



Members of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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[SeneddHealth@AssemblyWales](mailto:SeneddHealth@AssemblyWales)

17/03/2017

Dear Committee Members

### **The Public Health Bill**

I am writing as you scrutinize the details of the Public Health Bill to ask you to consider proposing amendments to the Bill in order to deliver the improvements required to the provision of pharmaceutical services in Wales.

Part 6 of the Bill relates to pharmaceutical services and includes measures to improve those services by placing requirements on relevant organisations. I have consistently argued that the Bill provides an excellent opportunity to improve the provision of pharmaceutical services through the medium of Welsh. A statutory inquiry into the Welsh language within primary care, 'My Language, My Health', held in 2014, highlighted a clear clinical need for Welsh language primary care services. The inquiry also highlighted the current inconsistencies in the provision of Welsh language primary care services, including pharmaceutical services. In its strategic framework for Welsh language services in health and social care, 'More Than Just Words', the Welsh Government committed to improve the provision of Welsh language primary care services. The introduction of new legislation relating to pharmaceutical services is a perfect opportunity to achieve that goal.

Nevertheless, the Bill as it stands makes no specific provision for Welsh language services. In my response to the general principles of the Bill during the Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny, I drew attention to the need for further consideration of the relevance of the Welsh language to some of the Bill's provisions. The Committee's report on the general principles of the Bill referred to this. The Cabinet Secretary responded to the matter by indicating that health boards would be required to consider the need for Welsh language services when assessing pharmaceutical needs, as required under the Bill. I understand that these assessments will measure local need for pharmaceutical services. It is not clear for me why the provision of Welsh language pharmaceutical

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services should be dependent on the results of an assessments of local need. Other kinds of Welsh language services do not depend on proof of local demand, for example, local authorities must provide services in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards.

I believe that it is reasonable to expect every pharmacy in Wales to provide certain Welsh-language services, for example, bilingual signs. Over recent years, work has been done to enable pharmacists to produce bilingual labels and warnings related to drugs. The Bill provides an opportunity to ensure that pharmacies in Wales offer such basic services bilingually. I do not see why assessments of pharmaceutical needs are required in order to ensure that such services are available in Welsh as well as English. This could be achieved by placing relevant requirements on all pharmacists to provide some basic services bilingually on the face of the Bill.

The Welsh Government is currently considering how to increase the use of Welsh in the primary care sector as part of its discussions on the Standards and their application to the health and social care sector, in accordance with the provisions of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. It is not yet clear to what extent the requirement to provide services in Welsh will be placed on pharmacists nor what kind of requirements will be placed on them. Given that, we should not miss the golden opportunity provided by the Public Health Bill to make some improvements to the provision of Welsh language pharmaceutical services, by ensuring that basic services, such as those referred to above, are available in Welsh in every pharmacy in Wales.

I trust that you, as members of the committee and party spokespeople on health and social care, agree that the opportunity provided by the Bill to ensure greater consistency in the provision of Welsh language pharmaceutical services in Wales, in line with objectives of 'More than Words', should not be missed.

I ask you to consider introducing relevant amendments to the Bill, in accordance with your powers to do so, in order to ensure better services for Welsh speakers in Wales.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee.

Yours faithfully,

**Meri Huws**  
Welsh Language Commissioner

Cc: Members of the National Assembly of Wales's Culture, Welsh Language and

