

# Working arrangements in a bilingual environment - Community Resource Teams Briefing Paper

## Background

Community Resource Teams (CRT) are being set up across Gwynedd and Anglesey. Members of these teams are employed by different organisations, and every organisation has its own Welsh language arrangements and procedures.

The range of matters arising from working together in a bilingual environment must be considered, and staff must be given strong guidance. The scope of the CRT extends to include GPs, third sector bodies and providers from different sectors. As an initial step, this discussion paper will consider the matters that need to be discussed in relation to the workforces of Gwynedd Council (the Council) and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCU).

It is also noted that the same matters are relevant for the Anglesey Council workforce and will be discussed with elected members and senior officers there in order to ensure that the relevant linguistic policy / strategic context is considered.

## Context

For many years, the Council's internal administrative language has been Welsh. This means that every internal correspondence and communication is in Welsh only (or occasionally, bilingual). Since the Council's recruitment policy supports this language policy, staff (with very few exceptions) understand Welsh. BCU policy and procedures are different, and although there is much bilingual correspondence, staff members are not obligated to understand and use Welsh in their everyday work when discussing and sharing information with colleagues.

Not unexpectedly, we are facing a situation where some tensions arise among staff. A range of feelings and viewpoints emerge - some feel excluded because they don't understand the oral communication that is happening around them; others feel that their rights to use the Welsh language are weakened due to being co-located with non-Welsh-speaking staff.

Through the More than Just Words Strategic Framework, councils and health boards are expected to make a proactive offer and to attempt to ensure that people receive services in the language that meets their needs. More recently, there are expectations for individual organisations since the introduction of Standards under the Welsh Language Measure 2011, and compliance is required to avoid being in breach of the law. Standards for the Council and the Health Board have been agreed.

## Matters that need to be discussed

Within the above context, there are several matters that should be considered as the Community Resource Teams are developed:

1. Staff language skills profile and planning to be able to meet the needs of communities, and create a working environment which complies with the linguistic rights and aspirations of staff

2. Internal communication within the teams - oral, written, electronic (and the expectations and best practice)
3. Patient / Client Records - protocols of practice and expectations
4. The proactive offer - recording, sharing and acting on the language need of the individual
5. The wider expectations of More than Just Words (for example, matters involving commissioning services)
6. Matters that need to be tackled in order to address the differences between the language policies of the Council and BCU and the impact on the workforce and the public
7. Responsibilities for meeting translation and simultaneous translation requirements, including resources and costs
8. The possible need for language ambassadors for the teams, and a comprehensive training programme
9. Language Standards and expectations of the Welsh Language Commissioner - understand the requirements on both organisations, and consider any challenge that could arise due to differing expectations
10. WCCIS (Welsh Community Care Information System) and the Welsh language – this is the system that has been bought by Welsh Government for managing health and community care records across Wales.

## Systems that exist to support the field

### The Council

There is a manager within the Adults, Health and Well-being department who is responsible for coordinating activities within the Council to meet the More than Just Words requirements. This manager is also a member of the Regional More than Just Words forum (which also includes representatives from BCU and the other councils).

The corporate language team also provides support to implement the Council's language policy and when developing relevant skills or systems.

### BCU

The Health Board has established a Project Management Group (across North Wales) to implement the Language Standards and More than Just Words. The group has a detailed work programme. A Standards Compliance Officer has been appointed within BCU.

Leaders from the three sub-regions of North Wales sit on this group. The Area Director represents the West. The group also includes leaders from the Hospital Management Team, Secondary Care and different professions.

The 'Welsh Language Strategic Plan 2016-19' has been approved by BCU's Strategy, Partnerships and Population Health Committee. This Committee is a sub-group of the BCU Executive Board. Within the Strategic Plan, there are three Strategic Aims and nine Work Streams.

## Work that is already underway

It is worthwhile drawing attention to specific work that is already taking place, or has recently taken place:

- One of BCU's work streams to implement the above Strategic Plan examines workforce planning, with a view to implementing the Bilingual Skills Strategy. Very recently, work has

started of mapping the workforce within the CRT across the sectors, and the next step will be to analyse staff language skills in each sector and geographical area.

- There is a Language Support Officer within BCU, and a Language Training Plan. With funding from Welsh Government under the 'Cymraeg Gwaith' scheme, another officer has been appointed to support this Officer.
- BCU has created an internal policy named 'Health Board Wide Procedure for Using Welsh Internally'. This document deals with corporate communication - for example, it states that all information shared with every staff member within the Health Board should be bilingual
- Recently, there has been effective collaboration between the Derwen team (Disabled and Sick Children) and BCU's language team. The work resulted in the creation of Language Guidelines for the team. A copy of these guidelines can be circulated.

## Translation arrangements

This is what we know about translation arrangements:

BCU - written translation, mainly internal (no fee charged). Buy in a simultaneous translation service from outside.

The Council - written translation and simultaneous translation internally, but occasionally buys in outside services when internal capacity is insufficient. No fee charged for internal work, but partnership work is charged (for example, work on behalf of CRT would fall into this category). Details about fees are available on the Council's intranet.

## WCCIS and the Welsh language

A work stream exists nationally to ensure that WCCIS, the new system for recording care and community health cases, is fully bilingual. Currently, the Leadership Group that leads on the WCCIS nationally has decided that the planned work should not proceed, but this is being challenged.

A technical solution exists which could ensure that all permanent information within the system could be entirely bilingual. A group of technical experts has confirmed that it is happy with the solution.

Due to the lack of national priority to proceed with the work, the Regional Partnership Board has managed to attract transformation grant funding which came from the 'A Healthier Wales' strategy, in order to develop standard glossaries in the field of Health and Care. This work will be commissioned during January 2020.

## Recording and sharing language preference (or 'need')

In recent months, a series of task group meetings has been held by the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, to discuss how individuals' language preference could be recorded and shared in Wales. The group examined all fields and all sectors (not only the health and care sector). The Health and Community Care Transformation Programme Leader (Gwynedd and Anglesey) was a member of this group. A report has been prepared which proposes recommendations regarding the way forward.

## Free Text Recording

Free text recording in a language that is either a) different from the language in which matters were originally noted or b) in a language that not everyone involved with a person's clinical care / social

work understands, has the potential to pose a risk to an individual's welfare. Naturally, this raises questions about the way to deal with situations in which staff and/or people who need services are bilingual.

Following discussions within the Language Partnership Board in the field of Health and Care (ministerial board), a task group has been set up to establish the principles of good practice on this topic nationally. A senior Civil Servant from Welsh Government chairs the group. The Chair of the Language Committee and the Health and Community Care Transformation Programme Leader (Gwynedd and Anglesey) are members of this group. A report on the work of the group will be submitted in March 2020.

It is worth noting that case studies have been carried out in Gwynedd to assist with the work of this task group. Collaboration arrangements were examined in three Health and Care teams (in the fields of Children, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health) where staff from the Council and BCU are located in the same office. What was seen, briefly, was that the workforce found logical solutions themselves to respond to the specific situation and the needs from the client or the patient's perspective. It was also seen that a lot of translating happened orally and in writing within the teams, which had become an inevitable part of the day-to-day work.

## Closing / Summary

This short paper highlights how wide-ranging the matters to be discussed are in the context of establishing bilingual working arrangements between the Council and BCU. It is also clear that different groups, locally, regionally and nationally, are discussing and attempting to resolve some of the matters in question.

Further work is required to agree on the necessary work, on identifying priorities and to establish arrangements within CRT.