

# Welsh Language Scheme



# Introduction

The United Welsh Group is a not-for-profit organisation providing homes and related services in South Wales. We are passionate about building homes, creating communities and transforming lives.

We look after over **6,300 homes** for people across **11 local authority areas**, and our services help thousands more in our communities.

We provide a range of accommodation including Extra Care and supported housing, and we are committed to working in partnership with local authorities, health boards and others to provide specialist projects that help people with their wellbeing and encourage independent living in the community.

We employ almost **400 people** and our Group includes our repairs and

maintenance service Celtic Horizons; timber frame home manufacturer Celtic Offsite and Harmoni Homes, which supports people to fulfil their dream of buying a home.

The United Welsh Group 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.

We have established that the demand for Welsh language services is currently modest in the areas where we work, so we believe that it is inappropriate for the organisation to adopt a fully bilingual policy for its work and service delivery.

However, we recognise that members of the public can express their opinions and needs better in their chosen language, and we offer the public the right to choose which

language to use when dealing with us. The United Welsh Group is **committed to ensuring that services are in place** to meet the needs of customers who wish to deal with us through the medium of Welsh.

## Our objectives are:

- To enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with United Welsh 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.

We intend to work with the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) to **further develop this scheme** in accordance with their advice and with any Welsh Government requirements.

# Service Planning

As we implement new policies, services and initiatives, or amend existing ones, United Welsh will assess their linguistic impact and make sure they are consistent with this scheme.

We will also ensure that whoever is involved in policy formulation is aware of this scheme and of United Welsh's responsibilities under the Act.

United Welsh is **proud to work in partnership** with others in many areas of our business, including Welsh Government, local authorities, health boards, third sector organisations and community groups.

- When United Welsh is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with this scheme
- When United Welsh is a partner in a consortium, it will encourage the consortium to adopt a language policy.

We want to **provide the best possible service** to all those with whom we work and we do not want a person's choice of language to impair the effectiveness of the service we provide.

We will aim to ensure that United Welsh's new policies, services and initiatives **promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language** wherever appropriate.



# Service Provision

## United Welsh will carry out the commitments noted in the scheme by implementing the following arrangements:

- Ensure that we have sufficient members of staff who are competent and confident enough to offer assistance and services to Welsh speakers, appropriate to the needs of our customers and the organisation
- Support staff who can communicate in Welsh to assist other staff when the need arises
- Raise awareness among United Welsh staff of the Welsh Language Scheme
- Consider the need to increase the availability of Welsh language skills by training and recruitment

- Adopt systems or procedures which facilitate the provision of a service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service wherever possible
- Ensure that contracts or arrangements made with a third party are consistent with relevant sections of this scheme.

We plan to progress our data collection so in future, for customers applying to live in our homes, we know **which language is their chosen language** by asking their preference via our housing applicant portal.

Once the chosen language of an individual is known, we will distribute contracts, contract guidance and printed communications in their **chosen language** (Welsh, English, or bilingually from then on, as appropriate).



# The Welsh-speaking public

## Written and verbal correspondence

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and all correspondence in Welsh will be dealt with promptly.

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

All written correspondence following a telephone, email, or face-to-face conversation in Welsh, will be in Welsh.

Where no Welsh speaker is available for a phone call, callers will be **given the opportunity** either to continue the call in English or have a Welsh speaker call them back. A written reply in Welsh will then also be made if a further reply is needed.

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).

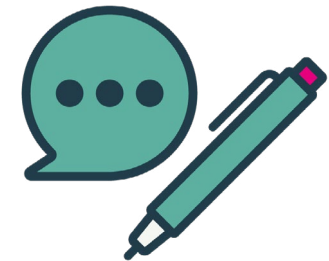
### To achieve the aim of treating the Welsh and English languages on an equal basis, we will:

- Share an internal network of Welsh speakers with staff who can assist with Welsh correspondence, such as phone calls
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to deal with communication such as emails and phone calls from Welsh speakers and ensure that they are familiar with the arrangements.

We will keep a record of those persons who wish to deal with us in Welsh, and we will **agree arrangements** for correspondence and translation.

If United Welsh initiates correspondence, then this will be in the **preferred language of the recipient** if known.

All staff will be **provided with guidance** on language equality in relation to correspondence. If it is not possible for our staff to answer correspondence in Welsh to a high standard, we will use professional translators.



## Meetings

At formal meetings, United Welsh will usually conduct the proceedings in English.

However, we will assess if translation services are necessary in relation to specific matters and we will attempt to establish the language choice of attendees / participants and provide translation services if there is sufficient need.

We will **advise attendees, in advance if possible**, if Welsh speaking staff are in attendance.

Based on the requirements of attendees, written materials such as leaflets or other documents used at public meetings may be provided in bilingual form.



When customer home visits or interviews are undertaken and where the stated preferred language of the customer is Welsh, we will endeavour to **provide a Welsh speaking member of staff** if this is possible and practical. If we are unable to provide a face-to-face meeting with a Welsh-speaking member of staff, we will politely explain the situation and **offer other options**, such as to organise a written Welsh translation.

If we regularly fail to meet the demand for face-to-face meetings through the medium of Welsh, we will consider action such as **training or Welsh fluency** as a compulsory requirement in the recruitment of some job roles.

# The Public Face of United Welsh



## Corporate Identity

United Welsh is committed to developing a bilingual corporate identity and bilingual public image.

