

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME**

**2010-2013**



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Prepared in accordance with the  
Welsh Language Act 1993

### **Declaration**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality. This Scheme sets out how the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

## **GENERAL NOTE AND FOREWARD**

### **General Note**

References to 'the Fire and Rescue Authority' and 'the Fire and Rescue Service' in this Scheme refer specifically to 'the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority' and 'the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service', who are responsible for the provision of fire and rescue services in the six counties in North Wales.

References to 'bilingualism' in this Scheme refer specifically to the Welsh and English languages.

This revised Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on **DATE to be inserted**. The original North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Language Scheme was published in 1999.

### **Foreword**

This is North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's third Welsh Language Scheme, which builds on our first two schemes which we published in 1999 and 2006.

Since our last scheme was published, North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has been making excellent progress in its drive towards improving the bilingual services we deliver. Significant milestones have been achieved in our objective of re-energising and adding new vigour to our activities and the profile of the Welsh language within the Service has been well and truly raised.

But we still have a way to go and our new scheme outlines our Linguistic Skills Strategy which is based on a gradual approach to achieving our goals over the next three to five years. Our strategy is to establish a clear understanding of the linguistic issues within our Service, cultivate a workforce which has an open mind with regards to dealing with the Welsh language and its culture, as well as other languages and cultures, and to establish strong foundations for our approach to bilingualism which will continue to see a gradual improvement in years to come.

This scheme also outlines how we aim to enhance our positive attitude towards the use of Welsh in our workplace - as well as in the community and the services we provide to the people of North Wales. In this way we hope to achieve an even better standard of customer service and raise the skills level of our workforce by encouraging them to learn Welsh and use their skills when communicating.

Our aim is to cultivate a Service which is completely in tune with its Welsh public and demonstrates a courtesy and empathy towards the language and culture of Wales which will ensure our communities receive a prompt, courteous, equal and complete service provided by a satisfied and confident workforce.

(add signature)

**Cllr Sharon Frobisher**

Chair

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

(add signature)

**Simon Smith**

Chief Fire Officer

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

### **THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR A BILINGUAL WALES**

In February 2003 the Welsh Assembly Government published '*Iaith Pawb*', a strategic policy document and a '*national action plan for a bilingual Wales*'. This was the first ever national framework for action that had been planned at a governmental level for preserving, sustaining and promoting the Welsh language.

Its concluding chapter contains the following appeal:

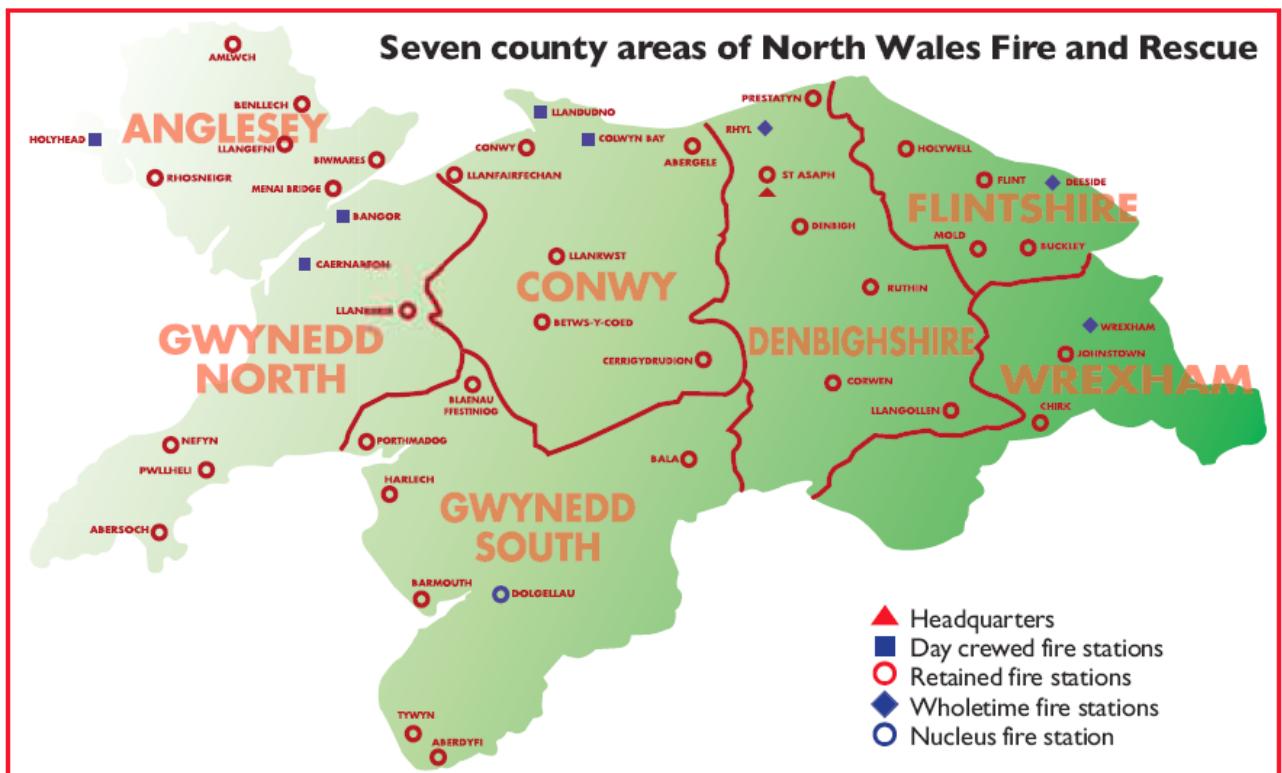
*"...we (the Assembly) cannot save the language by institutional or political action alone. Sustaining the Welsh language needs to be a joint effort on the part of the Government of Wales and the people of Wales. The structures laid down in this document for taking forward the Action Plan over the coming years are no less important to the success of our strategy than the proactive measures described. Those structures are designed to share ownership and responsibility destiny of the Welsh language. We cannot overstate the importance of the contribution which others – local authorities, public bodies, the private and voluntary sectors - can make. But survival of the language ultimately depends on individuals taking ownership of the language. This means people getting involved in the community driven initiatives to promote the language, parents passing the language on to their children and individuals being prepared to use it in social and business settings. We have no doubt that there is a positive future for the language if the people of Wales embrace our vision. Working together we can create a truly bilingual Wales.*

**We, the Fire and Rescue Authority, support the aims of that framework and consider that our Welsh Language Scheme represents an important local contribution towards the realisation of that broader national strategy.**

### **PLACING THIS LATEST SCHEME IN CONTEXT**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority serves a rich diversity of communities, against a backdrop of significant natural and cultural heritage.

The six unitary authority areas of Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham share a range of common features but also have their own distinct profiles in a region that combines closely populated or industrialised centres with more sparsely populated rural and semi-rural communities.



### Welsh usage in North Wales

According to the 2001 census information, out of 641,286 people aged three and over living in North Wales, 225,213 (35%) of them could either speak, read or write Welsh. An even higher number – at least 232,125 (36%) – said they were able to understand spoken Welsh.

### People with at least one skill in the Welsh language

	All people aged 3 or over	Who understand spoken Welsh	Who speak Welsh	Who read Welsh	Who write Welsh	Who either speak read or write Welsh (%)
Gwynedd	112,800	77,966	77,846	72,276	69,264	79,184 (70.2%)
Isle of Anglesey	64,679	41,220	38,983	35,510	33,246	39,885 (61.7%)
Conwy	106,316	37,112	31,298	29,085	26,077	33,839 (31.8%)
Denbighshire	90,085	28,146	23,760	22,431	19,858	26,119 (29.0%)
Flintshire	143,382	24,630	20,559	20,611	17,687	24,634 (17.0%)
Wrexham	124,024	23,051	18,105	18,386	15,280	21,822 (17.6%)
Totals -SUM(ABOVE)	641,286	232,125	210,501	198,299	181,412	225,213 (35.1%)

### **The projected increase in the use of Welsh**

The number of people with Welsh language skills looks set to increase. Census data from 2001 shows that there are around 500,000 speakers of the Welsh language in Wales (21% of the population) and it is expected that these figures will grow when the next survey is taken in two years time, especially amongst young people where the biggest growth is already being experienced.

