



**VOLUNTARY ACTION
MERTHYR TYDFIL
GWEITHREDU GWIRFODDOL
MERTHYR TUDFUL**

**BWRDD YR IAITH
GYMRAEG • WELSH
LANGUAGE BOARD**



Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil

Welsh Language Scheme

This voluntary scheme has been prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Board's Guidelines under the Welsh Language Act 1993

This updated Welsh Language Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board on 31.7.2009

1 Introduction

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil is the County Voluntary Council for the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough. Our mission is to provide a unique, quality service which supports, represents and helps develop voluntary organisations and volunteering in the County Borough.

Our vision is to:

- become a centre of excellence in Merthyr Tydfil for the provision of services to organisations and individuals involved with the voluntary sector and volunteering; and
- create a healthy civil society by helping to develop organisations to meet their needs, maximising volunteering opportunities and sharing our mission with all external stakeholders.

VAMT is based in Merthyr Tydfil's town centre and currently employs 23 staff. It has a Board made up of 9 representatives of local voluntary organisations and serves a population of approximately 58,000 residents. Of this, 6000 or 11% are fluent Welsh speakers.

VAMT's Equal Opportunities Policy aims to ensure that we treat people equally and fairly; and that no-one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, language, ethnic or national origin, disability, sex, marital status, sexuality, religious belief or age, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

VAMT recognises that members of the public can express their views and needs better in their preferred language, and

- Recognises the importance of providing services in accordance with the language preference of its users;
- Recognises that enabling the public to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice, not a concession; and that denying them the right to use their preferred language could place members of the public at a disadvantage; and
- Endeavours to offer to the public in Wales the choice of using either Welsh or English in their dealing with the organisation.

In order to reflect the language choices of local people, VAMT is committed to implementing a language scheme based on "As Good as our Words", guidelines produced by Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the Welsh Language Board for the voluntary sector; and which will seek approval as a voluntary scheme by the Welsh Language Board, under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

2 Mission statement towards the Welsh language

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will aim to treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. This scheme sets out how VAMT will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

3 Introduction to service delivery

All staff will be made aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme. VAMT will consult with the Welsh Language Board on any proposals which may affect the scheme. This scheme shall not be changed without prior agreement from the Welsh Language Board.

We have a commitment to ensure that any new policies or initiatives adopted will be consistent with the scheme, and we are committed to ensuring that the measures contained within the scheme are applied to any new policies and initiatives when they are implemented.

Our Commitment

- Welsh Language Scheme checklist to be used to measure possible Welsh language implications of all new policies and initiatives **from September 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager.**
- Welsh language scheme awareness will be included in the induction programme for new staff **by September 2009. Responsibility: Line Managers.**
- Awareness raising will take place for current staff around the Welsh language scheme. To be in place **by July 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager**
- Welsh Language Awareness Training will be provided to all staff via the Welsh Language Board's training pack **by October 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager**

4 Details of service delivery

4.1 Provision of services

VAMT provides a variety of services of support to the voluntary sector locally. These are managed on a day to day basis by the Chief Officer, with ultimate responsibility resting with the Board of Trustees.

As part of its role in assisting and supporting local voluntary organisations, VAMT will encourage, assist and support bilingualism amongst the voluntary community in Merthyr Tydfil and will offer advice on the use of bilingual material and the provision of services through

the medium of Welsh in collaboration with Canolfan a Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful

Our Commitment

- VAMT will survey the requirements of voluntary organisations in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil to ascertain their linguistic requirements with regard to the delivery of services. This will be built into the database update to take place **each year in May**.
Responsibility: Administration and Finance Manager
- The Volunteer Centre will record information on the linguistic skills of volunteers, the language skills required by voluntary bodies and match accordingly in line with the requirements of the national volunteer centre database **from September 2009**.
Responsibility: Volunteering Officers

4.2 *Equity of Service Standards*

VAMT welcomes dealings in both Welsh and English, and aims to provide an equal standard of service in both languages.

It aims to provide a high standard of service delivery in all aspects of its work, in accordance with the terms of this scheme. As with all its standards, VAMT will monitor and review its progress against the scheme regularly.

