



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cymraeg

More than just words

Annual Report 2023/24

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More than just words

Annual Report 2023-24

This report has been prepared for the Welsh Government by OB3 Research.

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Glossary

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ALTE – Association of Language Testers in Europe

CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

DHCW – Digital Health and Care Wales

ESR – Electronic Staff Record

HEI – Higher Education Institution

HEIW – Health and Education Improvement Wales

HPMA – Healthcare People Management Association

HR – Human Resources

IHC – Integrated Health Community

IIA – Integrated Impact Assessment

IMTP – Integrated Medium Term Plan

IQPD – Integrated Quality, Planning and Delivery

KAS – Knowledge and Analytical Services

LGBTQ+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer +

Llais – Citizen Voice Body for Health and Social Care

NHS – National Health Service

NWSSP – NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

PADR – Personal Appraisal and Development Review

PHW – Public Health Wales

PREMs – Patient-Reported Experience Measures

SCW – Social Care Wales

THB – Teaching Health Board

UHB – University Health Board

WAST – Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust

WIDI – Welsh Institute of Digital Information

WLPU – Welsh Language Policy Unit

1. Introduction

The More than just words plan 2022-27 was launched by the then Minister for Health and Social Services in August 2022. It set out an ambitious five-year plan, developed by an expert group and informed by an independent evaluation of the first More than just words five-year plan.

The plan is made up of several actions under five themes:

- culture and leadership
- Welsh language planning and policies
- supporting and developing Welsh language skills of the workforce
- sharing best practice
- monitoring progress.

At the heart of More than just words is a recognition that receiving services in Welsh, especially when people are at their most vulnerable, should be an integral component of person-centred care. Professional standards in health and social care services emphasise that effective communication is a key requirement and is fundamental to maintaining dignity and respect and providing person-centred care. The adoption and delivery of More than just words should therefore help improve the quality of care for individuals living in a bilingual country, in line with A Healthier Wales – the Welsh Government’s long-term plan for health and social care, and the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020.

The first More than just words annual report outlined the progress made in enhancing Welsh language services across the health and social care sectors in Wales. Some of the key achievements reported included the establishment of the More than just words Advisory Board to monitor the plan’s implementation, the delivery of mandatory Welsh language awareness training for National Health Service (NHS) staff and the development of a programme to support staff to refresh their language skills. The first annual report also referenced the efforts made to integrate Welsh language considerations into technological advancements, such as the NHS app, and the steps taken to provide patient-centred care that meets individuals’ language needs, via the Active Offer, without them needing to request it.

This second annual report looks to build on the evidence base collected for 2023-24, with a specific focus on the core themes of More than just words, actions undertaken to date, key impacts, any gaps in evidence, and where further (and faster) progress is needed.

2. How this report is structured

This report is the second annual report of the More than just words plan 2022-27 – the Welsh Government’s Welsh language plan for health and social care. The [first annual report](#) covered the initial year of implementing More than just words (August 2022 – August 2023). This second annual report covers the September 2023 to March 2024 implementation period.

The rest of this report is structured as follows.

- Chapter 3 sets out the achievements made against the overarching theme of culture and leadership.
- Chapter 4 considers the achievements and challenges against Theme 1, Welsh language planning and policies including data.
- Chapter 5 discusses the progress and challenges against Theme 2, supporting and developing the Welsh language skills of the current and future workforce.
- Chapter 6 sets out the achievements and challenges in realising Theme 3, sharing best practice and an enabling approach.
- Chapter 7 considers Theme 4, the ongoing monitoring of More than just words.

Case studies of good practice have also been included as appropriate within Chapters 3 to 6.

The report has been informed by:

- a review of reports prepared by health and social care organisations. A total of 29 reports were reviewed, prepared by:
 - Welsh Government
 - 7 health boards (Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board [UHB]; Aneurin Bevan UHB; Powys Teaching Health Board [THB]; Cardiff and Vale UHB; Swansea Bay UHB; Hywel Dda UHB; and Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB)
 - 13 local authorities (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Cardiff Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council, Pembrokeshire County Council, Powys County Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Swansea Council)
 - 6 national health organisations (Digital Health and Care Wales [DHCW], Higher Education Improvement Wales [HEIW], Public Health Wales [PHW], NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership [NWSSP], Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust [WAST] and Velindre University NHS Trust)

- 2 other organisations (Social Care Wales [SCW] and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol)
- interviews with representatives from a small number of these organisations to capture information to inform good practice case studies.

Whilst the majority of the reports prepared by health and social care organisations focused on the progress made during 2023-24, some achievements related to 2024-25 and have not been considered in this annual report.

For the next reporting period (for 2024-25), it will be important to improve the data and information gathering process and address the gaps in contributions – particularly from local authorities.

3. Overarching theme: culture and leadership

Leadership is a key driver for the successful implementation of More than just words. This overarching theme aims to embed a culture of belonging for the Welsh language in health and social care and to demonstrate leadership at all levels for the use of Welsh to deliver quality services and improved outcomes for individuals.

3.1. Performance management processes

During this reporting period, More than just words and the Active Offer were embedded within the performance management processes of health boards and trusts, and local authorities. This was achieved in four main ways.

Firstly, organisations ensured that the Welsh language was embedded within annual Personal Appraisal Development Reviews (PADR) across the organisations. Staff were encouraged to develop their Welsh language skills and awareness through this process. For example, in Cardiff and Vale UHB the Chair and Chief Executive had performance objectives specifically relating to aims and priorities in More than just words.

Secondly, some organisations reported the strategic mechanisms they had established to maintain oversight of More than just words. This included the establishment of relevant boards and steering groups, as well as appointing Welsh language champions at senior levels. Within PHW, for example, the People and Organisational Development Committee provided strategic oversight for the embedding of Welsh language within plans and services. Within Conwy County Borough Council, progress in implementing More than just words is reported annually to elected members at the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Carmarthenshire County Council established a Welsh Language Board for social care and housing. In Velindre University NHS Trust, the importance of the Active Offer has been cascaded via Welsh Language Divisional Groups, and this has included highlighting Welsh language services using notice boards and photos of Welsh speaking team members and giving patients the information they need without them having to ask. At the Welsh Blood Service, specific training has been provided for the blood collection teams as they are at the 'coal face' and communicate with donors regularly. This training has resulted in a SWOT analysis that will be used to further promote the Active offer and highlight areas for further development.

Thirdly, organisations embedded More than just words and the Active Offer within relevant reporting processes, strategies and plans. Examples provided included integrating More than just words priorities into Integrated Medium-Term Plans (in HEIW), a Welsh Language Service Annual Operating Plan (in Betsi Cadwaladr UHB), and a Social Services Transformation Business Plan (in Monmouthshire County Borough Council). Examples were also provided of how More than just words had been reported upon in relevant integrated impact assessments and in the Social Services Directors' Annual Reports. One such example was provided by Swansea Council, who explained that the Director of Social Services Annual Report includes data and summarises Swansea Council's progress on mainstreaming Welsh language standards and More than just words.

Finally, awareness-raising training and activities were embedded within staff induction and development processes. Organisations (for example Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and PHW) reported how mandatory language awareness training had been embedded as appropriate and consideration of training opportunities formed part of the PADR process. In Powys, the Welsh in Healthcare for Managers training course, a part of the mandatory Powys Teaching Health Board (THB) Managers' Training Programme undertaken by all individuals in Powys THB with line management experience, ensured an additional level of provision for more senior staff over and above mandatory language awareness training.

In addition, examples were provided of how progress has been measured and assessed during this reporting period. For instance, Newport County Council explained how the Active Offer was made and recorded across Social Services when assessments were undertaken. During 2023-24, the Active Offer was recorded in Adult Services on 97% of occasions and in Children's Services on 93%. Denbighshire County Council's Adult Services team implemented an audit of how services currently meet the needs of Welsh speakers, alongside work to ensure improvement and sharing of best practice in providing the 'active offer'.

