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Velindre University  
NHS Trust

# ***A BILINGUAL SKILLS STRATEGY***



## **2023 -2025**

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Approved by Welsh Language Development Group

# **A BILINGUAL SKILLS STRATEGY FOR VELINDRE UNIVERSITY NHS TRUST**

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## **1. Introduction.**

Velindre University NHS Trust recognises the importance of a bilingual service and to acknowledge the necessity to give equal status to the Welsh and English language. Providing a service to the public in their preferred language is not a secondary thought but it has been proven that it can enhance a patient or service user's experience.

The reality of providing a fully bilingual service to our service users against the true and current number of Welsh speakers across the NHS is a challenge; however, the Trust is committed to rising to that challenge and will make significant pathways into achieving this over the period of this strategy and beyond.

This is a long-term initiative that will take a number of years to implement and will need to be revisited and assessed at the end of the first three years. Workforce and communications colleagues will need to work closely together in order to fully realise the aims and ambitions of this strategy.

### **1.1**

Velindre University NHS Trust as of July 2023 has 139 members of staff able to speak Welsh at levels 3-5 competency. This is 8.4%% of our workforce.  
( )

The most recent data provided by Welsh Government has indicated that just over 17.8% of the population of Wales can speak the Welsh language and it is with this in mind that the Trust recognises the need for a truly bilingual approach to its workforce initiatives.

This strategy is not about translation or the need for all staff to learn the Welsh language, but its aims concentrate on the need to increase the Trust's ability to provide a bilingual service and the need to mainstream and consider language requirements as part of the Trust's planning processes.

### **1.2**

Velindre Cancer Centre is the largest cancer centre in Wales, and one of the largest dedicated cancer centres in the UK. The Centre provides all the non-surgical cancer care to the people of southeast Wales (population 1.5 m).

The Trust has ambitions to improve and transform cancer services in Southeast Wales and is working with Welsh Government and partner Health Boards in a programme to achieve this ambition. We are engaging with staff, patients, and

other stakeholders to develop a new model which would include a new state of the art replacement cancer hospital.

The Welsh Blood Service has an All Wales service currently collecting voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations from the general public.

Local authority population projections for Wales) identify that the population of Wales is growing year on year, and life expectancy is also growing. In light of this it is safe to say that the number of patients will therefore increase and evidence suggests, many of these patients will be using or reverting to a language that is more appropriate for their needs as they age.

Appendix 1 will give you further details of the linguistic profiles of Wales.

## **2. Aims**

**The ultimate aim of a bilingual skills strategy is to provide a framework for the development of Welsh language skills within the organisation.**

**This will:**

- Ensure that service users, staff and patients are given the opportunity to access a service that recognises a bilingual need.
- Address the imbalance in our workforce profile to meet the needs of our patients and donors.
- Improve the recording of staff language skills to plan services accordingly and inform workforce planning strategies.
- Ensure the right Welsh language skills are available to offer greater service user satisfaction.
- Ensure teams across the Trust have a balanced approach and understanding of bilingual needs and are supported by training and development opportunities.
- Ensure recruitment and selection processes assess language skills and recognise this skill as important against other skill needs.

## **3. Legislation**

### **3.1 The Welsh Language Act 1993**

The Welsh Language Act 1993 is intended to ensure that the Welsh and English languages were treated equally in Wales. The Act also places a responsibility on public organisations to produce a Welsh Language Scheme to ensure a bilingual approach to services to all public services.

### **3.3 The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

This measure provides a more proactive way forward in the development of the Welsh language in Wales. Following the appointment of a Welsh language Commissioner in April 2012, the language and its status has officially been

strengthened and is now equally and legally recognised as one of the countries two official languages.

