



A WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME FOR MONMOUTHSHIRE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

This Welsh Language Scheme has been prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 (the Act) and the new Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations in Wales, Welsh Government, December 2011.

October 2023

1. Opening Statement

Aim of the Scheme:

Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) 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 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
- to promote the use of the Welsh language in the community
- to encourage others to promote and use the Welsh language
- to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the workplace

MHA 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. MHA 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 and Corporate Values

- MHA became operational with effect from 21 January 2008 upon the transfer of 3,604 properties from Monmouthshire County Council following a successful ballot of tenants. MHA is a Community Benefit Society with charitable objectives.
- As with all registered social landlords in Wales, MHA is registered with and regulated by the Welsh Government and is also registered with the Financial Conduct Authority and a member of Community Housing Cymru.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is: to provide high quality homes and services that put people first

Our Vision

Our vision is to provide high quality homes for both existing and new customers. We seek to transform lives and help people realise their ambitions within vibrant communities and areas where they aspire to live and work.

Our Values

Our values set out the way in which we deal with our customers, staff and other people and organisations:

Open

We will act honestly, with integrity and our decisions will be made inclusively and transparently.

Fair

We will be committed to delivering consistent services to everyone.

Flexible

We will be innovative and proactive and view change as an opportunity.

Achieving

We will set and aspire to reach ambitious goals and targets.

Structure and Area of Operation

- The county of Monmouthshire includes the area formerly covered by Monmouth Borough Council plus the community of Llanelly inherited from Blaenau Gwent Borough Council. The last census data (2021) shows that Monmouthshire County Council serves a population of 93,194.
- Monmouthshire is located to the East of Wales and the Eastern side of the County forms a border with England.

- A senior management team is made up of the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Housing and Communities and Director of Property Services.
- MHAs Board comprises of 10 independent Board members
- MHA has its registered office at its Headquarters, Nant-Y-Pia House, Mamhilad Technology Park, Mamhilad NP4 0JJ
- MHA has approximately 235 full and part-time staff

Service Users

- The eligibility requirements for social housing in Monmouthshire dictate that the majority of tenants will be in a state of need
- MHA tenants are on average older than the general population of MCC. On average, MHA tenants are also characterised by lower levels of income and educational attainment and higher levels of disability and ill health than the general population.

The Welsh Language

- According to the latest published 2021 census information 12.7% of the population over three years of age have skills in Welsh
- The most recent census figures show a decrease in the number of Welsh speakers residing in Monmouthshire, from 9.7% in 2011 to 8.7% in 2021.

For further information about MHA's Welsh Language Scheme contact Gwyndaf Tobias, Deputy Chief Executive on 01495 761110 (Gwyndaf.Tobias@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk).

3. Planning and Delivering Services

3.1 Policies and Initiatives

- 3.1.1 In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, MHA 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 MHA 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 MHA will ensure that whoever is involved in the formulation of policies is aware of the Scheme and of MHA'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 MHA will aim to ensure that MHA's new policies and initiatives promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language whenever possible.

3.2 Service Provision

- 3.2.1 As far as is reasonably practicable and appropriate in the circumstances MHA will ensure that our services are available to the public in Welsh and in English and we will inform the public that those services are available in both languages.
- 3.2.2 MHA will carry out the commitments noted in the Scheme by implementing the following arrangements:
- enable officers from one team who can speak Welsh to assist another team when the need arises;
 - share services for Welsh speakers with nearby establishments which provide the same services, or to purchase the 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 where appropriate;
 - raise awareness among MHA's staff of the Language Scheme;
 - consider the need to increase the availability of Welsh language skills by means of training and recruitment.

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 MHA works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies. MHA operates on many levels when working with others. MHA will ensure that officers 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 in English will be equal in quality and they will be provided within the same timetable.

4. Dealing with the Welsh speaking Public

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 MHA 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 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 deal with MHA in Welsh.

4.2 Communication over the telephone

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

4.2.2 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 MHA 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;
- name staff who can offer service in Welsh on leaflets, forms and other publications

4.3 General Public Meetings

4.3.1 When public meetings are held by MHA, including conferences and other similar events, those present will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English. There will be circumstances in which it will be appropriate on the basis of information, to hold all the activities bilingually, in Welsh only or in English only.

4.4 Other Meetings

4.4.1 MHA welcomes meetings with the public in Welsh or in English, but due to the limited number 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

4.5.1 We will consider the best ways of meeting the needs of Welsh speakers in whichever way we deal with the public.

4.5.2 MHA will consider including some content in Welsh in the continued redevelopment and updating of the website.

5. The Public Face of the Association

5.1 Corporate Identity

5.1.1 MHA has adopted and maintains a bilingual identity.

5.2 Signs

- 5.2.1 When MHA renews or re-erects any signs we will ensure that the new versions are bilingual. Signs erected for the first time will be bilingual
- 5.2.2 The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.
- 5.2.3 On occasions when circumstances dictate that Welsh and English signs are provided separately, they will be equal in terms of form, size, quality, clarity and prominence where reasonably practicable.

5.3 Publishing and Printing Materials

- 5.3.1 MHA will produce our key strategic documents or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form. Key strategic documents are produced in a bi-lingual form and available from MHA direct or on our web-site.
- 5.3.2 MHA will ensure that staff and those with responsibility for printing are aware of the policy and procedures for publication.
- 5.3.3 MHA will ensure that Welsh text in our publications is of a high standard and that the tone is appropriate for the target audience.

5.4 Forms and explanatory material

- 5.4.1 MHA will produce bilingual forms when it is reasonably practicable and appropriate under the circumstances.
- 5.4.2 When we produce bilingual forms, our standard practice will be to produce bilingual forms with both languages appearing together in the same document.

5.5 Press Releases

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

5.6 Marketing and Publicity Campaigns

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

5.7 Official Notifications, Public Notifications and Staff Recruitment Advertisements

- 5.7.1 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.
- 5.7.2 Our staff recruitment advertisements will be bilingual where appropriate and particularly for posts where Welsh language skills are required.

6. Implementation and Review of the Scheme

6.1 Staffing

- 6.1.1 MHA 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.
- 6.1.2 MHA 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 MHA will continue to 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.

6.4 Vocational Training

6.4.1 The HR Manager who has responsibility for training annually assesses the need for specific Welsh language vocational training for staff.

6.5 Administrative Arrangements

6.5.1 This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of MHA. The Director of Resources 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.

6.6 Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme

6.6.1 The following senior officer has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme

**Gwyndaf Tobias, Deputy Chief Executive: Telephone 01495 761110
(Gwyndaf.Tobias@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk).**

6.6.2 MHA 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.

6.6.3 The Deputy Chief Executive will report to the Board annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Commissioner upon request. 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 MHA 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 MHA 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.

6.8.2 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.