The same is true of all six counties. As a service, therefore, we need to be mindful of the fact that public demand for bilingual services will almost inevitably grow.

### **The percentage of people aged three or over who speak Welsh**

Even in those areas bordering England that have the lowest percentage of 3 – 15 year olds who speak Welsh, percentages within individual community boundaries are still relatively high. In Flintshire, the percentage ranges between 29% and 46%. In Wrexham it ranges between 17% and 59%.

A survey commissioned by the Welsh Language Board in the year 2000 found that 75% of respondents were of the opinion that Welsh has a future as a living language for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, a high percentage foresaw an increase in the demand for bilingual skills in education, in the local authority sector and in the health service.

## **THE AUTHORITY'S OUTLOOK ON BILINGUALISM**

We in North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority pride ourselves on having taken the issue of language seriously over many years.

By acknowledging our moral and legal duties to meet public expectation and to protect the cultural heritage of the area, we also acknowledge that there are positive service benefits to be had from conducting our public business in both languages.

Saving lives and reducing risk are at the heart of the Authority's mission – the language issue is vital to its success.

We aim to provide services equitably to all areas of North Wales, taking into account the variations that exist between them.

We acknowledge our duty towards our staff too, the majority of whom are residents of North Wales, and who themselves reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their own communities.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME**

Responsibility for the successful implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme rests with the Chief Fire Officer, who delegates its day to day management to one of his Assistant Chief Fire Officers.

An internal language working group (Gweithgor iaith) has been set up to help drive the development of policies and procedures associated with this Scheme. Members of this group are drawn from amongst staff who, because of their role and/or position within the organisation, are well placed to influence and support the development of language-related policies.

In addition, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service meets regularly to share information and best practices with representatives from the other Welsh fire and rescue services responsible for Welsh language issues through the Chief Fire Officers Association Language Group.

### **THE DUTIES OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

The principal duties of the Fire and Rescue Authority are incorporated in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, namely:

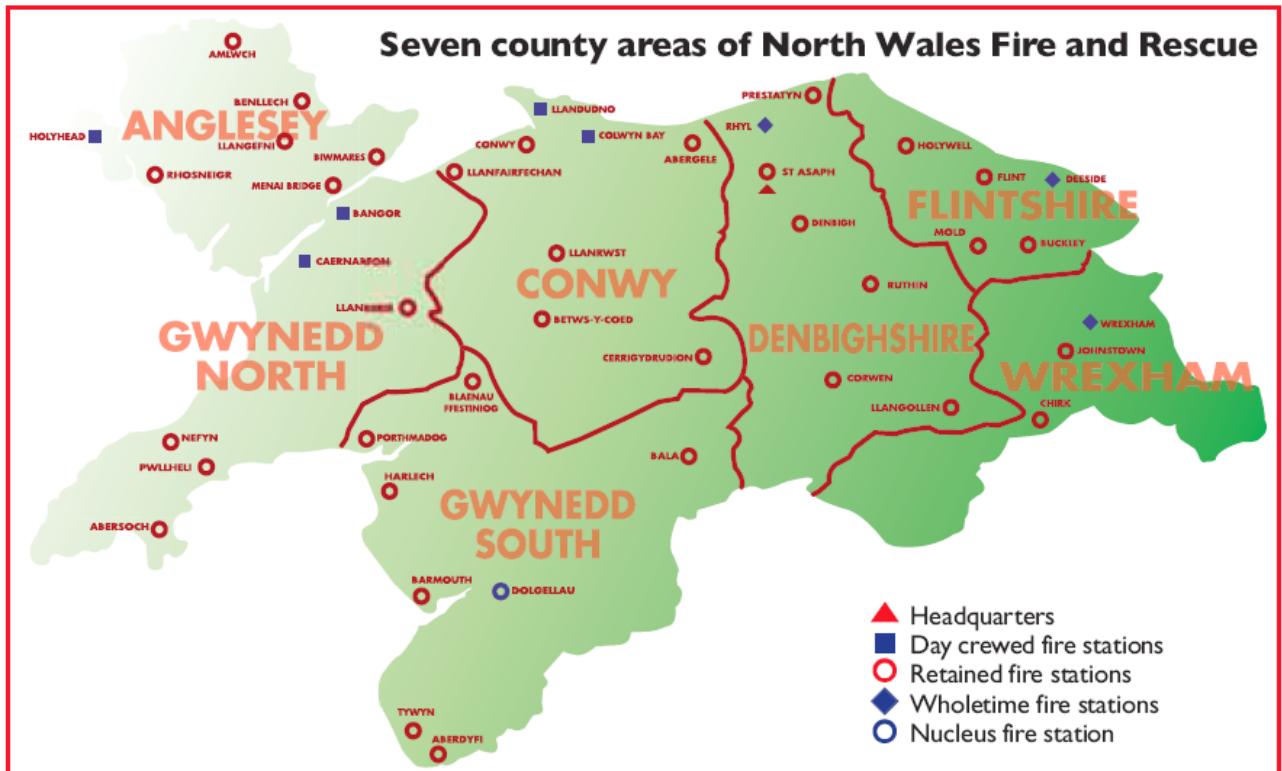
- Promoting fire safety through the provision of information, publicity and encouragement to prevent fires and deaths and injuries by fire
- Giving advice, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and on means of escape in the event of fire
- Making provision for protecting life and property in the event of fires
- Making provision for rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents
- Responding to other emergencies or eventualities as required to protect people, property, or the environment.

### **Corporate aims**

The Fire and Rescue Authority has developed a set of five corporate aims that summarise what it considers to be central to all its activities:

- To prevent accidental and malicious fires
- To protect people from being killed or injured by fire and other hazards
- To protect the community, businesses and the environment from being harmed by fire and other hazards
- To find ways to improve in order to meet the expectations of the community
- To operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, making the best use of the resources that are available.

## The structure of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service



North Wales Fire and Rescue Service employs just over 1,000 people in a range of different roles. About 56% are firefighters who work on the 'Retained Duty System' – men and women whose main employment is outside the Service, but who undertake response and prevention work within their local community.

Around 28% of the workforce are classed as 'wholetime firefighters'. These are people who, in addition to firefighting, might also be involved in other duties such as fire prevention, management or staff development. Almost 13% are non-uniformed staff working in a range of specialist roles such as fleet and estates management, human resources management, finance, health and safety, policy development, general administration and ancillary roles. A further 3% are employed as Control staff, the majority of whom are primarily involved in handling emergency telephone calls.

The Service itself is structured around the six unitary authority areas of North Wales. Local fire prevention services are delivered from seven county offices – one in each of the six areas, with an additional one in Gwynedd on account of its geographical spread.

There are forty-four fire stations across North Wales – Amlwch being the furthest north, Aberdyfi the furthest south, Abersoch the furthest west, and Wrexham the furthest east.

The main service headquarters building is located just off the A55 Expressway on St Asaph

Business Park.

Further west, at Llandudno Junction, are the service's vehicle workshops and central stores.

The main training centre is located in Rhyl. The main Control Room is situated in the Joint Communications Centre alongside North Wales Police on St Asaph Business Park.

## **A WORD ABOUT THE FORMAT**

**For ease of reading and reference, this section has been set out in a standard format.**

**Our Principles:** This is where we set out our fundamental beliefs, our guiding principles and our ultimate aims for the Service

Our guiding principles will obviously affect different aspects of the Service.

These aspects can be grouped under the following headings:

**POLICIES**

**SERVICE DELIVERY**

**OUR PUBLIC IMAGE**

**THE WORKFORCE**

**THIRD PARTIES**

In relation to each of the five elements listed above, we examine;

### **How do we demonstrate that we already follow our principles?**

To what extent are we succeeding? How do we already contribute to the realisation of our vision? What contributions do we make to the overall strategy for Wales?

### **What plans do we have for improvement?**

To what extent are we still working towards success? Which tasks are still in progress, and which have we yet to embark on?

**POLICIES**

#### **Our principles**

In order to deliver, improve and expand our services, we develop new policies and participate

in work programmes, schemes and initiatives. From time to time, we amend and update our policies to take account of changed circumstances.

