



Post Office Limited: Welsh Language Scheme

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Welsh Language Scheme (this Scheme) relates to Post Office Limited ("we", "us" and "our"). Prior to the adoption of this Scheme, we were subject to the Royal Mail Group Limited Welsh Language Scheme, which has been in effect since 1997. This Scheme takes precedence over the Royal Mail Group Limited Welsh Language Scheme to the extent that that scheme was applicable to us.
- 1.2 Following the enactment of the reforms contained within the Postal Services Act 2011, Post Office Limited now operates as an independent business from Royal Mail Group Limited. The company provides public and commercial services to its personal and small business customers through a network of 11,780 Post Office branches, including just over 950 branches in Wales. 97% of all branches in the network (98% in Wales) are agency branches operated by independent business people or multiple retailers – typically as part of retail premises. The rest are operated directly by Post Office Limited. Customers of the Post Office can also obtain products and services online and via telephone.
- 1.3 The Post Office employs just under 8,000 people, primarily in its directly operated Crown branches and its cash distribution network. The subpostmasters who operate agency branches have their own employees.

2 About this Scheme

- 2.1 We have adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, we will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. This Scheme sets out how we will give effect to that principle when providing public services in Wales.
- 2.2 We will adhere to the policies, and uphold the standards, set out in this Scheme, and will plan all new public services with reference to the commitments given in this Scheme. This Scheme sets out a framework for managing and monitoring our progress in fulfilling the commitments made in this Scheme.
- 2.3 Our starting point in acknowledging the equality of the Welsh and English languages is to ensure that customers in Wales, who may prefer to transact their public business with us in Welsh (whether in correspondence, by telephone or in person), are able to do so. We are committed to providing an equally high standard of customer service in Welsh and English.
- 2.4 The commitments set out in this Scheme require us to maintain our capacity for routinely handling public business in Welsh to the required standards, and this Scheme includes steps that we will take to achieve this.
- 2.5 This Scheme has the full support of our Board.

3 Products and Services

- 3.1 The Post Office offers over 170 different products at branches across its network. Products fall into four product pillars which cover both public and commercial products and services. Mails and Retail includes a range of Royal Mail Group Limited products and services and Camelot National Lottery products. We work with a number of partners and suppliers, most notably the Bank of Ireland plc (UK), to offer a range of financial services products including savings, credit cards, mortgages, insurance, foreign currency, payments (such as bill payments), and personal and business partner banking. Government Services include the Post Office card account, Passport Check & Send, motoring and benefits services. Telecoms services offered, again involving a number of partners and suppliers, include HomePhone and Broadband, Mobile Top-up and International Phone cards.
- 3.2 When delivering public services in Wales, on our own behalf or acting as agent for another organisation which has its own Welsh language scheme, we will ensure that we abide by the standards and commitments set out in this Scheme.
- 3.3 We will ensure that all invitations for tenders for provision of public services in Wales on our behalf include a requirement to fulfil our Welsh language commitments as set out in this scheme. We will also encourage suppliers or contractors and their employees who provide commercial services and products in Wales on our behalf to abide by our standards for the use of Welsh.

4 Counter transactions

- 4.1 We will provide badges to help customers identify branch staff who can serve them in Welsh.
- 4.2 We will design our counter processes to ensure non-Welsh speaking staff can process Welsh language forms without delay.
- 4.3 We will ensure that all employees and agents in our branches are made aware of the procedures for assisting customers who prefer to transact their business in Welsh.

5 Correspondence

- 5.1 We welcome letters and other written correspondence about our public services in Welsh. We will reply in Welsh to all such correspondence received in Welsh.
- 5.2 We will use Welsh in any correspondence that arises from a meeting or telephone conversation about our public services with a customer where that customer has communicated with us in Welsh.
- 5.3 We will use Welsh in all personal correspondence about public services which we initiate with any customer whose address is in Wales where that customer has indicated a preference for corresponding in Welsh. We will initiate correspondence bilingually if we have no indication of the customer's preferred language, but any further correspondence will be either in Welsh, in English, or bilingual, according to the choice expressed by the customer.
- 5.4 Any circulars or standard letters about our public services which we address to properties or business customers in Wales will be bilingual.

6 Telephone calls

- 6.1 We will provide a Welsh Language Helpline which will be both a bilingual and a dedicated Welsh language telephone helpline service. We will publicise the contact number of the Welsh Language Helpline bilingually on our leaflets, posters and website. We will also place bilingual advertisements, where they are used, in telephone directories in Wales giving the contact number.

- 6.2 Calls to the Welsh Language Helpline will be charged at the same rates as the equivalent English language helplines for the service in question. The Welsh Language Helpline will operate during our core hours of business.
- 6.3 Employees and agents who are unable to speak Welsh will be given instruction and training in the procedures for referring callers who wish to transact with us using Welsh to the Welsh Language Helpline.

