

# **Welsh Language Scheme Tai Calon Community Housing Limited**

**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  
Commissioner under section 14(1) of the Act on 04/05/2012.

## 1. Opening Statement

**1.1 Aim of the Scheme** Tai Calon 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.

### **1.2 Objectives**

We acknowledge that members of the public can express their opinions and needs better in their chosen language. We also acknowledge 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. We will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with us, in accordance with the principle above.

## 2. Introduction

### **2.1 Background and Corporate Values**

2.1.1 Tai Calon is a community mutual housing association with charitable status that has tenants at its heart. We are a new organisation, based in Blaenau Gwent, set up specifically to own, manage and improve the homes previously owned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. We are:

- A significant land owner in Blaenau Gwent.
- The provider of 80% of affordable housing in Blaenau Gwent and providing services to several thousand older people in Blaenau Gwent.
- A major employer in the County Borough

At the heart of our five year corporate plan is our absolute commitment to deliver the promises made to tenants and leaseholders by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council on our behalf at transfer. We recognise that we have a one-off opportunity to really improve homes and communities, and that this is a chance to change lives and life chances for the better. At the same time, we must maximise the potential regeneration benefits that the planned investment in improving homes to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard can offer.

Within the five year span of our Corporate Plan, we want to be recognised as a model of best practice and innovation. We want people to actively want to live in our homes, which will be safe and well maintained, and when they do live in a Tai Calon home, to be proud to live there and to be part of the local community.

The Tai Calon Board has agreed its mission, vision and values.

2.1.2 Our **mission** is to:

- Deliver our promises, improving homes and lives.

2.1.3 Our **vision** is that we will deliver:

- Excellent homes and services to make our communities proud.

2.1.4 Our **values** or “how things are done at Tai Calon” are that we will :

- Be Tenant focussed
- Listen and learn
- Be Excellent
- Show respect
- Be Open and honest

The Board and Executive team have developed a range of actions which will begin to deliver our vision and measure our success in doing this through **eight key themes**. These are:

- Service delivery
- Asset management and WHQS delivery
- Resources delivery
- Partnerships delivery
- Performance management delivery
- Tenant investment delivery
- Communications and marketing delivery
- Early achievements

Throughout all of these themes runs the commitment to deliver the promises made to tenants and leaseholders. Further details of how these themes and actions will be delivered are contained in our business plan and in the operational plans for each directorate.

## **2.2 Structure and Area of Operation**

Tai Calon is owned by our tenants and leaseholders in Blaenau Gwent and governed by a 15 strong Board consisting of 5 tenant, 5 councillor and 5 independent members. A Membership Scrutiny Committee, made up of 15 members, holds the Tai Calon Board to account on behalf of Tai Calon Members and closely monitors the work of Tai Calon. We employ over 260 members of staff from our Headquarters in Blaina.

## **2.3 Service Users**

Our service users are primarily tenants, leaseholders and residents of our communities or those looking for a home in our communities.

## **2.4 The Welsh Language**

2.4.1 The 2001 census identified that within the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent 9.5% of the population aged 3 years and over were reported as able to speak Welsh.

2.4.2 In July 2010, over 6200 homes were transferred to Tai Calon from the Council. During 2009, a major consultation exercise took place with tenants, which involved home visits to over 90% of these tenants to explain the stock transfer process and ensure that they had the information they needed to enable them to make an informed choice in a tenants' ballot. All those visited were asked if they wanted to receive any information in Welsh. No tenants took up this offer.

2.4.3 Tai Calon is committed to providing quality services in line with the needs of its tenants and leaseholders and the communities it serves and aims to eliminate discrimination in all areas of its work. In order to gain a greater understanding of the needs of its tenants and communities, in December 2010, it asked all tenants to complete and return a census questionnaire. To date 4131 tenants have returned their completed questionnaire, which represents 66.6% of Tai Calon households. Of the 4131 respondents, 58 people answered "yes" when asked "Do you speak Welsh?" and 7 "yes" when asked "Do you prefer us to communicate with you in Welsh?"

2.4.4 As a consequence this policy has been framed on the basis that, at present, the proportion of service users and employees who are Welsh-speaking is very small in number. However, we recognise that individuals may request and have the right to ask us to use Welsh if that is their preferred language. In relation to future potential users we want to ensure that they have equality of access to our services and jobs whatever their language of choice. So we will produce key access documentation separately in each language giving people the choice of which language version they require. Each version will be published simultaneously, be equally accessible and will both carry a message saying "This (leaflet) is also available in (Welsh)" and "Mae'r daflen (hon) ar gael hefyd yn (Saesneg)". We will also promote and support the enhancement of the Welsh language through the provision of language training for our staff and Board members.