Our Commitment

- Progress in delivering the scheme will be monitored throughout the year by the Development Services Manager, and an **annual report will be prepared following the date of approval**.

Point of Contact

Anyone is welcome to contact VAMT regarding the contents of the scheme. VAMT's contact for the scheme is currently: Hilary Edwards, Development Services Manager

5 *Contact with VAMT*

All staff will be encouraged to undertake a basic Welsh in the Workplace course **to be delivered by November 2009**

Following this initial training, all staff will be encouraged and supported to continue to learn Welsh if they so wish. Progress with this commitment will be monitored on an **ongoing basis**. **Responsibility: Line Managers**

5.1 Policy on telephone contact

VAMT welcomes telephone calls in English and Welsh. Telephone greetings will be bilingual as standard, as will Switchboard answerphone messages to enable people to use English or Welsh. Progress with this commitment will be monitored on an **ongoing basis**.
Responsibility: Chief Officer.

Our Commitment

- Greeting are standardised and in a bilingual format
- Switchboard answerphone messages are bilingual
- All staff will be encouraged to undertake initial training in Welsh in the Workplace to enable them to give a bilingual greeting, and to have an elementary initial conversation with callers. **From December 2009.**
- Written guidance will be made available to all staff on responding to telephone calls in Welsh **by December 2009.**

5.2 Written correspondence

VAMT welcomes written correspondence in Welsh or English.

Corresponding through the medium of Welsh will not lead to any undue delay in replying. Responses will be signed and sent in the language of the original correspondence.

Our Commitment

- Standardise the practice of stating that correspondence is welcome in both languages **from August 2009**. This information is also included in our newsletter.
- Maintain the practice of responding to written correspondence in the language it is received
- Maintain relationships with appropriate translation agencies
- Appropriate support materials to be available such as spell checker software and use of translation web sites **from September 2009.**

6 Meetings and Events

VAMT arranges many key meetings and conferences, attended by many different groups. We aim to enable those who wish to speak Welsh at such meetings to do so. Notices of meetings sent out before hand will welcome participants to let us know in which language they wish to communicate. Arrangements will be made in the light of responses received.

Our Commitment

- Notices of key meetings and response slips include a question on language
- Ensure that in the light of these responses, guidelines are available on simultaneous translation facilities for meetings.

6.2 Other meetings

VAMT aim is to ensure that individuals and representatives of groups who wish to do so can have face-to-face dealings with a representative from VAMT, in Welsh. Once a language of choice has been established, future communications with that group will routinely be conducted in their chosen language.

7 Public Image

VAMT aims to have and maintain a completely bilingual identity for the organisation. Both languages will be equal in terms of font, size, quality and prominence.

Our Commitment

- Maintaining bilingual letter headings, compliment slips, fax sheets, information leaflets, grant application forms etc **Responsibility: Administration and finance Manager/Development Services Manger**
- Membership application forms,, volunteer registration forms, policies (eg, complaints policy) and all associated documentation will be

available bilingually **by December 2009. Responsibility: Administration and Finance Officer/Volunteering Officers**

7.1 Signs

All internal and external signs will be bilingual, with equal prominence being given to both languages.

Our Commitment

- All internal signage will be bilingual, with equal prominence being given to both languages. **Ongoing. Responsibility: Administration and Finance Manager**
- Any existing English only signage will be replaced with bilingual signage when it is renewed. **Ongoing. Responsibility: Administration and Finance Manager**

7.2 Publications

General Publications

All general Information leaflets, information sheets and volunteering leaflets will be produced bilingually.

Newsletter

The newsletter currently carries the WCVA national bilingual supplement.

Our Commitment

- In partnership with Canolfan a Menter Iaith Merthyr VAMT will aim to increase the number of Welsh-only and bilingual articles. **Ongoing. Responsibility: Communications Officer**
- Our next customer care survey will assess the views of our membership on a fully bilingual format. This will take place **in April 2010.**

Website

VAMT's website framework and static content will be bilingual, with equal prominence given to both Welsh and English. News items will be in English only.