7 Public meetings

- 7.1 We will have a competent Welsh speaker present at any meeting we arrange in Wales which is open to members of the public. If someone attending the meeting notifies us in advance that they wish to speak Welsh we will also consider the provision of full translation facilities, having regard to the level of demand, location and subject matter of the meeting. Our advance publicity for such meetings will invite members of the public to contact us if they wish to request these facilities.
- 7.2 Where possible we will include a Welsh speaker amongst our representatives when we attend a public meeting in Wales arranged by others.

8 Forms and leaflets

- 8.1 In Wales, we will produce either bilingual or Welsh versions of Post Office Limited customer leaflets.
- 8.2 The principle of equality in design in respect of size, quality, legibility and prominence will apply to all our publications, materials or notices produced in Welsh. Where a place-name occurs within Welsh text, the official Welsh form will be used. These bilingual requirements for Wales will be incorporated in our design guidelines.
- 8.3 When providing forms and leaflets on behalf of third parties that are subject to language commitments we will ensure they are available bilingually in our branches in Wales.
- 8.4 Some of our branches in Wales may supply forms and leaflets on behalf of third parties that may not yet produce their literature in Welsh. In our capacity as agent we will use our influence to encourage the introduction of bilingual forms and leaflets wherever possible
- 8.5 We will ensure that our branches are adequately stocked and that items are adequately displayed, subject to space constraints. Where separate Welsh and English versions are available, we will ensure that the Welsh versions are available just as easily as the English versions.

9 Signs and notices

- 9.1 We will display bilingual signs on the exterior of our own buildings in Wales. Where Welsh branches are operated by agents on our behalf we will ensure bilingual signs are supplied when the fascia is refreshed, either as part of a network change programme, change of ownership or if the agent requests new signs.
- 9.2 All our branches in Wales will display bilingual signs internally. The principle of equality between Welsh and English will also apply to any new or replacement electronic signs, including customer screen interface equipment and digital voice announcements which we install in our branches in Wales.
- 9.3 All stamp vending machines and ATMs that we own and operate that are used by the public in Wales will display bilingual information.
- 9.4 Our Mobile Post Office vehicles that are permanently based in, or mainly used in, Wales will display bilingual signage.
- 9.5 Public information notices produced by us and displayed in public areas in our branches in Wales will be bilingual. If separate Welsh notices are produced, we will give them equal prominence with the English version.

- 9.6 The English and Welsh lettering on all our bilingual signs will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence. Where we provide separate Welsh and English signs, they will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

10 Websites and the internet

- 10.1 When designing our website we will take into account the principle of treating both languages equally in the delivery of public services as well as any guidelines and standards issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner relating to the development of websites.
- 10.2 We will display this Welsh Language Scheme, when approved, on a page on our new website www.postoffice.co.uk.
- 10.3 We will continue to increase the content for Welsh speakers on our new website.

11 Press notices, publications and exhibitions

- 11.1 Press notices and press releases about changes to our services in Wales, or which have special relevance to Wales or the Welsh language, will be produced bilingually. We will issue Welsh and English versions simultaneously unless particular urgency requires issue in English before translation is complete. In such cases, a Welsh version will be issued as soon as possible after the English version. When we address such press notices and releases to media in Wales, this may include newspapers published elsewhere but with the majority of their circulation in Wales.
- 11.2 We will normally produce bilingual public information publications for distribution to customers in Wales. However, we may continue to produce in English only versions for some items which have a low circulation in Wales.
- 11.3 Where we produce separate Welsh and English versions of a publication we will aim to publish both versions simultaneously and they will be available in Wales on terms of equal accessibility. If we make a charge for any publication which is issued in a bilingual format, the price will not be greater than that of a single language version of that document. Nor will the price of a separate Welsh version of any document be greater than the price of the English version.
- 11.4 Whenever we exhibit at an exhibition in Wales, we will have bilingual displays.

12 Product advertising

- 12.1 Any advertising promotions we produce aimed solely at Welsh customers will be bilingual, or have a Welsh language version.
- 12.2 Any customer survey questionnaires relating to our services in Wales will be produced bilingually, and will provide for responses in Welsh.
- 12.3 Where we produce advertising material aimed at promoting sales of commercial products rather than providing public information, we shall consider in each case the need for production of a bilingual or Welsh language version for Wales, having regard to the size and nature of the target audience, and commercial considerations.
- 12.4 Where we sell or distribute promotional or other products, either separately or in connection with another of our services, we shall consider in each case the need for production of a bilingual or Welsh language version for Wales, having regard to the size and nature of the target audience, but with a presumption in favour of the principle of equality between Welsh and English. Where third parties contract with us for the distribution or sale of products and/or services and produce joint promotions featuring one of our services, we shall ask them to take these considerations into account.

13 Postmarks and stamps in Wales

- 13.1 Hand stamps used to apply official postmarks at our branches will show only the registered listed name of the branch due to space restrictions.
- 13.2 Individual or sheets of Welsh Definitive stamps will be available at all our branches in Wales along with the current “Special Stamp” issues available at the time.

