

Welsh Language Scheme

Prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993

11th September 2006



Statement of principle

The Children's Commissioner for Wales adopts the principle that in the conduct of the work of his office the English and Welsh languages will be treated on the basis of equality. This scheme sets out how the Children's Commissioner for Wales will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

This scheme incorporates many of the current working practices of the Children's Commissioner's office in serving the public and in particular children and young people in Wales. In addition, the office is committed to developing its ability to provide a service in the other languages of Wales over a longer period of time. The scheme includes some new initiatives in addition to a formalisation of the commitment already expressed through the activities of the Children's Commissioner and his team.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales will be responsible for ensuring that all the staff of his office are aware of these commitments and arrangements, and will implement them.

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. 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.

Approval

The Welsh language scheme of the Children's Commissioner for Wales received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under Section 14 (1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on 11th September 2006.

The role of the Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Children's Commissioner for Wales was established by the Care Standards Act 2000 as a Corporation Sole. The powers of the Commissioner were further extended by the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001, and are detailed in the Children's Commissioner for Wales Regulations 2001.

The principle aim of the Children's Commissioner for Wales is set out in the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 as 'to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children in Wales, or normally resident in Wales'.

The Children's Commissioner and his team are there to help make sure that children and young people in Wales:

- are safe from harm and abuse
- get the opportunities and services they need and deserve
- are respected and valued
- have a voice in their communities and are able to play as full a part as possible in decisions that affect them
- know about their rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The main focus is on everyone aged 18 or under living in Wales, or who normally lives in Wales. But, the Children's Commissioner can also act in relation to older young people under certain circumstances – for example, if they have been looked after by the local authority. If there are implications for today's children and young people, he can also investigate things that happened to adults when they were children.

Under the legislation, the Children's Commissioner's role isn't limited to what are usually considered to be children's issues, such as health, education and social services. Planning, transport, the environment, economic development and rural affairs also fall within the scope of his role. The Commissioner can:

- review the effects of policies, proposed policies and the delivery of services to children
- examine the case of a particular child or children if it involves an issue that has a more general application to the lives of children in Wales
- require information from agencies or persons acting on their behalf, and require witnesses to give evidence on oath
- provide advice and assistance to children and young people, and others

The Children's Commissioner for Wales also has an additional power to consider and make representations to the National Assembly for Wales about **any matter** affecting the rights and welfare of children in Wales. This means that he can deal with issues outside the responsibility of the National Assembly, such as youth justice, the family courts and social security benefits.

In the conduct of his work, the legislation states that the Commissioner must:

- make sure that children and young people know where his offices are and how to contact him and his team
- encourage children to contact him and the team
- ask children what they think about his work and future work, and allow them to influence his work programme
- make sure that he and his staff go and meet children wherever they are
- have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in everything he and his team do.

The Children's Commissioner and his staff are based in offices in Swansea and Colwyn Bay, but cover the whole of Wales. Among the services and activities of the office are:

- An advice and support service for children and young people and adults who are concerned about their rights and welfare
- Policy and service reviews, for example of systems and arrangements in place for children's complaints, advocacy and reporting malpractice
- A bilingual website: www.childcomwales.org.uk
- Backchat/Atebnôl, which is an email group for children and young people allowing them to give their views and opinions
- Seminars, workshops and events aimed at professional audiences.
- Events for children and young people to allow them to influence and help prioritise the workplan of the Children's Commissioner and his team
- Consultation work with children and young people
- A targeted programme of workshops with children and young people from vulnerable or 'hard to reach' groups
- Influencing activity aimed at government at all levels and the general public
- A range of activities designed to promote awareness of children's rights and in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Planning and delivering services

Policies and initiatives

Our policies, initiatives and services will be consistent with this scheme. They will support the use of Welsh and will, whenever possible, allow the public, including children and young people, in Wales to use Welsh as part of their day-to-day lives.