2.4.5 The arrangements will be kept under review and should circumstances change, we will ensure that the Language Scheme is reviewed to reflect changes in the community language profile and resources are made available to reflect such circumstances.

2.4.6 The contact point for the Language Scheme is the Chief Executive, who can be contacted at Tai Calon Community Housing, Solis One, Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, Gwent, NP13 3JW, telephone 0300 303 1717.

## **3. Planning and Delivering Services**

### **3.1 Policies and Initiatives**

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

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

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

### **3.2 Service Provision**

3.2.1 We aim to deliver the same high standard of service in both Welsh and English.

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

- Raise awareness among our staff of the Language Scheme;
- Strive to ensure that we have sufficient members of staff who are competent and confident enough to offer assistance and service in Welsh
- Endeavour to organise our service team so that staff who can speak Welsh can deal with the service users who speak Welsh;
- Adopt systems or procedures which facilitate the provision of service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service;
- Supplement the language skills of our staff with professional translation services, which will be readily available to avoid any unnecessary delay in service provision.

3.2.3 All key access documents will be immediately available in Welsh. Any other documents that are not immediately available in Welsh will contain the following statement. “This (leaflet) is also available in (Welsh)” and “Mae’r daflen (hon) ar gael hefyd yn (Saesneg)”.

This statement will also be displayed in all our reception areas, including our sheltered schemes

### **3.3 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.

### **3.4 Quality Standards**

Services provided in Welsh and in English will be equal in quality and, so far as possible, we aim to provide them within the same timescales.

## **4. Dealing with the Welsh Speaking Public**

### **4.1 Correspondence**

4.1.1 Tai Calon 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 any significant delay.

4.1.3 When someone writes to us in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh where 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 deal with us in Welsh.

4.1.6 We will agree arrangements for correspondence and for arranging translation.

### **4.2 Communication over the Telephone**

4.2.1 Tai Calon welcomes personal enquiries in Welsh or English.

4.2.2 Our switchboard staff will answer telephone calls with a bilingual greeting.

4.2.3 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 us 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 Tai Calon, 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 will be arranged.

4.3.3 We will assess the need for members of staff who speak Welsh to be present at public meetings to welcome the public and to deal with their enquiries. Our staff will make their language abilities evident at meetings, for example, by greeting people bilingually and using the “Iaith Gwaith” badges.

#### **4.4 Other Meetings**

4.4.1 We welcome 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.

4.4.2 When we arrange a face to face appointment with a member of the public, who has informed us that they would prefer to communicate with us in Welsh, wherever possible, we will ensure that a qualified member of staff who speaks Welsh attends the meeting.

#### **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. Public Face of Tai Calon**

#### **5.1 Corporate Identity**

We are committed to developing a bilingual corporate identity promoting Tai Calon and our premises and services using a bilingual logo.

#### **5.2 Signs**

5.2.1 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.

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

#### **5.3 Publishing and Printing Materials Including Forms and Explanatory Materials**

5.3.1 We will produce key access documents that are needed to access our services for the first time in both languages. Tai Calon's key access documents will initially comprise:

- Application forms for housing
- Application forms for employment
- Application forms to become a member of Tai Calon
- A summary of our approved Welsh Language Scheme explaining people's right to deal with us in Welsh if they wish to
- Leaflet explaining how to contact Tai Calon
- Leaflet explaining how to become a tenant
- Leaflet explaining how to apply for jobs at Tai Calon
- Leaflet explaining how to become a member

This list will be reviewed annually as the Scheme progresses.

5.3.2 We will produce these documents separately in each language giving people the choice of which language version they require. Each version will be published simultaneously, be equally accessible and will both carry a message saying "This

(leaflet) is also available in (Welsh)” and “Mae’r daflen (hon) ar gael hefyd yn (Saesneg)”.

#### **5.4 www.taicalon.org.**

Our website is mainly in English but we will ensure that:

- Our Welsh Language Scheme will be posted on our website.
- The key access information referred to above is also available in Welsh through our website.