We believe that our policies should reflect the Authority's commitment to contributing to the Assembly Government's vision for Wales as set out in *Iaith Pawb*

As well as ensuring that our policies follow the guiding principle that both languages are equal, we believe that, where reasonable and practical, our policies should also actively promote and facilitate the use of Welsh

In accordance with Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act 1993, the adoption of a new policy must not result in our having to make changes to any part of our Welsh Language Scheme, without having first consulted the Welsh Language Board on the proposed change.

### **1. Developing new policies**

We have already made arrangements to communicate information about our policies to all staff of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service through our own internal policies (SAPPOs) system.

Instructions are set out in the very first SAPPO - Section 1, No. 1 - on the correct procedures for developing new SAPPOs. This includes a requirement to consider the implications for the Welsh language.

This requirement applies not only to policy development. When considering other initiatives, the implications for the Welsh language are to be routinely considered by the relevant individuals or group tasked with planning or participating in those initiatives.

This therefore mainstreams the linguistic element to all new initiatives and policies. The internal language group (*Gweithgor Iaith*) is responsible for scrutinising new policies and policy amendments to make sure that they have been compiled in accordance with the aims of this Scheme. The Chief Fire Officer, through the Executive Group, is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all SAPPOs comply with this Scheme.

### **Linguistic skills policy**

The most significant step made more recently towards promoting a bilingual service, achieved since the last Welsh Language Scheme was published, is the adoption of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's Linguistic Skills Strategy.

Our Linguistic Skills Strategy was launched at the beginning of 2009 and the basic principles of the strategy were laid down in a new North Wales Fire and Rescue Service policy document (SAPPO Order No 1 Section No 8).

The Linguistic Skills Strategy is a statutory requirement to provide a means of responding appropriately to the Service's commitments contained in the Welsh Language Scheme. The Strategy helps to take the Welsh Language Scheme further by providing a planned and strategic infrastructure for implementing it into the future.

Crucially, this means staffing the Service in accordance with the Welsh Language Scheme in order to enable the provision of services of equal quality, facility and breadth in both English and Welsh. It means satisfying service needs where there is a shortage of Welsh speakers within the workforce by adopting and implementing this strategy.

The benefits to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service of adopting a Linguistic Skills Strategy are that it will:

- Satisfy the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for Wales 2008-2011 which states that Welsh fire and rescue services should provide a bilingual service that recognises and reflects the diversity in their communities.
- Satisfy the Welsh Local Government Association Equality Improvement Framework for the Fire and Rescue Services in Wales which was launched in January 2008 and covers the seven strands of equality, focusing on gender, race, disability, Welsh language, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief.
- Provide a method of forward planning to acquire, deploy and develop the statutory Welsh Language Scheme
- Be impartial, objective and effective
- Help to reduce risks such as failure to achieve equality and customer care standards, failure to empathise and identify with customer needs, complaints and dissatisfaction.

In preparing the Linguistic Skills Strategy, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is adopting the objectives recommended by the Welsh Language Board which involve continually auditing the bilingual requirements of workplaces and posts, comparing skill needs with existing skill resources and being able to close the gap between the two, as well as appropriate arrangements for monitoring and reporting the strategy's implementation.

An audit of the bilingual requirements of workplaces and posts within the Service has been carried out and this identified which roles within the Service should be designated Welsh essential. The Service has since assigned Association of Language Testers in Europe ALTE

Level 1-5 competences to each type of role, providing a greater understanding of the standard of Welsh required

An audit of the bilingual skills of existing staff has been carried out and around 80% of Service staff have indicated the level of Welsh which they believe they posses. This information has since been established as a requirement of the Individual Development Review process for all staff and is now continually updated.

The Service compares the skill needs of posts with existing skill resources to ascertain what work is required to bridge the gap.

The aim is to close this gap gradually, taking a long term perspective through establishing well defined practices in staff training and support, recruitment, reorganisation and redeployment of staff. The work will involve:

- Increasing the number of staff who can confidently speak or write Welsh and encourage them to use their skills more often. All members of staff have received Welsh Language awareness training.
- From January 2009, all new members of staff are required to have the ability to show basic (Level 1) Welsh language courtesy skills on joining the Service.
- From January 2010, all new staff will be allowed a specified period of time after formal appointment to achieve Level 2 (using the Level 2 training CD but consideration of a training course if necessary).
- Existing staff will be encouraged to achieve Level 1 on a voluntary basis as part of the awareness course. Existing staff who have direct contact with the public will be encouraged to achieve Level 4/5 through intensive training.
- From January 2010, staff seeking promotion within the Service will be required to pass Level 2 to be successful.
- Training courses will enable staff to learn or improve their Welsh. Coleg Llysfasi will provide Level 1 and 2 training courses to staff which are supplemented by Welsh Language CDs (tests will be assessed independently by Coleg Llysfasi). The tests are linked to a nationally recognised accreditation.
- The Linguistic Skills Strategy will be incorporated into the Service's policy on Equality and Diversity – with reference to the Seven Strands of Diversity in Wales which include the Welsh language.

The Service will review the Welsh Language Strategy on a regular basis, working according to the Welsh Language Board's indicators. This work will involve having an accurate record of the number and percentage of staff who have direct contact with the public and the level of Welsh required in these posts, the proportion of staff who have received language training, as

well as being able to accurately identify staff who can speak Welsh – by department, job grade and workplace.

The Linguistic Skills Strategy ensures the Service complies with the Welsh Language Act and that ability in Welsh is recognised as a skill.

The Linguistic Skills Strategy will benefit staff by:

- Treating language skills in exactly the same way as any other skills which may be necessary, desirable or advantageous for the post
- Providing a means of ensuring consistency of approach in determining the language requirements of posts
- Placing an emphasis on staff training, development and support to enhance staff skills and competitiveness in the wider labour market.

This Strategy stipulates Service-wide commitment and has far reaching implications. The emphasis is on forward planning and for the acquisition of the necessary skills over a period of time – not sweeping change. The aim is to gradually improve both the service to the public and staff skill levels, over the period 2010 - 2013.

Adopting the Linguistic Skills Strategy as policy within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has meant that a great deal of awareness raising has been undertaken since the last Welsh Language Scheme was published to ensure our staff are sufficiently familiar with the content of our Welsh Language Scheme.

We have also raised the profile of the Scheme with the elected members of the Fire and Rescue Authority and especially with new members who have joined the Authority more recently.

The legal obligations and our expectations under the Linguistic Skills Strategy have been set out and we have utilised a variety of means of internal and external communication, incorporating our newsletters, our website and a newly launched bilingual intranet to draw attention to the practical advantages of acting in the spirit of the Welsh Language Act when delivering services to the people of North Wales. Internal targets that support the Assembly Government's targets for increasing the use of the Welsh language and the number of services being delivered through the medium of Welsh have been set out in our new policy.

### **Plans for improvement**

In conjunction with our efforts to promote a bilingual service, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service recognises that it must also strive towards a bilingual workplace in order to truly achieve bilingualism in the organisation.

We have already made excellent progress in this area which has helped to encourage the use of Welsh internally. For example, bilingual signage and bilingual email signatures have long been the norm and our bilingual internal publications and documents such as our staff newsletter 'Y Fflam' and the 'Chief's Update' are well established. More recently we have introduced a bilingual intranet for staff and that too has now become well established and our internal translator is always on hand to help with translation requests from all staff.

Our revised Welsh Language Scheme for 2010-2013 therefore formally adopts a policy statement in relation to the promotion of language use within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, based on the principle of protecting the language as a means of expression.

***North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority encourages staff to speak Welsh and supports the improvement of language skills, as learners and as fluent speakers. The Authority supports the appropriate use of Welsh and English in the business of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and facilitates internal bilingualism by creating surroundings which allow staff to have a preferred language whilst executing their own jobs; communicating with others, receiving services and socialising informally.***

To this end, the Service has identified two projects which it hopes will help to increase the internal use of Welsh.

The first involves establishing language champions amongst the workforce who can help to personalise the bilingual strategy at local level and who are keen to promote the language in the workplace.

