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Welsh Language Update

Author Máire Nig Ualghairg

1. Purpose / situation

This paper gives a status report on the current position of Public Health Wales Welsh-language provision, including how we are meeting our statutory obligations, remedial actions we need to be taking and suggestions for future action.

This report is primarily based on the most recent status available, which was January 2020. During the pandemic the Welsh Language Officers were redeployed for significant periods of time to support the Covid response. As per discussions with Directorates, we have not been made aware of any additional areas of that require action.

2. Background

Welsh Language provision in Public Health Wales is determined by various pieces of legislation and government policies. Our direct obligations are set out in the Welsh Language Standards, which are a comprehensive set of standards explaining what we must do to provide services in Welsh, both internally and externally.

The Standards came into force during 2019 and by January 2020 they were embedded well across the organisation, thanks to the cooperation of all our directorates. Much of the work of monitoring them had to be paused to focus on pandemic response and only restarted in April 2021.

Ongoing actions dating back to January 2020 include:

- Standard 17, requiring telephone calls to be dealt with in Welsh (until such point as they can be transferred to a member of staff with the necessary specialist knowledge to address the caller's need, at which point the conversation can change to English if that member of staff does not speak Welsh). We are working with the IT team to identify newer possible solutions to this and will bring an options paper forward with further information.
- Standards 106A/107A, that we publish all our Job Descriptions, Person Specifications and job advertisements in Welsh as well as English. The issue of this one is cost of translation, and the intention is to create an internal library of standardised Job Descriptions to ensure that they are translated at point of entry into the library (thus raising the cost of translation only once rather than multiple times). People and OD colleagues have reported that they have been unable to progress this.
- Standard 110, Clinical Consultation Plan (for our frontline services). A draft plan has been produced, however, we have subsequently received advice from the Welsh Language Commissioner which means the original draft can be considerably revised (simplified and shortened).
- Various standards regarding language choice in correspondence. We now have a database to facilitate identifying 'persons' who choose to use Welsh for correspondence and this is available via a SharePoint page accessible to all. This will be migrated to the SharePoint Online page along with the information on the current intranet Welsh Hwb page.

3. Description/Assessment – issues arising since January 2020

3.1 Complaints arising from a telephone survey

The 'How Are You Doing?' telephone survey (administered for PHW by a contractor, DJS Research) has been the subject of a complaint which is currently being investigated by the Welsh Language Commissioner. We have also been contacted by a Welsh speaking member of the public through our 'raising a concern' process, who suggested changes to the way that calls are currently handled and those changes are now being incorporated into the procedure. However, this has highlighted questions around procurement and our Welsh language obligations, which we will be investigating further.

3.2 Technology and Welsh

The team met with the Head of IM&T regarding the deployment of Welsh language spellchecking software. The Microsoft Welsh language packs have now been 'push installed' to all computers. This will ensure that we meet our obligation as regards Standard 89: 'You must provide staff with

computer software for checking spelling and grammar in Welsh, and provide Welsh language interfaces for software (where an interface exists).'

3.3 Website

The temporary Welsh Language Officer has worked with Communications colleagues to rectify issues with our website's Welsh pages, and to establish systems to prevent repetition of these.

3.4 Translation

The Service Level Agreement with Shared Services has been reviewed and extended for another year. This allows the preparation of shorter documents and notices in Welsh with a fast turnaround.

3.5 Welsh language skills

We currently employ 64 members of staff who have intermediate language skills, 83 who have higher skills and 133 who are proficient. We also have 362 staff who classed as entry level and 91 who are classed as foundation level (based on current ESR self-declared data). Work is underway to identify learning opportunities for staff and we will be offering these for a September 2021 start.

4.0 Conclusion

Many of the systems and procedures that were embedded during 2019 when the Standards first came into force have proved robust enough to withstand the pressures of the pandemic. Our front-line services such as Screening are to be particularly commended for the way in which they have been able to retain their commitment to providing an excellent service in both languages despite the upheaval they have experienced.

Much of the work around developing a Welsh/bilingual culture within the organisation was put on hold during the pandemic. As we begin to return to our 'new normal', we will again be able to develop this work. We are identifying opportunities presented by our new ways of working, including new online learning options, the possibility that our new technology will enable better connectivity for those wanting to practise their Welsh and develop a Welsh-speaking work community.