No significant challenges were reported in relation to embedding More than just words within performance management processes.

3.2. Communication approaches

There were many examples of how organisations developed their internal communication strategies to raise awareness of the Welsh language. Some carried out internal awareness-raising initiatives during the reporting period, including communication campaigns, sharing exemplar case studies, running engagement events and sharing Welsh language resources. For example, Aneurin Bevan UHB collected anecdotal evidence in video format showing the lived experience of Welsh-speaking service users. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was successful in obtaining Shared Prosperity Funding to deliver a cultural and heritage programme celebrating significant Welsh Days. DHCW and others such as Hywel Dda UHB, celebrated key dates in the Welsh language calendar. In Monmouthshire County Borough Council, the Welsh language department had a dedicated section within the fortnightly staff newsletter which provided tips on complying with Welsh language standards and communications about Welsh language events in the community.

Organisations also promoted training and development opportunities available to staff members. They made information about mandatory and other Welsh language training freely available to new and existing staff members, via the intranet, newsletters, induction processes and Welsh language networks. For example, in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, the Active offer, More than just words and the Welsh Standards were included in both social care induction and theory and legislation sessions to ensure all new staff had an awareness of the importance of Welsh language and culture. Cardiff Council also emphasised that social care staff undertake the All-Wales Induction Framework as part of their workplace induction. This incorporates More than just words, as does the suite of qualifications that follows.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB had a Culture Plan in place which directed much of its strategic communications relating to the Welsh language, focusing on the concept of 'Hiraeth'. The health board adopted a behavioural change science approach to its core communications.

Case study: Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

In 2023-24, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB developed its use of behavioural change science in its internal narrative around the Welsh language.

An internal promotion plan for Welsh language services was developed during the first More than just words reporting period, focusing on how the health board communicates about the Welsh language. It also included an action plan, identifying steps to promote the Welsh language through the lens of behavioural and cultural change, aligned to the Behaviour Change Wheel and the COM-B ^[footnote 1] enabling model.

The overall framework was taken forward in 2023-24 and [can be seen online here](#). The categories are based on three elements of a recognised behaviour change methodology, namely COM-B. COM-B covers Capability (knowing how to carry out the behaviour), Opportunity (having the means or resources to carry out the behaviour) and Motivation (having the will to want to perform a behaviour). The framework includes examples of practice under each category.

- The 'Da iawn' category focuses on celebrating individual examples of good practice from staff across the organisation when using the Welsh language. This enables good practice to be shared and adopted elsewhere, but it also includes 'social proof' and 'identity-based cognition'. The health board recognises that these are important concepts when spreading behaviour change as staff are much more likely to adopt behaviours that are supportive of the Welsh language if they see their own colleagues carrying out these behaviours as well. 'Da iawn' corresponds to the 'Motivation' aspect of COM-B.
- The second aspect, 'More Than Just Words: The Patient Experience' focuses on how using the Welsh language can positively affect the experience of service users. Demonstrating the impact of real-world behaviours on patients is an important motivation for NHS staff. This aspect also goes hand in hand with COM-B's 'Motivation' aspect.
- Thirdly, 'Staff Support' shares regular messages about how staff can access resources, advice or help to incorporate the Welsh language in the way they provide their services. This aspect aligns with 'Capability' and 'Opportunity' within COM-B.
- Finally, 'Skills, Learning and Development' shares regular updates and reminder messages about various opportunities for staff to develop their Welsh skills and other training and development opportunities related to the Welsh language. This last aspect corresponds to 'Capability' in the COM-B model.

¹ Capability, Opportunity, Motivation and Behaviour

Abbie Heasley, the health board's Welsh Language Officer, said: 'Our internal communications framework for Welsh Language Services has been successful because it combines behavioural change science with the health board's commitment to inclusivity and being a bilingual organisation. By applying insights into how to effectively motivate and support staff, we've created a culture where Welsh is regularly embedded in at least fortnightly regular communications. This approach not only fosters a more inclusive environment for our staff but also supports the More than words framework, helping us better serve our Welsh-speaking colleagues and communities.'

In addition, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB also developed its monitoring and evaluation approaches to gather evidence relating to patient experience and staff awareness of the Welsh language. This included an internal staff survey, use of patient-reported experience measures (PREMs) data, qualitative data from patients and site visits, as well as other qualitative examples of cultural change within the organisation.

The Welsh Language Commissioner's 'Defnyddia Dy Gymraeg' campaign was an example of partnership working in the sector during this reporting period. To celebrate the campaign, PHW collaborated with other NHS Wales bodies to provide a series of Welsh-language activities during the fortnight-long campaign. This included sessions on topics such as language and equality in Wales and using Microsoft 365 in Welsh.

3.3. Leading in a bilingual country

Three cohorts of delegates completed the Leading in a Bilingual Country (Academy Wales) Pilot Programme (funded by Welsh Government) during this reporting period. Directors and heads of services most commonly participated in the programme (for example, a Corporate Governance Director, Director of Communications and Engagement, Director of Communities). A few examples of the impact of the programme were given; for example, in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, as part of the Leading in a Bilingual Country programme, Welsh language awareness sessions were tailored to include Heads of Service and Service Managers. These leaders were encouraged to make small steps to make a difference, such as opening and closing meetings bilingually, hosting Welsh language support sessions, and providing opportunities for staff to practice their Welsh.

Some organisations were unable to secure places on the programme during this reporting period and were not aware of upcoming opportunities. They were keen to participate in future sessions.

Some organisations also highlighted how More than just words principles were embedded within their own internal leadership training programmes. For example, Swansea County Council staff who participate in their Management Development Programme are required to take part in Prentis Iaith training and assessment. Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB developed its own leadership programme which includes a specific section for leadership and the Welsh language for senior leaders. The content of the programme also inspired the Welsh content of the health board's Leadership Competency Framework. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough

Council also completed sessions with the Senior Leadership Team (Head of Service and above) based on the Leading a Bilingual Country content.

Reflecting the importance of demonstrating leadership, Judith Paget, Director General of Health, Social Care and Early Years and Chief Executive of NHS Wales met biannually with the Welsh Language Commissioner to discuss matters of common strategic interest and the More than just words plan was an item on the NHS Leadership Board meetings, attended by NHS chief executives and chaired by Judith Paget.

4. Theme 1: Welsh language planning and policies including data

More than just words recognises that having strong data collection processes and a strong evidence base is crucial to inform and drive policy and workforce planning decisions. Ensuring a greater understanding and awareness of effective service planning will enable health and social care organisations to successfully deliver the Active Offer through its workforce.

4.1. Building the evidence base

Whilst the reporting during this period outlines some interesting developments in the pipeline that have the potential to establish a clear and structured plan for commissioning research or analysing existing datasets, little progress was made during the 2023-24 period.

Welsh Government is one of the lead accountable organisations for this action and they outlined plans to work with colleagues in Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) to identify opportunities going forward. One area of work led by KAS during 2023-24 was the planning undertaken for a repeat of the national survey of primary care providers (see section 6.5 of this annual report) – and for this national survey to also include optometry, dental and pharmacy services. This national survey (carried out in the 2024/25 reporting period) is a repeat of the 2019 survey of GPs and their use of the Welsh language and support for priorities in More than just words.

[Llais](#) is a relatively new organisation that was being established during the reporting period so it would be expected that their contribution would be fairly limited, although a survey was distributed and analysed. Whilst universities and think tanks are named accountable organisations and have an important role to play, there does not seem to be a systematic process in capturing or commissioning research findings relating to More than words at these organisations currently. There would be merit in establishing such a process going forward.