The second is the introduction of language choice at meetings as a matter of good practice and this will initially be piloted in one county and gradually extended to the whole of North Wales. We recognise that some areas of the region we cover are more naturally bilingual than others and we hope to capitalise on this by using our lead Welsh areas to help those other areas where spoken Welsh may not be as strong.

Other initiatives aimed at promoting and facilitating a bilingual workplace are detailed in our action plan for the period 2010-2013 and these include annual staff awards for learners, using our newly designed cartoon character 'Tanwen' as an identifiable 'brand' for promoting bilingualism, the introduction of bilingual HR forms and induction packs and the use of electronic bilingual out of office greetings.

## **2. Reviewing existing policies**

A system for reviewing SAPPO's is already set up to ensure that each one is re-examined after a specified period. The frequency varies according to the subject matter of the SAPPO, but is normally every three years. As part of this review, any implications for the Welsh language and our bilingual policy must be taken into account.

### **Plans for improvement**

We are aware that whilst concentrating on the specific content of any policy, we could miss an opportunity to introduce measures that would actively promote and facilitate the use made of the Welsh language.

Because we believe that the content of all our policies should be consistent with, and not undermine the Welsh Language Scheme, we will find ways to improve the process for reviewing policies to make sure that we neither miss an opportunity to improve in this way, nor risk contravening Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **Our principles**

We acknowledge that members of the public including elected Members of the Authority have a right to choose whichever of the two languages to use when dealing with us, be that in the workplace, at home or out in the community

The number of Welsh speakers is rising, and we believe that we should prepare for a rise in the community's expectations of us in terms of the services that are available to them in both languages

We recognise that offering language choice to the public constitutes good practice, not a concession. We recognise that people express opinions and needs better in their chosen language.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to delivering a Service that is of the same high standard and quality in both Welsh and English.

## **1. Promoting fire safety through the provision of information, publicity and encouragement designed to prevent fires and to prevent deaths and injuries from fires**

Our existing policy is very clear in this regard – all publications and meetings (including interviews and campaigns in the media) which are for, or which involve the public are to be made available bilingually.

We strive to fill posts that incorporate an element of direct contact with the public with bilingual staff, and we have produced guidelines on appointing staff to these posts. This commitment extends to members of staff who are involved in youth intervention programmes and specific preventative and rehabilitation work with offenders.

Bilingual officers are encouraged to wear a badge that makes it clear that they are able to communicate in both languages. As the duties of the Fire and Rescue Service focus increasingly on the prevention of fires, more work will be undertaken in the community. Where we have staff who wish to learn Welsh, we can support them with their lessons.

We employ bilingual fire safety tutors. Materials for school pupils are prepared bilingually. Fire safety presentations in schools are conducted in the language chosen by the school. Leaflets distributed as part of these presentations are made available in both languages.

Where we stage an event or visit in conjunction with other public or voluntary organisations, we encourage all participants to produce their own materials bilingually.

A large proportion of the workforce is made up of firefighters working the retained duty system, which requires that they live or work in close proximity to their fire station so that they can respond quickly to emergency calls as required. Understandably, because of the shortage of retained firefighters in some areas, it has been inevitable in the past that bilingual skills have not been ascribed the same level of importance for the recruitment process as physical and other attributes and being available to respond within the specified time. Furthermore, we already employ many full time employees who come into contact regularly with the public as part of their work, but who cannot speak Welsh.

Recently, we have sought to increase the proportion of our workforce throughout North Wales who can speak Welsh, and to ensure that more individual members of staff have learned sufficient Welsh to enable them to provide at least some of our services through the medium of Welsh.

This has been achieved by formally adopting a Linguistic Skills Strategy which has involved all members of staff throughout the Service receiving language awareness training and ensuring all new staff joining the Service from January 2009 onwards are required to have the ability to show basic Level 1 Welsh Language courtesy skills - and from January 2010, all new staff will be allowed a specified period after formal appointment to achieve Level 2.

### **Plans for improvement**

Adopting the Linguistic Skills Strategy follows on from a comprehensive linguistic skills audit

of both individual posts and groups of posts (e.g. crews or watches), and we are now pursuing a process of integrating the information received from an audit of the bilingual skills of existing staff with the Service's Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) for all staff. This will enable us to objectively and systematically match the linguistic skills requirements of posts to the individual linguistic skills of staff and will hopefully improve our ability to ensure that when the Service becomes involved in new initiatives and activities in North Wales, we can do so bilingually.

## **2. Giving advice, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and on means of escape in the event of fire**

As previously described in this section, our principles on linguistic matters cut across all our policies on appointing and developing staff. We endeavour to assign bilingual staff to those posts where there is direct contact with the public (face to face or on the telephone), and we have guidelines relating to appointing new staff to positions that necessitate regular contact with the public.

According to these guidelines, bilingual skills are indispensable for staff in posts where they are expected to meet and give advice or training to the public. Assistance in learning Welsh is available for members of staff who do not already have bilingual skills.

Nevertheless, because we cannot make absolute guarantees that the staff that members of the public come into contact with in the first instance will be bilingual, our policy is that we offer members of the public the choice of language for a future appointment, where this would be helpful. Our guidelines give clear instructions on how to deal with correspondence, communication, meetings and appointments.

As part of our strategy for incorporating bilingual skills into our IPDS, we are now actively working towards being able to consider the desirability of bilingual skills for the effective performance of individual roles within the organisation. Through IPDS, we are operating a consistent and objective system of assessing linguistic ability which will eventually give us an accurate picture of how bilingual our Service is.

### **Plans for improvement**

Every year, as part of the Service's performance management framework, we will set targets to increase the proportion of our staff who have the necessary bilingual skills as part of our annual target-setting process, with the aim of increasing the proportion of staff able to provide our services through the medium of both languages. Whereas in the past target setting in relation to bilingual skills has been undertaken as a separate and isolated exercise, there is now a much clearer understanding of the relationship between the achievement of other service delivery targets and the achievement of linguistic skills targets. Figures relating to the

numbers and locations of posts filled by staff who have the required linguistic skills will be generated by internal recording systems, and used to inform the overall target setting process.

### **3. Making provision for protecting life and property in the event of fires**

As well as preventing fires, we also respond to those that have already occurred. Our response to fire calls normally starts at the point of receipt of an emergency call by our Control Room. Trained bilingual control staff are always available to handle the call in either language, including providing survival guidance to trapped or distressed callers. Firefighters who deal with the fire itself work as a team, with each individual trained to the required standards. In certain circumstances, managers at a more senior level are called in to take strategic control of a situation

#### **Plans for improvement**

The linguistic composition of firefighting crews and their directing officers has generally been a secondary consideration, except in relation to the fire prevention role. Recruitment and development policies for firefighters have primarily focused on fireground skills and capability.

Whereas the internal language group (Gweithgor Iaith) has become increasingly instrumental in promoting the operational advantages of bilingualism for those who deal with people at incidents, we will seek to reinforce this practice within our new Linguistic Skills Strategy - which aims to gradually increase the underlying language profile of the service to such an extent that crews attending fire incidents have sufficient bilingual skills for dealing with people caught up in an emergency incident.

Where we identify a serious deficiency of appropriate bilingual capability in one area that cannot be resolved through training, we will investigate whether we can re-distribute staff in order to correct the deficiency.

### **4. Making provision for rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents**

Emergency crews acknowledge the value of being able to communicate with people who are trapped in a vehicle in the language they are most comfortable with. Victims can be reassured, calmed and kept informed during the process of extrication. Because of the prolonged nature of some incidents involving extrication, linguistic skills for firefighting crews could be considered to be even more important when dealing with road traffic incidents than when those same crews respond to fire incidents. We respond to a wide range of non-fire emergency and non-emergency situations such as chemical spillages, flooding and rescues.

#### **Plans for improvement**

As already described in the section relating to firefighting crews, the availability of bilingual skills amongst crews responsible for rescuing people from vehicles should gradually increase with the adoption of our Linguistic Skills Strategy. In practice, it is the same people who respond to a whole range of emergency and non-emergency incidents, so our plans for this specific topic are as for staff involved in dealing with fires.

