

# United Welsh Housing Association Ltd

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## Approved – 08/07/08 Welsh Language Scheme

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 8<sup>th</sup> July 2008

### Contact Details

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## Opening Statement

### 1.0 Aim of the Scheme

United Welsh has adopted the principle, that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances, and reasonably practical, 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.

#### 1.1 Objectives:

- 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

1.2 United Welsh 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. United Welsh will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with it, in accordance with the principle above.

1.3 Demand for bi-lingual services is growing across Wales. Although United Welsh currently works in regions of low demand, we are 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.

1.4 United Welsh has already identified current demand for Welsh through consultation with all its customers. We have established that demand is relatively modest in the areas where we work. Regular consultation will ensure that our services adapt to meet any changes in demand for Welsh in the future

1.5 We respect the right of our customers to communicate with us in the language of their choice. We will endeavour to ensure that tenants that have expressed the desire to deal with us in Welsh will receive their services in Welsh

## **2.0 About United Welsh**

United Welsh is a not-for-profit organisation providing housing and related services to people in South Wales. We offer a range of homes including family houses, apartments and bungalows across a wide area working with 11 local authorities.

## **2.1 Our Vision**

*To be the organisation of first choice...*

## **2.2 Building quality homes that people can afford to rent or buy**

We rent our homes using our choice-based letting system called Select a Home. It is designed to make sure people can decide where they want to live while those in most urgent need are given priority.

For those who want to buy their own home, we offer low cost home ownership through 'Homes within Reach'. This is a scheme designed to help those people who otherwise would be unable to buy adequate housing to meet their needs on the open market.

## **2.3 Growing with people**

**Living<sup>+</sup>** provides housing for people 55yrs of age and over. It is a service that specialises in meeting the lifestyle needs of this group of customers and is committed to developing services as people's needs change.

## **2.4 Providing Excellence in Housing and Support Services**

We work with other support providers to supply homes for people with diverse additional support needs, including those with learning difficulties, individuals of all ages who are homeless, young people leaving care, women fleeing domestic abuse and people with mental health problems.

We also directly manage homes for a mixed client group at our PREP projects and at our hostel, Oak House.

## **2.5 Investment in homes and communities**

We invest in all our residents' local communities through our community development team and take a proactive approach to managing anti-social behaviour issues with our specialist staff. We invest in our tenants' homes with a planned maintenance programme and a high quality, responsive repairs service.

Our tenants are rewarded for keeping up-to-date with their rent payments through our 5\* Loyalty Scheme, and our specialist adviser helps tenants access the benefits to which they are entitled.

We help our local authority partners achieve their aims by taking part in regeneration projects.

## 2.6 Partnership

We are a member of Integrate, a consortium of eight like-minded housing associations in South Wales who have joined forces to offer the best value in procurement and service delivery. Whilst retaining organisational independence, Integrate members pool skills and experience and take advantage of their joint purchasing power to obtain better value.

