

# Workforce Planning for the Welsh Language



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WALES

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## Contents

1. Introduction and context .....	3
2. Workforce Planning for the Welsh language .....	6
3. Identifying the Welsh language skills required for your workforce .....	6
3.1 Population .....	7
3.2 Competency levels of the current workforce .....	7
a. Adding Welsh language competencies to ESR .....	7
b. Updating Welsh language competencies on ESR .....	8
4. Assessing the gap and identifying actions for workforce planning .....	8
4.1 Increasing/improving Welsh language skills within your current workforce .....	9
4.2 Recruitment .....	9
5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion .....	10
6. References .....	10

## 1. Introduction and context

This guidance has been developed to help you workforce plan for Welsh language skills within your workforce and to ensure NHS Wales organisations are meeting all necessary legal requirements.

All NHS Wales organisations will have developed their own Welsh language action plan, and it's important that you incorporate this into your workforce plans.

### Legislation and Strategic Framework

The [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) is the legislation that created the [Welsh language standards](#), which came into force over the following decade. These standards promote and facilitate the Welsh language, to ensure it is not treated less favourably than the English language in Wales. This legislative framework is a key driver for embedding Welsh language into the care and support services we provide.

In 2013, the Welsh government first launched the '[More than just words Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care](#)'. At the heart of this framework is the concept that being able to use your own language is an integral part of care which results in better clinical outcomes.

The framework is implemented through the '[More than just words Five Year Plan \(2022-2027\)](#)' which articulates that individuals usually access and receive health care services when they are at their most vulnerable, which is why language is so important. For this reason, a number of groups have been identified as a priority to receive services in Welsh, these include :-

- children and young people
- older people
- people with learning disabilities
- mental health service users
- people living with dementia
- people accessing stroke services
- people accessing speech and language therapy services

In terms of workforce planning, this means that the development of the workforce and their Welsh language skills are even more important for the workforce working within these services and departments and providing care for these priority groups.

['More than just words Five Year Plan \(2022-2027\)'](#) highlights actions which organisations should take to help deliver on the key aims including, embedding a cultural change that

supports an increase in the use of Welsh in health and social care services over the next five years and creating an infrastructure and approach to enable this. These actions include:–

#### **Action 10**

That action 30 of the ‘Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy’ – to develop workforce planning guidance for Welsh language skills identification and development in the health and social care workforce – is progressed at the earliest opportunity. This guidance should consider the required number of staff with Welsh language skills and the nature of those skills in different health and social care contexts and within the priority areas of need identified.

The guidance is used as part of annual workforce planning by Health Boards, Local Authorities, HEIW, Social Care Wales and other employers as appropriate. Furthermore, that the guidance inform the work of the relevant regulators and inspectorate as appropriate.

#### **Action 11**

The importance of the Active Offer in planning and delivering quality services to be included in the guidance and reporting requirements for the Duty of Quality and refreshed health and care standards. The Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 became law on 1 June 2020 with its full implementation to be completed by Spring 2023. This includes reframing and broadening the existing duty of quality on NHS bodies.

The ‘Active Offer’ (mentioned above in Action 11) is a core element of the ‘More than just words’ framework. It conveys the importance of Welsh language service provision not only as a right or a choice, but as an essential need for many Welsh speakers.

The Active Offer means providing a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. It creates a culture that places the responsibility on health and social care providers to provide a proactive language offer so that people can access care, as equal partners, through the medium of Welsh.



**This doesn't mean the workforce has to be 100% fluent in Welsh, but they should be aware that many patients will have better clinical outcomes by receiving some elements of their care through the medium of Welsh. Therefore, if an individual is unable to provide this service, they should know where to go to facilitate this for the patient, whilst ensuring seamless service delivery. Incorporating Welsh language requirements into your workforce plan will enable you to identify where you need to develop Welsh language skills within your workforce that will improve the quality of care for patients and service users.**

There should be an awareness of the Active Offer in higher education settings and induction programmes for all employees. Health Education and Improvement Wales, via the education contracting process, ensure the requirement that all students are aware of the role of the Welsh language in delivering more effective healthcare throughout Wales, and that they have the opportunity to improve their own Welsh language skills.