## **5. Public Relations**

The public rightly expects a high level of openness and transparency from its fire and rescue service and increasingly expects to be involved in decisions relating to the way it operates.

Over the years, the fire and rescue service has built up an excellent reputation but we accept that this must not be taken for granted, and that maintaining good public relations is key to maintaining that excellent reputation.

### **Fire and Rescue Authority meetings**

The majority of the Fire and Rescue Authority's meetings are open to the public, and all discussions may be held in either language. A simultaneous translation service is provided at all its meetings, so that speakers may choose which language they wish to use. An announcement will be made at the outset of every public meeting to notify that each person present is free to contribute in Welsh or English. At least one Welsh speaking member of staff will be present to welcome and assist those attending the Authority's public meetings.

Generally, correspondence and written materials (paper-based or electronic) are distributed bilingually for meetings of the Authority and its sub-committees. However, in exceptional circumstances this is not possible (for example correspondence or information from an external source received in English only very shortly before a meeting).

Occasionally, where it would be unreasonable or unrealistic to translate because of time or other substantial constraint, draft documents or complex technical documents will be presented in English only for approval or discussion prior to the final compilation of a bilingual report. Where this is the case, a legitimate explanation of the circumstances of this absence of bilingual documents must be given to Members.

### **Other public meetings**

The principle of treating the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality extends to all public meetings organised by or on behalf of the Authority or the Service. All notices regarding public meetings will be bilingual. Contributions in either language are welcomed equally, and a simultaneous translation service will be provided so that speakers may choose in which language they wish to express themselves.

Signs will be placed in suitable locations outside the meeting place or on the visiting exhibition stand or educational vehicle informing members of the public that they are welcome to use their preferred language to communicate with the Authority or Service. Service guidance has been compiled for organising and holding public meetings.

### **Face to face meetings with individuals**

Guidance has been compiled for meeting and making appointments with members of the public. Through our linguistic skills strategy, we aim to increase the availability of staff members who are able to deal with members of the public in their chosen language.

By increasing the number of employees who have sufficient linguistic skills to conduct their work through the medium of either language, our aim is to be able to offer a genuine choice of two languages to any member of the public. Exercising this choice must not result in any detriment to the standard of service received.

Meetings conducted via video conferencing will be treated according to the same linguistic criteria as meetings conducted in person.

Where there are no members of staff available to discuss the matter in the preferred language of the member of the public, he or she may choose either to rearrange the appointment or to continue in his or her second language.

### **Emergency telephone calls (999)**

Through careful recruitment, development and allocation of staff, we aim to treat every emergency call according to standard procedures, irrespective of whether that call is conducted in Welsh or English. Control staff in our Joint Communications Centre are required to be able to handle calls in either language and only bilingual staff are recruited to deal with emergency calls - a policy which has been in effect since 1996.

All staff, including control staff, have received language awareness training and advice on how to recognise Welsh place names where they differ from English ones (e.g. St Asaph and Llanelwy).

### **General telephone calls**

Incoming non-emergency telephone calls are dealt with according to standard procedures, irrespective of whether they are received from a Welsh or an English speaker. Guidance has been compiled for staff who do not speak Welsh to ensure that callers who contact us in Welsh are given an equally professional response as callers who contact us in English. First point of contact staff are required to give a bilingual greeting, with Welsh first.

Staff employed to work in reception areas are required to have ALTE Level 3-5 Welsh skills

for their post. Staff operating switchboards are sufficiently familiar with the linguistic skills of managers so that if a caller wishes to proceed with an enquiry in Welsh, the call can be transferred to a Welsh speaking member of the relevant department. In the event that there is no Welsh speaking member of staff available at the time who has the relevant skills and knowledge to deal with the enquiry, the caller will be politely offered an explanation and a choice of how to proceed. The caller may wish to proceed with the call in English or to agree a suitable alternative arrangement (e.g. to receive a written response in Welsh, or to be contacted by a Welsh speaker at a later date).

### **Voice mail and answering machines**

Guidance has been compiled for staff leaving automatic messages for anyone who might try to contact them by telephone when they are not available to answer the call. Each answering machine on a telephone number published for public access will include a bilingual message. Individual staff members with sufficient bilingual skills are required to record the greeting on their answering machine and/or mobile phone in both languages, with Welsh first. Individual staff members who do not speak Welsh are strongly encouraged to leave a bilingual message, and assistance will be provided for anyone who is unsure about the correct terminology to be used.

### **Correspondence**

Guidance has been compiled for corresponding with members of the public by letter, which ensures that anyone who sends us a letter in Welsh or English will receive a response in that language. Also, if the letter is sent following a conversation, the letter will be in the language of the conversation, unless otherwise requested.

If it isn't obvious which language is desired, the correspondence will be bilingual.

The Fire and Rescue Service's headed notepaper contains a sentence indicating that members of the public are welcome to write to the Authority in Welsh or English. Wording appears bilingually on the Authority's standard printed stationery.

The services of our internal Translator are available to all staff.

### **Electronically**

We are adopting new ways of using technology to deliver services and fire safety messages, including more recently social media such as Facebook. When introducing new electronic systems, we continually seek to ensure that means of communication are available in both languages.

Services provided to the public via the Authority's website will be treated according to the

same linguistic criteria as services provided via any other means. This will include the use of electronic forms for the public. We will work with the Welsh Language Board to implement the standards in its Information Technology Strategy where appropriate to the work of the Authority on the implementation of the Language Scheme.

More recently, we have begun to place a greater emphasis on promoting a bilingual workplace and have established a bilingual intranet service for staff

### **Plans for improvement**

As part of our efforts to promote a bilingual service and in addition to personal bilingual email signatures, we encourage staff to use bilingual automatic out of office messages.

### **Consulting with the public**

From time to time we conduct opinion surveys to gauge the public's view of our services. Periodically, opinion surveys will include questions about levels of satisfaction with our bilingual services. Public opinion surveys will be conducted bilingually.

Assessing our own success or otherwise in the field of public relations can be problematic in terms of measuring and recording individual interactions with members of the public. In the past, we have relied on quantitative counts of failures or deficiencies (such as from complaints) however, more recently we have introduced monitoring the number of hits to our Welsh website, the number of press queries dealt with in Welsh as well as the number of calls dealt with in Welsh by our Joint Communications Centre staff.

We also attend Welsh events such as the Eisteddfodau and agricultural shows in Wales and these are staffed by Welsh speakers.

### **Plans for improvement**

There is still room for improvement in terms of which performance indicators we use to assess our own success and the internal language group (Gweithgor laith), under the guidance of the Welsh Language Board, will be responsible for ensuring that these assessments are conducted at suitable intervals, and for compiling and monitoring action plans arising from the results. Reports will be provided to the Executive Group who will also be responsible for approving the proposed action plans.

## **PUBLIC IMAGE**

### **Our principles**

Our public image as an Authority that operates bilingually helps us to reach the people we serve. Our main aim is to keep people safe, and by communicating effectively at all times in both languages, we can improve our accessibility to our communities.

In our opinion, we have a responsibility as a public service to reflect the community we serve, so that we can provide excellent services throughout the area.

The Authority's image and corporate identity will be bilingual at all times.

### **Signage**

All signs belonging to, produced by, or erected for the Service are to be bilingual. Where signs exist for each language separately, both will be equal in terms of format, size, quality and prominence. Guidance is issued on the bilingual requirements to all agents who are involved in producing these signs.

### **Vehicle livery**

The Service's vehicle livery is bilingual, with Welsh words appearing above or (to the reader) to the left of the English. Guidance is issued on the bilingual requirements to relevant vehicle livery suppliers.

### **Publications for the public in Wales**

Guidance has been compiled on producing publications for the public in Wales. All publications and printed material for the public in Wales will be bilingual. The quality of the writing and phraseology will be of equal standard in both languages.

Usually, bilingual publications are printed back to back. Occasionally, however, it may be more appropriate to publish two separate versions – one in each language (e.g. educational books for schools).

In cases where there is no choice but to publish Welsh and English versions separately, both versions must be distributed simultaneously, and both must be made equally available. Both versions will carry a statement indicating that the document is also available in the other language.

