

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

4. Volunteers

4.5 Recruiting Welsh speaking volunteers



In recent years voluntary organisations have increasingly come to recognise the importance of promoting equality and diversity. This affirms the Welsh Government's vision outlined in the Voluntary Sector Scheme (2000), which recognises that everyone has a right to participate and be included in the life of their community through volunteering.

In order to respect equality and ensure social inclusion here in Wales, organisations are increasingly looking to operate bilingually. The publication of the Welsh Government's document '*Iaith Pawb – a National Plan for a Bilingual Wales in 2003*' and commitment to 'Wales becoming a truly bilingual country' has further promoted the benefits of bilingualism.

Although the main argument for promoting diversity and equality is one of social justice, by operating bilingually your organisation can also benefit by:

- Adopting good practice. Giving a client real choice regarding the use of language is the essence of good practice.
- Improving its image as a Welsh organisation.
- Reflecting the community it serves
- Appealing to a wider spectrum of volunteers.
- Improving its chances of attracting funding from bodies who look favourably on an organisation with a policy of attracting volunteers from a cross section of society.
- Improving its quality of services to the public.

These may be reasons why your organisation will be eager to recruit Welsh speaking volunteers as part of a team, but there is also a need to consider the recruitment strategy used. If Welsh speaking volunteers are required to fulfill special tasks through the medium of Welsh, such as answering the phone, speaking to Welsh media or working with Welsh speaking clients, this should be made clear from the outset. Not all Welsh speakers will be happy to perform these roles. It is better to aim to increase bilingualism generally throughout the organisation than to limit your interest to fulfil specific tasks in Welsh.

How do we recruit Welsh speaking volunteers?

Volunteering is a part of life in Welsh communities where traditionally people have helped each other and been involved in community activities.

All kinds of voluntary groups spring from communities in order to meet the needs of local people. The people involved are often unaware that they are volunteers; “volunteering” is often seen as something to do with the establishment and formal organisations.

It is important that organisations are aware of the need to take a different and sensitive approach to recruiting Welsh speaking volunteers.

- It is important to make Welsh speaking volunteers feel welcome in an organisation. This could be linked in to any equal opportunities or diversity policy.
- A bilingual image for the organisation will reflect its commitment to treating the Welsh and English languages as equal.
- Providing bilingual information, in an informal, friendly language will reflect the organisation’s commitment to providing language choice both internally and externally.

How do we reach Welsh speakers?

1. Do some research into Welsh speaking organisations in your area (perhaps your local Menter Iaith/ Language Initiative can provide contacts) and work through them to reach the Welsh speaking community, arrange meetings, exhibitions and appeal for volunteers. Examples include:

- Young Farmers’ Associations
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh medium youth organisation – local groups all over Wales)
- Chapels and Churches
- Local schools (including Parent/ Teachers Associations)
- Language Centres
- Merched y Wawr (Welsh women’s organisation)
- Gwawr (Welsh women’s organisation)
- Mentrau Iaith (Language initiatives)
- Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Welsh medium nursery school organisation – local groups all over Wales)
- County voluntary councils
- Local volunteer centres
- Welsh medium choirs and societies.
- Local Eisteddfodau and sub-committees of National Eisteddfodau and national music festivals (such as the Gŵyl Gerdd Dant) visiting the area. The sub-committees are made up of local people.

2. Advertise through the Welsh speaking media:

- Radio Cymru (national radio station which also offers regional programming at various intervals during the day)

- Welsh slot on local radio station
- Welsh slot in local newspapers
- Local Welsh monthly newspapers (Papurau Bro). The Welsh Language Board has compiled a list
- Golwg (National Welsh magazine)
- Y Cymro (National Welsh newspaper)
- Yr Herald Cymraeg (now a supplement in the Daily Post)
- S4C programmes such as Wedi 3, Wedi 7, Uned 5

3. Place a bilingual page on your website.

4. Take advantage of national events such as Volunteers Week (1-7 June), National Eisteddfod of Wales (first week in August), the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show (mid July), the Urdd National Eisteddfod (week beginning Whitsun Bank Holiday), International Volunteer's Day (5 December) and arrange visual activities that will grab attention.

5. Use public place within the community to place adverts e.g. library, schools, doctor's surgeries, newsagents and volunteer centres.

Points to consider when including Welsh speaking volunteers

- Recruitment and selection of Welsh or English speaking volunteers should adhere to equal opportunities practice.
- Try to ensure that volunteers have access to a Welsh speaking support worker.
- Translation work is a skill and should not be the responsibility of Welsh speakers without the necessary training and support.
- Dealing with the Welsh speaking media on behalf of an organisation is a great responsibility. Welsh speakers should receive the necessary training and support and a full briefing before this is required of them.
- Organisations should aim to provide training courses through the medium of Welsh and English if there is a need. (WCVA has a database of consultants and trainers)
- Volunteering is a matter of choice and volunteers should have the time and opportunity to consider whether to undertake the tasks offered them.
- They should feel no obligation to undertake tasks which they feel are inappropriate.
- Organisations should be aware that Welsh speaking volunteers need the same training and support provided to other volunteers doing similar work.
- Welsh speaking volunteers may need training to enable them to carry out their work through the medium of Welsh, for example, specialist vocabulary acquisition, written skills.

Further information

For more information or further advice on good practice, recruiting and supporting volunteers contact your local volunteer centre or your county voluntary council.

For more information on developing the use of the Welsh language in your organisation visit WCVA's website or contact:

Mentrau Iaith

www.mentrau-iaith.com

Welsh Language Board

www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk

Estyn Llaw

www.estynllaw.org

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.

For further information contact

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