The main focus for the commissioner will be to:

- Promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language
- Promote equality between the Welsh and English languages
- Develop five year reports detailing the situation of the language
- Develop 'Standards' for the reporting of the Welsh language by public bodies including the right to fine an organisation for non-compliance of its Welsh language scheme
- The commissioner can hold investigations into circumstances where it is believed that an organisation or individual has failed to comply with language standards or tried to prevent the use of the language verbally.

Two principles underpin the work of the Commissioner:

- In Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language
- Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so

### **3.4 'More than Just Words...' the strategic framework for Welsh language services in health and social services.**

This framework was launched in 2012 and re launched in 2022 with a focus on increasing accessibility to bilingual care for users of services.

Its three-year action plan gives the Trust a number of delivery actions that has a focus on making changes to internal procedures that will have a positive impact on Welsh speakers and eventually lead to an equitable service in both Welsh and English.

The follow on strategy and subsequent action plans support the aims of the original strategy and continues to provide a focus for ensuring an 'Active offer' of Welsh language services becomes a reality.

The Trust is charged with reporting yearly, directly to Welsh Government on compliance against this framework

The Bilingual skills strategy will assist in achieving the aims of 'More than just Words...'

### **3.6 Equality Act 2010**

In Addition to the Welsh Language Measure the Trust has responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998, which support the need to provide services in community languages, including British Sign language.

This document/policy/strategy compliments the strategic Equality Objectives of the Trust to meet the language needs of patients, donors and service users as set out under this legislation.

#### **4. Priorities**

##### **1. IDENTIFY CURRENT SKILLS BASE TO DETERMINE LANGUAGE BASELINE**

**Aim: To increase the number of staff members recording Welsh language skills within ESR from 86% to 100% compliance**

##### **Audit of Staff Skills**

Currently the number of staff completing the 'Welsh language competency' section within ESR is lower than what is required to enable the Trust to have a full and comprehensive picture of all staff language skills.

In order for us to increase the compliance with this, managers across the Trust will need to ensure that staff complete the competency section (Appendix 3) of the Electronic Staff record (Employee Self-Serve) in order to assess their individual skills base.

To ensure a systematic approach to the collection of ESR data we will continue to ensure it is collected as part of the personal appraisal process or PADR process. In order to ensure a consistent approach the Trust will need to fully commit to meeting the PADR activity increases defined in its Integrated Medium Term Plan.

The Upload of this data will allow for staff skills to be assessed and training options made available should a member of staff wish to follow a training schedule or other options discussed in terms of ensuring basic language skills are available for service user's needs.

It is not intended to stipulate that all staff should be fluent Welsh speakers but that they are able to provide an acceptable service to patients/service users should there be a recognised need for this as part of their current role.

This can be achieved in many ways:

1. Through identifying key words to learn in order to meet a basic standard of service - Having confidence to use basic communication like:

How are you? Shwmae/Su'mae = **Shoo+my (De Cymru)**

**Sim+my (North Wales)**

Good morning Bore da = **Bore+eh dah**

Good evening Noswaith dda = **Noss+wythe ('th' fel yn 'think') thah ('th' fel yn 'the')**

How are you? Sut ydych chi? = **Shoo deech chee? ?**

In practice this will take a long term commitment and the need for managers to support staff and provide opportunities to practice using the language.

**Basic Language Training will need to be mainstreamed into Team Training opportunities.**

2. Completing basic awareness courses to understand the culture of service users across Wales and be able to identify individuals able to respond to the service user. These courses can be discussed further with the Education and Development department or the Trust's Welsh language officer and will need to be supported by management in order to identify a training budget.
3. Attend a training course, in-house or external to learn the language at a higher level and offer greater language support across the Trust for those wishing to develop their skills. Again information on these courses can be sought from the Education and Development department or the Trust's Welsh language officer or by visiting <https://learnwelsh.cymru/work-welsh/introduction-to-work-welsh/>

## **4.2 ESTABLISH BILINGUAL PROVISION WITHIN SERVICE TEAMS**

**Aim: Ensure all teams across the Trust are aware of the Welsh language skills abilities of individuals within a team in order to identify the Welsh language service provision needs.**

As part of their planning processes, each team will need to identify how able they are to provide a bilingual service based on the current skills within the team. There is an online audit tool available that will assist individuals assess their language abilities visit:

<https://learnwelsh.cymru/work-welsh/introduction-to-work-welsh/>

A learning and development training needs analysis will need to be completed by each team and managers will use this in order to inform the basis of learning requirements and feed into the Trust's workforce development strategy.