Case study: Llais

Llais collaborated with the More than just words team to explore how well health and social care services support the use of Welsh in day-to-day interactions. A survey launched after the panel discussion allowed people to share their views on using Welsh in health and social care. Responses highlighted the critical role of bilingual services for practical communication and emotional wellbeing. Feedback consistently showed that people feel happier, more involved, and respected when they can communicate in their language of choice. However, Welsh language service provision remains inconsistent, creating gaps in patient care and experiences. Building on these insights, Llais is preparing to publish a [position statement](#) to highlight the impact of limited Welsh language provision on patient care.

4.2. Developing planning and guidance tools

Developing workforce planning guidance and tools to allow health and social care organisations to identify existing skills and skills gaps in their workforce is a key driver within the More than words action plan. These are reported upon under several actions under Theme 2 of this report. This reporting period has seen a number of tools, methods, planning and guidance documents and developments shared within the sector to improve processes further. There is, however, an opportunity to strive for improved sharing and consistency to minimise duplication of effort and seek opportunities to share developments earlier, and in a more structured way going forward. The recent launch of [Hwb Iaith](#) could help to support this agenda, going forwards (see section 6.1).

Some of the data gathering processes, tools, guidance, or developments in relation to workforce planning highlighted by health organisations during this reporting period include the following:

- Aneurin Bevan UHB developed a tool to make the collection of this information easier and have shared it with other health boards and organisations
- Cardiff and Vale UHB established a task and finish group to review recruitment processes in relation to the Welsh language as they look to improve their ability to plan their workforce appropriately
- a strategy for Welsh in Healthcare at Powys THB was developed which includes new steps to enforce mandatory assessment of all vacancies with respect to teams' existing ability to provide services in Welsh. This will ensure that vacancies are appropriately assessed for Welsh language requirements and should result in an increase in roles advertised as Welsh essential. Their vacancy assessment tool has garnered interest from other health boards too
- workforce planning guidance was accepted during this period at Swansea Bay UHB and shared across the health board's intranet. The guidance will form part of a wider review of their Bilingual Skills Framework, and embedded into recruitment strategies thereafter
- HEIW developed a methodology for gathering the data based on a process adopted by Aneurin Bevan UHB. They also developed a 'How to' guide for staff and a manual intervention process to reach staff with accessibility issues
- DHCW developed a new app to assess the Welsh language skills of jobs prior to the job scrutiny and advertising process
- in 2024, WAST held a Strategic Workforce Plan collaborative engagement workshop which helped outline and agree actions for implementation within the Welsh language theme of the plan

- Betsi Cadwaladr UHB undertook an online campaign to inform staff of the requirement to complete the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) and developed guidelines to assist staff during the reporting period
- Cardiff and Vale UHB undertook an organisation wide campaign to improve the collection of Welsh language skills data. They also made the process of registering Welsh language skills easier through the use of Microsoft Forms
- at Velindre University NHS Health Trust data relating to language skills now forms part of the data dashboard recorded by WorkForce software.

Social care organisations also developed tools and processes to improve data collection in relation to their workforce during this reporting period:

- Carmarthenshire County Council updated an exercise assessing staff language skills and Welsh language demand from citizens, with data cleansed to ensure accuracy. This will help with forward workforce planning
- the language skills of all staff were collated centrally by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council during this reporting period, with the language levels of all new staff identified. The social services team undertook a more thorough approach to the Welsh language skills of their team in line with SCW's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
- during 2023-24 Welsh speakers self-evaluated their Welsh-language speaking and listening skills which has enabled managers to be aware of which members of their team can support delivery through the medium of Welsh at Newport City Council
Monmouthshire County Council's social care team implemented a learning and development recording system in 2023 which has since been adopted across the wider local authority, with plans for all-Wales roll-out. If this is achieved, it will facilitate the ability to report nationally on all learning and development activity relating to the Welsh language.

Local authorities also provided updates on activities that had continued during 2023-24. For example, at Isle of Anglesey County Council there is existing expectation that the social services department provides an Active Offer to service users. Welsh-speaking staff are known and are allocated to service users who wish to communicate through the medium of Welsh. Similarly the language choice of the service user is shared with social care agencies from the outset, with a contractual expectation that all services can be provided in the language of choice. During this period, Swansea Council, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council all updated or revised their integrated impact assessment (IIA) processes to strengthen Welsh language consideration in all policy development going forward.

Case study: Health Education and Improvement Wales

Guidelines have been developed by HEIW to help staff plan for Welsh language skills within the workforce. The [guidance](#) will help ensure that health and social care organisations meet

all the necessary legal requirements. More importantly, this will help support the workforce to be able to respond to patients in their preferred language, which will lead to better clinical outcomes. The resource helps managers to plan the workforce for the Welsh language when considering:

- the needs of their current population
- the current levels of competence of their workforce in the Welsh language
- any gaps in Welsh skills.

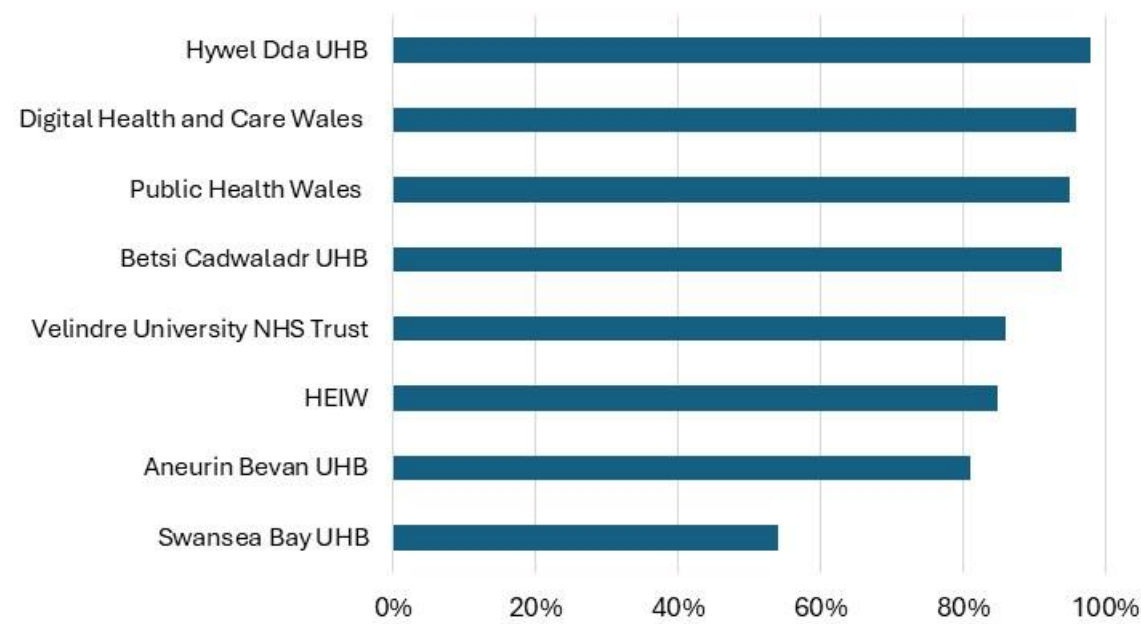
The guidelines provide a comprehensive package of resources, including an introductory video, the guidance document itself, examples and good practice, links to Welsh language training, links to workforce planning training and a curated library for workforce planning.

The resources are placed on 'Y Tŷ Dysgu' portal and therefore accessible to any health and social care worker. The aim is to spread this further so that it is an integral part of any workforce planning in the areas concerned.

