

Welsh Language Scheme

Welsh Language Scheme prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Guidelines under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

ateb has adopted the principal that, in the conduct of public business in Wales, the Welsh and English language will be treated on the basis of equality. This scheme sets out how ateb will meet the principals established by the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the measures that ateb proposes to take to achieve the aims of the Act. This scheme also recognises the provisions contained in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 which is the official status of the Welsh language in Wales and the freedom to use Welsh. It should be noted that this scheme will be replaced by standards under the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and that ateb is committed to implementing the principles of the 2011 Measure.



1. Aim of the Scheme

ateb has adopted the principle, that in the conduct of public business in Wales, 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.

2. Objectives

To enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with the Association 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.

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

3. Introduction

Background and Corporate Values

ateb is a Co-operative & Community Benefit Society. It was established in 1981 as Pembrokeshire Housing Association. ateb's purpose is creating better living solutions for the people and communities of West Wales, and it works in partnership with both the statutory and voluntary sectors to achieve this.

Structure and Area of Operation

The Board of Management is comprised of voluntary members who are remunerated under a Deed of Agreement for Services. The staff team are employees, led by the Chief Executive. ateb currently has over 3,000 homes in management and an ongoing development programme to provide additional affordable homes in response to identified housing needs.

The properties are distributed from St Davids in the North West of the County to Saundersfoot in the South East. The majority of the homes are in the main urban centres of Haverfordwest, Milford Haven,

Pembroke and Pembroke Dock. There are smaller scale developments in the rural villages, in some cases individual properties.

Service Users

Our service users are primarily our tenants or those looking for a home. The role of housing associations is to provide accommodation to those who have least ability to secure a home in the open market. Many of our service users will be in low paid employment or in receipt of benefit.

The Welsh Language

According to the 2011 census, the percentage of Welsh speakers in Pembrokeshire is 19.2%, ranging from 29% in St Davids to 10.5% in Saundersfoot. In the urban centres where the bulk of housing provision is the respective percentages are Haverfordwest 14.6%, Milford Haven 8.9%, Pembroke 10.6%, and Pembroke Dock 9.3%.

Across the County the age group recording the highest percentage of people able to speak Welsh is 5 - 15-year olds (43.6%). The Welsh Language use survey 2013 – 2015 commissioned by the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner shows a reduction in fluent Welsh speakers between 2004 – 06 and 2013 – 15 of 1,400 (11,000 to 9,600) and an increase in non-fluent Welsh speakers of 1,600 (11,700 – 13,100). The Association will monitor the use of the Welsh language by its service users and seek to respond accordingly.

The Association has operated a Welsh Language Policy for a number of years, committing to correspond with customers in their language of choice within its standard response times, and to make information available in Welsh.

ateb will endeavour to act in accordance with the Welsh Language Commissioner's vision of "A Wales where people can use the Welsh Language in their everyday lives"

For further information about this scheme the contact is:

The Chief Executive, ateb Group Ltd, Meyler House, St Thomas Green, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire. SA61 1QP



4. Planning and Delivering Services

Policies and Initiatives

In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, the Association 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.

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

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

Service Provision

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.

The Association will carry out the commitments noted in the Scheme by implementing the following arrangements:

- Adopt systems or procedures which facilitate the provision of service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service;
- Raise awareness among the Association's staff of the Language Scheme
- Consider the need to increase the availability of Welsh language skills by means of training and recruitment.

Services Provided for the Public by Other Organisations

Regulatory Functions and Third-Party Services

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

Partnerships

When the Association joins or forms a partnership, it will ask prospective partners about their Welsh language schemes, language policies or the means by which they will operate bilingually. Within any

partnership, the Association will offer advice and support to the other partner organisations.

The Association will ensure that officers 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.

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

5. Dealing with the Welsh Speaking Public

Correspondence

The Association 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. Our performance targets for responding to correspondence are the same, irrespective of language.

When someone writes to us in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh (if a reply is needed).

We will keep a record of those persons who wish to deal with the Association in Welsh, to ensure they receive communication in their language of choice.

We will agree arrangements for correspondence and for arranging translation.

Communications over the Telephone

We have a limited number of bilingual members of staff at present, therefore we are not able to deal with all phone calls in Welsh. When members of the public call and wish to speak Welsh, we will attempt to connect them with one of bilingual members of staff, arranging for a call back if necessary. They will also be offered the opportunity to make an enquiry in Welsh by letter.

Telephone calls will be answered with a bilingual greeting.

Public Meetings

When public meetings are held by the Association, including conferences and other similar events, those present will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English.

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.

Other Meetings

The Association 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 organising translation or proceeding with the meeting in English.

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 more bilingual staff.

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.

The Association is committed to enabling the public deal with us in Welsh through electronic communication, online or other media.

We will consider the requirements of this Scheme when providing or planning new information technology systems, or when providing interactive media.

6. The Public Face of ateb

Corporate Identity

The Association has adopted a bilingual corporate identity.

Signs

When we renew or re-erect any signs, we will ensure that the new versions of instructional signs are totally bilingual. Instructional 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

We will produce our key strategic documents or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form. The Association will explore opportunities to co-operate with other bodies in producing work for publication which is similar or the same.

Website

Our website is available in Welsh and English and key documents will be available in a bilingual form on our website.

We will ensure that Welsh text in our publications is of a high standard and that the tone is appropriate for the target audience.

Forms and explanatory material

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

Press Releases and Marketing Campaigns

Given the nature of our customer base and the geographical area within which we provide services, press releases will usually be in English. However, there may be circumstances in which the use of bilingual material would be relevant. We will consider all cases on an individual basis and respond positively as appropriate.

Official Notifications, Public Notifications and Staff Recruitment Advertisements

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.

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



7. Implementation and Review of the Scheme

Staffing

The Association 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.

In order to ensure we have appropriate Welsh language skills in the correct places, we will follow the following process:

- We will note those workplaces and posts where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable or essential.
- We will undertake a follow-up audit to re-establish the number of staff who have Welsh language skills, as well as their level of ability and location.
- The results of these two exercises will be compared in order to identify workplaces where there is a shortage of staff with appropriate skills in the Welsh language.
- We will respond to any lack of skills by means of our recruitment and training. 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.

Recruitment

When it is 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".

Welsh Language Training

We will support this Language Scheme by encouraging and supporting members of staff to learn Welsh or to improve their skills in Welsh. 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.

Administrative Arrangements

This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of the Association. 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.

Directors and Managers will have responsibility for implementing those aspects of the Scheme which are relevant to their work.

Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme

The Chief Executive has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this scheme. 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

We will seek the opinions of Welsh speakers occasionally regarding the range and standard of services provided by the Association through the medium of Welsh.

We will use the Association'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.

The Association welcomes and records recommendations on how to improve the service. The Chief Executive will report to the Board of Management annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Commissioner. 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.

Publication of Information

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 Commissioner.

Publicity

We will ensure that members of the public who deal with the Association know about this Scheme and its contents, and how they can conduct their dealings with the Association 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 in a prominent location on our website. 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 appropriate.

