

WELSH LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN HEALTHCARE

CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

There are a variety of challenges for the Welsh language, culture and identity in healthcare and one of them include the shortfall of Welsh language services, as well as the inconsistency of accessible services. Additionally, healthcare suppliers weren’t available. The lack of services in Welsh affects Welsh speakers, including patients who suffer with mental health issues and children. “A clear strategic direction and raised awareness of the need for continued increase in the provision of Welsh language services in many areas. By placing the principle of the Active Offer at the heart of its strategic aims, More than just words had conveyed the importance of Welsh language service provision not only as a right or a choice, but as an essential need for many Welsh speakers. Key areas of success include increased use of visual markers identifying Welsh speaking staff; investment in Welsh language health and social care higher education courses; and renewed focus on the importance of Welsh language provision and the Active Offer in both higher education and induction programmes for employees. “ (Welsh Government, 2022.)

CONCLUSION

The welsh language is essential to the healthcare experience for a variety of people wales. However, speaking to patients in their mother tongue promotes open communication, offers culturally sensitive treatment and increases trust. The policies such as, “More Than Just Words” and The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, was announced to ensure the needs of the welsh speakers are met. Nonetheless, we must keep striving to address the gaps that still exist. Increasing funding for health workers’ welsh language training and expanding their understanding of bilinfual services would contribute to the development of an improved and diverse medical system. To make sure that language is not an obstacle to accessing excellent care, the public, legislators and healthcare professionals should collaborate. Simplifying patient access to health services by offering welsh language services enhances patient-centred care delivery and contributes to wales strong linguistic legacy.

INTRODUCTION

“It’s important that people working in social services and social care recognise that many people can only communicate their care needs effectively through the medium of Welsh. For many Welsh speakers being able to use your own language has to be seen as a core component of care, not an optional extra.” To deliver a service which meets people’s individual needs and respects their diversity, services must be able to support Welsh language and culture and be able to communicate with people whose first language is Welsh. It is important to recognise that:

- People are better able to express their views and needs in their language of choice.
- Language is an essential part of a person’s identity - responding sensitively to language, whilst focusing on the individual, is an essential principle of maintaining dignity and respect.
- to provide high quality care, there has to be an appreciation that language is a matter of need.” (Denbighshire county council, 2025.)

POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

“The Health Board have a responsibility under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards to ensure equity of opportunity for persons to use Welsh language within our services and to treat the Welsh and English languages, on the basis of parity. The policy outlines clear expectations around the application of the Welsh Language Impact Assessment within Primary Care and ensures that due process is followed, ensuring equity in opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and ensuring services are treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. This policy has been developed to mitigate against any potential negative effects a decision made in relation to providing a primary care service may have on:

- 1) Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language,
- and 2) Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.” (Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, 2020.)

REFERENCES

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UNDERSTANDING WELSH CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HEALTHCARE

The importance of welsh culture and identity of health care has a big effect on trust, conveying and general value of care given. Welsh language and culture combined has a big impact on how a person views treatment, health and illness. As a healthcare supplier, being a cultural constituent, showing respect to the welsh language and it’s heritage is a must as this results in patient satisfaction and makes them feel heard and respected. According to (CMM, 2025.) “Healthcare studies have found that the language barrier between people and providers prevents people from accurately describing their symptoms and causes problems for providers when fully explaining diagnoses, leading to adverse health effects.”

THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

“Language has always been important in health and care because responding to the individual needs of patients / service users always starts with communication. The Welsh Government recognises this by acknowledging that receiving services through the medium of Welsh is a key component of care, especially when discussing sensitive and emotional concerns. The focus of the More than just words, the Welsh Government’s strategic framework to strengthen Welsh language provision in health and social care, is on providing care that meets the needs of individuals.” (Welsh government, 2021.) Under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the NHS in Wales has a statutory duty to deliver their services to the public in both Welsh and English. This legislation gives the Welsh language official status in Wales, and reinforces the principle that the Welsh language should not be treated less favourably than the English language in Wales. The Measure states that individuals in Wales should be able to conduct their lives through the medium of Welsh if they choose to do so. Since 30 May 2019, Public Health Wales is subject to the Welsh Language Standards set by the Welsh Language Commissioner under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. (Public Health Wales, 2025.)