

VALLEYS TO COAST

WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

This Welsh Language Scheme has been prepared under 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 March 2012



BWRDD YR IAITH
GYMRAEG • WELSH
LANGUAGE BOARD

1. Aim of the Scheme

Valleys to Coast (V2C) has adopted the principle 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 customers whilst also having regard to our operating context.

Objectives

- a) To enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with V2C to do so through the medium of Welsh or English according to the personal choice of the individual.
- b) To ensure that the services available through the medium of Welsh are high quality services.
- c) To promote the use of the Welsh language in the community.
- d) To encourage others to promote and use the Welsh language.
- e) To promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the workplace.

V2C acknowledges that customers can express their opinions and needs better in their chosen language. It also acknowledges that enabling customers 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. V2C will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with it, in accordance with the principle above.

2. Introduction

Background

Valleys to Coast Housing Limited was created as a result of the formal transfer of all the housing stock from Bridgend County Borough Council in September 2003. V2C was the first large scale voluntary transfer organisation to be formed in Wales. We are an Industrial and Provident Society with charitable status and our aim is to provide homes in thriving communities where people feel safe and want to live.

The Welsh Language

V2C is committed to act in accordance with the principles of the Welsh Government's action plan for a bilingual Wales.

According to the 2001 Census approximately 13,500 people aged 3 years or over in the Bridgend County Borough (11%) can speak Welsh. We propose to implement our scheme by offering language choice as far as is reasonably practical.

We will promote and support the enhancement of the Welsh language through the provision of training and support for our staff members.

The arrangements will be kept under review, and should circumstances change, we will ensure that the Welsh Language Scheme is reviewed to reflect changes as appropriate, and that resources are made available to reflect such circumstances.

3. Planning and Delivering Services

Policies and Initiatives

In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, V2C will assess the linguistic impact and make sure they are consistent with this Welsh Language Scheme and will ensure that the measures in the Scheme are implemented when new policies and initiatives are implemented.

V2C will consult the Welsh Language Board beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Welsh Language Scheme. This Scheme will not be amended without the prior agreement of the Welsh Language Board.

V2C will ensure that whoever is involved in the formulation of policies is aware of the Scheme and of V2C's responsibilities under the Regulatory Code and the Welsh Language Act 1993.

Service Provision

We will ensure through clear information and signposting that those dealing with us are aware of how we can communicate with each other both in Welsh and English as required.

We will endeavour to establish the chosen language of those dealing with us, and will strive to ensure that we have sufficient members of staff who are confident and competent to offer assistance in Welsh. To ensure a high quality level of service, we will supplement the language skills of our staff with professional translation services, and these facilities will be readily available to avoid any unnecessary delay in service provision.

Services provided for customers by other organisations

Regulatory functions and third party services

Any contracts or arrangements made with a third party will be consistent with the relevant sections of this Scheme.

Partnerships

V2C works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies. V2C operates on many levels when working with others. V2C will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the Language Scheme when operating in partnership.

Quality Standards

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

4. Dealing with Welsh Speaking Customers

Correspondence

V2C welcomes correspondence in Welsh. All correspondence will be dealt with promptly and correspondence through the medium of Welsh should not in itself lead to delay. When someone writes to us in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh (if a reply is needed).

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.

We will keep a record of those persons who wish to deal with V2C in Welsh.

Communication over the telephone

V2C welcomes telephone calls in Welsh and our standard practice is to ensure that customers can speak in Welsh or in English when dealing with us over the telephone.

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 V2C 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.

General Public Meetings

When public meetings are held by V2C, including conferences and other similar events, those present will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English. If it is known that Welsh speakers intend to be present, translation facilities will be arranged.

Other Meetings

V2C welcomes one to one meetings with customers in Welsh or in English, but due to the shortage of Welsh speakers within the organisation we cannot always guarantee a face to face meeting in Welsh without prior notice. In such circumstances we will politely explain the situation and offer other options, such as making an appointment to meet with a Welsh speaking member of staff, organising translation or proceeding with the meeting in English.

Communicating with customers in other ways

We will incrementally increase the amount of information on our website available in Welsh with specific targets featuring in our Action Plan.

We will consider the best ways of meeting the needs of Welsh speakers when planning communication exercises to all customers.

5. The Public Face of the Association

Corporate Identity and Signs

V2C undertakes to adopt and introduce a bilingual identity during the life time of this scheme.

When V2C renews or re-erects any signs we will ensure that the new versions are bilingual. Signs erected for the first time will be bilingual. The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.

Publishing and Printing Materials

V2C will normally produce documents and customer information in English but undertakes to provide translations of any corporate material upon request.

Press Releases, Notifications and Advertisements

Our press releases and notifications will normally be issued in English, but will be bilingual when appropriate under the circumstances. In such instances they will be equal as regards to form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

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

6. Implementation and Review of the Scheme

Staffing

V2C 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.

V2C will conduct an annual audit to establish the number of staff who have Welsh language skills, including a review of their ability and location. We will respond to a lack of skills by means of recruitment and/or training. We will also provide awareness training for staff with regard to the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme, and will include awareness training in the induction process for new staff.

Recruitment

When it is desirable or essential that an applicant should possess skills in the Welsh language, this will be noted clearly in the requirement section of the post description and in advertisements. We will also note the level of competence necessary for the post, for example “to be a fluent Welsh speaker”. Such advertisements will be produced bi-lingually.

Welsh Language Training

V2C will support this Language Scheme by encouraging and supporting members of staff to learn Welsh or to improve their skills in Welsh. Where a demand exists, Welsh lessons will be procured direct and be held on V2C premises.

Welsh Language Awareness sessions will also be included in the Induction Programme for all new starters.

Administrative Arrangements

This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of V2C. The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Language

Scheme and all members of staff have a responsibility to know how to implement the Scheme effectively.

Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme

The Chief Executive has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme:

Stephen Cook
Chief Executive

Valleys to Coast Housing
No.1 Court Road
Bridgend
CF31 1BE

Tel: 01656 762489

We shall use the organisation's standard compliments and complaints procedure to record and deal with feedback about this Scheme and will ensure that it will be possible to monitor specific complaints about the Scheme.

The Chief Executive will report to the Board of Management on an annual basis, 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.

Publication of Information

V2C 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.

Publicity

V2C will ensure that customers who deal with us know about this Scheme and its content, and how they can conduct their dealings with us in Welsh.

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 on our website.