

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil

Your local county voluntary council



4. Volunteers

4.27 Promoting Welsh Language through volunteering

In Wales, the Welsh Language has official status which means

- It should be treated no less favourably than the English Language
- Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh Language if they choose to do so

Welsh Language standards are being introduced 2015 – 17, which will apply to Welsh Welsh Government, public bodies and National Parks. They serve as a model of good practice for other organisations.

The Welsh Language Commissioner now supports third sector organisations in producing Welsh Language Promotion Plans. More information can be found at www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/hybu. This service has been set up with the new Welsh Language Standards in mind and replaces the former requirement to publish a 'Welsh language Scheme'.

Some of the ways in which volunteer involving organisations can help to promote the use Welsh Language are outlined below.

Marketing

The volunteering opportunities website www.voluntering-wales.net is a bilingual site and organisations are encouraged wherever possible to upload opportunities bilingually. [Guidance](#) is available on the website to facilitate this, which includes translation of common phrases that are used in describing volunteer roles.

The Welsh Government [Volunteering Policy: Supporting Communities, Changing Lives](#) (2015) expressly encourages volunteering involving organisations to “actively seek to promote appropriate volunteering opportunities through the medium of Welsh, and other languages where there is a need”

The WCVA/CVC Information sheet [Attracting Welsh Speaking Volunteers](#) includes practical suggestions for reaching and recruiting Welsh speaking volunteers and ensuring that they feel welcome within your organisation.

The [benefits of bilingual marketing](#) by Third Sector organisations, more generally, has been researched by the Welsh Language Commissioner and found to be beneficial. It helps to establish the Welsh ethos of an organisation, which is valued by Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers alike.

70% of survey participants thought that charities operating in Wales should market bilingually. Such bilingual communication adds credibility and indicates a commitment to Welsh society and Welsh culture. This is especially significant in relation to Third Sector organisations whose Head Office is outside of Wales.

Operations and Service Delivery

As organisations seek to improve the ways in which they deliver services in Welsh and English languages, there will be growing potential for volunteers to use their Welsh language skills to assist with this.

For example, guidance is available, based on recent research, on how to conduct sports coaching bilingually. The techniques developed in this field are transferable to other areas where bilingual communication with groups would be appropriate.

As use of social media continues to grow, there is a role for posting of comments and tweets in Welsh and English and volunteers may be able to assist with this.

Specific needs for Welsh language skills should be made clear when advertising volunteer roles, including the type of skill (listening and speaking, reading, writing) and degree of proficiency.

Remember that existing volunteers may also have valuable language skills which could be put to better use for the sake of your organisation and its beneficiaries.

Creating opportunities for Welsh speakers (including Welsh Learners)

Volunteering is recognised as a two-way process which benefits both the volunteer involving organisation and the volunteers themselves. Good volunteer programmes will be looking for ways in which volunteers can grow and develop, whether for personal interest and enjoyment, to gain life skills or to improve employability.

The aim in introducing the Welsh Language measures is that those who wish can live out their everyday lives through the medium of Welsh in Wales.

Through volunteering, organisations can offer an environment where people can socialise through the medium of Welsh, or can practice their language skills to improve their confidence and proficiency in an informal setting. They can provide a means for young people leaving the Welsh language education system to continue to use their Welsh and, for those still in education, a way of using the language beyond the classroom.

The Investing in Volunteers Standard

[Investing in Volunteers](#) is the UK Quality Standard for volunteer management. Organisations can use this as a framework for developing their practice in relation to volunteers, whether or not they choose to undertake assessment to achieve the quality mark.

The implications for Welsh language run through the standard's nine indicators:

Indicator 1 requires a written policy on volunteer involvement. This could include the organisations commitments, provision and support in terms of Welsh language.

Indicator 2 concerns appropriate resourcing for volunteer programmes. Financial provision for translation costs are amongst these.

Indicator 3 is about embracing and proactively increasing diversity. It includes the promotion of volunteering to reach different target audiences. Equal opportunities data is monitored as tool for improvement as well as for reporting purposes, and this could include data about Welsh language abilities of volunteers. The Information sheet on [Attracting Welsh Speaking volunteers](#) is especially relevant here.

Indicator 4 expects clarity about the expectations of volunteer roles. Role descriptions, as noted above, could more often specify either the possibilities for using Welsh language or the requirement for language skills to perform a volunteer role.

Indicators 6, 7, 8 and 9 are about recruitment induction, support and recognition of volunteers. All involve oral and written communication, raising the question of how far provision can be made in both Welsh and English languages.

Indicator 9 also encourages the provision of opportunities for volunteers to develop their skills and talents. The opportunity to improve Welsh language speaking and writing skills is one way in which volunteers can develop through their volunteering.

[PQASSO](#)

The 4th edition of the PQASSO Quality Standard includes new requirements around demonstrating the use of the Welsh language in the development and delivery of services, and in other aspects of organisational life which include managing staff and volunteers and the learning and development of staff and volunteers.

Further Information

[The Welsh Language and Volunteering](#). (February 2014) Welsh Language Commissioner)

WCVA/CVC Information Sheet [4.5 Attracting Welsh Speaking volunteers](#)

[The Benefits of bilingual marketing by charities in Wales](#) (August 2014). Welsh Language Commissioner

[The Welsh Language Progress Plan](#) self assessment tool for developing a framework for increasing the use of Welsh in your organisation over time.

The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy: [Supporting Communities, Changing Lives](#) (2015)

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

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Last Updated: 05/01/2017



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