4.3. Collecting and reporting on workforce Welsh language skills data

Health boards and trusts reported good progress during this reporting period, with an increase in the rate of compliance in recording the Welsh language skills of NHS staff, as demonstrated in the examples provided at Figure 4.1. The data at Figure 4.1 points to increases that were often well above organisation's targets for the year. DHCW are setting a 100% target for next year, with PHW also aiming for 95%. Even those with lower rates reported for 2023-24 are working hard to improve their compliance for the forthcoming year. Swansea Bay UHB for example successfully managed a 20% improvement on their compliance rate compared to the previous year and are working closely with NWSSP to fix data issues on the ESR and are aiming for 85% compliance by the next reporting point.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of staff who have recorded their language skills on the Electronic Staff Record (ESR), as at March 2024



Description of figure: This chart shows that the percentage of staff who recorded their language skills varied from 54% to 98%.

Source: 2023-24 progress update reports

The social care sector is also making some progress, with 14 local authority social care departments providing an update against this action, generally outlining the internal processes and systems in place at their respective local authorities to record workforce language skills centrally. For example Cardiff Council’s Welsh Language Skills Strategy provides guidance to managers on how to assess staff’s Welsh language skills, supported by a Council-wide survey to identify the data currently being held.

Isle of Anglesey County Borough Council was the only local authority to provide quantitative evidence against this objective as it already collects comprehensive Welsh language skills data for its staff. 80% of Adult Services staff can speak Welsh at Level 3-5, whilst 86% of all Children and Families staff can speak Welsh to Level 3-5 on the ALTE Framework.

The SCW workforce register was at 62,000 registrants with the inclusion of adult care homes during 2023-24. SCW have made changes to their Welsh language registration categories so that they are aligned to national datasets, allowing for improved data collection and more accurate levels to be reported in the future alongside their annual workforce survey.

Case study: Social Care Wales

Over the last decade, SCW has developed a specific tool to assess and record the Welsh language skills of staff. The aim of the tool is to enable employers to gain a clear and accurate picture of the language abilities of their staff, using a language skills framework based on the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) levels (Levels 0–5),

covering the four communication areas: speaking, reading, writing, and understanding. The tool forms part of a broader workforce planning package, helping organisations to assess, recruit, and strategically plan based on the language needs of their services.

During 2023-24, an updated version of the tool aimed at making it more interactive and available online, improving accessibility and encouraging more staff to take part, was piloted. The new version includes an improved user interface and visual guidance that explains the skill levels, making it easier for staff to confidently assess their abilities.

In one striking example of a care home using the newly updated tool during the pilot phase, it was found that a significant number of staff could speak Welsh but lacked the confidence to use it in the workplace. 'Confidence-Building' and 'Camau' courses were commissioned in partnership with the National Centre for Learning Welsh as a result of identifying this issue. Within six months, a 26% increase in staff language competency was recorded.

Although the tool is now available online, the next step involves raising awareness and providing practical support for employers to begin the process of assessing their workforce's language skills. SCW intends to build on the momentum by collaborating with partners such as the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

5. Theme 2: Supporting and developing the Welsh language skills of the current and future workforce

Theme 2 highlights the importance of developing the Welsh language skills of the current and future workforce in order to achieve the overall ambitions of More than just words. This is also recognised in the Health and Social Care workforce strategy jointly published by HEIW and SCW which sets out ambitious goals for a bilingual workforce. ^[footnote 2]

5.1. Current workforce

5.1.1. Strategic planning

Good progress was made during this reporting period to identify Welsh language skills gaps in the workforce. This was achieved through improving the collection and recording of data on the Welsh language skills of current staff, as well as improving the collection and recording of vacancy language requirements. Gwynedd Council, for example, required staff to complete a language self-assessment and targeted services where there were notable gaps (such as frontline staff without access to IT accounts). As a result, Gwynedd recorded the language skills of around 90% of the social care workforce, an increase of 30% compared to the previous year. In another case, PHW's Workforce Planning Group met every five weeks to maintain oversight of core considerations when workforce planning, including language requirements. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council identified language skills gaps through its Training Needs Analysis.

As a result, many organisations were able to take steps to address identified language skills gaps in the workforce, particularly through targeted training and recruitment. In some cases, this comprised in-house training and development opportunities and, in others, collaboration with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to deliver targeted training. Targeted recruitment commonly focused on specifying language requirements and targeting appropriate potential employees. For example, DHCW identified skills gaps in the service desk and communications team and, to remedy the situation, advertised posts as Welsh essential and used Welsh language recruitment sites. NHS Wales SSP developed its own training on telephone call handling. Cardiff Council conducted an annual survey to record staff Welsh language skills and posts designated as Welsh essential. The results of this survey informed interventions to ensure teams have sufficient capacity to deliver Welsh language services. The bilingual Cardiff team worked with team leaders and operational managers to address identified gaps through staff management, recruitment and training.

However, progress in developing and implementing a targeted Welsh language training and workforce strategy to respond to identified gaps was mixed, with some organisations further ahead than others. There were diverse examples of how organisations approached the development of workforce strategy and training for the Welsh language. Betsi Cadwaladr

² HEIW and Social Care Wales, 2020. *A Healthier Wales: Our workforce strategy for health and social care.*

UHB established its Bilingual Skills Policy and Procedure, which focused on delivery areas such as: ensuring all frontline posts are advertised as Welsh language essential posts; training leave requests; and including training opportunities in PADR objectives. Cardiff and Vale UHB developed a Clinical Consultation Plan, which looked at how the organisation could enhance its capability to deliver consultations with patients and service users through Welsh. Their People and Culture Plan also reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to promoting the Welsh language. Conwy County Borough Council continued to invest in and support the bilingual Social Work MA programme delivered at Bangor University. Since 2023, they have supported five employees to undertake their studies in Welsh. In 2024, they created the new postgraduate Trainee Social Worker, with the requirement to complete the MA in Social Work at Bangor University. This continued investment ensured a supply of Welsh speaking social workers.

Other organisations had not yet finalised a dedicated Welsh language training and workforce strategy. Some had made progress towards producing a strategy and were using new language skills data to do so. For example, Swansea Bay UHB were in the final stages of developing a five-year strategy to increase their capacity to undertake clinical consultations through the medium of Welsh, identifying skills gaps as priorities. Others primarily reported on training plans and mechanisms in place, constituting their strategic response to identified skills gaps.

There were some examples of how organisations had built workforce language skills considerations into their leadership processes. In Carmarthenshire County Council, a Welsh Language Learning and Development Advisor formed part of the wider learning and development team; they advised on skills development and organised a wide range of learning opportunities for staff. Monmouthshire County Council rolled out a new supervision policy across social care, which included regular one-to-one meetings and the need to agree learning and development, including relating to the Welsh language.

During this reporting period, many health boards, trusts and local authorities developed and strengthened positive relationships with the National Centre for Learning Welsh (the Centre). Many examples were provided of strategic planning undertaken in partnership with the Centre, although provision on the ground was more advanced in a couple of areas of Wales. In particular, this included the establishment and ongoing delivery of Work Welsh provision. For example, Newport County Council reported that Work Welsh was launched during 2023-24 and that colleagues, from beginners to those with highly developed language skills, were encouraged to enrol on appropriate courses. In response to demand from the sector, the Centre also continued to oversee delivery of mainstream Welsh language courses, primarily provided through close partnership working between organisations and Learn Welsh providers. For example, Isle of Anglesey County Council explained how they worked closely with Learn Welsh North East to offer tutor-led classes at various levels. This included a variety of different learning formats, including weekly sessions, Work Welsh courses and residential courses. Since participating in the National Centre for Learning Welsh's Work Welsh scheme, the number of staff attending courses has trebled at corporate level. Swansea Bay UHB reported that they were able to offer 150

learning opportunities to staff at entry level during the reporting period, funded through Work Welsh.