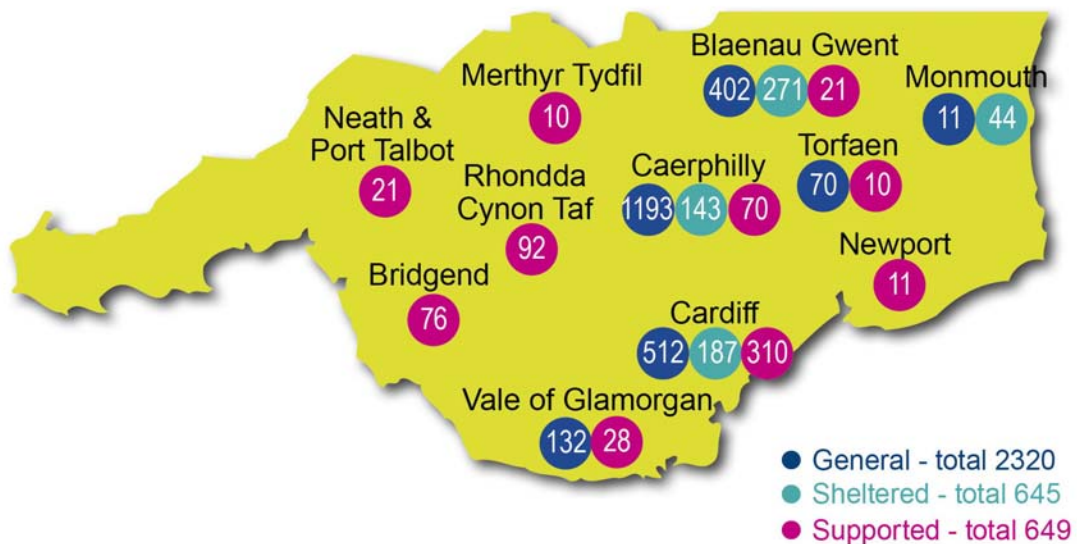
## 2.7 People

United Welsh is a top performing housing association and we know that we achieve this through attracting and keeping top performers. We understand the importance of having highly skilled, well-trained, professional people. This factor is fundamental to our future success and we are committed to ensuring our employees receive the very best support in all aspects of their working life.

## 2.8 Area of Operation

United Welsh works in 11 different local authority areas in South East Wales. Our work is predominately concentrated in the regions of Caerphilly, Cardiff and Blaenau Gwent. These areas are home to many different communities with different requirements for housing and varying economic circumstances.

We have two offices situated in Cardiff and Caerphilly. In addition we manage a number of supported housing schemes in Cardiff and housing for people 55yrs and over in Cardiff, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, and Monmouthshire.



## 2.9 Welsh Language Data

Welsh speakers within the local authority areas where United Welsh work:

- Bridgend 11% / RCT 13% / Vale of Glam 11% / Caerphilly 11% / Cardiff 11% / Blaenau Gwent 10% / Monmouthshire 9%
- In Caerphilly 40% of those aged 10-14yrs were able to speak Welsh in 2001

*All figures based on the 2001 Census and on the numbers / percentages of those 3 years of age or over who are able to speak Welsh*

The 2001 census provides the most up to date picture of Welsh language issues in Wales. The situation within the local authority areas where United Welsh work is as follows:

Local Authority Area	% over 3 years old able to speak Welsh	Number over 3 years old able to speak Welsh	% 10 – 14 years old able to speak Welsh	% 50 – 59 years old able to speak Welsh
Bridgend	10.8	13,397	30.5	14.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12.5	27,946	34.2	5.3
Vale of Glamorgan	11.3	12,994	36.7	5.4
Caerphilly	11.2	18,237	39.8	3.5
Cardiff	11.0	34,606	31.0	6.1
Blaenau Gwent	9.5	6,417	44.1	2.1
Monmouthshire	9.3	7,688	44.5	3.1
Total	- - -	121,285	- - -	- - -

It is apparent that the incidence of Welsh speaking is most dominant amongst children and young people with a sharp fall off amongst older age groups. It can therefore be expected that the demand for services in Welsh will increase over time.

## 2.10 Structure

United Welsh is 'not for profit' and registered with both the National Assembly for Wales (our regulator) and the Register of Friendly Societies under Charitable Rules.

The Shareholding Members elect a Board to oversee the running of the Association. The Board is responsible for the Association's strategy and policy framework.

Responsibility for the day to day management of United Welsh and implementation of the policy framework is delegated to the Chief Executive who has a Senior Management Team to help. Each member of the Senior Management Team is an operational Director with teams of staff reporting to him or her.

The Board is primarily a group of Shareholding Members, elected by the other Shareholding Members, to direct the affairs of the Association. The Board has ultimate responsibility for the governance of United Welsh.

### **3.1 Policies and Initiatives**

3.1.1 In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, United Welsh 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 implemented.

3.1.2 United Welsh will consult the Welsh Language Board beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Language Scheme. This Scheme will not be amended without 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 United Welsh's 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 United Welsh's new policies and initiatives promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language wherever appropriate.

### **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 United Welsh 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
- raise awareness among United Welsh 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.