The physical brand / logo of United Welsh will remain unchanged as the logo and organisational name 'United Welsh' is a well-established brand name and easily recognised by our customers.

Basic information about United Welsh will **appear in both languages** on all public documents e.g. letterheads, publications, signs, business cards, compliments slips.



## Signs and notices

When we renew or re-erect any signs, we will ensure that the new versions are bilingual.

Signs erected for the first time **will be bilingual**. Development site names created for marketing purposes will be **Welsh or English** (not bilingual) and will **reflect the local heritage** of the area. Street naming is the responsibility of the local authority.

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

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.



## Publishing Materials

We will produce our key strategic and performance publications in a bilingual form or publish separate Welsh and English versions.

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.

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

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

## Social media

Social media content will usually be published in English.

Comments and queries submitted to United Welsh via our social media are treated as correspondence. Therefore, comments and queries submitted in Welsh will **receive a Welsh reply**.

## Advertising, marketing and publicity campaigns

All advertising and publicity campaigns need to be **considered on an individual basis**, with attention given to the size and nature of the target audience, the circumstances surrounding the campaign, timing, demand and value for money.

## Website

The United Welsh website is bilingual, except for press releases and blogs published on the site.

If we receive a request for a press release or blog in Welsh, we will discuss the request and where reasonable, agree arrangements for translation.

## Press Releases

Press releases will usually be issued in English.

There may be notices or events where bilingual presentation is considered appropriate and where reasonable, this will be provided.

## Policies, forms and explanatory material

Policies, forms and explanatory information issued to customers will usually be in English.

However, we will **clearly signpost** how customers can request a Welsh language version and for particular items for which the publication or provision of a Welsh language version is appropriate, this will be provided.

If at any future time a significant demand for Welsh language materials is demonstrated, then this policy will be reviewed.

If a Welsh language policy, form or explanatory material is requested, we will endeavour to provide it if this is possible and practical.



## Official Notifications, Public Notifications and Staff Recruitment Advertisements

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.

Our staff recruitment advertisements will be **bilingual** for posts where Welsh language skills are essential for the role.

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.

If we use the Welsh language press to advertise, our advertisements in those publications will appear in Welsh only.



# Implementing and monitoring the scheme



## Staff and recruitment

The services offered by United Welsh are diverse in nature, with different communication methods used.

We will arrange, to the extent that it is reasonably practical, for the public to access staff with appropriate Welsh language skills to **receive services in Welsh**. The degree to which this is necessary or possible will vary, depending on the service.

**We will respond to any lack of skills by means of our recruitment and training, and 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 team 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.

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. We will also note the level of competence necessary

for the post, for example “to be a fluent Welsh speaker”.

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.

We will **increase resources** for implementing the scheme in a sensitive way by encouraging and supporting all staff members to take part.

We will also **develop skills in the language** as well as a supportive attitude towards providing bilingual services. Those staff members wishing to learn Welsh should not be prevented from practising it and we will treat language skills in a similar way to any other skills which need to be developed.

## Board members

The mix of skills and experience on the United Welsh Board is kept under review to make sure the mix is right for delivering Our Strategy, and that the balance of background and experience aligns with the communities in which we work.

United Welsh will **encourage a mix of Welsh and English speakers** on its Board of Management by including language in the annual review of Board Member skills. The Board may decide to prioritise Welsh speakers within the recruitment and co-option of new members.

## Welsh language training

United Welsh will support staff to learn Welsh wherever possible.

**The type of language training offered to staff will be appropriate to each individual's personal and professional needs and the requirements of the organisation, but could include:**

- General introduction and induction to Welsh on apps such as Duolingo to start learning the language
- Access to resources and tools to help in developing language skills including upcoming festivals, events, websites, books, media, and language groups
- Access to other learners to help further develop their language skills
- Options to attend sessions when skills reach a specific level with an aim to achieving a usable level within the organisation

- An informal staff network for practicing conversation within a safe learning space with staff more confident in the language. Offering the opportunity to build confidence.
- Access to sessions to help develop proficiency in written and spoken Welsh as appropriate.



## Administrative Arrangements

The commitments and arrangements set out in this scheme have been approved by the United Welsh Board.

United Welsh will ensure that everyone in the organisation is familiar with the scheme and that staff know how it should be implemented and what is expected of them.

An introduction to the scheme will also be part of United Welsh's staff induction process.

Directors and managers will have responsibility for implementing those aspects of the scheme which are relevant to their work.



## Monitoring our Welsh Language Scheme

**Monitoring this scheme will be a continuous and structured activity and will include monitoring the following areas:**

- The number and distribution of Welsh speakers in the organisation
- The number of staff taking Welsh language courses and participating in support offers
- The number of customers who state Welsh as their preferred language
- The number of requests received for Welsh language versions of specific materials
- The number of complaints regarding the Welsh language (using the United Welsh complaints procedure to record and deal with complaints about this scheme)

The Chief Executive has responsibility on a corporate level for monitoring the scheme; however, each Director will have responsibility for their specific areas of operation.

The scheme will be the subject of an annual report to the United Welsh Executive Team to review and where necessary, identify and implement improvements.



## Publicity

We will ensure that members of the public who deal with United Welsh know about this scheme, and how they can use our services or work with us in Welsh.

We will use our usual methods of publicity to promote the scheme, which will include the scheme being published on our website.