

Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association

Welsh Language Scheme



This 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 **20/10/09**

1. Opening Statement

Aim of the scheme

Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association (MTHA) has adopted the principle, that in the conduct of public business in Wales, that it will 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.

Objectives:

- To promote the use of the Welsh Language in the community.
- To encourage others to promote and use the Welsh Language in the workplace.

MTHA 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.

2. Introduction

Background and Corporate Values

Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association is a charitable housing association registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. It was established in 1977 and formed out of a local branch of Shelter. Its original aim was to address a shortage of specialist accommodation and the decay within terraced housing communities.

Our Purpose

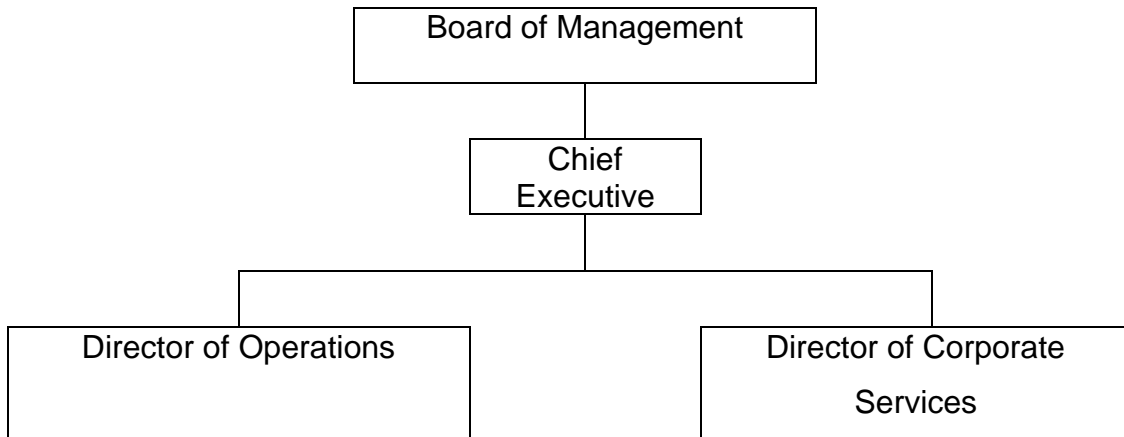
Working with people to improve their lives.

Our Vision

We will work with people within the borough of Merthyr Tydfil and provide sustainable tenancies in quality accommodation within vibrant communities.

Structure and Area of Operation

A voluntary, unpaid Board of Management, to whom a Chief Executive is responsible, supervises the Association. The senior management structure is as follows:



The Association employs 47 members of staff at their office at 11/12 Lower High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8EB.

Service Users

The Association works exclusively within the communities that make up the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and provides homes to rent and associated services to people who cannot afford to buy or rent a property on the open market. There are 1,183 homes in management. A mix of Social Housing Grant from the Welsh Government (currently 58%) and private sector loans have funded these.

The Welsh Language

These figures will be updated following the results of the 2021 National Census. However, in the interim, the following table is taken from the Welsh Government Welsh language use in Wales, 2013-15.

Fluent			Not fluent		
2004-06	2013-15	Difference	2004-06	2013-15	Difference
2,000	1,500	-600	1,900	4,600	2,800

Table 2: Welsh speakers by fluency and local authority area, 2004-06 and 2013-15 (Merthyr Tydfil)

Source

[Welsh language use in Wales, 2013-15 \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/welsh-language-use-in-wales-2013-15)

Merthyr Tydfil

We will strive to act in accordance with the principles of Iaith Pawb, the Welsh Government’s action plan for a bilingual Wales.

From respondents to our 2021 tenant census, we have 9 tenants (0.8%) who can either speak and or write Welsh.

The contact point for the Language Scheme is the Director of Corporate Services, who can be contacted on 01685 352807, or heather.beynon@mtha.org.uk

3. Planning and Delivering Services

3.1 Policies and Initiatives

3.1.1 In formulating new policies and initiatives, or when reviewing and amending policies, MTHA 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 MTHA will consult the Board beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Language Scheme. The Scheme will not be amended without the prior agreement of the Board.

