERVICES

We aim to provide services of high quality in both Welsh and English and a person's choice of language will not impair the effectiveness of the service offered.

It may not be possible to provide a fully consistent service in Welsh and English across all areas of operation. However we will always attempt to provide the best possible service.

We will ensure that those tasked with formulation of policies are aware of the Scheme and the need to assess the impact of new policies upon the scheme and that they are consistent with the scheme and do not undermine it.

1 Board of Management

- 1.1 The Association will aim to recruit and maintain a representation of Welsh speakers amongst its voluntary Board Members which reflects the local position and will offer training in the Welsh Language to those interested. Advertised vacancies for Board Members will indicate that Welsh Speakers are welcomed.

2 Corporate Identity

- 2.1 Representations of our public image will appear in Welsh and English. For example, logos, sign boards, letterheadings, business cards, compliment slips, vehicles, clothing and buildings. When we renew or re-erect new signs any signs, we will ensure that the new versions are totally bilingual. Signs erected for the first time will be totally bilingual. An exception to this is where signage appears in English and Cantonese.
- 2.2 Wherever both Welsh and English are used they shall have equal prominence.
- 2.3 It is accepted that achievement of a fully bilingual corporate identity will take time and although it will not be possible to replace all such items immediately, this will be planned as and when new stock/supplies are purchased.

3 Correspondence

- 3.1 We welcome correspondence in both Welsh and English and will reply in the language of the originator. The Association will ensure that timescales for Welsh and English replies will normally be identical. Replies that may be technical in nature may take a little longer whilst professional assistance is sought for translation. In this case we will reply to the writer explaining the reason for any delay in the language of choice.
- 3.2 We will write in Welsh where we know that it is the person's preferred language and this preference will be annotated on our records. Current tenant preferences will be requested in one exercise, and thereafter on first contact with the Association.
- 3.3 Arrangements will be made to resource translation services if required.
- 3.4 All those who have business with us will be advised that communication is welcome in Welsh or English and this will be stated on our letterheading.
- 3.5 Standard letters to tenants will be produced in both Welsh and English.

4 Meetings

- 4.1 When arranging meetings in our offices or in a tenant's or applicant's home, we will ask the preferred language if we do not already have the information on file. Wherever possible, we will ensure that a Welsh speaker deals with those whose chosen language is Welsh.

- 4.2 Due to the small number of Welsh speaking staff at the beginning of our Scheme, we are not able to guarantee immediate face to face meetings in Welsh. We will aim to provide more face to face services through the medium of Welsh during the lifetime of this scheme.
- 4.3 If there is a consistent demand for such meetings in Welsh and we are not able to meet that demand, we will consider recruitment or training to enable us to meet the need.
- 4.4 If public meetings are held. We will welcome contributions in Welsh or English. When sending out notification of the meeting, we will ask participants to advise us beforehand of their language preference and we will endeavour to organise translation services wherever possible. We will advise attendees, in advance, if Welsh speaking staff will be in attendance.

5 Partnerships

- 5.1 We will encourage our partner organisations to make use of the Welsh language.
- 5.2 We will provide a copy of our scheme to our contractors during the tender process and ask how they can operate bilingually.
- 5.3 If we are partners in a consortium we will encourage that consortium to adopt a bilingual policy.

6 Publications

- 6.1 We will aim to produce all newly produced printed material for our tenants bilingually, with both languages appearing in the same document. We will endeavour to complete this exercise by the end of this scheme which will allow us to allocate funds and increase budgets accordingly.

7 Publicity

- 7.1 Display boards for marketing and PR purposes will normally be produced in English and in Welsh where appropriate. For example, Care and Repair in Ammanford will always have display material and information leaflets in Welsh.
- 7.2 Press releases will normally be in English where the media to be used is English but will be produced in Welsh if aimed at Welsh publications.

8 Public Notifications

- 8.1 Public notices will appear in the press in both Welsh and English.

9 Recruitment

- 9.1 Our aim is to ensure that sufficient numbers of Welsh Speaking staff are in contact with the public.

- 9.2 Where the recruitment media to be used is English then, English will normally be the appropriate medium for recruitment advertising. However, where it is decided that the ability to speak Welsh is an essential requirement of the post, then the advertisement will appear in both Welsh and English
- 9.3 Recruitment application forms will normally be provided in English and the applicant will be required to apply in English, this being the main business language of the Association.
- 9.4 Person specifications will specify Welsh as desirable at a minimum for all posts.
- 9.5 Managers will consider whether posts should have Welsh as essential depending on numbers of Welsh speakers in their service areas and the customers they serve.
- 9.6 Recruitment information packs will contain bilingual information where this is pre-printed. Information packs for posts where Welsh is essential will be produced bilingually.
- 9.7 Candidates offered positions will be informed of the Welsh language services offered by the Criminal Records Bureau.

