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Health Education and  
Improvement Wales (HEIW)



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**

# Workforce planning for the Welsh language



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# 1. Introduction and context

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This guidance has been developed to help you workforce plan for Welsh language skills within your workforce. The guidance will help to ensure health and social care organisations are meeting all necessary legal requirements.

All health and social care organisations will have developed their own Welsh language action plan. It's important that you incorporate your Welsh Language actions into your workforce plans.

## Legislation and Strategic Framework

The [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#), is the legislation that created the [Welsh language standards](#). 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 patient outcomes.

The framework is implemented through the '[More than just words Five Year Plan \(2022-2027\)](#)'. The five year plan articulates that individuals usually access and receive health care and social 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. Particularly, for the workforce working within these services and departments and providing care for these priority groups.

This video from Social Care Wales highlights the importance of using the Welsh language to connect with people - [available here](#).

[‘More than just words Five Year Plan \(2022-2027\)’](#) highlights actions which organisations should take to help deliver on the key aims. These include, embedding cultural change through creating an infrastructure and approach that supports an increase in the use of Welsh across health and social care services. 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 informs 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 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 where services 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. However, they should be aware that many people will have better outcomes by receiving 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, 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. This will improve the quality of care for people and will also help to inform recruitment strategies for the organisation.

There should be an awareness of the Active Offer in tertiary education settings and induction programmes for all employees. Health Education and Improvement Wales, ensure that all healthcare students are aware of the role of the Welsh language in delivering more effective healthcare throughout Wales. This is achieved via the education contracting process. Students also have the opportunity to improve their own Welsh language skills. Similarly, in Social Work qualifying training, the culture of Wales, including the importance of language, is embedded into the delivery of programmes to students.

#### [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. 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](#).

The strategy aims to create an engaged, healthy, flexible, responsive and sustainable workforce for the future, that reflects Wales' diverse population, Welsh language and cultural identity. The legislative framework (mentioned above), 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.

The principles include a requirement that Welsh language legislation will be considered as part of all workforce plans.

## 2. Workforce Planning for the Welsh language

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Health and social care providers need to ensure that they have appropriate and adequate staffing arrangements in place. In order, 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. This applies to both 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, succession planning and talent pipelines.

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

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When planning your workforce you will need to assess if you have sufficient Welsh language skills available and identify any potential gaps in Welsh language skills. You need to develop actions and workforce solutions to improve or increase Welsh language skills for your current and future workforce. This could include actions to build staff confidence to use the language skills they already have. You also need 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 need, you should undertake data collection and analysis to inform your workforce planning. Some of this data will be available as part of your organisation's population needs analysis. Workforce information will be held within your Electronic Staff Record (ESR) and other personal employment records.

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

Social Care Wales have published a Welsh language tool, which enables recording and assessment of your workforce language skills - [available here](#).

## 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. This data is crucial as it identifies the level of demand in the community to provide health and social care services, 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. 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 6 levels which can be used to give an indication of somebody's Welsh language skills:

- ❏ Level 0 - No skills
- ❏ Level 1 - Entry
- ❏ Level 2 - Foundation
- ❏ Level 3 - Intermediate
- ❏ Level 4 - Advanced
- ❏ Level 5 - Proficient

It is important to consider the different levels in your workforce plans. For example, you may have a high proportion of individuals with Level 1 competency, however, there may be a need for competence level 3 or 4.

Further information and descriptions of the various Welsh language level is included in the Language Skills Framework - [Assessing and recording your staff's language skills tool](#).

### 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:

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

### Updating Welsh language competencies on ESR

When staff Welsh language levels change, they should update their competency level within their ESR record to reflect this change. Guidance on how to update Welsh language competencies can be found here:

[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. This includes Level 0, as this will enable the organisation to workforce plan and develop approaches to meet required levels.

## Action 14

of the 'More than just words' plan indicates that all NHS and social care colleagues follow a language 'awareness' course. This should explain how important Cymraeg is in service delivery and as a patient need.

For health the course is accessible via the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system and Learning@Wales platform. The course includes background and context to the Welsh language. It explains the importance of the Welsh language for patient experience and a section on the Welsh language standards. 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'

For social care a range of useful information, tools and eLearning are available on the [Using Welsh at work webpages](#).

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

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Comparing your workforce's current Welsh language competency levels with the local population, you may identify 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 identify 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 be during training and development opportunities. Include students on placement who are either seeking to improve their Welsh Language skills or are learning through the medium of Welsh in your plans.

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

The promotion and availability 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. 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.

Social Care Wales have a wide range of resources which can be used to increase and improve Welsh language skills within the current workforce. There are links to free online Welsh language training at a range of levels - [available here.](#)

## 4.2 Recruitment

You may 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. However, options for increasing/improving skills of the current workforce will not be suitable or achievable. Your action may therefore be to recruit people with different Welsh language skills into the workforce.

When recruiting you must assess the need for Welsh language skills and categorise the 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;

Where a post has been categorised with Welsh language skills being essential, desirable or need to be learnt, you must specify that when advertising the post. You must also advertise the post in Welsh.

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

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

## 5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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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 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).

We will try our utmost to source an alternative version suitable for you. We also very much welcome contributions through the medium of Welsh.

## 6. References

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