

The Pensions Advisory Service
Welsh Language Scheme: 2009

Introduction

Under the Welsh Language Act 1993 every public body providing services to the public in Wales has to prepare a scheme setting out how it will provide those services in Welsh.

This is our scheme.

It describes how we will give effect, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, to the principle established by the Welsh Language Act that, in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality.

The scheme covers the services that we provide to the public in Wales.

In this scheme, the term **public** means individuals, legal persons and corporate bodies. It includes the public as a whole, or a section of the public, as well as individual members of the public. The term includes voluntary organisations and charities. Directors and others representing limited companies are also within the meaning of the term 'public'. It does not, however, include persons who are acting in a capacity which is representative of the Crown, Government or the State. Consequently, persons who fulfil official functions of a public nature, even though they are legal persons, do not come within the meaning of the word *public* when they are fulfilling those official functions.

Further information about the scope and purpose of Welsh language schemes can be found in the Welsh Language Board's guidelines (www.Welsh-language-board.org.uk).

This scheme was prepared under Section 12 to 14 of the Act - and in accordance with guidelines issued by the Welsh Language Board under Section 9 of the Act. It came into effect on **17 March 2009**.

Background to the organisation

The Pensions Advisory Service is an independent voluntary organisation, founded in 1983. It is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales, company number 2459671. We are a public body and as such have been classified as an executive non departmental public body (NDPB). We are funded by means of a grant in aid from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This is recoverable from a general levy imposed on occupational and personal pension providers.

We provide a one stop pensions information and guidance service through:

- resolving specific problems an individual may be experiencing with a private pension provider;
- giving general information and guidance (other than investment guidance) on all pension matters;
- bringing to the attention of government departments, the public and the pensions industry areas of concern arising out of our experiences.

We provide our service through a mix of paid staff based in London and a nationwide network of volunteer pension professionals. It is delivered through:

- giving information and guidance on all aspects of pensions via our national telephone helpline, operated by a combination of volunteers and paid staff. The helpline is open Monday to Friday 9-00am to 5-00pm.
- responding to written enquiries received either by post, fax or email;
- dealing with written complainants an individual has with their pension provider;
- providing information and guidance to employees in the work place;
- contributing to press articles and participating in relevant radio and television programmes;
- giving talks to outside bodies on both pension issues and our role;
- Providing comprehensive information and guidance on our website www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk;
- producing and distributing leaflets on a range of pension issues;
- producing an annual review for public consumption;
- working in partnership with other bodies to ensure the public receive the best possible service.

Service planning and delivery

Policies, legislation, services and initiatives

Our policies, initiatives and services will be consistent with this scheme. We will support the use of Welsh and, whenever possible, will help the public in Wales to use Welsh as part of their day to day lives.

When we contribute to the development or delivery of policies, initiatives, services or new legislation led by other organisations, we will do so in a way which is consistent with this scheme.

Delivering services

We will ensure that as many as possible of our services are available in Welsh and we will let the public know when they are.

Standards of quality

Services provided in Welsh and English will be of equal quality and will be provided within the same timescale.

Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

Correspondence

Our normal practice will be as follows:

Our target time for replying will be the same as for replying to letters written in English.

When we initiate correspondence with an individual, group or organisation, we will do so in Welsh when we know that they would prefer to correspond in Welsh.

If the Welsh and English versions of any correspondence have to be published separately, our normal practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time.

Enclosures sent with bilingual letters will be bilingual, when available.

Enclosures sent with Welsh letters will be Welsh or bilingual, when available.

The above will apply to email correspondence as well as paper correspondence.

All hard-copy Welsh correspondence that we issue will be signed.

Telephone communications

Because of our location it would not be practicable for us to conduct telephone conversations in Welsh.

Our volunteer advisors give information and guidance on pensions matters over the telephone. As they are volunteers we cannot state that these positions are Welsh essential or desirable. However we will ask for information about their Welsh Language skills – this is described in more detail in the Recruitment section below.

Other dealings with the public in Wales

When we undertake **public surveys**, we will ensure that all aspects of communication with the public will be bilingual.

Respondents will be asked if they wish to respond to the survey in Welsh or English.

Our public face

Publications

We will prepare a programme, to be agreed with the Welsh Language Board, setting out how we will increase the availability of bilingual publications, over time.

We will publish material made available to the public in Wales bilingually, with the Welsh and English versions together in one document.

If the Welsh and English versions have to be published separately (for instance, where a single document would be too lengthy or bulky), both versions will be of equal size and quality - and our normal practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time and are equally accessible. Each version will note clearly that the material is available in the other language.

If not available free of charge, the price of a bilingual document will not be greater than that of a single language publication - and the price of separate, Welsh and English versions will be the same.

The above will also apply to material made available electronically on our website, on CD Rom or otherwise.

Websites

Our websites will include pages in both Welsh and English.

We will provide Welsh versions of the interactive pages on our websites.

We will prepare a programme, to be agreed with the Welsh Language Board, setting out how we will increase the Welsh language content of our website, over time.

When designing new websites, or redeveloping our existing websites, we will take into account the Welsh Language Board's *Bilingual Software Guidelines and Standards* and any other guidance issued by the Board with regard to developing websites.

Whenever we post English language publications on our websites, the Welsh versions will be posted at the same time, if available.