In order to do this, the team will need to consider the relevance of a bilingual service to their daily duties against the current service they provide and the population they serve. **Teams need to remember that a bilingual service has to be provided to service users without them having to specifically ask for it.** The English and Welsh languages need to be treated equally across the Trust.

The Team will need to consider the need to offer front-line services against the possibility of assisting other teams to provide this service should bilingual skills be strong. This information can be kept by the manager to assist with language assessment as part of future appointments to the team.

#### **4.3 DEVELOPING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

**Aim: To provide Welsh language training as a priority (in line with other training priorities) for all members of staff who either demonstrate the need for training as part of their current role, where language skills within a team or department are unavailable or those who wish to expand their current Welsh language skills.**

The Trust's Welsh language Standards Compliance notice stipulates the need for Welsh language training initiatives to support staff development and provide a bilingual service.

However commitment to this principle is more difficult in practice as releasing staff from current commitments can be problematic. A degree of flexibility and patience will need to be agreed and a realistic action plan agreed to monitor skills learned and used across the Trust.

There are a number of ways in which staff can learn the Welsh language but it is important to provide opportunities for current Welsh speakers to practice their language skills and to increase their confidence to provide a bilingual service. The latter would be the most efficient for the Trust.

Useful websites can be used such as [\\_ or work Welsh/Iaith Gwaith](https://learnwelsh.cymru/work-welsh/introduction-to-work-welsh/)  
<https://learnwelsh.cymru/work-welsh/introduction-to-work-welsh/>

by staff looking to increase their confidence in using the language, along with staff who would like to learn the basics of communication. On line courses are also available and methods to assess Welsh language skills. More information on training and training aids, such as useful 'Apps' etc. can be found on the Trust intranet site.

<http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/972/page/62034>

Managers need to be aware that the Trust is legally obliged to support staff in their training and therefore there is no cost to a staff member.

#### **4.4 RECRUITMENT**

**Aim: To ensure that recruitment processes for the Trust consider the need for Welsh language skills when looking to advertise new posts.**

**RECEPTION POSTS OR THOSE ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE NEED TO BE PRIORITISED AS WELSH ESSENTIAL AND ADVERTISED ACCORDINGLY.**



**Posts can be advertised in Lleol.net / Safle swyddi and Golwg 360 to ensure Welsh speakers can access the relevant posts. NHS jobs should also be used but only alongside these other recruitment platforms.**

Recruiting Welsh speakers to the organisation is essential to up-skill the language abilities of staff and provide a bilingual service to those who need it. The Welsh language should be viewed alongside other skills and valued alongside other skills but certainly not to the detriment of medical or other essential skills.

The Trust is committed to providing opportunities for its staff to develop their personal skills. As part of this strategy all current posts and vacant posts will be language assessed by the relevant manager to strengthen existing skills and ensure future language skills are sufficient to provide a bilingual service. Again, this process is not about identifying individual's lack of language skills but assessing the need for language skills across the team and for future recruitment purposes.

Making a commitment to ensuring the organisation has the correct bilingual skills base to provide a bilingual service is crucial. In circumstances where it is difficult to appoint the relevant individual to the organisation then a commitment will be agreed to ensure that any successful applicant will be offered opportunities to learn the Welsh language and further their own personal development goals by doing so.

Currently training for the recruitment process is sympathetic to the needs of bilingual applicants. The Trust has included a statement as part of this process that promotes applications from Welsh speakers and will continue to do this in line with this strategy.