Our Commitment

- Website revisions will be complete and the Welsh versions translated **by October 2009**
- The views of our membership will be assessed on a fully bilingual format **in April 2010**

Annual Report

A fully bilingual annual report is currently produced

Our Commitment

- We will continue to work with external designers to ensure WLB Guidelines on bilingual design are followed.
- All other key publications are produced bilingually

Press Contact

Our Commitment

- All media releases to national press are issued bilingually.
Responsibility: Communications Officer
- We aim to ensure that at least one Welsh speaking contact is given on release. **Responsibility: Communications Officer**

8 Publicity and Advertising

Any exhibitions and displays which promote and publicise the work of VAMT will be bilingual.

Our Commitment

- Any Volunteer Bureau advertising carried out will be bilingual
- All display and exhibition material is bilingual
- All organisational advertising is bilingual

Responsibility: Communications Officer

9 Recruitment and Recruitment Advertising

Recruitment

When recruiting for employment, VAMT aims to treat all sectors of the community equally, and to ensure that the ways in which jobs are designed, advertised and filled fulfil the requirements of our policy on equal opportunity. VAMT recognises that for some posts fluency in Welsh will be an essential requirement.

Our Commitment

When bids made for funding for additional staff, full discussion will take place around language needs of the organisation and the specific post.

Recruitment advertising

Staff recruitment advertising should be bilingual in national press, and in Welsh only when adverts are published in Welsh medium press.

For any post where Welsh language is considered to be an essential requirement, the advert will only appear in Welsh with a short English explanation.

Training and Development

VAMT will make every effort to ensure that sufficient numbers of staff are available to offer an effective bilingual service. VAMT will encourage and support staff both financially and with time allowances to develop their Welsh language skills.

Our Commitment

- We will work with Canolfan a Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful to source good quality and appropriate Welsh language classes for relevant staff from **July 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager**
- We will work with other agencies to develop basic Welsh language and telephony skills training from **July 2009. Training to be delivered by December 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager**

11 Implementation and responsibility

The scheme will be agreed by staff and Board. The Chief Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the scheme is implemented and monitored. Line managers will be expected to ensure that their team members are implementing the scheme. Currently, Hilary Edwards is responsible for the scheme, and for any queries relating to it. If this should change, the scheme will reflect this change, and member organisations will be notified in writing.

Our Commitment

- Written guidance on the scheme will be issued to all staff and Board members **by October 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager**
- Instructions and procedures for translation of material by professional translators to be issued **by October 2009. Responsibility: Development Services Manager**

Complaints

All complaints regarding the scheme will be dealt with under VAMT's published Complaints procedure. VAMT welcomes suggestions from its staff, trustees and members for improvements to its Welsh Language Scheme and service.

12 Monitoring

The implementation of this scheme will be measured against the target dates contained in this document, and will be reviewed annually, from the dates of the scheme's approval. **A copy of this report will be presented to the Board of Trustees and the Welsh Language Board annually.**

Revision of the scheme

The Welsh Language Scheme and the targets contained will be reviewed in their entirety after a period of four years in order to measure the necessity for revising the scheme and to produce a new set of targets.

Our Commitment

We will review the scheme and the target dates contained within it with the support of the Welsh Language Board **in April 2013. Responsibility: Development Services Manager and Welsh Language Board.**

13 Publicity

VAMT will aim to ensure that all Board members, staff, member organisations, partner organisations, funders and the general public are aware of its Welsh language scheme. It will ensure that anyone who deals with VAMT or uses its services are aware of the scheme. Copies of the scheme, in a bilingual format will be available free of charge, to member organisations, Board members, and members of the general public on VAMT's website.

Our Commitment

VAMT's newsletter "Inform" will carry a standard paragraph in each issue stating that we have a Welsh language scheme, and that any contact with us is welcomed in both English and Welsh **Ongoing. Responsibility: Communications Officer**

VAMT's website will contain a link to the Welsh Language Scheme **by October 2009. Responsibility: Communications Officer.**