[The Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance 2023 and Quality Standards 2023](#) highlights the Welsh Government's commitment to safe, effective and person-centred health services. Ultimately, the purpose of this duty of quality is to ensure that NHS bodies secure improvements in the quality of services they provide, and this includes the requirements for Welsh language which are listed below –

- Being able to access services in the Welsh language makes a significant positive difference to the overall experience for many Welsh-speakers
- Being able to access services in the Welsh language can improve the quality, safety and outcomes for Welsh-speakers
- Welsh language considerations must be embedded in the culture of quality
- Welsh language responsibilities must be embedded in quality reports

### The Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care

The [Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care](#) builds on the foundations of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), and [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) to create an engaged, healthy, flexible, responsive and sustainable workforce for the future that is reflective of Wales' diverse population, Welsh language and cultural identity. The legislative framework (mentioned above) relating to the use and delivery of services in the Welsh language that we are working within, will drive the embedding of the Welsh language into the care and support we provide.

Supporting our workforce to deliver care using the Welsh language is a fundamental principle which must underpin every area of this strategy.

There are specific actions within the workforce strategy, which state we will:-

- support our existing and future workforce to develop and/or improve their Welsh language skills;

- review and develop targeted schemes for significant shortages in professional and occupational groups, hard to recruit areas, and under-represented groups, which includes Welsh language considerations;
- develop workforce planning guidance for Welsh language skills identification and development.

Alongside the Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care a set of [Principles to Underpin Workforce Planning for NHS Wales](#) have been developed, which include a requirement that Welsh language legislation will be considered as part of all workforce plans.

## 2. Workforce Planning for the Welsh language

Health care providers need to ensure that they have appropriate and adequate staffing arrangements in place to provide bilingual (Welsh and English) services for the Welsh public. This means, when developing your workforce plans, you will need to include consideration of the need for Welsh Language skills, both for your current and future workforce – you must aim to understand, anticipate and plan to meet the Welsh language needs of your students, your workforce, your patients and your service users.

As with all workforce plans, you should be thinking about your population, workforce trends, workforce supply, your succession plans and your talent pipelines.

## 3. Identifying the Welsh language skills required for your workforce

When planning your workforce you will need to assess if you have sufficient Welsh language skills available, identify any potential gaps in Welsh language skills and then develop actions and workforce solutions you could take to improve or increase Welsh language skills for your current and future workforce. There may also be a need to build staff confidence to use the language skills they already have, and to consider whether you need to recruit Welsh speaking staff to fill some of the gaps.

To support the identification of the Welsh Language skills and development you will need for your workforce, you should undertake data collection and analysis to inform your workforce planning. Some of this data will have already been gathered as part of your organisation's population needs analysis and as part of workforce information held within your Electronic Staff Record (ESR).

The key areas you will need to consider are:-

- Your current population needs
- Your workforce's current Welsh language competence levels
- The gap in Welsh Language skills

### 3.1 Population

Your workforce should reflect the characteristics of its local community, therefore as part of your planning process you should consider the Welsh language requirements of your local population. Your organisation should have undertaken a recent population needs analysis, and this data is crucial as it gives you an idea of the level of demand on your department/service to provide health care services to the community, through the medium of Welsh.

Obtaining this type of population data will also give you an indication of how easy/difficult it will be to recruit to 'Welsh language essential' roles – as the local population is where the majority of your workforce is likely to come from. (For more information on Welsh language essential roles, see section '4.2 Recruitment').

### 3.2 Competency levels of the current workforce

When workforce planning for Welsh language skills you will need to ascertain the Welsh language skills of your current workforce. There are 5 levels which can be used to give an indication of somebody's Welsh language skills –

- Level 0 – No Skills (Entry level)
- Level 1 – Foundation
- Level 2 – Intermediate
- Level 3 – Advanced
- Level 4 – Proficiency

It's important to consider the different levels, as you may have a high proportion of individuals with Level 1 competency, but their roles may actually require them to have a higher level of competence e.g. a level 3 or 4 ability. Further information and descriptions of the various Welsh language levels can be found [here](#).