*“The Trust specifically welcomes applications from Welsh speakers”*

However, there needs to be a commitment from every manager to ensure that language assessments take place whenever a post becomes vacant and not to include language skills as desirable across all posts.

Should a post be advertised with bilingual skills as ‘essential’ and the post not be filled, managers will need to assess the training requirements of that post should it be re-advertised with language skills as ‘desirable’ .

Further guidance on recruitment and the Welsh language is available from the Welsh language Commissioner’s ‘Recruitment and the Welsh language’ document:

<http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.org/English/Publications%20List/20120518%20DG%20S%20Dogfen%20Cyngor%20Recruitment%20f2.pdf>

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

**The implementation of this strategy is the responsibility of all managers across the Trust.**

The Workforce and Organisational Development Committee, along with the Welsh language steering group are charged with monitoring the success of this strategy, under the direction of the Welsh language officer and dedicated WOD representative.

Implementation of the strategy and language skills improvements will be monitored by the Welsh language Commissioner as part of the Trust's annual reporting structure.

## Appendix 1

### The linguistic profile of Welsh speakers across the areas serviced by the Trust

cal authority	Aged 3 to 15	Aged 16 to 64	Aged 65+	All ages (3+)
	Percentage point	Percentage point	Percentage point	Percentage point
Isle of Anglesey	-3.5	0.3	-3.7	-1.5
Gwynedd	-3.0	0.5	-3.3	-1.0
Conwy	-5.6	0.4	-2.8	-1.4
Denbighshire	-7.8	-0.2	-3.0	-2.1
Flintshire	-7.5	0.0	-1.2	-1.6
Wrexham	-3.1	0.4	-2.6	-0.7
Powys	-7.0	0.0	-2.9	-2.1
Ceredigion	-6.5	0.5	-6.4	-2.0
Pembrokeshire	-8.5	-0.2	-2.2	-2.1
Carmarthenshire	-2.6	-3.0	-8.7	-4.1
Swansea	-0.6	0.6	-3.2	-0.2
Neath Port Talbot	-6.6	-0.1	-4.1	-1.8
Bridgend	-6.6	1.0	-0.5	-0.5
Vale of Glamorgan	-2.5	2.0	-0.1	0.7
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf	-5.4	1.8	-0.6	0.1
Merthyr Tydfil	-3.0	1.0	-1.0	0.0
Caerphilly	-7.6	1.2	0.1	-0.7
Blaenau Gwent	-12.5	0.5	-0.1	-1.6
Torfaen	-11.2	0.5	-0.2	-1.6
Monmouthshire	-8.4	0.9	0.2	-1.2
Newport	-12.3	0.4	0.0	-1.8
Cardiff	-0.5	1.4	0.7	1.1
Wales	-5.7	0.3	-2.3	-1.2

## Appendix 2 – Welsh language skills matrix

To be completed within the employee self-service system.

