

Date: Wednesday 5 December 2001

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Culture Committee's Review of the Welsh Language - Services through the medium of Welsh

Purpose

1. For the Health and Social Services Committee to note:

- The current position with regards to the Culture Committees' Review of the Welsh Language - Services through the medium of Welsh. (Culture Committee paper [CC-13-01\(p.2\)](#) refers).
- The current position with regards to the Welsh Language Issue within the NHS in Wales.

Background

Position with Regards to the NHS in Wales

2. 'Putting Patients First' envisages an NHS in Wales where the unique personal needs and wishes of individual patients are increasingly placed at the top of any list of priorities when planning and providing health care. It states that 'services should be designed around the patient so that, consistent with our values, the NHS delivers the quality of treatment and care that patients and carers need, in the way they want it.' It also states that 'patients want to be seen quickly in conditions which respect their privacy and dignity and to be cared for by staff who understand their needs and concerns as individuals.' This must include a commitment to expand definitions of quality to include language choice. This is highlighted in the NHS Plan for Wales 'Improving Health in Wales'.

3. The Welsh Consumer Council conducted a survey into the provision in Wales for Welsh speaking patients and their families. As a result a report entitled 'Welsh in the Health Service - The scope, nature and adequacy of Welsh Language Service provision in the National Health Service in Wales' was produced. The report highlights the lack of services through the medium of Welsh and the lack of sensitivity towards care needs of Welsh speaking patients. It is envisaged that the recommendations contained within the report would raise the awareness in the NHS Wales of language as an issue and provide a way forward.

4. The report is a well researched document and highlights the key issues that need to be addressed. It calls for a fundamental change of approach on the part of NHS Wales, arguing that the definition of quality of care in the Service should include language choice, as it already does with other important non-clinical requirements, such as dietary needs and religious beliefs.

5. The report recognises that in order to improve the quality of health care services the long term aim should be directed towards removing the burden of responsibility from the patients and placing it on the care providing institutions. It is recognised that greater leadership from the National Assembly for Wales in tackling these issues is needed.

Establishment of an All Wales Task Group - Welsh Language Services

6. The Assembly have recently established an All Wales Task Group - Welsh Language Services to take forward the recommendations of the Welsh Consumer Council's report and formulate a policy for the NHS in Wales with regards to the Welsh Language issue. The group is chaired by Ann Lloyd, Director of the NHS in Wales.

7. The All Wales Task Groups' composition includes representation from the National Assembly, users, providers of the NHS in Wales and also the Welsh Language Board, who are committed to working in partnership and will look at the provision of services through the medium of Welsh, within the NHS in Wales with the aim of developing strategic ways to raise the awareness of culture and language issues for all frontline staff.

Workforce Planning

8. This year's workforce planning process for the NHS in Wales included data collection on the number of staff in the NHS in Wales who were able to conduct their work through the medium of Welsh. We have also collected data on the future needs of the workforce who undertake their work in the medium of Welsh. This data will be used to inform the education commissioning process in order that where necessary, students will have the opportunity to undertake at least part of their course through the medium of Welsh. This year the figures collected were not robust and the Welsh Language Board is now advising on the questions asked, in order that next years figures will be more meaningful.

Position with Regards to Social Services in Wales

9. As a result of recruitment and retention difficulties in social services, the Minister established a task and finish group on the workforce in January 2001, chaired by the Chief Inspector and which reported in September 2001. The report noted that, on the basis of data collected regularly, 16% of the statutory workforce are Welsh speaking (varying from 86% in Gwynedd to 1% in Rhondda Cynon Taf). One of its major recommendations was the development of a strategy to plan for workforce requirements and this would need to include cultural appropriateness. It is also proposed that there should be regional

consortia to tackle workforce and recruitment and retention issues. These should be sensitive to language and culture at the local level.

Compliance

10. The National Assembly for Wales, under the Welsh Language Act 1993, has a statutory requirement that in conduct of public business and administration of justices in Wales, the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality. The Assembly functions from this Act have been delegated to the Minister for Culture. There are no issues of regulatory and property. The Assembly Compliance Office have been consulted and are content.

Cross-cutting themes

11. There are many cross-cutting themes that include Organisations involved in Economic Development, tackling social inclusion, improving learning and the NHS in Wales with an overall cross cutting aim to improve the cultural and language issues.

Action for Subject Committee

12. The Health & Social Service Committee are asked to note paper (CC-13-01) and the progress regarding the Welsh language issue within the NHS in Wales.

13. The HSSC are also asked to note that a more detailed paper on progress will be submitted at a later date.

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