



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# More than just words...

## Welsh Language in Primary Care

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**Q.** What are Welsh Government's aims for the Welsh language?

**A.** We have two main strategic aims for the Welsh language, both to be achieved by 2050.

1. To see a million Welsh speakers.
2. To double the daily use of Welsh.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 confirms the official status of Welsh in Wales. The Welsh Government believes that Welsh speakers should be able to access important services in the language of their choice where the capacity exists and to increase the use of Welsh in the workplace.

**Q.** Why offering Welsh services in health/primary care is important?

**A.** *More than just words* is our framework for strengthening Welsh language services in health and social care. At the core of all our work to strengthen Welsh language provision in health and social care are patient safety, dignity and respect as language choice can be a need rather than a preference for patients.

The quality of care can be compromised by the failure to communicate with people in their chosen language.

It is especially important for vulnerable people and their families who need to access services in the language of their choice, such as older people suffering from dementia or stroke who may lose their second language or very young children who may only speak Welsh. You may wish to view the video on the link below that shows more vividly than words how important language is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10Au1qB0DkQ&feature=youtu.be>

*My Language, My Health: The Welsh Language Commissioner's Inquiry into the Welsh Language in Primary Care (2014)* also highlighted the importance of offering Welsh services in the primary care sector as this is the first point of contact for many members of the public with the healthcare system.

It set out a number of recommendations including:

- I ask Welsh Ministers, professional bodies and representative bodies to provide a clear policy lead to primary care providers on the implications of failing to treat Welsh speakers with dignity and respect, and the effect of failing to recognise their identity and needs.
- As a policy matter I ask Welsh Ministers to ensure that language choice is understood as meaningful practice. Arising from this, Welsh Government should take steps, in co-operation with all primary care service providers, in order to publicise the services that members of the public might reasonably expect to receive in Welsh.
- I ask Welsh Ministers, in partnership with those responsible for primary care in Wales, to provide informative guidance on the relationship between being able to use the Welsh language and the quality of care, and in relation to that, the individual's dignity.
- The primary care sector should take action in accordance with current Welsh language duties and revisit its approach to Welsh language provision. I wish to see an action plan and timetable for change.
- I ask Welsh Ministers to take a policy stance in favour of the 'active offer' model to enable it to be implemented systematically and effectively across primary care services, in order to ensure a quality experience and safe start to the patients care path.
- The sector should co-operate with users in order to learn about their experiences of Welsh language services and to identify the practical steps that could be taken to ensure continuous improvement.

**Q.** What are Welsh language standards?

**A.** The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives the Welsh language official status in Wales and also provides for Welsh language standards which can be imposed on a range of bodies across the public and private sector. The standards replace and build on the Welsh Language Schemes. They will make it easier for people to access Welsh language services, and use Welsh in their everyday lives. The purpose of the Welsh language standards is to:

- improve the services Welsh speakers can expect to receive from organisations in Welsh and increase the use people make of Welsh language services
- ensure clarity to Welsh speakers on what services they can expect to receive in Welsh
- make it clear to organisations what they need to do in terms of the Welsh language.

Regulations making Welsh language standards applicable to Health Boards and Trusts were approved by the National Assembly for Wales in March 2018 (The Welsh Language Standards No.7 Regulations 2018) and they came into force at the end of June 2018.

The Welsh Language Commissioner has since issued compliance notices to those bodies and they began complying with standards from 30 May 2019. As well as dealing with services they provide to the public, standards in the regulations include the requirement for bodies to develop the Welsh language skills of their staff; provide Welsh language awareness training and assess the need for Welsh language skills when advertising posts.

For the health sector there is also a standard requiring NHS bodies to publish a five year plan setting out the extent to which they are able to carry out clinical consultations in Welsh and the actions they intend to take to increase their ability to do so. All bodies must also develop the Welsh language skills of their staff and keep a record of those skills as well as showing in their service change and improvement plans that they have paid due regard to the need to actively offer services through the medium of Welsh.

The Welsh language standards do not apply to primary care providers, including GP surgeries, apart from a small number managed directly by health boards. To coincide with the introduction of the Welsh language standards for the health sector, the Welsh Government agreed with all four representative bodies to include Welsh language duties in the contracts/terms of service for independent primary care contractors. This is where you can play an important part in helping promote, develop Welsh language skills and recording the 'Active Offer'.