3.1.3 We will ensure that whoever is involved in the formulation of policies is aware of the Scheme and of MTHA'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 MTHA's new policies and initiatives promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language whenever possible.

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 MTHA will carry out the commitments noted in the scheme by implementing the following arrangements:

- To share services for Welsh speakers with nearby establishments which provide the same services, or to purchase services from them.
- Adopt systems or procedures which facilitate the provision of service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service.
- Employ professional translators if necessary.
- Raise awareness among MTHA's staff of the Language Scheme.

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 MTHA will ensure that staff are aware of the requirements of the Language Scheme when operating in partnership.

3.4 Quality standards

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

3.4.2 MTHA will highlight this central principle in key documents such as corporate plans and annual reports. It should be outlined also in other situations where statements are made regarding equal opportunity and standard of service.

4. Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 MTHA welcomes correspondence in Welsh.

4.1.2 All correspondence will be dealt with promptly and correspondence through the medium of Welsh should not in itself lead to a delay.

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 We will keep a record of those persons who wish to communicate with us in Welsh.

4.1.6 We will agree arrangements for correspondence for arranging translation.

4.2 Communication over the telephone

4.2.1 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 MTHA 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 MTHA, including conferences and other similar events, those present will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English.

4.3.2 When there are Welsh speakers among those invited to attend, or if it is known that Welsh speakers intend to be present, translation facilities should be arranged.

4.4 Other meetings

4.1.1 MTHA 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.

4.5 Communicating with the public in other ways

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 MTHA

5.1 Signs

5.1.1 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.

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

5.1.3 There are processes in place to ensure the accuracy of text, and we will coordinate and review this carefully, especially when work is carried out.

5.1.4 When developing a new estate or other accommodation, MTHA will suggest a name that is consistent with the heritage and history of the area.

5.2 Publishing and printing materials

5.2.1 We will produce our key strategic documents or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form, upon request.

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

Website

5.2.3 Key documents will be available in a bilingual form on our website upon request.

5.3 Forms and explanatory material

5.3.1 We will produce bilingual forms when it is reasonably practicable and appropriate under the circumstances.

5.3.2 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 Press Releases

5.4.1 Press releases are a prominent part of the MTHA's public face, and we will therefore publish them bilingually when appropriate under the circumstances.

5.5 Marketing and Publicity Campaigns

Our marketing campaigns will comply with the relevant sections of this Scheme.

5.6 Official Notifications, Public Notifications and Staff Recruitment Advertisements

5.6.1 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.

5.6.2 Our staff recruitment advertisements will be bilingual for posts where Welsh language skills are required.

5.6.3 Information packs, such as job descriptions and person specifications will be prepared in Welsh and English for every post where Welsh language skills are essential or desirable.

6. Implementation and Review of the Scheme

6.1 Staffing

6.1.1 MTHA 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 the area.

6.1.2 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 and in advertisements. 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 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.

6.3.3 Dictionaries and electronic material will be available to help members of staff who are learning Welsh.

6.3.4 MTHA will also provide awareness training for staff with regard to the requirements of this Scheme on an annual basis. Our standard practice will be to include such training in the induction of new staff.

6.5 Administrative Arrangements

6.5.1 This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of MTHA. The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Language Scheme and all the Association’s members of staff have a responsibility to know how to implement the Scheme effectively.

6.5.2 The relevant Director will be responsible for implementing the clauses of the Language Scheme.

6.6 Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme

6.6.1 The following senior officer has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme: Director of Corporate Services.

6.6.2 We will use MTHA’s 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.

6.6.3 The Chief Executive will report to the Board of Management annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Board. The report will follow a format agreed with the 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 MTHA know about this Scheme and its contents, and how they can conduct their dealings with the Association in Welsh.

6.8.2 Our methods of publicising the Scheme and its contents will follow our usual corporate publicity arrangements, and we will ensure that the Scheme is published in a prominent location on our website.

6.8.3 We will ensure that the Association's staff and agencies are familiar with the measures included in the Scheme in order to ensure that attention is paid to the measures whenever possible.