

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)-07-06(p7)

Meeting date: Wednesday 5 April 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: The structure and work of the Welsh Language Unit within the NHS; and initiatives to help Welsh speaking professionals to work through the medium of Welsh, including information on anything the Welsh School of Medicine was doing.

Purpose

1. This paper provides additional information to that included in the preceding HSSC paper of 1st Feb 2006 and describes the work of the NHS Welsh Language Unit.

Background

Structure

2. The NHS Welsh Language Unit, based in the Health and Social Care Department, consists of 3 full-time posts and a National Liaison Officer for Speech and Language Services who is undertaking a twelve month Speech and Language Therapy project.

Role of the Unit

3. The purpose of the NHS Welsh Language Unit is to raise awareness, importance, status, promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language within the healthcare sector in Wales. This it does by:

- Developing and Supporting infrastructures
- Working with the All Wales Task Group for Welsh Language Services and providing support for the implementation of the Task Group's Action Plan.
- Working closely with the NHS Trusts and Local Health Boards in promoting and encouraging the use of the Welsh language in healthcare services in Wales. In particular, directing and working with Welsh Language Champions and Contact Points Groups.

Training

- Developing and distributing training resources such as the Welsh Language Awareness Training pack 'Iechyd Da/Good Health, and providing training seminars.
- Negotiating with key partners to influence training provision e.g. discussions with ELWa have resulted in training for Welsh-speaking staff to have confidence in using the language in the workplace.

Providing advice and support to the NHS

- Advice on the preparation and implementation of Welsh Language Schemes.
- Manage the development of Welsh Language services within primary care e.g. advising on language choice related to the new GMS/Pharmacy/Dental contracts.

Conducting Research

- The survey of Welsh Language Awareness amongst health practitioners in Wales conducted by University of Wales, Bangor provides us with evidence and a baseline to measure progress.
- The Speech and Language Therapy National Liaison Officer is working with the stakeholders in speech and language services to develop a model of good practice. Developing Welsh medium training for speech and language therapists is a primary goal for improved bilingual services.

Sharing good practice

- Organising the Annual Welsh Language in Healthcare Conference and Awards provides an opportunity to showcase good practice.
- Influencing policies and strategies by sharing good practice and its success within health organisations.

Iaith Pawb

The Unit provides support in the implementation of the Health and Social Care targets set out in Iaith Pawb which include

- developing the NHS language awareness programme;
- raising status of the language within the NHS by means of the NHS Welsh Language Unit;
- improving the capacity of social care providers to deliver Welsh language services;

Liaising with other Government Departments

- Presenting evidence on Welsh language provision within the NHS for the Committee of Experts

for the European Council for Regional and Minority Languages.

- Providing advice to the Department of Health on the preparation of their Welsh Language Scheme.

Initiatives to help Welsh speaking professionals to work through the medium of Welsh

4. The NHS Welsh Language Unit initiates and supports projects throughout Wales which enable Welsh-speaking staff to work through the medium of Welsh. These include:

- A course for those who speak Welsh as a first language/experienced learners has been developed and tailored by North West Wales NHS Trust to improve oral presentations in Welsh - taking part in meetings and discussions relevant to the workplace, presenting reports etc.
- Several Trusts and LHBs in Wales implement a ‘buddy’ scheme to encourage Welsh speakers and learners to practice their language skills in the workplace every day.
- The NHS Welsh Language Unit has encouraged the wearing of Iaith Gwaith badges throughout the NHS in Wales. By wearing the badges, Welsh-speaking staff and learners are making it evident that the use of Welsh in the workplace is culturally acceptable, and are given the confidence to use and develop the language in the workplace.
- Subject specific health resources have been developed such as Bilingual Terms for Health Promotion, Midwifery, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, and Health Care of Older People, and the development of customised training packages e.g. Welsh language support via e-mail for learners and those staff who are short on confidence to use Welsh at work.
- The NHS Welsh Language Unit is negotiating training for Trusts and LHBs to enable Welsh speaking staff to use their Welsh at work.
- The School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies, University of Wales, Bangor sets aside 9 hours to provide Welsh language lessons for students. The aim is to give students confidence to use Welsh in the workplace.

5. The Welsh School of Medicine in Cardiff has no specific initiatives to help Welsh-speaking professionals to work through the medium of Welsh. They do however ensure that Welsh-speaking students are able to use Welsh with Welsh speaking patients when on placement.

Conclusion

6. This paper provides and outline of some of the key initiatives undertaken by the Unit to support the development of bilingual services within the NHS.

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