10 Staffing

- 10.1 An annual audit of language skills will be carried out and names of staff members who are able to communicate in Welsh will be published so that they are easily identified to others who may need assistance.

11 Tenant information

- 11.1 Standard letters will be produced in English and Welsh.
- 11.2 Tenancy handbooks and legal agreements will be produced in English, and available in Welsh to those whose preferred language is Welsh. We will ensure a bilingual copy is available on our website
- 11.3 Tenancy application forms will be produced bilingually and available on our website.

12 Telephone Contact

- 12.1 We welcome telephone contact in both Welsh and English. All staff members answering public external telephone lines in all sections of the Association will answer with a bilingual greeting. Non-Welsh speaking staff will direct callers to a Welsh speaker if the caller wishes to proceed in Welsh. If there is none available, callers will be given the opportunity to continue the conversation in English or we will arrange for a Welsh speaker to return the call at the earliest opportunity. Alternatively, they may submit a letter in Welsh.
- 12.2 Our central office answerphone will contain a bilingual message.

13 Training

13.1 We will support this scheme by offering Welsh language training at beginner and improver level to staff and Board Members. Staff are encouraged to use Welsh during the business day where they are confident to do so. In addition, there will be Welsh Awareness training for all front line staff. The Scheme will be introduced during the general induction of new staff.

14 Visitors to our offices

14.1 We welcome contact with members of the public through the medium of Welsh. Welsh speaking members of staff will either deal directly with queries, or if this is not possible, will interpret on behalf of other members of staff if available. We do not usually regard the use of simultaneous translation facilities to be practical in such circumstances.

14.2 Display information and internal signs in our offices will be bilingual where we produce these ourselves. We will ask other agencies for bilingual material when appropriate but it is accepted that not all agencies will be able to comply with this request.

15 Website and email contact

15.1 We will work towards producing our website in both Welsh and English where appropriate and practical. Email communications received in Welsh will be passed to a Welsh speaker. The timescales for replying in Welsh or English will be identical.

16 Monitoring

16.1 We will monitor and report upon the progress of this scheme and the action plan annually to our Board of Management as well as the Welsh Language Board. In addition, we will provide statistics on:

- Number of requests for correspondence in Welsh
- Number of requests for meetings in Welsh.
- Number of staff receiving training
- Percentage of staff able to communicate in Welsh written and spoken.
- Complaints received

17 Costs and timescale

17.1 It is accepted that there will be significant budgetary implications attached to this scheme. We will endeavour therefore to deliver the scheme targets within three years from the official adoption of the scheme.

18 Responsibility

- 18.1 It will be the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Services to ensure effective implementation of this scheme. Each Manager will be responsible for its execution in their own areas of operation.
- 18.2 The Head of Personnel will be responsible for circulating information and guidance on the scheme and disseminating good practice.
- 18.3 Comments and requests for additional information should be sent to:

C Fortey
Head of Personnel
Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd
43 Walter Road
Swansea, SA1 5PN

Email: caroline.fortey@fha-wales.com.

19 Timetable for Implementation

Target	Lead Officer	Target Date
Have regard to the need for Welsh language skills when considering Board Membership.	Chief Executive	Jan 07
Source professional translation services	Head of Personnel	Immediate
Review Welsh speakers amongst staff in each service area. Consider action required.	All Section Heads	March 07
Tenants' language preferences collated and recorded in tenants' files	Head of Housing and SP	March 07 and on-going
Identification and translation of standard letters, e.g. rents, arrears, repair and recharge letters. Liaison with IBS	All Head of Sections to identify letters.	Sep 07
Ensure staff answer external lines with bilingual greeting. Train staff to do this.	Head of Housing, Head of Property Services, Head of Personnel	Immediate
Production of Bilingual letterheadings, compliment slips etc. Include statement that communication is welcomed in Welsh or English.	Head of Personnel	Immediate
Corp Identity. Where logo etc appears on vehicles, clothing etc, produce bilingually.	Head of Property Services. Head of Development.	Jan 07 - Jan 10
Carry out annual language skills staff survey and publish the results to all staff.	Head of Personnel	On-going
Publication of scheme to staff and include in induction. Encourage staff to participate in Welsh Language training.	Head of Personnel	When approved and on-going
As positions become vacant review importance of Welsh language skills as an essential criterion.	All Heads	On-going
Publication of scheme on website.	Head of ICT	When approved
Translation of all website pages including Welsh versions of documents e.g. tenants' handbook.	Head of ICT	Sep 07
Ensure partner contractors are aware of our scheme	Head of Dev and Property Services	When approved
Liaise with contractors to ensure construction signage is bilingual	Head of Dev and Property Services	On-going
Continue with training for improvers and introduce awareness training for front line staff. Include in budgets.	Head of Personnel	Jan 08 and on-going
Production of leaflets and publicity material aimed at the public bilingually including recruitment literature.	All Heads.	Jan 2010
Inform new staff of CRB's Welsh service	Personnel Section	Immediate