When planning and formulating new policies and initiatives the Children's Commissioner for Wales will assess their linguistic consequences to ensure that they meet the commitments made in the Welsh Language Scheme. Guidance will be issued to staff on the need to assess whether there is a Welsh language dimension or implication to a specific initiative or piece of work. Application of this guidance will be monitored.

- New policies and initiatives formulated by the Children's Commissioner for Wales will:
 - a) facilitate the use of Welsh wherever possible.
 - b) move the Children's Commissioner for Wales closer to implementing the principle of equality.
- All Children's Commissioner for Wales staff involved in the formulation of policy and the development of new services will be made aware of the Scheme and of the Children's Commissioner for Wales's responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

Service delivery

Our normal practice will be to ensure that our services are available to the public in Welsh at an equally high quality as the services provided in English, by:

- Adopting procedures which facilitate service provision in either Welsh or English. These are more fully described in sections that follow.
- Providing training and guidance for staff to facilitate implementation of the scheme.
- Promoting bilingual working within the office and identifying effective and high quality translation services and making suitable arrangements for fast and reliable translations of all relevant material.

Our regulatory functions and services undertaken on our behalf by third parties

Any agreements or arrangements which we make with third parties will be consistent with the relevant parts of this scheme, when those agreements or arrangements relate to the provision of services to the public in Wales.

This will include services which are contracted out, granting licences and granting other permissions.

Standard and quality of service

- The service provided in Welsh will be of an equally high standard to that provided in English. The Children's Commissioner for Wales will ensure that it provides a consistent standard of service in Welsh across its activities.
- The standards applied to Welsh language service and their implementation will be monitored annually.
- Information concerning the Children's Commissioner for Wales's achievements under this Scheme will be included in his Annual Report each year.

Dealing with the public

Written correspondence

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales welcomes correspondence in Welsh as in English
- Correspondence in Welsh will be dealt with as quickly as correspondence in English.
- All replies from the Children's Commissioner for Wales will be in the language of the original letter.
- All correspondence following a face-to-face or telephone communication in Welsh will be in Welsh, unless the person concerned has requested otherwise.
- When we initiate correspondence with a member of the public, group or organisation, we will do so bilingually unless we know that they would prefer to correspond in Welsh or English only.
- A letter from the Children's Commissioner for Wales to individuals, groups or organisations which the Children's Commissioner for Wales knows work mainly in Welsh, or prefer to receive letters in Welsh, will be in Welsh.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will develop and maintain a database of those who wish their communication with the office to be in Welsh.
- Circular letters or standard letters will always be produced bilingually.
- 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 e-mail correspondence as well as paper correspondence.
- All hard-copy Welsh correspondence that we issue will be signed.
- Written guidance on the above will be issued to all staff.

Telephone communication

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales welcomes telephone calls in Welsh as in English.
- All publicly advertised telephone numbers will be answered bilingually, and staff with direct line numbers will be encouraged to do the same. If the staff member does not speak Welsh, s/he will explain courteously and will offer to transfer the caller to a proficient Welsh speaker.
- If the member of staff is not able to deal with the call in Welsh, if possible the caller will be transferred to a Welsh speaker who can deal with their enquiry.
- At any time when no Welsh language speaker is available to deal with an enquiry the caller will be given the choice of continuing the call in English or having the call returned by a Welsh speaker as soon as possible. The caller will also be given the option to put their enquiry in writing; if they write in Welsh they will receive a reply in Welsh.
- Our switchboard answerphone machines will have a bilingual greeting, inviting the caller to leave a message in either language; other staff will be encouraged to leave a bilingual message on their answerphones or voicemail.
- Written guidance on the above – including a list of Welsh language speakers within the organisation - will be issued to all members of staff.
- When we set up telephone help-lines, or similar facilities, to give information, services or support to the public, we will provide a Welsh language service. This will be advertised alongside the English language service. Both services will share the same telephone number.