Where a document produced by the Authority is priced, the price of the Welsh version must not be higher than the price of the English version, and the price of a combined bilingual version must not be higher than the price of the same document in just one language.

In the unlikely event that we publish a document about a particularly complex technical or specialised subject (e.g. relating to computer systems or equipment) that is unlikely to be of interest to anyone but the most specialised readership, it may be distributed in the original Welsh or English version but accompanied by a summary of the content in the other language.

When we distribute publications on behalf of another organisation or agency, we make every effort to ensure that they are made available in both languages

### **Forms and associated explanatory materials**

All forms and associated explanatory materials relating to the public in Wales will be published bilingually. Usually, both languages will appear side by side on the one form or material.

When that is not possible (eg printing difficulties or design), we will produce Welsh and English forms separately. Both versions will be published at the same time and as available as each other and will be distributed together in the post or across the counter. Each form will include a sentence to confirm that it is available in the other language. Appropriate training will be provided to staff about presenting the Fire and Rescue Service's forms in North Wales.

### **Plans for improvement**

In line with our latest emphasis on promoting a bilingual workplace, other internal forms for the use of staff e.g. sickness, expenses forms, will also be translated and made available in Welsh.

### **Other miscellaneous materials**

Items such as invitations, posters, cheques, licences, cards, menus, timetables, receipts, invoices, maps and vouchers are all bilingual. As a rule, both languages are to appear side by side on the same item. Where this is not possible (e.g. for printing or design reasons), the two separate versions are to be published simultaneously, made equally accessible and distributed together

### **Uniforms**

The Service's uniform livery will be bilingual, with the Welsh version appearing above or (to the reader) to the left of the English version.

### **Advertising and publicity**

All public activities organised in Wales by the Authority (e.g. exhibitions, campaigns, conferences) are conducted bilingually unless the Authority agrees to comply with a specific bona fide request to conduct the activity through the medium of one language only. This will extend to advertising the public activity itself, messages about the activity on information boards, banners, badges, balloons, etc., including electronic messages.

### **Official and public notices in Wales**

We ensure that the Authority's official public notices and job advertisements appear bilingually, with Welsh and English side by side, whether that is in the press, in an electronic

format, on message boards or otherwise.

We ensure that the Welsh and English versions are equal in format, size, quality, clarity and prominence, with the Welsh version placed either above or to the left of the English version.

The information we provide for contractors and others has been updated in order to re-emphasise the importance of our bilingual public image. More people now use the internet for research and to make contact – we therefore continue to find ways to improve the effectiveness of our website in promoting our public image as a bilingual organisation

### **Plans for improvement**

We acknowledge that from time to time we could do more to promote our bilingual public image, particularly when it comes to short-lived local initiatives, and particularly in areas where Welsh is less prominent. We will therefore strengthen the guidance we provide for personnel in this regard, to reinforce what it is that the Service expects of them.

## **THE WORKFORCE**

### **Our principles**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's aim is to offer its services to members of the public in North Wales in either Welsh or English according to their preference, where it is practically possible to do so.

To this end, North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ensuring that sufficient staff with the necessary bilingual skills as well as other relevant skills and appropriate levels of authority are available to meet the demands of its own Welsh Language Scheme.

#### **1. Humans resources strategy**

Our ultimate aim is to be able to offer a genuine choice of language, based on public preference rather than officer availability.

Information, advice and training on the Service bilingual policies and the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme is available to all, and we anticipate that raising the profile and improving access to the Scheme in particular will contribute to this. All members of staff, whatever their role, are aware of the requirement to adhere to the principle of treating both languages on the basis of equality when conducting public business in Wales.

The aim of our general strategy is to ensure that all members of staff of the Fire and Rescue Service are fully aware of their duties, and are able to: contribute to the realisation of the Authority's vision of delivering services in the language choice of the public; and act in

accordance with the principle that when conducting public business in Wales, the Welsh and English languages will be treated on the basis of equality. This has been emphasised through language awareness sessions to all staff.

A complete audit of the bilingual requirements of workplaces and posts within the Service has identified which roles should be designated Welsh essential and we have recently extended this by assigning ALTE Level 1-5 competences to each type of role, providing a greater understanding of the standard of Welsh required

An audit of the bilingual skills of existing staff has been carried out and around 80% of Service staff have indicated the level of Welsh which they believe they possess. This information has since been established as a requirement of the Individual Development Review process for all staff and is now continually updated.

The Service is in the process of comparing the skill needs of posts with existing skill resources to ascertain what work is required to bridge the gap. The aim is to close this gap gradually, taking a long term perspective through establishing well defined practices in staff training and support, recruitment, reorganisation and redeployment of staff.

This is being achieved through the induction process for new employees, through Welsh awareness sessions to all existing staff and through individual development reviews. Our human resources department will provide regular qualitative and quantitative reports on the extent of these activities for consideration by the internal language group (Gweithgor Iaith).

We recognise that for some individuals the attainment of Welsh language skills may be challenging. We are totally committed to supporting such individuals and assisting as far as possible in reaching the required levels.

Our Linguistic Skills Strategy is being used to ensure that the necessary linguistic skills are available within the workforce. The primary aim of the strategy will be to ensure that sufficient employees with bilingual skills are available to fill those posts where contact with the public forms part of their regular duties. One element of the strategy relates to issues of succession, in order to avoid lack of skills in the future.

### **Plans for improvement**

Software introduced in 2006 will allow us to monitor the allocation of staff who have the skills to provide services in both languages, thereby enabling us to rectify more easily any current or potential future shortfall. Reports will be submitted regularly to the Authority, including statistical and descriptive information on the linguistic profile of the service and its performance. This is in addition to the regular updates to the Welsh Language Board.

## **2. Appointing and promoting staff**

Linguistic ability is regarded as a skill like any other skill for appointing staff. Members of staff involved in the recruitment process have access to guidance which sets out the Authority's recruitment policy.

The ability to speak Welsh is considered to be an 'essential' or a 'desirable' skill for some posts. In this context, 'essential' means that the ability to speak Welsh is absolutely necessary (Level 3-5), and 'desirable' means that although it would be an advantage to appoint a Welsh speaker, it is not absolutely necessary (Level 1-3).

The main factors for consideration when assessing language requirements for posts are:

- the extent and frequency of contact with the public
- the current ability of the department/ team/unit/office to provide services through the medium of Welsh
- the expertise needed for the post (i.e. perhaps Welsh skills would be key in some areas of work, such as working with children or the elderly)
- if the post is located in a particular area, then an assessment of the linguistic nature of the area.

In a situation where two candidates applying for a post for which the ability to speak Welsh would be 'desirable' have the same qualifications and experience, the ability to speak Welsh will be taken into account. In the event of appointing a person who does not have the bilingual skills desired for the post, the successful applicant will be encouraged to learn Welsh.

The ability to speak Welsh is considered to be a qualification equal to any other essential skill required for anyone employed in a post deemed Level 3-5. Should there be difficulty in appointing a Welsh speaker with the necessary skills for such a post, a condition will then be set for the successful candidate to learn Welsh to the required level within an agreed period of time.

More recently, with the adoption of our Linguistic Skills Strategy, further guidelines relating to the Welsh language skills of staff seeking promotion have been established. From January 2010, staff seeking promotion within the Service will be required to pass the Level 2 test to be successful.

### **Plans for improvement**

Although we actively encourage staff to learn Welsh, we will explore the possibility of introducing new requirements for at least some posts whereby successful non-Welsh

speaking applicants for a Level 1-3 assigned post would be required to commit to achieving a pre-defined level of competence in Welsh within an agreed timescale.

### **3. Other miscellaneous**

#### **Job advertising in the press**

We will endeavour to ensure that job vacancies that appear in newspapers and on websites appear in or on the most appropriate for that post in that they are the most likely to attract suitable applicants. Normally, job adverts will appear bilingually, but occasionally they may appear in Welsh only, for example where the job is designated Level 3-5 / 'Welsh essential' and the advert appears in a Welsh language newspaper or website

#### **Recruitment campaigns**

Recruitment campaigns will be conducted bilingually and information provided as part of recruitment packs will express the Authority's commitment to having a workforce that has the appropriate skills to deliver services bilingually.

