

# Health and Social Services Committee

## HSS(2)-11-04(p.12)

Date: 6 October 2004

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Title: A Study of Welsh Language Awareness in Healthcare Provision in Wales

### Purpose

1. This paper is presented to the Committee to provide information on the recent research into Welsh language awareness amongst healthcare professionals in Wales commissioned by the Assembly Government.

### Summary / Recommendations

2. This research was commissioned to give a current assessment of Welsh language awareness amongst healthcare professionals in Wales. The research has found that there is a range of individual and organisational factors that effect language awareness in practice. The report makes a number of recommendations for healthcare organisations and higher education institutions.

### Background

3. Over recent years there has been criticism that the health service does not offer the same standard of bilingual services as can increasingly be expected from other public and many private sector providers.

4. This study was commissioned as part of the programme of the All Wales Task Group for Welsh Language Services in Healthcare, set up by the Minister for Health and Social Services to facilitate improvements in Welsh language services in the NHS and partnership organisations in Wales. Part of this programme by the All Wales Task Group was to commission a sector-wide survey of the language awareness of healthcare professionals across Wales. This study therefore aims to identify the factors that enhance language choice within service delivery, exploring how attitudes and language proficiency of practitioners facilitate Welsh language provision in healthcare.

### This study concludes that:

- Language choice is influenced by a range of individual and organisational factors within the

healthcare setting.

- Individual factors that affect language choice for patients and clients include the Welsh language proficiency and confidence of healthcare professionals, as well as their attitudes towards the Welsh language.
- Organisational factors that affect language choice for patients and clients include the availability of procedures to identify and facilitate the language preference of service users.
- Regardless of Welsh language proficiency, large proportions of practitioners demonstrate positive attitudes towards the Welsh language in healthcare and facilitate language choice for patients and clients
- An equally large proportion of healthcare professionals demonstrate neutral attitudes towards the Welsh language in healthcare. This, coupled with a lack of fluent Welsh speakers has implications for Welsh language awareness training in healthcare that enhances both the Welsh language sensitivity and proficiency of practitioners.

**Based on the evidence in this research study the following recommendations have been made:**

- Healthcare professionals be encouraged to enhance their Welsh language awareness in practice.
- Higher education institutions be encouraged to enhance Welsh language awareness amongst healthcare students.
- Healthcare organisations be encouraged to inform relevant bodies of their needs for appropriately qualified healthcare professionals with the required levels of Welsh language awareness.
- Healthcare organisations be encouraged to develop appropriate measures to enable healthcare professionals to demonstrate their Welsh language awareness in practice.

## **Consideration**

5. This report is being considered by the All Wales Task Group for Welsh Language Services and Officials, and will be shared with all trusts and LHBs. It will be used to inform the NHS's ongoing developments in Welsh language provision and the continued roll-out of the awareness training and video.

## **Compliance**

6. Not applicable – paper to note

## **Financial Implications**

7. None – this is to inform on existing work.

## **Cross Cutting Themes**

8. The Welsh language is a cross cutting theme that has implications for all aspects of work.

### **Action for Subject Committee**

9. No action required.