#### **5.5 Press Releases and Presentations**

Usually, these will be issued in English. There may be notices or events where bilingual presentation is considered appropriate; in those cases this will be provided.

### **6. Implementation and Review of the Scheme**

#### **6.1 Staffing and Recruitment**

We will endeavour 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. In order to ensure that 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.
- We will conduct an audit every year to 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 used to ensure we provide access to sufficient staff with appropriate skills in the Welsh language.
- We will respond to any lack of skills by means of staff training.
- We will also provide awareness training for staff with regard to the requirements of this Scheme. Our standard practice will be to include such training in the induction of new staff.

#### **6.2 Welsh Language Training**

We will support staff to learn Welsh. The type of language training offered to staff will be appropriate to each individual's personal and professional needs, and the requirements of the organisation's business, but could include:

- A general introduction to the language for complete beginners.
- Confidence building sessions for staff with some knowledge of the Language.
- Advanced Welsh courses for front line staff.
- Welsh Language Awareness.

#### **6.3 Administrative Arrangements**

This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of Tai Calon. The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Language Scheme and all our members of staff have a responsibility to know how to implement the Scheme effectively.

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

## **6.4 Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme**

6.4.1 The Director of Housing and Community Services has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme.

6.4.2 We will use our standard comments, compliments and complaints processes to record and deal with feedback about this Scheme and will ensure that it will be possible to monitor specific complaints about the Scheme.

6.4.3 The Chief Executive will report to Tai Calon's Board annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Commissioner. The report will follow a format agreed with the Commissioner and will include information about the nature of any complaints and improvement suggestions received from the public in respect of the Scheme.

## **6.5 Publication of Information**

We will include a statement in our Annual Report, which will be sent to all of our tenants and a range of stakeholders, noting where members of the public can obtain a copy of our annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Commissioner .

## **6.6 Publicity**

6.6.1 We will ensure that members of the public who deal with us know about this Scheme and its contents and how they can conduct their dealings with us in Welsh.

6.6.2 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.

## WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME – IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

<b>Action Plan Target / Task</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Officer with Responsibility</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Maintain a directory of all customers requesting communication in Welsh.	Tenant census data, Northgate IT system.	Performance and Business Development Manager	On-going.
Ensure Customer Services greet callers bilingually.	Audit, mystery shopping.	Head of Housing	31 Sept 2012.
Raise awareness of staff about the Welsh Language Scheme.	Intranet site and Staff Forum - SATNAV	Chief Executive, Head of HR.	31 Sept 2012
Amend corporate logo to become bi-lingual.	Website, branding, signage, stationary.	Communications and Marketing Manager.	30 November 2012
Audit of all posts with regards to Welsh Language skills required.	Job descriptions and person specifications.	Head of HR	28 August 2012
Amend Role profiles to identify where Welsh language skills are desirable	Intranet, Role Profiles.	Head of HR.	28 August 2012
Add question to annual HR audit re level of welsh language skills	HR audit document, Intranet.	Head of HR.	28 August 2012
Establish Scheme Awareness, induction and Welsh language training	Training Delivery Plan.	Senior officer: Training and Development and Head of HR.	28 August 2012
Publish names of staff who have Welsh language skills on the intranet, as well as their level and ability.	Provision of internal directory on intranet.	Communications and Marketing Manager.	28 August 2012
Establish efficient and effective translation process to ensure there is no delay when a response to correspondence is required in Welsh.	No difference in response times for correspondence in Welsh and English.	Performance and Business Development Manager	31 July 2012
Publish internal guidelines and ensure that frontline staff knows how to respond to phone calls from Welsh speakers.	Publication of guidelines.	Head of Housing.	28 August 2012
Add statement to all documents and new leaflets stating in English and Welsh “This is also available in Welsh”.	Amended letters, leaflets and website.	Communications and Marketing Manager.	On-going
Display Welsh Language Scheme notice in reception areas.	Signage.	Head of Housing.	28 August 2012
Produce first time access leaflets and application forms in Welsh. Ensure they are available on website.	Service leaflets, application forms, website.	Communications and Marketing Manager.	1 November 2012
Produce an annual report for the Welsh Language Board.	Annual Report and website.	Chief Executive, Communications and Marketing Manager.	June 2013
Include a statement in our published Annual Report, noting where members of the public can obtain a copy of our annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Commissioner.	Annual Report and Newsletter.	Communications and Marketing Manager.	September 2013