

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	27/6/23
TITLE	Department for Adults, Health and Well-being Report
PURPOSE	To present information about the Department's contribution to the Language Policy

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report has been prepared in order to present information to the Language Committee on the implementation of the Language Policy within the Department for Adults, Health and Wellbeing.
- 1.2 The Council's Language Policy is embedded in all the Department's work and we will highlight in this report the opportunities available to improve provision for our residents whilst also recognising the challenges facing the field.
- 1.3 In 2021 'More than Just Words: 5 Year Plan 2022-27' was launched. The plan succeeds the More than Just Words follow-on strategic framework published in 2016 and places expectations on local councils and health boards to deliver services through the medium of Welsh and to do so based on the principle of 'Active Offer'. The Active Offer means to ensure that Welsh-speaking individuals automatically receive a service in Welsh without having to ask for it or express a language choice or preference.
- 1.4 The framework supports the Council's Language Policy and as a Council we have been committed to More than Just Words since its publication in 2012, and have welcomed the principles. Council officers have consistently contributed to the More than Just Words regional forum for collaboration and sharing good practice and are also currently contributing to a task group focusing on how we may align the data we are collecting on the language skills of staff in the sector.
- 1.5 To implement the 5 Year Plan, the Council has set up an internal More than Just Words group led by Huw Dylan Owen, Director of Social Services. Group membership includes the relevant heads of department, senior managers, training and language officers and human resources representation. The relevant cabinet member, who has responsibility for the Welsh language, also sits on the group. A piece of work has been undertaken to map out our work in relation to the commitments in the scheme so that we can focus on those areas where further work is needed. The group is also currently working on establishing performance measures for this work.

<p>The matter that members would like to discuss:</p>	
<p><u>Language promotion</u></p> <p>How does your department go beyond to offer services bilingually and to contribute to the objectives of the county's language strategy (what activities and projects have been undertaken during the last year to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh in the community)?</p> <p>The Council's language strategy sets priorities for promoting the Welsh language in five areas :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family language, 2. The language of learning, 3. The language of work and service, 4. Community language 5. Research and Technology 	<p>The Department for Adults is required to make an active offer to all service recipients, ensuring that individuals receive services in their first language without having to ask. This principle is core to the Department's Day to Day work.</p> <p><u>Technology</u></p> <p>Technology in the care field is developing quickly. With an ageing population living for longer and dementia rates increasing (for example), the level of care that we will need to provide in future is going to be significantly higher than the current level. Recruiting more staff alone isn't going to meet the demand, and technology will play a leading role in providing alternative care and support to the population in future. We are currently developing provisions in Gwynedd that provide a service in Welsh, one example being 'AskSara' - Disabled Living Foundation - AskSARA (livingmadeeasy.org.uk). Over the next two years, we will replace all our telecare equipment across Gwynedd and provide digital equipment (around 1500 pieces of equipment). This equipment currently 'communicates' in English (for example when connecting to the call centre), but the intention is to continue to commission new digital equipment that communicates in Welsh to a high standard, and that that service is of equal standard to the English option.</p> <p><u>More Than Just Words</u></p> <p>From a work and service perspective, the Department is committed to providing services through the medium of Welsh to residents across the county - automatically and without them having to ask for it. Several officers from the Department sit on the council's More than Just Words group and the focus of the group over the last few months was to map out what is expected of us as a local authority, to assess exactly where we are at with each action point and to appoint a dedicated officer responsible for leading on each workstream. Currently, work is taking place to develop a measure to allow the department to be able to better evidence our success in providing care needs assessments in Welsh. This will form the basis for us to identify any gaps in provision and to plan towards increasing our capacity within those domains/services. In addition, we work closely with partners such as the Health Board to provide health and care services to Gwynedd residents; we are currently reviewing any areas where partnership working creates difficulties from a language perspective. We will be paying attention to those areas over the coming months.</p>

<p><u>Policy and Standards Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Staff Language Skills</i> ii) <i>Barriers</i> iii) <i>Praise and Complaints</i> 	<p><u>Staff Language Skills</u></p> <p>According to the Department's latest language designations data, just over 60% of the Department's staff (722 individuals) have completed the language self-assessment tool. The majority of staff who have not completed the self-assessment are care staff who do not have access to information technology system on a day to day basis, e.g. home carers. The challenge of getting these members of staff to complete the self-assessment continues, and we will try to give them the opportunity to complete it by running workshops out in the community.</p> <p>Of those who have completed the self-assessment, 80% meet the language designations assigned to their roles. Again, the majority of the 128 who do not reach their language designations are frontline workers – for example working in the residential homes or being home carers. Specific work/campaigns take place in certain areas of the county, for example staff at Llys Cadfan home in Tywyn attending group sessions for learners.</p> <p><u>Obstacles</u></p> <p>One of the main barriers for the Department remains the need to work in partnership with the Health Board and others, and the impact of that on our use of the language. Running integrated services with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board requires close collaboration, and this can be a challenge when so many of the meetings etc start in English. The Department seeks to influence certain aspects, for example by pressing for simultaneous translation to be provided in more formal meetings.</p> <p>Another barrier is the advances in technology in the care field. Some systems are so specialised they are not available in Welsh (for example a 'buddi' drop alarm, and a 'Canary' monitoring system). However, we have noted examples above of how the Department seeks to influence technology providers. There is a recent example where we have told a provider that we will not commission or use their equipment ('robot' to tackle loneliness) until it is available in Welsh, and the company has started developing the software to be available in Welsh.</p> <p>Recruitment continues to be one of the main barriers to enabling us to offer services fully in Welsh. Recruitment into the care field remains a national problem. When the service attempts in every way to recruit to frontline care positions and fail, compromises often have to be made to be able to offer any type of service, whether through non-Welsh speaking staff or agency staff. Support is given to non-Welsh speaking staff and there are examples of non-Welsh speaking staff learning and becoming valued members of the Department with support. The Department has started recruiting more locally, and this has enabled managers to discuss language needs and options with individuals who possibly may not have come into contact with us previously.</p>
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	<p><u>Praise and Complaints</u></p> <p>No formal compliments or complaints about the language have reached the Department's Customer Care Officer over the past year. Considering the number of adults receiving services by us across the county, there are probably reasons why the praise and complaints do not formally reach us. Some evidence suggests that individuals in the care field in particular are reluctant to complain about their service, worrying that it would have an impact on the care and/or support they receive. As a significant proportion of the care the Department offers is available in Welsh, it is possible that this care in Welsh is taken for granted and is the reason why formal praise does not reach us. Members of staff are certainly aware of informal thanks from residents that they are being cared for in Welsh.</p>
<p><u>Development Opportunities</u></p> <p>Do you have ideas for new ways we could be promoting the Welsh language within the county's communities – either within your own services or working with others?</p>	<p>In order to further promote the Welsh language within Gwynedd's communities, it is vitally important that the Department for Adults continues to follow and promote the principles of More than just Words, and ensures that Gwynedd residents receive the active offer at all times.</p> <p>We need to ensure that all our staff (including professional staff – social workers, occupational therapists etc), are aware of the demands of More than just Words and what it means to them. There is a feeling that some of the county's most vulnerable residents do not receive a service in Welsh without always having to for it, and instead in some cases the question is being asked of them which is their language of choice.</p> <p>We need to work towards the point where the active offer is a natural habit, and that we have a way of effectively measuring the impact of this on Gwynedd residents.</p> <p>As mentioned above, another thing the Department needs to do to promote the Welsh language is to ensure that any technology developed as part of future alternative care is fully available in Welsh.</p>