**Q.** What are the Welsh language duties placed on independent primary care contractors?

**A.** Six duties have been placed on independent primary care contractors and they are outlined below:

1. Where the contractor provides services, or any part of a service, under the contract through the medium of Welsh, it must notify the Local Health Board in writing.
2. The contractor must make available to its patients and members of the public a Welsh language version of any document or form provided to it by the Local Health Board.
3. Where the contractor displays a new sign or notice in connection with services, or any part of a service, provided under the contract, the text on the sign or notice must be in English and in Welsh, and the contractor may utilise the translation service offered by the Local Health Board for this purpose.
4. Where the contractor provides services, or any part of a service, under the contract through the medium of Welsh, it must encourage its staff to wear a badge to convey that they are able to speak Welsh.
5. The contractor must encourage and assist its staff to utilise information and/or attend training courses or events provided by the Local Health Board, so that it can develop:
  - (a) an awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of its history and its role in Welsh culture); and

(b) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used when delivering services, or any part of a service, under the contract.

6. When delivering services, or any part of a service, under the contract, the contractor is encouraged to:

(a) establish the language preference of a patient; and

(b) record any language preference expressed by or on behalf of a patient.

**Q.** When did they come into force?

**A.** The duties placed on independent primary care contractors came into force on 30th May 2019.

**Q.** What's the difference between standards and duties?

**A.** The Welsh Language Standards are set out in Regulations approved by the National Assembly and bodies subject to the Regulations are issued with compliance notices from the Welsh Language Commissioner. Compliance with the standards is monitored by the Welsh Language Commissioner and complaints in relation to bodies not meeting the standards set in their compliance notices are investigated by the Commissioner.

The duties placed on independent primary care contractors are included within the National Health Services (Welsh Language in Primary Care Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2019. The duties sit within the primary care contracts/terms of service of independent primary care contractors. The contracts are managed and monitored by Local Health Boards and complaints on not meeting the duties would be investigated by the relevant health board.

**Q.** To what services do the duties apply?

**A.** The duties apply to the Primary Care Sector in Wales which includes general practice, community pharmacy, dental, and optometry services.

**Q.** What is the 'Active Offer'?

**A.** A key component of *More than just words* is the concept of the 'Active Offer'. The 'Active Offer' simply means providing a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. It places the responsibility of asking the question on you, the service provider, not the service user. Offering services in Welsh without the need for the end user to request them is an intrinsic part of a good service.

**Q.** How should I make the 'Active Offer'?

**A.** Delivering the 'Active Offer' can be achieved in many different ways and does not need to be costly. It may be challenging in some areas due to a possible shortage of Welsh speakers, but non-Welsh speakers also have a role to play in delivering the 'Active Offer'.

Here are some practical things you can do to provide an 'Active Offer':

- Bilingual greetings.
- Bilingual signage.

Here are some examples:

- All Welsh-speaking staff in your organisation should wear a 'Working Welsh' or 'Learning Welsh' pin badge or lanyard. For information on obtaining some of these, contact the Health Board Welsh Language Officer.
- To ensure that Welsh speakers have every opportunity to use their Welsh, make sure that all signs are in Welsh and English and displayed with Welsh on the left, and English on the right and/or Welsh on top and English below.
- All information which is public-facing should be bilingual.
- Make sure your staff know the importance of having bilingual greetings and are aware of services available to ensure Welsh-speaking patients are making an informed choice. Even when services are not available it is important to ask so that the Welsh language preference is recorded to aid future planning and to be passed on with a referral.

**Q.** Why should I make the 'Active Offer' if am unable to provide all or some of the services available in Welsh?

**A.** We all have a part to play in delivering the 'Active Offer'. Simple day-to-day Welsh language phrases can be introduced to use with patients. Any attempt to make the patient feel at ease will be appreciated.

It is important to record when an 'Active Offer' is made and language preference expressed in order that other services the patient may be referred to are aware and can consider if they are able to provide some or all of the services in Welsh.

We are working to further enhance clinical systems to record and share language preference within the NHS and social care to ensure the patient's preference is being catered for through the whole of their care.

**Q.** Why is Welsh Language signage important?

**A.** Signage supports a sense of place and when people see visible bilingual signage it can make them feel more at ease and it shows respect. The health board will provide you with bilingual posters/ information and provide translation for new signage in both Welsh and English.