Meetings with members of the public

The Children's Commissioner for Wales organises meetings with a wide range of organisations and groups, including:

- a) other statutory/public sector organisations
 - b) voluntary organisations
 - c) community groups, service users groups etc.
 - d) press conferences and briefing meetings
 - e) children and young people
- When the Children's Commissioner for Wales organises such a meeting or event, contributions in Welsh or English will be welcomed; we will advise participants of this fact in advance of the meeting and invite them to advise us of their preferred language.
 - When a public meeting is organised by the Children's Commissioner for Wales we will provide interpreting or translation facilities for non-Welsh speakers.
 - The provision of simultaneous translation will be made known before the start of a meeting and appropriate equipment made available.
 - All publicity for meetings listed above will be bilingual and will make clear the bilingual nature of the meeting.
 - The Children's Commissioner for Wales's office in Wales welcomes face-to-face meetings with individual members of the public in Welsh and/or in English.

On request, the Children's Commissioner for Wales will arrange that a Welsh-speaking member of staff is made available to meet with a Welsh-speaking member of the public.

If no suitably qualified Welsh speaker is available, we will offer the choice of continuing the meeting in English, or dealing with the subject by corresponding in Welsh.

The above will also apply to meetings held using videoconferencing and similar equipment.

Other dealings with the public

- The above commitments cover the Children's Commissioner for Wales' present forms of direct communication with members of the public. Any future initiatives will be based on the principles of linguistic equality set out above.
- When we arrange seminars, training courses or similar events for the public, we will assess the need to provide them in Welsh.
- Any audio-visual displays or interactive media that we prepare will be bilingual.

Exercise of the Children's Commissioner for Wales's Statutory Powers

This scheme will apply to activities relating to the exercise of the Children's Commissioner's statutory powers under the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 and relevant regulations, and any future legislation amending these powers.

For example, policy or service reviews will involve the use of bilingual questionnaires and interviewees will be given an opportunity to be interviewed in Welsh and as far as possible to use their preferred language throughout the review process.

The public face of the Children's Commissioner for Wales

Corporate identity

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales has adopted a fully bilingual corporate identity
- All official letter headings, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, press release headings and business cards used by the Children's Commissioner for Wales are bilingual.
- The logo includes the name of the Children's Commissioner for Wales in both Welsh and English.
- Internal signs in public areas in the Children's Commissioner for Wales' offices will be bilingual, as well as any external signs for the offices.

Publishing and printed material

As a matter of policy our normal practice will be to publish material made available to the public 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.

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.

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.

Publication of reports will occur simultaneously in both languages, normally as one bilingual publication. In the case of more detailed briefings on issues which are not intended for general publication, if the document is only available in English translation will be arranged if a Welsh language version is requested.

- All computers in the Children's Commissioner for Wales's office in Wales will be equipped with Welsh fonts.
- All staff with responsibility for designing and publishing Children's Commissioner for Wales publications will be issued with written guidance regarding bilingual publications.
- Written guidance on the above will be issued to all staff.

Forms and questionnaires

- Bilingual forms and explanatory material will be available. If due to difficulties with presentation Welsh and English versions are printed separately both will be equally available and distributed together. The version in each language will note that the form is also available in the other.

- For any review, survey or other study by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, involving written response forms or questionnaires, the forms, and any relevant guidance, will be issued bilingually.

Media releases

- Press releases to the press and broadcasting media in Wales will be issued in Welsh and English where deadlines permit or according to the language preference of the recipient media organisation or publication.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will ensure that a Welsh speaking contact is available at all press and news conferences.
- Where possible, we will ensure that Welsh speakers are available to undertake interviews with the Welsh language press and broadcasting media.

Website

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales's Website will be available in Welsh and English accessed from a bilingual portal. Where appropriate (e.g. pages linked to initiatives for children and young people or the publication of reports) pages will be bilingual page.
- Our normal practice will be to provide Welsh versions of the interactive pages on our website.
- When designing new websites, or redeveloping our existing website, we will take into account the Welsh Language Board's guidelines on website design.
- Whenever we post English language publications on our website, the Welsh versions will be posted at the same time, if available.