A more recent development was the establishment of confidence building courses in the health and social care sector. Welsh language tutors started delivering confidence building courses in a few organisations and plans were made to deliver in other organisations as well. Not all organisations were able to take full advantage of the provision available through the Centre, either due to funding restrictions or difficulty in releasing staff to attend provision.

Case study: The National Centre for Learning Welsh

The National Centre for Learning Welsh is responsible for leading the Learn Welsh sector by providing strategies and services to create Welsh speakers who enjoy using the language.

In April 2023, following discussions with the NHS Wales Leadership Board, a business case was presented to Welsh Government to design a scheme specifically for the health and social care sector, and funding was agreed.

The Centre initially focused on building strong partnerships with health boards and trusts and, during 2023-24, provision started within a few health boards.

The main focus of the health and social care scheme at this time was to develop a programme of support to build the confidence of Welsh speakers in the workforce. This followed on from a successful pilot in Hywel Dda UHB in 2022. This programme targeted staff who can speak Welsh but haven't used it for some time and who are less confident and/or less prepared to use it.

This Building Confidence Scheme differed from other mainstream provision in its strategy and its intensity; in most cases, tutors supported staff on a one-to-one basis (or small groups) and provided highly flexible, responsive support.

Partners worked to overcome some minor challenges at the start of the scheme. However, initial reports from the health boards involved suggested that there had been a noticeable increase in the confidence of staff, that the organisation and delivery of the sessions had proved to be excellent and that the relationship between the health boards, the Learn Welsh providers and the Centre were strong. Case studies of individual staff members demonstrated how and where they had used their Welsh as a result of participating in the Scheme.

The Centre's intention was to start delivering the Building Confidence Scheme within other organisations during 2024/25, building on the lessons and successes of this first year of delivery.

In its evaluation of the building confidence course in 2023-24, Hywel Dda UHB wrote that 'the confidence building courses have been popular among health board staff with a presence from many areas such as nursing, estates, mental health, children's services, administrative roles and many more. Increasing the Welsh language skills of the workforce

is a priority for the health board, so seeing so many staff willing to commit to these types of sessions is a very positive step in order to improve the patient experience. Increasing the use of Welsh was the main aim of the scheme and we are now confident to say that many more staff are now using more Welsh with patients and other colleagues in the workplace.'

5.1.2. Defining Welsh language skills requirements

Organisations reported good progress in defining the level of Welsh language skills necessary for jobs, including developing methods and tools to assist the process. They fairly consistently used the categories 'Welsh essential', 'Welsh Desirable', 'Need to Learn Welsh on Appointment' or 'No Skills Needed in Welsh' during recruitment processes. Many organisations reported that they had developed guidance and assessment tools to support managers to define skill requirements. For example, the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust used a Welsh Language Skills Assessment Tool for managers as part of the vacancy process. PHW had a Microsoft Word form for recruitment managers to complete, to ensure they consider appropriate language requirements. DHCW developed a new app to assess the Welsh language skills requirements of jobs. Denbighshire County Council reported using SCW's Welsh language level checker to support to assess staff's Welsh language skills. Gwynedd Council advertised all jobs as Welsh essential.

Not all organisations specified the exact skill level required within their processes. The definition of Welsh language skills was being addressed partially on a national basis by the new Welsh Government Group on defining language skills levels, on which HEIW is represented. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council was in the process of undertaking a corporate review of the different language levels to ensure they are aligned with the CEFR. Newport County Council used the ALTE framework for self-assessment of Welsh language skills. Cardiff Council explained that the required level of Welsh proficiency for a post designated as Welsh essential is levels 3-5 in the ALTE framework. Proficiency levels 1 to 5 are described and defined in the Council's Welsh Language Skills Strategy and supporting guidelines. Work is ongoing to move from the current ALTE system to CEFR.

5.1.3. Language awareness and courtesy Welsh

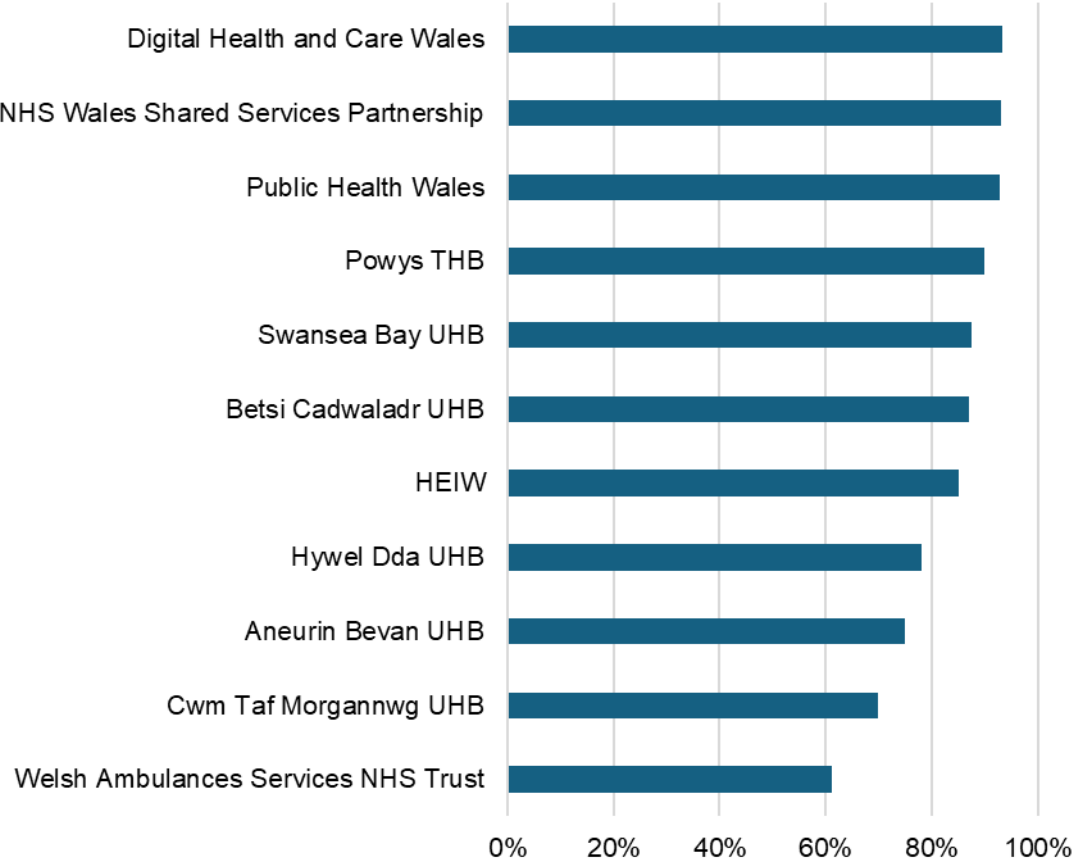
During this reporting period, the National Centre for Learning Welsh made progress in developing the 'Cwrs Croeso' language courtesy course. This involved initial conversations with sector organisations and providers to make plans for delivery. Although delivery did not commence during this reporting period, the groundwork was laid for subsequent implementation during the 2024/25 reporting period.

Some organisations undertook work internally to develop courtesy-level skills amongst their workforces. For example, Cardiff and Vale UHB developed a 'How to Greet Bilingually' card and distributed this across the Health Board to encourage and support staff to use their Welsh language skills. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council shared 'Standards of the Week' and basic associated phrases and words on the weekly Human Resource (HR) bulletin. Isle of Anglesey County Council has developed an internal Welsh language course titled 'Introduction to Welsh'. Each member of staff who has contact with members of the

public and has Level 0 Welsh language skills had four hours of practice over four weeks with the Welsh Language Promotion Officer.

