



FAMILY HOUSING ASSOCIATION (WALES) LTD

WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

Prepared under the

WELSH LANGUAGE ACT 1993

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FHA 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 first approved by the Welsh Language Board under section 14 (1) of the Act on 25/05/07.

The updated scheme received approval on 03/06/2010

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, Neath/Port Talbot and in 2011, Ceredigion. 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 and 52% in Ceredigion. Figures from the 2001 Census show that 20.8% of the Welsh population speak Welsh.

With a main office in Swansea, and work bases throughout the area, we employ over 230 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 encourage Welsh Speakers.

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, 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 stocks/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 increased 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 our 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.
- 6.2 When it is not possible to do this in one document, leaflets and printed material will have a Welsh version which will be on display and freely available.
- 6.3 Every publication on our website will have a Welsh version.

7 Publicity

- 7.1 Display boards for marketing and PR purposes will normally be produced in English and 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 service.
- 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.
- 9.8 Recruitment literature in Ceredigion will state that being able to communicate in Welsh will be advantageous. (see 10.3)

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.
- 10.2 Staff members who can speak Welsh will be encouraged to wear the Welsh Language Board's 'Taith Gwaith' badge to identify themselves.
- 10.3 We will endeavour to recruit and maintain a target of 50% staff in Ceredigion who are Welsh speakers.

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 We will keep a record of tenants who wish to communicate in Welsh.
- 11.4 Circulars for general information will be produced in Welsh and English.

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.
- 12.2 Where answerphones are used, the messages will be bilingual.

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 when 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 services 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.

14.3 Members of staff who are able and willing to speak Welsh will display a Welsh Language Board sticker/badge.

14.4 There will be signage in our main reception indicating that Welsh is welcome.

15 Website and email contact

15.1 We will work towards producing our website in both Welsh and English where appropriate and practical. We will continue to develop the website in line with best practice, for example by increasing the number of Welsh option buttons throughout the site.

15.2 Email communications received in Welsh will be passed to a Welsh speaker. The timescales for replying in English and Welsh will be identical and in line with our published service standards.

16 Monitoring

16.1 We will monitor and report on 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 or 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.

Comments and requests for information should be sent to:

C Fortey

Head of Personnel

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