Publicity and promotional activities

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales's advertising and publicity activities will be conducted bilingually, treating the two languages equally.
- Exhibitions and public exhibition stands prepared by the Children's Commissioner for Wales will always include bilingual material.
- All the Children's Commissioner for Wales's banners and display materials will either be bilingual or in both Welsh and English, with an instruction that both banners should be used together.

Official notices, public notices and staff recruitment advertising

- Public notices in the press in Wales will be in both languages, with Welsh and English versions shown together, and given equal prominence.
- All recruitment advertising for staff to work in the Children's Commissioner for Wales's office in Wales will be bilingual.
- 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.

Implementing and monitoring the scheme

Staffing

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will have sufficient and appropriately skilled Welsh speakers to ensure that it is possible to provide a full service through the medium of Welsh.
- From time to time, we will undertake audits to establish the number, ability level and location of staff that can speak, read and write Welsh (including staff who are learning Welsh). We will also identify staff who wish to learn Welsh.
- We will identify those workplaces and jobs where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable or essential. This requirement may be defined as a component of a workplace or team, or it may be attached to a particular job.
- Any decrease in the number of bilingual staff in posts closely related to this Scheme will be noted, and the Children's Commissioner for Wales will rectify any deficiencies as and when the opportunity arises, for example through recruitment and by providing training for staff to learn Welsh.
- Our normal practice will be to ensure that our reception areas and main switchboards are always able to offer a service in Welsh.

Learning Welsh and supporting the use of Welsh

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales encourages and supports staff working in Wales who wish to learn Welsh, and supports Welsh speaking staff who wish to improve their linguistic abilities.
- Members of staff in Wales will be encouraged to attend appropriate courses aimed at improving their Welsh. Where it is judged to be the best use of resources courses will be provided in the workplace.
- Welsh speaking members of staff will encourage staff known to be learning Welsh to use their Welsh in the workplace.
- We will fund this training and allow staff to attend courses during work hours.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will ensure that Cysgliad is installed on the computers of staff who wish to work through the medium of Welsh, and of all administrative staff who may be called to work on bilingual documents .
- Copies of the Welsh Academy English-Welsh Dictionary and Y Geiriadur Mawr are available in both offices.

Recruitment

- Where competence in Welsh is essential for a post this fact and the required levels of fluency and literacy will be specified when recruiting to that post.
- Where an appointment is made and the level of fluency or literacy of the person appointed needs further development, appropriate training and support will be offered.
- If it is necessary to appoint a non-Welsh speaker to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is considered essential, it will be a condition of employment that they learn the language to the required level within a reasonable period, with the support of the Children's Commissioner for Wales. This condition will be made known to the candidates at the time of the recruitment.
- When no suitable Welsh speaking candidates can be found for a post where Welsh is *essential* (or whilst a candidate unable to speak Welsh has been appointed and is learning the language) we will make temporary arrangements under which the Welsh language

service can be provided (by using, for example, Welsh speaking staff from elsewhere in our organisation to deliver parts of the service).

- Where no suitable Welsh speaking candidates can be found for a post where Welsh is desirable, the person appointed will be encouraged to learn Welsh.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will encourage applications from Welsh speakers for job vacancies by:
 - a) Ensuring that all recruitment advertising appears bilingually.
 - b) Considering placing additional recruitment advertising in Welsh language newspapers or magazines, even when the ability to speak Welsh is not an essential requirement.
 - c) Including a statement that applications from Welsh-speakers are encouraged in recruitment adverts.
- Information packs and application forms will be provided in Welsh and English for all job vacancies within the organisation.

Vocational training

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will assess the need for specific training in Welsh language communication and other relevant skills for staff.

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.
- Whenever possible, 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.