You may also wish to consider other ways to increase the visibility of the Welsh language in the workplace. Why not introduce a Welsh language noticeboard in your waiting areas which provides up-to-date information and relevant links for staff and patients. For example, you could introduce a 'Welsh word of the day'. The Local Health Board's Welsh Language Officer will be able to help you with this.

**Q.** Why is recording language preference important?

**A.** We have previously explained the importance of the recording of the 'Active Offer' and language preference.

It is important that patients do not have to or be asked at every appointment or multiple times for their language preference. Having this noted on a patient record and passed, wherever possible, as part of the referral information to other services is important as this will aid the process of supporting the principle of the 'Active Offer'.

It is also important information in understanding demand for Welsh language services for the population and future planning of your and wider health services.

**Q.** How can I learn more about the language profile of my population?

**A.** Local authorities and Local Health Boards have come together across Wales to form six new Regional Partnership Boards (RPB). The RPBs release data on the language profile of the Local Health Board area.

The six Regional Partnership Boards (RPB) are:

**North Wales Regional Board**

<https://www.northwalescollaborative.wales/regional-partnership-board/>

**Mid and West Regional Board**

<https://www.wwcp.org.uk>

**Western Bay Regional Board**

<http://www.westernbay.org.uk>

**Cwm Taf Regional Board**

<https://www.wwcp.org.uk/>

**Cardiff and Vale Regional Board**

<https://www.cardiffandvalesocialcare.co.uk/>

**Gwent Regional Board**

<http://www.gwentrbp.wales/home>

Each RPB explains in a population assessment regional plan how they will work together across Wales to deliver health and social care services. It's based on a report about the care and support people need in each of the six areas written by the individual Regional Partnership Board, called a population assessment.

**Q.** What Welsh language training is available for staff?

**A.** There are readily available Welsh language beginners' courses that can be accessed through your Local Health Board.

Also, the National Centre for Learning Welsh – 'Learn Welsh' offer a 10-hour free online taster course tailored to the health & social care sector. They also offer face to face courses that cater to learners of all ability. More information can be found on their website: <https://learnwelsh.cymru/>

Health Board Welsh Language Officers can also help by providing useful resources such as signage and other resources to help the training available.

**Q.** What about the cost?

**A.** There should be no extra cost for you to incur as your Local Health Board can provide you with resources such as translation of signage, badges and training.

The Welsh Government can also support you through our Welsh in Business helpline to be launched later in 2019. This helpline will give you free translations of up to 500 words per month and a Welsh language proof reading service.

The helpline can refer you to our 12 Welsh in Business officers who can help you use more Welsh in your business free of charge. They provide a bespoke service offering practical advice and tools as well as helping you find further relevant support.

**Website:** <https://cymraeg.gov.wales/business/business/?lang=en>

Improving and offering Welsh language services can also support your business. By raising awareness and capacity to offer services in Welsh you may attract more people to your services.

**Q. Where can I ask for help/ support?**

**A. There are readily available Welsh language beginners' courses that can be accessed through your Local Health Board. The Welsh Language Officers of the health board also provide support in their health board area. The list of the Local Health Board Welsh Language Officers are as follows:**

**Aneurin Bevan University Health Board –**  
welshlanguageunit.abb@wales.nhs.uk

**Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board –**  
bcu.gwasanaethaucymraeg@wales.nhs.uk / bcu.welshlanguageservices@wales.nhs.uk

**Cardiff & Vale University Health Board –**  
alun.williams4@wales.nhs.uk

**Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board**  
ctt\_welshlanguageunit@wales.nhs.uk

**Hywel Dda University Health Board –**  
translation.welsh.hdd@wales.nhs.uk

**Powys Teaching Health Board –**  
powys.geninfo@wales.nhs.uk

**Swansea Bay University Health Board –**  
carol.harry2@wales.nhs.uk

Currently, there are two Cymraeg Byd Busnes Pilots commencing in Autumn 2019, in two primary care clusters within the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Hywel Dda University Health Board areas. At their core, the Cymraeg Byd Busnes Pilots in primary care aim to support the sector learn and share best practice in promoting the Welsh language.

The Local Health Boards' Welsh Language Officers, Cymraeg Byd Busnes team and the Welsh Government will support the pilot clusters and share best practice across Wales.