



Welsh Language Scheme Annual Report 2022-2023

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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 2022/23 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 3rd 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 1st 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. Following the death of Aled Roberts, Efa Gruffudd Jones has been appointed Welsh Language Commissioner in January 2023.

2. Current Position

- 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 slightly from 41.81% in 2021/22 to 38.86% in 2022/2023, Level 3 has also decreased from 16.36% to 16.06%. These are reflected in our total decrease of those comfortable using conversational Welsh to Fluent Welsh dropping from 70% in 2022/2023 to 63% in 2022/2023.

	No of Staff 2022/2023	%
Pre level 1	5	2.59
Level 1	27	13.99
Level 2	27	13.99

Level 3	31	16.06
Level 4	16	8.29
Fluent	75	38.86
No Data	12	6.22
Total	193	100%

The Welsh language recruitment assessments for Level 1, 2 and 3 have been reviewed and continue to be used for recruitment. Assessments take place over the phone or face to face, depending on the role. A flow chart has been developed to identify the Welsh language requirement for each post to aid with recruitment and individual development.

2.3 All corporate external communication is bilingual.

- 2.3.1 Website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn
- 2.3.2 AGM Paperwork
- 2.3.3 Rent Statements
- 2.3.4 Clwb Seren (Tenants Newsletter)
- 2.3.5 Leaflets produced
- 2.3.6 Videos are subtitled

2.4 Welsh language and culture was celebrated on St David's Day by staff and Tenants/Service Users. Our annual staff conference was held on St.Davids Day and was themed around the Welsh Language and culture.

2.5 All complaints are registered centrally and held on our Open Housing system – again there have been no complaints in 22/23 in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme or the use of the Welsh language.

2.6 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. Work Welsh learning is offered to staff who want to learn, and 'Panad a Sgwrs' sessions are organised to give the opportunity to practice. Mentors are also available, and other bilingual staff are encouraged to converse with them in Welsh whenever possible to help to build confidence and practice.

3 Areas for Improvement

3.2 We will continue to support staff who are below the Welsh level for their role and have not yet made a commitment to learn, signposting them to appropriate courses and giving them opportunity to practice wherever possible.

3.3 The Welsh Language Group will be reviewing the monitoring programme for employees.

3.4 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.

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 Training

4.2.1 Following budgetary restrictions and drop-off of attendance at classes, alternative options for learning have been provided.

4.2.2 A wide variety of learning options are offered to staff including online training and a return to residential training and reintroduce face to face learning.

4.2.3 Training is provided during work time and is open to any member of staff.

4.2.4 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.

4.2.5 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.

4.3 Complaints

We manage formal complaints well and have an established process. Again, there were **no** complaints received that relate to the Welsh Language in 2022/23.

4.4 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.

4.5 Celebrating the Welsh Language and Culture

4.5.1 St David's Day was celebrated at our annual staff conference which had a Welsh language and culture theme. Individual schemes also celebrated by hosting their own events, particularly in the Older Persons schemes.

4.5.2 There is also a Welsh language group, which will be re-launched in the summer of 2023, 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.

4.6 Website and Social Media

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

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

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

4.7 Promoting the Welsh Language

We attended a number of jobs fairs, promoting the organisation's commitment to the language and culture to prospective job seekers and 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. New members are recruited periodically.

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