Percentages of staff who completed the mandatory language awareness course ranged from 61% to 93% across different health boards and trusts during this reporting period. Although not all organisations provided data, Figure 5.1 provides an indication of the high completion rates in some organisations. Cardiff Council also provided a completion rate of 80% for its mandatory language awareness training.^[footnote 3]

Figure 5.1: Percentage of staff at each health board and trust who completed the language awareness course as at March 2024



Description of figure: This chart shows that between 61% and 93% of staff at health boards and trusts completed the language awareness course

Source: 2023-24 progress update reports

Examples were provided of the way in which language awareness training has been embedded into induction and training processes. Isle of Anglesey County Council, for example, reported that there is a More than just words module on their Learning Pool, that social care students in Bangor University learn about More than just words as part of their course and that relevant information is also included within corporate induction processes. Some local authorities made use of the Welsh language awareness eLearning module for

³ Completion rates were not provided in the annual reports of other local authorities.

workers and students in the social care and early years and childcare sector, which was developed by SCW.

Some organisations undertook their own language awareness training, in addition to the mandatory training module. Aneurin Bevan UHB also provided bespoke training on language awareness to targeted groups emphasising areas that are most pertinent to them. They were able to share a version of this training with local authorities so that it could be utilised within some social care settings. Cardiff and Vale UHB's Welsh Language Officer developed and delivered in-person Welsh Language Awareness sessions when requested by departments.

5.1.4. National awareness and promotion

Some limited progress was made with national promotional campaigns during this reporting period. There were 14 nominations for the NHS Wales awards (examples of which are set out under Theme 3) and SCW undertook a media campaign. HEIW did not have sufficient resources over this reporting period to progress their work on national awareness and promotion but had clear plans in place should resources be provided in future. These plans included a concentrated communications message to all staff.

5.2. Future workforce

5.2.1. Data

Clear frameworks were established to support the monitoring of student numbers. HEIW collated, analysed and shared the number of bilingual students being trained as health and social care professionals during this reporting period. They completed the first round of university visits to monitor data returns for year 1 of the contract. These were held in conjunction with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. HEIW noted a number of success stories where recruitment and learning in Welsh is flourishing – and some areas where more support was required to encourage growth. Some areas of common interest – where HEIW and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol will lead on a more national approach – include simulation, placements, Welsh learning and awareness and marketing of courses to Welsh speakers on a broader, national basis.

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol confirmed that it collects annual data from undergraduate providers who offer at least 40 credits through the medium of Welsh, and that this information appears on the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's website course search facility. In 2023-24, 19 out of 21 subjects in the Health Science field offered Welsh-medium learning opportunities for students with at least one provider.

In the More than just words Annual Report 2022-23, Welsh Government confirmed that it is currently monitoring the number of bilingual learners and apprenticeships undertaking health and social care courses and/or apprenticeships.

5.2.2. Developing provision

There were minimal reports and detail available on training providers' plans in terms of student skills development. HEIW were querying plans with all the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in joint visits to them with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. HEIW found that some of the HEIs had already produced comprehensive plans, whilst others were still in development. HEIW worked with them to monitor progress and support them pragmatically to develop and deliver comprehensive plans. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol continues to provide 'Sbarduno' grants and interdisciplinary grants to support the development of new provision through the medium of Welsh

A few health boards and trusts and local authorities took steps to improve their own internal training bilingual provision. DHCW's Business Change Team recruited a translator to ensure all accredited training courses are bilingual. The implementation of Monmouthshire County Council's first year in practice programme and direct care induction has now incorporated specific Welsh language and More than just words content. This includes making staff aware of Welsh language courses available to them. In addition, they have included learning around the Active Offer and Welsh context discussions to embed the importance of Welsh Language Awareness and the need for assessments to be offered in Welsh. Cardiff Academy is the Council's in-house training provider and provides most training courses for council staff. This includes a variety of Welsh language training courses catering to all levels of ability and the Welsh language awareness module.

5.2.3. Engagement with the future workforce

As with national campaigns, HEIW did not have sufficient resources during this reporting period to promote the importance and opportunities Welsh language skills can provide within careers in health and social care to young people. They have plans in place should more resources become available, including building a dialogue with Welsh-medium schools and coordinating ongoing dialogue between schools and universities.

A few organisations detailed the work they had undertaken during this reporting period to raise awareness of the benefits of the Welsh language within health and social care careers. Aneurin Bevan UHB had a programme of engagement with Welsh speaking students at all age levels to increase their awareness of the importance the health board gives to the skill they have as Welsh speakers. This included those who are studying Welsh as a second language. Cardiff Council highlighted that work was already ongoing through the Bilingual Cardiff strategy to investigate how to increase the number of students in Cardiff engaging with Welsh language further and higher education. The Council also supported 'Gyrfa Gymraeg' in partnership with Cardiff's universities and colleges. This is an annual careers fair to promote the Welsh language and the value of Welsh language skills. Over 300 Year 9 pupils attended the event in 2023.

Betsi Cadwaladr UHB also undertook work during this reporting period to inform the future workforce of the benefits of Welsh language skills when entering the workforce. This included the importance of providing language-appropriate care to patients.

Case study: Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

During 2023-24, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB worked to inform the future workforce of the benefits of Welsh language skills.

Welsh language skills roadshow culminating in national award

The Health Board's Welsh Language Team was named the Best Promoter of Welsh in the Workplace at the Careers Wales Valued Partner Awards. The national awards were presented during a ceremony at Senedd Cymru in November 2023, which celebrated the efforts of employers from all over the country who work in partnership with Careers Wales to help young people prepare for the world of work.

The Welsh Language Team was nominated for the work its members have done to inspire and motivate young people to make the most of their bilingual skills, whilst also informing them about employment opportunities within the health sector in north Wales.

After the Team contributed to a number of Careers Wales-arranged events, a large-scale secondary school tour was organised to coincide with the Health Board's Welsh Language Week in October. Over a ten-day period, more than twenty sessions were held at thirteen different secondary schools. Alongside an initial presentation by a member of the Welsh Language Team, each of the sessions also included contributions from members of the Public Health Team and short presentations by clinical staff, who discussed their own personal experiences of working bilingually.

Working bilingually in the health sector – a guidebook for young people

By working in partnership with members of the Health Board's Workforce and Organisational Development and partners from Bangor University, the Welsh Language Team created a new booklet. The main purpose of the booklet was to inform young people about the various types of jobs that are available within the Health Board and about the benefits of bilingual skills for individuals who are considering careers within the sector in Wales.

The new booklet also included case studies of two young members of staff who work bilingually in north Wales, in addition to positive experiences that patients and their families have had as a direct result of receiving services through the medium of Welsh.

The booklet was shared with all secondary schools and further education colleges in north Wales.

Partnership working with Wrexham University

The Health Board collaborated with Wrexham University to hold an Interprofessional Education Day on 'Care and Language Hand in Hand'. This event was arranged by the university to promote bilingualism within the health care sector. First and second year students on a variety of courses including Occupational Therapy, Adult and Children Nursing and Paramedical Sciences attended the education day.

There were guest speakers including the Welsh language team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), a physiotherapist and the Director of Allied Health Professionals for Integrated Health Community (IHC) East. Patient related stories were discussed, showcasing how the Active Offer plays an instrumental role in patients' care. Students also attended Welsh taster lessons. The feedback was excellent, with a number of students commenting that they had a better understanding of why language is important to patients.

6. Theme 3: Sharing best practice and an enabling approach

Sharing best practice between health and social care practitioners forms a vital component of the More than just words plan. There are good examples of practice being shared and celebrated across the sector although greater priority needs to be given to some actions which fall under this theme.

6.1. Sharing best practice

Sharing best practice and resources forms an important element of More than just words.