#### a. Adding Welsh language competencies to ESR

All employees' Welsh language competency levels should be added to their ESR record.

[Guidance on how to add Welsh language competencies can be found here.](#)

#### **b. Updating Welsh language competencies on ESR**

When staff Welsh language levels change, they should ensure that their correct level of competence is updated within their ESR record to reflect this change.

[Guidance on how to update Welsh language competencies can be found here.](#)



**It's important that all staff competency levels are completed and up to date, even if they are at Level 0, as this will enable the organisation to workforce plan and develop approaches to meet required levels.**

One of the actions in the 'More than just words' plan is that all NHS and social care colleagues undertake a language awareness course which explains how important the Welsh language is in the delivery of services and to patient needs. The course includes background and context to the Welsh language, the importance of the Welsh language for patient experience and a section on the Welsh language standards. The course is accessible via the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system and Learning@Wales platform. It is mandatory for all NHS staff (including those who don't deal directly with patients / service users) and it will need to be retaken every 3 years. Completion rates will be collated by NHS Shared Services Partnership with data reported to the Advisory Board to oversee the delivery of 'More than just words'.

## **4. Assessing the gap and identifying actions for Workforce Planning**

After comparing your workforce's current Welsh language competency levels with those of the local population, it may become apparent that there are gaps in your ability to deliver the level of care required. If there are gaps, you should consider a range of options to address any gaps in your workforce Welsh language competency levels. It is likely that your workforce solutions will fall into one or both of the areas below.

### **4.1 Increasing/improving Welsh language skills within your current workforce**



Your workforce plan may have identified that you need to include actions to increase and/or improve the Welsh Language skills within your current workforce. For example, the actions could include promoting and encouraging your workforce to learn Welsh or improve their current Welsh Language skills.

You may want to consider opportunities for people to learn Welsh or for those who are learning Welsh to actively practice using their Welsh language skills. This could happen during training and development opportunities, including students on placement who are either seeking to improve their Welsh Language skills or are learning through the medium of Welsh.

Your organisation will have developed their own Welsh language action plan, and your local Welsh Language Officer will be able to advise on Welsh language competencies, skills development, and training opportunities available within your organisation.

Availability and promotion of free Welsh language lessons for all staff is an expected standard – [See Welsh Language Standards 99, 101 and 102.](#)



**Generally, Welsh language skills are required in speaking and understanding, and moving somebody from a Level 0 capability to Level 1 is where the most difference can be made - This increase in skills can easily be taught within 6-8 weeks.**

## 4.2 Recruitment

There may be instances where you have identified the need for a role/s where there is a need for a higher/different competence level in Welsh language to deliver the service, and where options for increasing/improving skills of the current workforce will not be suitable or achievable. Your action may have identified the need to recruit people with different Welsh language skills into the workforce.

Therefore, when recruiting to a new or vacant post you must assess the need for Welsh language skills and categorise it as a post where one or more of the following apply –

- a. Welsh language skills are essential;
- b. Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post;
- c. Welsh language skills are desirable;

If you have categorised a post as one where Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt you must specify that when advertising the post and advertise the post in Welsh.



**When you advertise a post, you must state that applications may be submitted in Welsh, and that an application submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than an application submitted in English.**

Speak to your local Workforce team for further advice and guidance on recruitment.

## 5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

An Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken as you develop your workforce plan. Your local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team will be able to support you with this.

Health Education and Improvement Wales are fully committed to ensure that our processes are inclusive to all and we have therefore undertaken accessibility checks on this document. However, if there is another format that would help you, please do not hesitate to contact us on [HEIW.WorkforcePlanning@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:HEIW.WorkforcePlanning@wales.nhs.uk) and we will try our utmost to source an alternative version for you. We also very much welcome contributions through the medium of Welsh.

## 6. References

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