#### **Partnerships**

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

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

### **3.4 Quality Standards**

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

## **4. Dealing with the Welsh speaking Public**

### **4.1 Correspondence**

4.1.1 United Welsh welcomes correspondence in Welsh.

4.1.2 All correspondence in Welsh will be dealt with promptly.

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 United Welsh in Welsh.

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

## **4.2 Communication over the telephone**

4.2.3 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 United Welsh 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 public meetings are held by United Welsh, 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 The organiser will assess whether translation facilities are needed. As well as considering whether United Welsh has been informed of the chosen language of the attendees, he/she will consider the location of the event, who is likely to be present, and the subject in question.

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

4.3.4 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.

## **4.4 Other Meetings**

4.4.1 United Welsh welcomes meetings with the public in Welsh or in English, but due to the shortage of Welsh speakers, we 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 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.

4.4.3 We will aim to provide more face to face services through the medium of Welsh during the lifetime of this Scheme if required to meet demand and the needs of our customers.

#### **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.

### **5. The Public Face of United Welsh**

#### **5.1 Corporate Identity**

5.1.1 United Welsh is committed to developing a bilingual corporate identity and we will adopt a bilingual public image during the lifetime of this Scheme.

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

#### **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. Development site names created for marketing purposes will be Welsh or English (not bi-lingual) and will reflect the local heritage of the area. Street naming is the responsibility of the local authority.

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 the Association's 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.

#### **5.3 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 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.

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

5.3.7 Key documents aimed at the public such as the Annual Report will be available in a bilingual form on our website.

5.3.8 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 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 United Welsh will try to establish the chosen language of new tenants by including a “language choice” question on the initial housing application form. 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**

5.5.1 Press releases are a prominent part of United Welsh’s public face and we will therefore publish them bilingually when specifically targeting the Welsh media.

#### **5.6 Marketing and Publicity Campaigns**

5.6.1 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 essential for the role.

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

## **6. Implementation and Review of the Scheme**

### **6.1 Staffing**

6.1.1 United Welsh 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

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 Unit or 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.

6.1.6 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. We will also note the level of competence necessary for the post, for example “to be a fluent Welsh speaker”.

## **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 United Welsh will also provide awareness training for staff with regard to the requirements of this Scheme. Our standard practice will be to include such training in the induction of new staff.

## **6.4 Vocational Training**

6.4.1 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 the Board of United Welsh. The Marketing and Communications Manager has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Language Scheme. All United Welsh employees 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,

## **6.6 Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme**

6.6.1 The following senior officer has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme – Marketing and Communications Manager

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 the United Welsh 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 Marketing and Communications Manager will report to the Management Board annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Board. The report will follow a format agreed with the Welsh Language 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**

6.7.1 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 United Welsh know about this Scheme, and how they can conduct their dealings with United Welsh 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 an appropriate location on our website.

6.8.3 We will ensure that United Welsh staff are familiar with the measures included in the Scheme in order to ensure that attention is paid to the measures whenever appropriate.

## Timetable for Implementation

Action	Lead Officer	Target Completion Date
Include a section within the induction programme for new starters on the Welsh Language Scheme and its requirements	GE	Feb 2008
Publish the Welsh Language Scheme on the United Welsh website	GE	March 2008
When new Customer Service Advisor positions become available, consider whether Welsh should be included as a desirable or essential criterion for the job	GE & Human Resources	April 2008
Identify a pool of translators and translation services	GE	April 2008
Publish a list of Welsh speakers within the organisation	GE	April 2008
Use a range of communication channels, including the quarterly tenant newsletter and website, to promote the opportunities available to receive information in Welsh	GE	May 2008
Complete training with Customer Service Advisors on Welsh service delivery – including guidance on dealing with Welsh telephone calls	GE, LM, KHJ	April 2008
Complete a consultation exercise to identify the communication preferences of our customers.	LM	Sept 2008
Implement an awareness raising campaign within the organisation to inform staff about the Welsh Language Scheme and its requirements	GE	Sept 2008
Investigate the need for Welsh Language training / courses amongst key front line staff	GE & Human Resources	December 2008