In addition, from January 2009, shortlisted candidates are required to show basic Level 1 Welsh language courtesy skills on joining the Service and from January 2010, this will be extended to achieving Level 2.

#### **Job fairs / careers conventions**

The Authority welcomes people from a range of different backgrounds as employees, which includes a commitment to targeting Welsh speakers when appropriate. Staff on hand at jobs fairs and careers conventions will be required to convey to potential employees the Authority's commitment to achieving a diverse workforce, including its commitment to employing sufficient numbers of Welsh speakers to deliver services through the medium of Welsh

#### **Learning Welsh**

We endeavour to maintain an appropriate distribution of bilingual employees by encouraging existing staff in posts where it was deemed that the ability to speak Welsh is an essential skill to learn Welsh; or by relocating staff, on a voluntary basis, wherever possible. Training and development in Welsh language skills will be planned and financed in the same way as for any other training and development activity.

Existing staff are encouraged to achieve Level 1 Welsh on a voluntary basis as part of the language awareness course. From January 2010 this will be extended to Level 2. Existing staff who have direct contact with the public are being encouraged to achieve Level 4/5 through intensive training.

The information provided as part of the IPDR process will keep track of staff skills in the Welsh language and this will be used to measure the Service's progress towards achieving a workforce with appropriate Welsh language skills and to offer the appropriate Welsh Level training to those who have not reached the desired level of skill.

### **Vocational Training**

An assessment will be carried out of the need for vocational training through the medium of Welsh by the Skills, Learning and Development Centre, so that staff may receive vocational training through the medium of Welsh. Professional Welsh speaking staff will be encouraged to attend seminars and courses through the medium of Welsh in their related fields.

Learning Welsh forms part of the Service's development programme. Priority is given to those members of staff who come into regular contact with the public, and their progress in learning the language will be regularly assessed

Where an identified need exists, the Service's Development Manager will arrange for members of staff to receive vocational training courses through the medium of Welsh, where these are available. This relates particularly to members of staff in specialist posts, who will be encouraged to attend seminars and courses in their own particular subject area through the medium of Welsh.

### **Plans for improvement**

The bilingual skills requirements of particular posts are already integrated into job descriptions. In addition, user friendly wording in advertisements for Level 3-5 posts will be adopted and advertisements placed in appropriate Welsh community publications and websites. To encourage recruitment of Welsh speakers, especially in seeking candidates to apply for posts requiring Level 3 - 5 Welsh, the Human Resources Department will adopt job descriptions that reflect the bilingual skills requirements of particular posts as opposed to generic job roles.

People applying for Level 3-5 jobs will be offered the opportunity to attend interviews held in Welsh.

In line with the greater emphasis on promoting a bilingual workplace, greater efforts will be made to widen the choice of vocational training courses available through the medium of Welsh and this will be extended, where possible, to generic training to staff e.g. training which relates to health and safety, first aid, equality.

## **THIRD PARTIES**

## **Our principles**

The Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ensuring (through contracting arrangements) that agents or contractors, when providing services to the public in Wales on our behalf or under our supervision, satisfy those elements of this Scheme that relate to their work.

Any contract or arrangement made with a third party on our behalf for the delivery of services to the public in Wales (contractors, partnerships etc.) must be consistent with the terms of this Scheme. This includes services contracted out. Any requirements in relation to the Welsh language are stated in tendering documents and contracts.

As part of our strategy for communicating our expectations to external organisations that undertake to provide services for us, we have reviewed all the written guidance currently issued to external agencies and contractors to draw their attention to the requirements of this Scheme. Contractors and others working on fire and rescue service premises are encouraged to erect bilingual signs

## **A SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE ISSUES**

### **1. Monitoring**

The Authority's Welsh Language Scheme will be routinely monitored.

We will:

- ensure that all members of staff receive guidance and instructions on the implementation of the Scheme;
- ensure that the Service's performance is monitored against the Scheme;
- Ensure that a regular update is submitted by the Authority to the Welsh Language Board.
- ensure that our monitoring process corresponds with the process relating to the Wales Programme for Improvement
- Produce a report on our performance in relation to the relevant performance indicators.

The responsibility within the Service for monitoring performance against various aspects of the Scheme will be passed to the most appropriate group or individual, as determined from time to time by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support). Monitoring and reporting will form part of the Service's overall performance management framework.

Results and regular updates will be formally reported at suitable intervals to the Executive Group and the Fire Authority, as part of a continuous process.

Reports will include identification of any weaknesses, problems, complaints or obvious deficiencies that have become apparent with regard to the operation of the Scheme, and any actions that have been taken or planned to address them.

Complaints or problems associated with the operation of the Scheme will be logged and summarised in the regular update to the Welsh Language Board.

As a minimum, the following aspects will be monitored and reported:

- The number and % of emergency calls that were successfully dealt with in Welsh
- Percentage and number of staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The number and % of main reception roles that were designated Welsh essential and were filled by bilingual staff
- The number and % of staff that have received training in Welsh to an agreed qualification level.
- The number and % of staff within the service that can speak Welsh - by department, by job grade, by the workplace.
- Number and % of staff that have received language awareness training
- The proportion and number of jobs where Welsh is essential that are filled by staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The proportion and number of jobs where Welsh is desirable that are filled by staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The number of complaints from sources not including staff or their representatives about the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme and the % of complaints that were dealt with, in accordance with the standards set by the Authority.
- The number of complaints from staff or their representatives about language issues.
- The performance set against any target that is adopted as part of the performance management framework
- The number of agencies and contractors that receive guidance to comply with our Welsh Language Scheme.

Statistical analyses of the linguistic profile of successful and unsuccessful applicants, recruits and leavers will also be undertaken inasmuch as internal human resources systems are capable of collecting and reporting this data.

Timed action plans setting specific targets on meeting the requirements of the Scheme will be drawn up and regularly updated. The principal aim of specific targets will be to enable the Service to provide a consistently high standard of bilingual services in all areas of North Wales

This is the reporting procedure for compliance with the Scheme during next three years:

The annual Monitoring Report to the Board will seek to achieve the following aims:

- (i) To assess whether the Service is conforming to the Scheme
  - In performing against the set timetable
- (ii) To measure the quality of frontline services through the medium of Welsh
  - Data
  - Assessment by the Board on face to face service.
- (iii) To measure whether the management / administration of the Scheme is adequate
  - Evaluation by the Board
  - Focus report on services provided on behalf of the Service by third parties
- (iv) To measure the adequacy of its language skills by comparing need and resource
  - Language skills data
  - Personnel
- v) Chapter on mainstreaming -proven examples of mainstreaming in action including:
  - Corporate steps or measures taken by services to promote Welsh medium services
  - Use of Welsh in the community
  - Increase in the number of Welsh speakers
- vi) Analysis of the Service performance according to priority / target;
  - Role of scrutiny
  - is the Service accomplishing what it seeks to do?

The Service will summarise its findings in the form of a brief narrative (with evidence) to be submitted to the Board and will identify any fundamental weaknesses/risks, and draw up an action plan of corrective measures, together with a timetable. The Service will also draw attention to progress, good practice and compliance levels.

Where there are weaknesses, an action/development plan shall be agreed with the Board.

## **2. Publishing Information**

Relevant information about the Authority's performance as a bilingual authority will feature in its corporate publications to the public.

## **3. Publicity for the scheme**

The name and contact details of the person delegated by the Chief Fire Officer to implement the scheme will be made known to the staff, the public, and any agent or contractor working on behalf of the Authority.

The Authority will clearly state in all informative documents distributed to the public on a regular basis, that members of the public

are welcome to contact the Service in Welsh or English. A similar statement will appear on the Service's website.

It will also be made known to the public visiting exhibition stands (e.g. fire safety exhibitions), open days, roadshow events and any other public event organised by the Service, that they are welcome to contact the Service in their preferred language

#### **4. Translation**

The Service employs its own full-time Welsh Translator for translation work, to support specific initiatives and to advise on bilingual design matters and proof-reading.

External translation services will be commissioned to meet occasional large translation workloads

Simultaneous translation services will be made available at public meetings

#### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer, or as otherwise directed by the Chief Fire Officer, will be responsible for implementing and supporting the scheme.