14 Recruitment and training – Post Office Limited employees

- 14.1 In Wales, we will advertise job vacancies for Post Office employees in both Welsh and English. However, where we consider that the ability to speak or write Welsh is an essential requirement of the job, we may advertise in Welsh only, with a footnote in English explaining the purpose of the advertisement.
- 14.2 We will identify those jobs for which we consider that the ability to speak Welsh is essential or desirable. Where such a requirement applies it will be stated in our job advertisement and incorporated in the job description.
- 14.3 We will monitor the recruitment, placing and level of proficiency of Welsh speaking employees, with a view to increasing wherever possible the number of Welsh speakers serving the public in Wales. However, no employee will be assigned or transferred to a duty for reasons of linguistic competence without their agreement.
- 14.4 For jobs where we consider that it is essential or desirable to speak Welsh, we will encourage and support appropriate language training to ensure that the holder can reach and maintain the standard we require within a stated period. The support we provide for our employees, e.g. day release, periods of study leave for examinations and costs of tuition and study aids, will be on the terms that we normally apply for study of approved subjects.
- 14.5 We are an equal opportunities employer and will select the person most competent to fill a vacancy, taking all factors into consideration. Where we have stated that the ability to speak Welsh competently is desirable for a particular job, and where in our view candidates are otherwise equally qualified, we will give preference to a Welsh speaker.

15 Recruitment and training – Agents and their employees

- 15.1 Vacancies for agents to operate Post Offices in Wales on our behalf will be advertised bilingually.
- 15.2 When appointing agents we will select the person most competent to fill a vacancy, taking all factors into consideration. Where we have stated that the ability to speak Welsh competently is desirable in applicants for a particular branch, and where in our view candidates are otherwise equally qualified, we will give preference to a Welsh speaker.
- 15.3 We will encourage agents operating Post Offices on our behalf to employ Welsh speakers at their branches, and will ensure that this is discussed as part of the appointment process for new agents.

16 Implementing and monitoring this Scheme

- 16.1 Observance of this Scheme is mandatory within all parts of Post Office Ltd and managers have a responsibility to see that it is communicated and implemented. This Scheme will be publicised internally to maintain awareness. All appropriate new employees and agents will be made aware of this Scheme as part of their induction training.
- 16.2 The planning of all our products and services for the public will take account of the need in Wales for equality between the Welsh and English languages and the commitments given in this Scheme.

- 16.3 We will ensure that the measures and standards set out in this Scheme are implemented, maintained and monitored, and that Welsh language requirements are given proper consideration. The commitments given in this Scheme will be incorporated in appropriate business guidelines and instructions and communicated to all relevant Staff, and to contractors providing services to the public on our behalf. Agents operating branches on our behalf will be asked to communicate these measures and standards to their employees.
- 16.4 We will nominate a senior person with overall responsibility for Welsh language policy. The name of the person will be made known, as appropriate, to all employees and agents, as well as to the public. Our overall compliance with this Scheme shall be the responsibility of our Company Secretary.
- 16.5 We shall keep the effectiveness of this Scheme under review, and we shall consider any necessary amendments to this Scheme for further promoting equality between the Welsh and English languages in consultation with the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 16.6 We shall consult the Welsh Language Commissioner in advance regarding proposals which will affect this Scheme.
- 16.7 We shall not make any alteration to this Scheme without proper consultation with the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 16.8 We will monitor the number and nature of enquiries, suggestions and complaints we receive about the Welsh language service and policy. The results will be included in the published annual report on performance against Scheme commitments.
- 16.9 We will promote continuing awareness of this Scheme by sustaining a programme of on-going publicity about it.
- 16.10 We will send annual monitoring reports to the Welsh Language Commissioner, outlining progress in delivering this Scheme, based on our records.

17 Contact points

- 17.1 Customers who have an enquiry or complaint about one of our products or services, should first take it up with the customer service centre for the relevant product or service. The numbers to contact are available on the Post Office website or in our leaflet 'Your guide to customer service', which is available bilingually, in all branches. The Welsh Language helpline can be contacted on 0845 746 8469.
- 17.2 If you have a query or complaint concerning our Welsh language policy and the contents of this Scheme, please contact:

Post Office Ltd
External Relations
3rd Floor
Cardiff Mail Centre
220 Penarth Road
Cardiff
CF11 8TA

Email: swyddfarpost@postoffice.co.uk

Action	Responsibility	Completion date
Ensure that up to date information regarding the Welsh Language Scheme is available on the Post Office intranet.	Corporate Digital Communications Manager	To coincide with the Scheme's publication
A communication to remind Post Office central functions staff of that information and advice about Post Office's Welsh Language Scheme is available on the intranet.	Head of External Relations, Wales	Annually
A communication to remind Post Office branches in Wales how to access information and advice about Post Office's Welsh Language Scheme.	Head of External Relations, Wales	Annually
Develop the range of corporate and product information on www.postoffice.co.uk	Head of Digital	Continuous – with annual monitoring
Report to the Post Office Board on the operation of the Scheme.	Company Secretary	Annually, to coincide with the annual monitoring report
Provide monitoring report to Welsh Language Commissioner, including measurement of usage of services offered.	Head of External Relations, Wales	Annually