

Pensions Ombudsman

Welsh Language Scheme: 2007

## **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](http://www.welsh-language-board.org.uk)).

This scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board under Section 14 of the Act. It came into effect on 18/12/2007.



## **Background to the organisation**

The Pensions Ombudsman can investigate and decide complaints and disputes about the way that occupational or personal pension schemes are run.

The Pensions Ombudsman's role and powers have been decided by Parliament, and he is appointed by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. He is completely independent and acts as an impartial adjudicator.

There is no charge for using the Pensions Ombudsman's services.

The Pensions Ombudsman's decision is final and binding on all the parties to the complaint or dispute. It can be enforced in the Courts. His decision can only be changed by appealing to the appropriate court on a point of law.

The Office is based in London. Our website address is

<http://www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk>

Our address can be found on the last page of this document.

## **Service planning and delivery**

### **Policies, legislation, services and initiatives**

Our policies, initiatives and services will be consistent with this scheme. They 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.

### **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:

When someone writes to us in Welsh we will issue a reply in Welsh (if a reply is required). Our target time for replying will be the same as for replying to letters written in English.

We will use a scoring system, to be agreed with the Board, to identify objectively when standard or circular correspondence should be published as bilingual documents or as separate Welsh and English versions (for instance, when the correspondence is very technical or lengthy).

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 Welsh letters will be Welsh or bilingual, when available.

The above will apply to e-mail 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. However, any telephone help-lines, or similar facilities, to give information, services or support to the public in Wales will provide a Welsh language service. This will be advertised alongside the English language service. Both services will share the same telephone number.

### **Other meetings with the public in Wales**

Because of our location it would not be practicable for us to conduct face-to-face meetings with the public through the medium of Welsh.

### **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**

### **Advertising**

Any advertisements placed in English language newspapers (or similar material) distributed mainly or wholly in Wales, will be bilingual, or will appear

as separate Welsh and English versions (with both versions appearing simultaneously, and being equal with regard to size, prominence and quality).

In Welsh language publications advertisements will be in Welsh only.

### **Publications**

We will publish material made available to the public bilingually, subject to the scoring system referred to below, 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.

We will use a scoring system, to be agreed with the Board, to identify objectively when material should be published as separate Welsh and English versions or as bilingual documents.

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

### **Websites**

Our website homepage will be in both Welsh and English, and will also provide links to other information we produce bilingually.

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.

### **Forms and associated explanatory material**

We will use a scoring system, to be agreed with the Board, to identify objectively when forms and associated explanatory material should be published as separate Welsh and English versions or as bilingual documents.

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.

### **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.

## **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.

### **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.

### **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 expect those translators to be 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.

### **Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations**

We will operate in accordance with the Board's advice on the *Welsh Language Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations*.

When we release information under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, we will translate it into Welsh if requested provided that the number of words to be translated is less than 500.

### **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:

Jane Carey  
Business Manager  
Pensions Ombudsman  
11 Belgrave Road  
London  
SW1V 1RB

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