#### **CONTACT DETAILS**

Comments or enquiries about this scheme or our bilingual policy, should be sent to:

Colin Hanks  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters  
Ffordd Salesbury  
St Asaph Business Park  
St Asaph  
Denbighshire  
LL17 0JJ

Tel: 01745 535250

Email: [colin.hanks@nwales-fireservice.org.uk](mailto:colin.hanks@nwales-fireservice.org.uk)

## PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Action	Responsibility	By When
<b>Promoting the Scheme Internally</b>		
Establishing annual staff awards for 'Most Significant Contribution to the Welsh Language' and 'Learner of the Year' to be presented at the Eisteddfod	Corporate Communications Manager	Annually
Using the staff newsletter 'Y Fflam' to raise awareness of the Scheme – including a regular Welsh column 'Y Golofn Gymraeg' to promote the Welsh language and culture directly to staff	Corporate Communications Manager	Bimonthly
Continue to develop and improve the bilingual intranet to help promote the language to staff and offer a language choice to Welsh speakers	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
Continue to provide a weekly Welsh phrase for learners 'Ymadrodd yr Wythnos'	Corporate Communications Manager	Weekly
Ensure all new recruits who join the Service receive Welsh language awareness training – all current staff will receive this training by October 2009	Corporate Communications Manager and SLDC Development Manager	Ongoing
The use of cartoon character 'T' to raise the profile of the Scheme	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
Establishing Welsh language champions amongst staff with clear objectives and including champions seminars and mentoring schemes	Corporate Communications Manager	Jan 2011
Introducing a language choice at selected internal meetings with specific training course and advice booklet	Corporate Communications Manager	Jan 2011
Introduce electronic bilingual out of office greetings	ICT Manager	March 2010
Introduce bilingual HR forms (e.g. relating to sickness, time in lieu, expenses etc) and induction packs for new staff	HR Manager	March 2010
Introduce a wider choice of vocational training courses available through the medium of Welsh and extend this, where possible, to generic training to staff e.g. training which relates to health and safety, first aid, equality.	SLDC Development Manager	March 2011
<b>Promoting the Scheme Externally</b>		
Continue to provide a bilingual website which promotes our public image as a bilingual organisation and provides equal information on the Service and its activities in Welsh and English	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
Continue to provide guidance to external agencies and contractors, drawing their attention to the requirements of this Scheme – to include the requirement of third parties working on fire and rescue service premises to erect bilingual signs	Facilities Manager	Ongoing

Continue advertising the requirement for new staff to attain the appropriate level of Welsh on appointment in all recruitment campaigns	HR Manager	Ongoing
Using the media to promote the Scheme (e.g. highlighting significant milestones) at every opportunity	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
<b>Providing the Internal Infrastructure</b>		
Responsibility in relation to providing a source of advice and guidance for matters relating to Welsh Language	Translator	Ongoing
Responsibility for overseeing the various tasks associated with the linguistic skills strategy in future, including the maintenance of an adequate proportion of staff who have bilingual skills	Gweithgor Iaith	Ongoing
Ensuring North Wales Fire and Rescue Service policies relating to the Welsh language are reviewed regularly and monitoring reports for the Welsh Language Board are produced regularly by June each year	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
<b>Making it Happen</b>		
Providing appropriate advice and guidance when developing policies and schemes of work and identifying ways to actively promote and facilitate the use of Welsh.	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
Strengthen the guidance provided for personnel in relation to promoting our bilingual public image, to reinforce what it is that the Service expects of them.	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing
Putting the Linguistic Skills Strategy into practice to ensure that the necessary linguistic skills are available within the workforce to deliver services in the preferred language of the public. This strategy to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the number of staff who can confidently speak or write Welsh and encourage them to use their skills more often.</li> <li>• Continue to recognise the bilingual requirements of workplaces and posts within the Service and the ALTE Level 1-5 competences identified for each type of role, which provides an understanding of the standard of Welsh required</li> <li>• To extend, manage and maintain up to date information on the bilingual skills of all staff as part of the Individual Development Review process for all staff.</li> <li>• To use the above information in aiming to increase the number of staff who achieve Level 1 and 2 Welsh language skills</li> <li>• All new members of staff are required to have the ability to show basic (Level 1) Welsh language courtesy skills on joining the Service.</li> <li>• All new staff will be allowed a specified period of time after formal appointment to achieve Level 2 (involving 5 days of training and a second training CD) from January 2010.</li> <li>• Existing staff will be encouraged to achieve Level 1 on a voluntary basis as part of the awareness course.</li> <li>• Existing staff who have regular direct contact with the public will be encouraged to achieve Level</li> </ul>	Corporate Communications Manager, SLDC Development Manager, HR Manager	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2011</p> <p>March 2013</p> <p>From Jan 2009</p> <p>From Jan 2010</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

<p>4/5 through intensive training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff seeking promotion within the Service will be required to pass Level 2 to be successful.</li> <li>• Training courses will enable staff to learn or improve their Welsh. Coleg Llysfasi will provide Level 1 and 2 training courses to staff which are supplemented by Welsh Language CDs (tests will be assessed independently by Coleg Llysfasi). The tests are linked to a nationally recognised accreditation.</li> <li>• Incorporating the Welsh Language Scheme into the Service's policy on Equality and Diversity</li> <li>• Targetting new staff to sit the new Level 1 &amp; 2 tests that have been established in the Service to raise awareness of the Linguistic Skills Strategy</li> </ul>			From Jan 2010 From Jan 2009  From Jan 2009 From Jan 2009
Ensuring any successful non-Welsh speaking applicants for Welsh Level 3-5 posts commit to achieving a pre-defined level of competence in Welsh within an agreed timescale	HR Manager / SLDC Development Manager	March 2010	
Introducing and managing an effective system for maintaining up to date data relating to bilingual requirements in the workplace, bilingual skills of existing staff and Welsh language skills training achieved by staff and reporting on this data regularly through the Executive Group	HR Manager / SLDC Development Manager	March 2011	
Adopting job descriptions that reflect the bilingual skills requirement of particular posts as opposed to generic roles	HR Manager	March 2010	
Adopt user friendly wording in advertisements for Level 3-5 posts and advertise in appropriate Welsh community publications and websites	HR Manager	March 2010	
Ensure that learning Welsh is included in the Service's development programme	SLDC Development Manager	March 2010	
Introduce regular assessments of Welsh language skills for staff in identified priority posts	HR Manager / SLDC Development Manager	March 2010	
Develop and adopt appropriate performance indicators that measure the Service's progress towards achieving a workforce with appropriate Welsh language skills	Gweithgor Iaith	March 2011	
<b>Continuous Self-awareness</b>			
Introduce systems to identify serious deficiencies in bilingual capability within employee groupings, and clarify the procedure for resolving shortages through training or re-distribution of staff	HR Manager / SLDC Development Manager	Ongoing	
Qualitative assessments to establish how effectively we perform in Welsh in the field of public relations	Corporate Communications Manager	Ongoing	
Integrate the monitoring of the linguistic profile of the service into annual processes associated with the Wales Programme for Improvement	Corporate Planning Manager	Ongoing	
Ensure that regular reports are submitted to the Authority, including statistical and descriptive information on the linguistic profile of the service and its performance. This is in addition to the regular updates to the Welsh Language Board.	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Annually	

## **LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- The number and % of emergency calls that were successfully dealt with in Welsh
- Percentage and number of staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The number and % of main reception roles that were designated Welsh essential and were filled by bilingual staff
- The number and % of staff that have received training in Welsh to an agreed qualification level.
- The number and % of staff within the service that can speak Welsh - by department, by job grade, by the workplace.
- Number and % of staff that have received language awareness training
- The proportion and number of jobs where Welsh is essential that are filled by staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The proportion and number of jobs where Welsh is desirable that are filled by staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The number of complaints from sources not including staff or their representatives about the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme and the % of complaints that were dealt with, in accordance with the standards set by the Authority.
- The number of complaints from staff or their representatives about language issues.
- The performance set against any target that is adopted as part of the performance management framework
- The number of agencies and contractors that receive guidance to comply with our Welsh Language Scheme.