Administrative arrangements

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales fully supports, authorises and approves this Scheme and will give full authority to the Scheme during its implementation.
- Copies of the draft Scheme will be given to all Children's Commissioner for Wales staff when it is issued for public consultation with guidance notes to explain its importance and relevance.
- The commitments and arrangements outlined in this Scheme have been approved by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and have his full support.
- Training will be held to inform staff of their responsibilities within the Scheme, and the broader context in relation to delivering our services, equality of opportunity and cultural issues.
- All new members of staff will receive detailed guidance regarding the Scheme as part of their new employees' Welcome Pack. They will also be made aware of the Scheme as part of their induction training programme.
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales will identify effective professional translation services and a list of such translators will be accessible on the organisation's Intranet to ensure that written material can be speedily and correctly translated.
- Welsh speaking staff of the Children's Commissioner for Wales will not be expected to act as in-house translators. Where staff are accustomed to working bilingually, individual

discretion may be used in relation to short passages of translation, particularly in relation to the translation of Welsh into English.

- We will prepare, and regularly 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. The plan will include targets, deadlines and a report on progress against each target.
- **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.

Partnerships

The Children's Commissioner for Wales works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies. The Children's Commissioner works on many levels when working with others:

- When the Children's Commissioner is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with the Welsh Language Scheme.
- When the Children's Commissioner joins a partnership in which another body is leading, the Children's Commissioner's input to the partnership will comply with the Welsh Language Scheme and the organisation will encourage other parties to comply.
- When the Children's Commissioner is a partner in a consortium, it will encourage the consortium to adopt a bilingual policy. When acting publicly in the name of the consortium, the organisation will act in accordance with its Welsh Language Scheme.
- When the Children's Commissioner joins or forms a partnership, it will ask prospective partners about their Welsh Language Schemes, Language policies or the means by which they will operate bilingually. Within any partnership, the Children's Commissioner will offer advice and support to the other partner organisations.

Complaints

- All publicity concerning the Scheme will state to whom complaints concerning the implementation of the Scheme should be made.
- The target time for clearance of complaints relating to the service provided in the Welsh language will be the same as for all other complaints.
- All complaints received will be acknowledged in writing.

Monitoring

- We will monitor our progress in delivering this scheme against the targets set out in its accompanying action plan.
- Our existing monitoring and reporting procedures will include reference to progress in delivering this scheme, as appropriate.
- We will send monitoring reports to the Welsh Language Board, when requested by them, outlining progress in delivering this scheme.

Overall and day-to-day responsibility

The Children's Commissioner for Wales will have overall responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Scheme and will ensure that all monitoring is a structured and continuing activity and that it includes those who provide or administer services on behalf of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

- Day to day responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Scheme will be the responsibility of the Assistant Commissioner (Communications and Participation).
- A working group will be established to undertake the annual monitoring of the scheme. Members of this group will be from all staff groups within the organisation and both offices and the Children's Commissioner's Young People's Advisory groups will also contribute to this process.
- 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.

Suggestions for improvement

The Children's Commissioner for Wales will welcome suggestions for improvements to any aspects of the Welsh Language Scheme. Suggestions should be sent to either of the Children's Commissioner for Wales's offices. All suggestions received will be acknowledged in writing.

Publishing information

Updates on the implementation of the Scheme will be published in the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Annual Report, and will also be available from the Commissioner's offices. This information will include progress made towards full implementation of the Scheme, the percentage of Welsh-speakers employed and explanations for any failure to achieve targets and a description of steps taken to address this.

Publicity

The Welsh Language Scheme will be publicised initially and on a continuing basis as follows:

- a) in workshops and presentations to children and young people
- b) in a specially produced - and young-person-friendly - leaflet sent out to organisations and individuals
- c) in any relevant leaflets and publications produced after the date of adoption
- d) on our website

Copies of publications will be available from the Children's Commissioner for Wales on request.

Key agencies and those delivering services in conjunction with or on behalf of the Children's Commissioner for Wales will receive copies of the Scheme.

Contact

For further information regarding this Welsh Language Scheme please contact:

Children's Commissioner for Wales
Oystermouth House
Charter Court
Phoenix Way
Llansamlet
SWANSEA
SA7 9FS

or

Children's Commissioner for Wales
Penrhos Manor
Oakview Drive
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LL29 7YW