	LISTENING / SPEAKING	READING / UNDERSTANDING	WRITING
<b>Level 0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No appreciable ability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No appreciable ability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No appreciable ability</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pronounce Welsh words, place names, department names etc.</li> <li>Greet and understand a greeting</li> <li>Use basic every day words and phrases, e.g. thank you, please, excuse me, etc.</li> <li>Understand / pass on simple verbal requests of a routine / familiar / using simple language e.g. 'may i speak to....'</li> <li>State simple requests and follow up with extra questions/requests in a limited way</li> </ul>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand simple key words and sentences on familiar / predictable matters relating to my own job area. E.g. on signs and in letters</li> </ul>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fill in simple forms, note down simple information e.g date and venue of a meeting, Welsh address etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the gist of Welsh conversations in work</li> <li>Respond to simple job-related requests and requests for factual information</li> <li>Ask simple questions and understand simple responses</li> <li>Express opinions in a limited way as long as the topic is familiar</li> <li>Understand instructions when simple language is needed</li> </ul>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand factual, routine information and the gist of non-routine information on familiar matters related to my own job area, e.g. in standard letters, leaflets, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write short simple notes / letters / messages on a limited range of predictable topics related to my personal experience</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand much of what is said in an office, meeting, etc.</li> <li>Keep up a simple conversation on a work related topic, but may need to revert to English to discuss/report on complex or technical information</li> </ul>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand factual, routine information and the gist of job-related routine and non-routine correspondence, factual literature, etc. When standard language is used.</li> </ul>	<p><b>I Can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write a detailed/descriptive letter relating to my own job area, but will need to have it checked by a Welsh speaker</li> <li>Make reasonably accurate notes while someone is talking</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer predictable or factual questions</li> <li>• Take and pass on most messages that are like to require attention</li> <li>• Offer advice on simple job-related matters</li> </ul>		
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>I Can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep up an extended casual work related conversation or give a presentation with a good degree of fluency and range of expression but may need to revert to English to answer unpredictable questions or explain complex points or technical information</li> <li>• Contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work</li> <li>• Argue for/against a case</li> </ul>	<b>I Can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and understand information fairly quickly as long as no unusual vocabulary is used and no particularly complex or technical information is involved</li> </ul>	<b>I Can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare formal letters of many familiar types such as enquiry, complaint, request and application</li> <li>• Take reasonably accurate notes in meetings or straightforward dictation</li> <li>• Write a report/document relating to my own job area, but will need to have it checked by a Welsh speaker</li> </ul>
<b>Level 5</b>	<b>I Can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise on/talk about routine, non-routine, complex, contentious or sensitive issues related to own experiences</li> <li>• Give a presentation/demonstration</li> <li>• Deal confidently with hostile or unpredictable questions</li> <li>• Carry out negotiations using complex/technical terms</li> <li>• Give media interviews</li> </ul>	<b>I Can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand complex ideas and information expressed in complex or specialist language in documents, reports, correspondence and articles etc.</li> </ul>	<b>I Can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write letters on any subject</li> <li>• Write full/accurate notes of meetings while continuing to follow discussions and participate in them</li> <li>• Write reports/documents with confidence but they may need to be checked for minor errors in terms of spelling and grammar</li> </ul>

**Highlighted areas are the most needed levels for posts where communication with patients and donors is expected.**

## Appendix 3

### Language skills assessment matrix

Language assessment should happen as part of all posts as and when they become vacant or when a new post is created.

When assessing a post for its linguistic requirements, the following points will also need to be considered:

When a post has '**Essential**' as a Welsh language requirement:

- The need to assist Welsh speakers whether they are internal staff or service users
- A post whose respective function or part of it is being in contact with the public, which could expect the individual to be able to communicate in English and Welsh
- Situations where there are no members of staff available to provide a Welsh language service
- Situations where it is not possible for another office to provide a Welsh language service
- Local considerations in an organisation's Welsh language scheme e.g. the need to undertake administration in English and Welsh
- The need to deal with other organisations / individuals who operate through the medium of Welsh only

When a post has '**Desirable**' as a Welsh language requirement:

- A situation where it's not possible for another officer / team member to provide a Welsh language service
- Situations where employing a Welsh speaker would improve the service provided
- A situation where having to provide a Welsh language service by asking another officer / team member for assistance would have a detrimental effect on the service

Managers must also be mindful of situations when:

- a Welsh speaker is on leave and the ability to cover that post,
- the workload of a Welsh speaker could increase significantly should they be asked to use their skills to cover for the team

Individuals assessing language needs need to remember that there is a legal and practical difference between language as a qualification and language as a skill in terms of achieving the purpose of a post

## Flowchart – Please use this chart to ensure Welsh language skills are correctly assessed for posts.

In order to ensure these requirements are met managers should follow the process below when preparing to advertise a new post or vacancy.



