

Introduction

- Wales is one of the four nations of the United Kingdom, located to the west of England, with a distinct cultural heritage and a strong bilingual identity. It has a unique health and social care system shaped by its language, culture, and strong community values (Edwards *et al.*, 2026). Evidence shows that using a patient's preferred first language improves communication, trust, and comfort in clinical interactions, particularly in primary care where bilingual provision can be inconsistent (Edwards *et al.*, 2026). Many patients report feeling more comfortable and better understood when Welsh-language consultations are offered.
- Understanding the Welsh context is essential for health and social care professionals, as communication, trust, and cultural awareness directly influence patient outcomes and equitable access to services (Spencer *et al.*, 2025). Language barriers and limited awareness of Welsh language rights can negatively impact patient experience (Spencer *et al.*, 2025). Professionals, including pharmacists, recognise that using Welsh enhances clarity and rapport with Welsh-speaking patients (Jones, 2025). Although national policies such as *More than Just Words* (Welsh Government, 2022) promote Welsh language services, gaps remain in implementation and professional training. This poster explores how Welsh culture, language, and identity shape health and social care delivery and highlights the importance of culturally sensitive, person-centred practice in Wales.

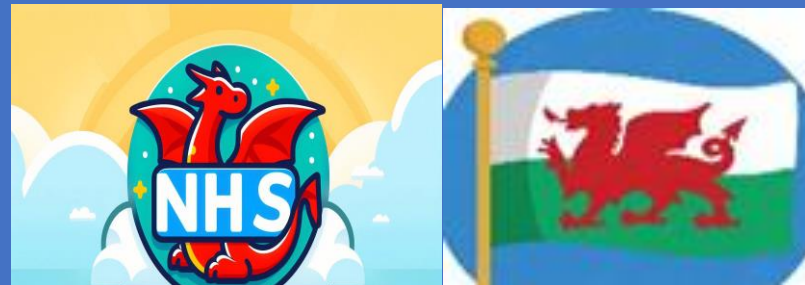
Culture, Language and Patient Experience

- Welsh culture values community belonging, respect, and heritage (Welsh, Government, 2015) these cultural principles influence how individuals perceive illness, care, and professional relationships (public Health Wales, 2022). Patients often prefer healthcare workers who understand their background and communicate sensitively (NHS, Wales 2023).
- Language plays a key role in care delivery. For Welsh speaking patients, receiving services only in English may cause anxiety or misunderstanding (Welsh Government, 2015).
- Cultural identity also affects mental health and wellbeing. When patients feel respected and understood, they are more likely to participate actively in their care (Public health, 2022) therefore culturally sensitive practices is essential for reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes. (Welsh Government, 2015).



Welsh context and healthcare challenge

- Wales faces distinct healthcare challenges due to its geography and population structure ((Public Health Wales, 2025). Many rural communities have limits access to hospitals and clinics, resulting in longer travel times and reduced service availability (Welsh Government, 2015). In addition, the ageing population increases demand for long-term and community-based care (NHS Wales, 2023).
- Bilingual service provision remains central healthcare delivery. Patients who prefer speaking Welsh often feel more confident when services are delivered in their first language (Welsh Government, 2011). Research shows that clear communication improves diagnosis accuracy, treatment adherence, and patient satisfaction (Public Health Wales, 2025).
- Strong communication lies in Welsh speaking areas also influence care practices. Health professionals must understand local tradition and values to build trust and encouragement with services (Welsh Government, 2015)



Policy, Legislation and Professional Practices

- Health and social care Wales is guided by national legislation and policy framework (Welsh Gov., 2011) ensures equal access to services in Welsh and English, requiring providers to offer bilingual communication and documentation.
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2015) focuses on sustainability and social justice, requiring organisations to work collaboratively to improve long-term wellbeing (Welsh, Government., 2015).
- These policies shape professional practice by promoting ethical behaviour, inclusion, and accountability. Health workers are responsible for maintain cultural competence and promoting equality in service delivery (NHS,2023)

Conclusion

Health care in Wales is shaped by language, culture, and geography. Providing bilingual and culturally sensitive services improves trust, access, and health outcomes. Strengthening rural healthcare and inclusive practices will ensure quality care for all residents.

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