Forms and associated explanatory material

We will prepare a programme, to be agreed with the Welsh Language Board, to increase the number of forms available bilingually, or as separate Welsh and English versions.

This will include interactive forms published on our websites.

If the Welsh and English versions have to be published separately (for instance, where a single document would be too lengthy or bulky), both versions will be of equal size and quality - and we will ensure that both versions are available at the same time and are equally accessible. Each version will note clearly that the material is available in the other language.

When we enter information on Welsh versions of forms that are sent to the public, we will do so in Welsh.

When we enter information on bilingual forms that are sent to the public, we will do so bilingually unless we know that the recipients would prefer to receive the information in Welsh or English only.

When other organisations distribute forms on our behalf, we will ensure that they do so in accordance with the above.

We will prepare a programme, to be agreed with the Welsh Language Board, to increase the number of forms available bilingually, or as separate Welsh and English versions.

Official notices, public notices and staff recruitment notices

Official notices, public notices and staff recruitment notices placed in English language newspapers (or similar media) distributed mainly or wholly in Wales, will be bilingual, or appear as separate Welsh and English versions. Notices will be in Welsh in Welsh language publications.

The Welsh and English versions will be equal in terms of format, size, quality and prominence – whether produced as a single bilingual version, or as separate Welsh and English notices.

In the English language media, posts where the ability to speak Welsh is essential may be advertised in Welsh, with a brief description in English.

Recruitment notices placed in English language journals (and other publications) with a UK-wide distribution may be in English, unless the post is one where the ability to speak Welsh is essential, in which case the notice may be fully bilingual, or in Welsh with a brief explanation in English.

Any official notices, public notices or staff recruitment notices placed elsewhere in Wales will be bilingual.

Press releases and contact with the media

Press releases to the Welsh language press and broadcasting media in Wales will be issued in Welsh where deadlines permit.

We will post Welsh language versions of press releases on our website, if available.

Implementing the scheme

Staffing

We have no offices in Wales. Even so, we will seek information about the Welsh language skills of job applicants and existing staff. This is discussed under *Recruitment*, below.

Recruitment

For any posts having extensive and regular contact with the public in Wales we will consider whether fluency in Welsh should be a desirable or essential skill – and this will be stated in job competencies and advertisements.

Our advisors are volunteers – they are pensions professionals who provide information and guidance to the public on a voluntary basis. Whilst we cannot state that these positions are to be Welsh essential or desirable, we will seek information about their Welsh language skills and attempt to attract Welsh speaking volunteers to provide these services to the public in Wales.

Information and Communications Technology

The need to provide information and services in Welsh, and operate in accordance with this scheme, will be catered for as we develop, design and purchase information and communications technology products and services.

We will modify our existing information and communications technology systems to ensure that they enable us to provide information and services in Welsh - and operate in accordance with this scheme.

As we develop or procure ICT systems we will take into account the Board's *Bilingual Software Guidelines and Standards*.

Internal arrangements

The measures in this scheme carry the full **authority**, support and approval of our organisation.

Operating in accordance with the scheme will be a **compliance** issue.

Managers will have the **responsibility** of implementing those aspects of the scheme relevant to their work.

We will appoint a senior member of staff to **coordinate** the work required to deliver, monitor and review this scheme.

We will prepare, and continuously update, a detailed **action plan** to be agreed with the Board, setting out how we will ensure that we will operate in accordance with this scheme. The action plan will come into effect on the date on which the scheme comes into effect, or as soon as possible thereafter. The plan will include targets, deadlines and a report on progress against each target. The overall aim of the action plan will be to ensure that we deliver the commitments set out in this scheme as soon as possible.

The scheme will be **publicised** to our staff, and to the public in Wales. It will be published on our website in a prominent place.

We will ensure that we use only qualified **translators** or interpreters for translation of electronic and printed material – and for simultaneous translation. We will make use of the Welsh language service provided by the Department for Work and Pensions' Pensions Service Welsh language unit. We will expect that any additional translation work will be done by members of the Association of Welsh Translators or a similar organisation.

Any form of contact with the public in Wales, which is not specifically dealt with by this scheme, will be undertaken in a manner which is consistent with the general principles enshrined in this scheme.

Monitoring

We will monitor our progress in delivering this scheme against the targets set out in its accompanying action plan. We will report to our senior management on that progress.

Our existing monitoring and reporting procedures will include reference to progress in delivering this scheme, as appropriate.

We will report to the Welsh Language Board on our progress in delivering this scheme, when requested by them.

Our target is to ensure that we act in accordance with the aims and objectives of this scheme within four years of its coming into effect. We will use a self-assessment procedure, to be agreed with Board, in order to monitor progress against this target.

Reviewing and amending the scheme

We will review this scheme within four years of its coming into effect.

Also, from time to time, we may need to review this scheme, or propose amendments to this scheme, because of changes to our functions, or to the circumstances in which we undertake those functions, or for any other reason.

No changes will be made to this scheme without the Welsh Language Board's approval.

Complaints and suggestions for improvement

Complaints related to this scheme, or suggestions for improvement, should be directed to the senior member of staff with responsibility for the scheme, at the following address:

Barry Wilkins
Director of Administration
The Pensions Advisory Service
11 Belgrave Road
London
SW1V 1RB

Or by email to: barry.wilkins@pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk

We will cooperate with the Board in order to resolve complaints - and during any investigations held under Section 17 of the Welsh Language Act.