At a national level the Welsh Government held an event at the National Eisteddfod in Llŷn ac Eifionydd 2023 to engage with the public and to promote More than just words. Under the theme of learning Welsh in health and social services, the session was opened by the then Minister for Health and Social Services Eluned Morgan MS, and there were opportunities to hear about personal stories of learning Welsh in the sector and newly introduced learning resources.

From the perspective of health and social care staff, sharing best practice and resources was achieved during this reporting period via quarterly meetings of the strategic group for Welsh language officers from health boards and trusts. This group also maintained discussions via an MS Teams group chat, to support cross-organisational team-working. During the reporting period, members met at a national level to share experiences and the network engaged in discussions with Welsh Government officials. However, there were no opportunities for Welsh language officers and managers to meet with Welsh language executive leads from the health sector during this reporting period, and this should be a prioritised as an action in the future.

Health boards and local authorities also facilitated the sharing of best practice and resources amongst their staff, via internal portals, websites and networks. These portals, websites and networks are highly valued and there is merit in sustaining them. One such example was the More than just words Gwent portal. Good news stories were also promoted by local authorities on their websites, such as in the case of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council who highlighted achievements and difference made by staff who are learning Welsh. One successful portal developed during this reporting period was the Hwb Iaith portal. DHCW, in collaboration with the Welsh Institute of Digital Information (WIDI) developed the Hwb Iaith portal and which was launched during the forthcoming reporting period on Diwrnod Shwmae, October 2024.

Case study: Hwb Iaith

The Hwb Iaith – NHS Wales portal is a resource for the NHS workforce and others to share and read about examples of good practice in order to understand the importance of providing Welsh language services, and influence the sector to strengthen the Welsh offer to patients and service users. The site includes guidelines, resources, information and

contacts for using Welsh in the workplace. The resource library provides a link to documents and resources available via partner organisations such as SCW, Digital Communities Wales: digital confidence, health and well-being; the Welsh Language Commissioner, Mentrau Iaith, Duolingo and LearnWelsh.cymru

A number of Welsh language networks were established or strengthened during this reporting period. These included PHW Ymlaen network, Carmarthenshire County Council Welsh language champions' network across their Communities department, Swansea County Council's Welsh language champions' group across their Adult Services department, and Cardiff and Vale UHB's Welsh language Rhwyd-iaith network. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reported that they had created a dedicated Microsoft Teams group for their Welsh speaking staff to share good practice as well as means of directing service users for support through the medium of Welsh. In addition, local authority officers continued to meet to share good practice as part of the Welsh Local Government Association's Rhwydwaith network for Welsh language officers.

Case study: Public Health Wales

Public Health Wales' (PHW) Welsh language network, Ymlaen, was launched on St David's Day in March 2023 and has grown steadily. It is now one of the organisation's largest staff networks, with over 100 members. Similar networks already existed for other staff communities, such as LGBTQ+ and our women's network, so creating a Welsh language network was a natural progression. Ymlaen provides a space for staff to discuss, promote and use the language.

The network is co-chaired by members of staff who are passionate about the Welsh language but the Welsh language is not a part of their day-to-day role within the organisation, meaning that activities complement the work of the Welsh Language Team. The network meets online every quarter and organises events around key dates such as St David's Day and Diwrnod Shwmae. For example, to mark St David's Day, a week of celebratory activities was held, including awarding the first ever PHW Welsh learner of the year and talks from guest speakers. Some of the network sessions are conducted in Welsh with translation services, while others are bilingual, encouraging learners to take part.

Ymlaen has a small budget to fund its events and is supported by a senior director. This leadership backing helps ensure the network is seen as an important and integral part of the organisation, rather than just a project led by the Welsh Language Team.

Neil Lewis, Director of People and Organisation Development at PHW, who has executive responsibility for the Welsh language and the Ymlaen co-chairs, said: 'Ymlaen is a great way for us to promote the Welsh language across the organisation and supports us to ensure that our staff have the opportunity to use and develop their Welsh skills while at work. The network makes a positive contribution to the bilingual culture of the organisation by celebrating all things Welsh.'

Case study: Cardiff and Vale UHB

Cardiff and Vale UHB's Rhwyd-iaith network is helping to bring Welsh-speaking staff and learners together in a supportive, virtual space. Established by a member of the health board's translation team, it aims to promote Welsh culture and encourage greater use of the language in the workplace.

Now the largest staff network within the organisation, Rhwyd-iaith has over 100 members and operates through Microsoft Teams. It provides a platform for sharing resources, stories, and links to Welsh language events, helping staff engage with the language in an accessible way.

Alun Williams, Welsh Language Officer at Cardiff and Vale UHB said 'Rhwyd-iaith exists to provide an opportunity for Welsh speakers to make greater use of their language. It's a great way for people to connect with colleagues who speak Welsh.'

Looking ahead, the health board plans to build on Rhwyd-iaith's success by introducing events and expanding its presence on Viva Engage, an internal social media platform. This will help even more staff embrace and celebrate the Welsh language at work.

6.2. Developing bilingual digital content

Some, but not all, organisations made effective use of the Bilingual Technology Toolkit during this reporting period. The toolkit was applied in three cases:

- the toolkit was shared with the communications team at the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust
- NWSSP developed the Primary Care Workforce Information System and the GP Rota Systems as bilingual systems
- PHW shared the toolkit with their communications team.

A few organisations did not adopt it during this reporting period as they had not developed any new digital services. There is some lack of awareness about its availability which suggests that there is a need for continued promotion of the toolkit, to ensure that new staff are adequately informed about its availability.

Examples were also provided of translators working on content creation during this reporting period. As an example, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB reported that their Welsh language team had contributed to the development of their Digital Strategy and contributed to their Patient and Carer Experiences Group. DHCW had recruited a Translation Manager and a Translator to support projects which required bilingual interfaces. The main project during this reporting period was the development of the [NHS Wales App](#), which was developed bilingually from the outset using Welsh speakers to test prototypes. The App has a language switch enabling users to switch language. Also during this reporting period, PHW recruited a Welsh language Digital Content Officer and implemented improvements across their websites.

6.3. Regional forums

Regional forums operated in some areas of Wales such as in Gwent, north Wales and Powys during this reporting period. Effective regional forums were well attended by regional and national organisations, and jointly developed and shared resources. For instance, north Wales forum developed information cards for answering the telephone bilingually and tailored phrases for staff to use.

Regional forums were absent in several areas, including Cwm Taf Morgannwg, Cardiff and Vale, and Swansea Bay. Attempts to establish a forum in Cwm Taf Morgannwg during this reporting period were unsuccessful due to insufficient representation from key partners. Meanwhile, the regional forum set up by Cardiff and Vale UHB was discontinued. Health sector organisations operating in these regions would welcome support from the Welsh Government to establish effective and well attended forums.

6.4. Celebrating success

Several examples of initiatives to celebrate success were reported during this period, including:

- the Caring in Welsh Award, which was introduced during this reporting period by SCW
- 'Clywed dy Lais' event, held at the National Eisteddfod and facilitated by Llais to hear patients and service users' experiences
- the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) Cymru award for Welsh language which was secured by Cardiff and Vale UHB in March 2023
- the NHS Wales Equitable Care Award. This was a new category introduced when the awards were launched in February 2024. The Betsi Cadwaladr UHB Language Choice Scheme was named as a finalist for the NHS Wales Equitable Care Award.

