



# **Welsh Language Scheme**

# **Annual Report**

# **2020-2021**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Welsh Language Scheme is a statutory scheme that treats the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality.
- 1.2. North Wales Housing has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality.
- 1.3. The revised Welsh Language Scheme was approved by the North Wales Housing Board in June 2010.
- 1.4. The officer responsible for the North Wales Housing Welsh Language Scheme is the Chief Executive.
- 1.5. The Board Welsh Language Champion is Dylan James.
- 1.6. This report is available to view on our website and hard copies are available on request.
- 1.7. This Monitoring Report covers the 2020/21 financial year and it looks at how well we have performed against our Welsh Language Scheme and in some cases the standards.
- 1.8. NWH was part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of Welsh Language Investigations undertaken by the Welsh Language Commissioner, NWH's response was completed in August 2015 and the compliance notice was expected in 2017/18. The compliance notice was delayed due to the elections in 2016 and has still not been received.
- 1.9. On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 the Welsh Language Commissioner published a new Regulatory Framework that is applicable to the Welsh Language Standards and Schemes.
- 1.10. A Welsh Language Bill was proposed to replace the Standards. However, following a period of consultation, the Government announced that they will not be proceeding with the Bill. The programme of introducing standards will continue instead. Housing Associations are awaiting these standards; no timetable has been given as to when we should expect receipt.
- 1.11. The Welsh Language Commissioner, Aled Roberts has been in post since April 2019.

## 2. Areas of Progress.

- 2.1. Staff have continued to follow the standard bilingual guidelines for answering telephone calls, e-mails (signatures and out of office) and their voicemail messages.
- 2.2. The number of fluent Welsh speaking staff has decreased very slightly from 40% in 2019/20 to 39.87% in 2020/21, Level 4 has increased from 11% to 12.65%. Overall, there has been a total increase of those comfortable using conversational Welsh to Fluent Welsh rising from 66% in 2019/2020 to just over 67% in 2020/2021.

	No of Staff 2020/2021	%
<b>Pre level 1</b>	4	2.53%
<b>Level 1</b>	21	13.29%
<b>Level 2</b>	22	13.92%
<b>Level 3</b>	23	14.55%

<b>Level 4</b>	20	12.65%
<b>Fluent</b>	63	39.87%
<b>Not assessed</b>	5	3.16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 2.3. The Welsh language recruitment assessments for Level 1, 2 and 3 have been reviewed and continue to be used for recruitment. During the lockdown assessments have taken place online or over the phone.
- 2.4. A flow chart has been developed to identify the Welsh language requirement for each post to aid with recruitment and individual development.
- 2.5. All corporate external communication is bilingual.
  - 2.5.1. Website, Twitter and Facebook
  - 2.5.2. AGM Paperwork
  - 2.5.3. Rent Statements
  - 2.5.4. Clwb Seren (Tenants Newsletter)
  - 2.5.5. Leaflets produced
- 2.6. The Older Persons Team have been using the Tenant Profiling data to tailor service provision, this includes the use of the Welsh Language.
- 2.7. A STAR Tenant Satisfaction Survey (March 20) was undertaken and 93.1% of respondents were satisfied with the arrangements to communicate in their language of choice, an increase of 6.1% from December 2018.
- 2.8. Welsh language and culture was celebrated on St David's Day by staff and Tenants/Service Users. This year's celebrations were slightly different to normal due to the Coronavirus pandemic and that majority of staff were working from home. Celebrations were therefore held virtually; a number of sessions took place over the day, from Welsh bingo, quiz and a session which gave learners the opportunity to practice their Welsh.
- 2.9. All complaints are registered centrally and held on our Open Housing system – again there have been no complaints in 20/21 in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme.
- 2.10. North Wales Housing has continued to support new members of staff on an individual basis to attain the Welsh language requirement for their role during their probationary period, if required. Staff are provided with a selection of written material/workbooks, CD's and details of apps and websites to assist them in their preferred method of learning. Mentors are also allocated and other bilingual staff are encouraged to converse with them in Welsh whenever possible to help to build confidence and practice.
- 2.11. Several staff members have attended weeklong intensive residential courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn to improve their language ability and confidence. The feedback from these courses has been extremely positive. This style of learning is more intense consisting of a choice of daily or residential attendance including social activities through Welsh.