[footnote 4]

Case study: Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

The Betsi Cadwaladr UHB Language Choice Scheme (Dewis Iaith Scheme) involved introducing orange magnets to identify Welsh-speaking patients and staff to allow BCHUB to adopt the 'active offer' principles. With patient consent, an orange magnet is placed on the whiteboard next to the patient's bed to indicate a preference for communicating in Welsh. Staff boards also display orange magnets to show which members can speak Welsh, ensuring staff are aware of and can meet patients' linguistic needs. This information helps in planning and providing bilingual services. A 'Monthly Audit Form' helps record data on patient and staff language preferences, and ward managers are encouraged to collect and record this information monthly.

The Language Choice Scheme was first trailed on Ward Glaslyn at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor, for dementia patients. Following its success and positive feedback, it expanded

⁴ [Cynllun Dewis Iaith | Language Choice Scheme \(BCUHB\) - NHS Wales Executive](#)

to Prysor Ward for stroke patients and then to other wards across north Wales, including community hospitals and Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. By the end of 2019, the scheme was implemented on all Health Board clinical sites, including Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

6.5. Survey of primary care providers

Work continued by the Welsh Government during this reporting period to plan and delivering a national survey of primary care providers to understand their Welsh language provision in the context of the Welsh language duties and the Active Offer. This survey was issued to primary care providers during Autumn 2024/25.

Three health boards (Aneurin Bevan UHB, Cardiff and Vale UHB and Swansea Bay UHB) captured information on the Welsh language skills of their primary care providers in order to identify who could deliver services through the medium of Welsh. This information was then shared on their websites. In one case, Swansea Bay UHB reported that the response secured from their primary care providers was low.

6.6. Use of Iaith Gwaith

During this reporting period, health and social care providers continued to make extensive use of the Iaith Gwaith resources. Resources such as posters, lanyards, badges and stickers are commonly distributed by organisations to their staff. Health boards reported that staff were able to request uniform and scrubs with the Iaith Gwaith symbol when ordering and one local authority (Gwynedd Council) reported that they were planning on providing a new uniform to social care staff which would have the Iaith Gwaith symbol sewn on them. Staff who speak and learn Welsh commonly used these badges and lanyards to indicate their language capabilities, which in turn allowed patients, service users, family members and visitors to easily identify staff who they could converse with in Welsh.

A few examples of how information was being captured, displayed and shared via ICT systems were provided by health and social care organisations. A number of health and social care organisations reported that their staff were encouraged and supported to use bilingual electronic signatures on emails. In these cases staff were often provided with standardised text to include in their email signatures to indicate if they spoke or were learning Welsh. Many organisations also created appropriate Microsoft Teams backdrops for staff to use, which indicated if they spoke or were learning Welsh. For instance, as part of their brand guidelines published during this reporting period, PHW set out guidance for using bilingual email signatures, Powerpoint slides and Microsoft Teams backdrops, which are proving critical in helping to ensure consistency across the organisation.

There were also good examples of visual display materials being used in health and social care settings during this reporting period. For example, Isle of Anglesey County Council reported that posters which encourage visitors to deal with the Council in either Welsh or English are displayed in reception areas. Gwynedd Council also reported that they displayed staff photos on the wall of a care home with a Welsh language badge to indicate which staff spoke Welsh, in an effort to promote the language and encourage family members and other visitors to use the language when visiting. Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

reported had rolled out the use of e-whiteboards across all of the health board's hospital beds to display the language need of patients. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 29 patients had benefited from this system across the region's hospitals. In one of these cases, the language preference of a patient who had been admitted to one hospital, and then transferred to another hospital setting was retained, without the need for such information to be collected again.

Greater dissemination of the language information captured via ESR could be achieved as very few examples were provided where this information was used for wider identification purposes, such as sharing the information via staff directories. In one case (Aneurin Bevan UHB), it was reported that staff directories were linked to ESR, so that staff with Welsh language skills could be identified. In another case, Swansea Bay UHB reported that this task was proving problematic, and that they would welcome greater guidance in the future.

6.7. Standardising terminology

There was a notable expansion in the translation capacity across health boards during this reporting period, with additional translator appointments made. Local authorities reported continued use of inhouse translation teams to support the written and simultaneous translation needs of their social care services. The Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust (WAST) recruited a Welsh language translator whilst DHCW recruited a Translation Manager and Translator during this reporting period. HEIW reported that their internal translation team could now accommodate most of their translation requirements, as they had recruited three Apprentice Translators over the preceding two years and were in the process of appointing another translator to join their team.

Several health boards reported that their translated word count had increased over the reporting period, not least because the enforcement of the Welsh Language Standards introduced in 2018 was continuing to drive demand. For instance, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB reported that during this reporting period they became able to respond to urgent out of hours requests for translation and provide support to the primary care sector. They also provided detail about the total number of words translated during the 2023-24 financial year, at 3,721,696, an increase of 28% compared to 2,912,344 words translated during the previous year (2022/23). In February 2024, the Translation Service at Betsi Cadwaladr UHB entered into a Service Level Agreement with Aneurin Bevan UHB, to support them with the translation of public facing documents and correspondence.

Case study: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

During this reporting period, NWSSP proposed to undertake a feasibility study to examine how Welsh language translation services were delivered across NHS Wales. In response to growing demand for translation support and increasing financial pressures within the health sector, it was both timely and necessary to explore more efficient and effective ways of working.

A key area of focus was the potential to introduce a shared translation memory system across health sector organisations. At the time of the study, individual organisations were

using different translation memory software, creating challenges in efforts to standardise Welsh healthcare terminology. The lack of a common platform limited opportunities to build a unified terminological corpus and impeded collaboration between organisations.

To better understand the landscape, a survey was distributed to all health sector organisations. It is anticipated that the results will reveal an appetite among partners for implementing a shared language memory system. However, it is anticipated that there will be several challenges to achieving this goal over a period of time. For example, translators across the sector were using a range of different translation memory tools, including Phrase, Déjà Vu, and Wordfast Pro. Each organisation had separate software licence agreements in place, with varying expiry dates. In some cases, contracts for licences were active for up to three years, meaning the transition to a common system would require careful planning and a staggered approach.

NWSSP noted: “This feasibility study marks an important step towards a more consistent, collaborative approach to Welsh language translation across NHS Wales. By exploring the potential for a shared translation memory system, we’re laying the groundwork for greater efficiency, improved quality, and more consistent use Welsh language healthcare terminology’, the feasibility study will be shared with Welsh language leads in each of the NHS Wales organisations with a view to producing a report on the findings during 2024/25”.

Based on the study’s findings, NHS Wales will move forward with a pilot project during 2024/25 and 2025/26, involving a small group of partner organisations. This pilot will test the practicalities and benefits of adopting a shared translation memory system, with the aim of improving efficiency and consistency in translation services. If successful, the approach will be scaled up and made available to all NHS Wales partners, supporting the long-term goal of standardising Welsh language healthcare terminology across the service.

7. Theme 4: Ongoing monitoring of More than just words

The final theme embedded in More than just words relates to the ongoing monitoring of the plan. More than just words recommends the mapping of available data and the introduction of a performance management framework to support measuring progress against its objectives, with the view to enabling future success. A number of actions are set out to support the focus on improving data, supporting indicators and dashboards.

The More than just words Advisory Board met for the first time in October 2023 and played an important role during the year in monitoring and scrutinising progress against the action plan and agreeing the More than just words' budget for forthcoming years. At each of their meetings, the Advisory Board considered specific actions in More than just words and identified areas for further progress (which was then fed back to the lead organisations). It also considered the role of cultural change makers, made suggestions for a Welsh language category in the NHS Awards, had a specific focus on key data on using the Welsh language in the health and care workforce, and considered the implementation of the recommendations of the sensory loss working group from the perspective of the Welsh language. The Chair of the Advisory Board also met on an individual basis with key stakeholders to raise the profile of priorities in More than just words and build momentum around the need for further change and progress. This included building relationships with the new body Llais, which has a key role in reporting on patient experiences.