### 3. Areas for Improvement

- 3.1. Some staff are below the Welsh level for their role and have not yet made a commitment to learn, NWH's existing policies (Conduct/Capability) would be followed to ensure consistency, however clear expectations of requirements will be communicated to staff before any process is invoked.
- 3.2. The Welsh Language Group will be reviewing the monitoring programme for employees.
- 3.3. Tenant profiling is an ongoing process and the information is used in service planning, but further work needs to be undertaken to enable tailored communication i.e. to identify those tenants who would prefer correspondence and communication in Welsh etc. Some tenant profiling information was updated during Covid-19 tenant welfare calls, and the updated information will be used for future planning.

#### **4. Service Delivery, Welsh Language Skills and Promoting the Language**

##### **4.1 Recruitment**

- 4.1.1 Application documentation is available bilingually and candidates have the option to undertake their interview in their language of choice.
- 4.1.2 We continue to use a Welsh Language Assessment for each applicant who successfully progresses to the interview stage. Guidance is provided on our website and available by request. The assessment is undertaken by a staff member using a structured process. This is now taking place online or over the phone since lockdown.
- 4.1.3 Level 1, 2 and 3 assessments have been reviewed and implemented for all posts.
- 4.1.4 A flow chart to assess the level of Welsh required for advertised posts is being utilised to ensure that the right level of Welsh language is recruited for.

##### **4.2 Induction**

- 4.2.1 All new staff receive an induction. Part of this induction is a session about the Welsh Language Scheme at NWH, the move towards standards, what is expected of them, especially in relation to communication.
- 4.2.2 Each new member of staff is provided with the guide "How to communicate in Welsh – answering the phone, voicemail and e-mail." This is also saved on the intranet.
- 4.2.3 In 2020/2021, 25 new staff went through the induction process.

##### **4.3 Training**

- 4.3.1 Following budgetary restrictions and drop-off of attendance at classes, alternative options for learning have been provided.
- 4.3.2 A wide variety of learning options are offered to staff including cd's, apps and online training, webinars, face to face training and intensive weeklong residential courses. This year all training has been carried out remotely. However, when safe to do so we would like to look into the possibility of continuing to offer residential training and reintroduce face to face learning.
- 4.3.3 Training is provided during work time and is open to any member of staff.
- 4.3.4 The aim is to provide staff with the opportunity to undertake training at each level and all learners continue to be assessed on an ongoing basis, ensuring improvement and the identification of learning needs.
- 4.3.5 There are some staff that are not meeting the Welsh Level requirement of their role and are not currently undertaking any training; the approach to change this still needs to be developed and implemented.

#### **4.4 Complaints**

We manage formal complaints well and have an established process. Again, there were **no** complaints received that relate to the Welsh Language in 2020/21.

#### **4.5 Front Line Service Delivery**

Staff have been fully supported to ensure call answering and email communications are compliant with our commitment to our Welsh Language Policy.

#### **4.6 Celebrating the Welsh Language and Culture**

4.6.1 St David's Day was celebrated virtually due to the Coronavirus pandemic. A number of sessions took place over the day, from Welsh bingo, quiz and a session which gave learners the opportunity to practice their Welsh.

4.6.2 There is also a Welsh language group who actively promote the Welsh language internally and externally. One way they do this is by encouraging learners to share their learning journey with other staff.

#### **4.7 Website and Social Media**

4.7.1 We continue to provide our website, Facebook and Twitter accounts bilingually, these are managed by bilingual staff.

4.7.2 We have seen an increase in the use of Facebook with our tenants and we want to see further increases.

4.7.3 Bilingual staff are able to respond to comments received in Welsh.

#### **4.8 Promoting the Welsh Language**

We attended a virtual jobs fair organised by Bangor University to promote the benefits of speaking Welsh in the workplace to the university and local school students.

### **5. Management and Administration of the Scheme**

5.1. On a day to day basis the Scheme is managed by the Chief Executive.

5.2. There is a Welsh Language Group ("Group") that meets approximately every 2 months, with representatives from senior management and various service areas from across the organisation. As far as possible the representation consists of a 50:50 split between fluent Welsh speakers and learners. The Group was relaunched in 2020 and new members are recruited periodically.

5.3. The Welsh Language Monitoring Report is approved by the Group Board prior to publishing.