**‘Welsh Language Training’ Programme** 

**Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board**

**(BCUHB)**

July 2023

**Background and context**

Since 2017, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board ( BCUHB) has worked jointly with the Centre for Learning Welsh as part of the centre’s Work Welsh project. One of the strategic objectives of the National Centre for Learning Welsh is to develop innovative schemes to ensure opportunities and contexts for learners to use their Welsh confidently and its use in the workplace is clearly an important priority. As part of the 'Work Welsh' scheme, the health board employs a Welsh Language Training Support Officer. Her main duties are to support and mentor learners on the ‘Work Welsh’ course.

BCUHB was funding staff to attend community based courses run by external providers, but workforce demand far exceeded availability. In addition, these external courses did not include what the staff regarded as necessary, namely Welsh that would help them in their day-to-day work, be that with patients in a clinic or answering the phone on reception. A business case was presented to the Board of Directors outlining the demand, current constraints, and benefits to the Health Board of appointing an in-house Tutor. There was full support for this and the business case was agreed.

The decision to recruit a full-time tutor was ground-breaking, as this was the first health board to take such a step. The tutor provides a range of different courses, to assist staff to learn Welsh. Since the original Tutor was appointed, demand has increased significantly. Following an evaluation of the value and impact of the first investment, BCUHB has been awarded funding to appoint another tutor to further strengthen the in-house provision.

**The Programme and the Role of the Tutor**

The role of the tutor is to create and tailor courses that are suitable for the needs of staff. The needs of staff vary according to their work (clinical, reception work etc) and/or level of ability. By working with the tutor, learners are improving their language skills and increasing their confidence so that they can use their Welsh. This is done by providing them with language training opportunities and other resources, to improve their ability to provide care in Welsh.

**Assessing the linguistic skills and training needs of staff.**

We offer weekly lessons to a variety of learners from different work backgrounds. These lessons follow the Learning Centre’s course books, but the in-house tutor tailors the lessons to make them relevant to the Health and Care sector. For example, changing role play from a shop or cafe to a situation where someone is asking for an appointment with a Doctor, asking a patient for personal details etc.

If a particular department requests a block of lessons, the tutor can create and tailor a specific lesson plan for the needs of that department. For example, the tutor has created a week-long intensive course for Speech and Language therapists in the West. Before creating the course, the tutor was given a list of relevant vocabulary by the department; the tutor ensured that this vocabulary was included in the lessons.

**What is the role of HR?**

The Human Resources/Recruitment department provides annual figures to the Welsh language training team including statistics on the Welsh language skills of our staff. We receive figures for each level of the Welsh Language Skills Matrix table which is analysed from the Health Board’s Electronic Staff Record (ESR) website.

BCUHB's Welsh language training team is also working with the recruitment department to ensure that new members of staff receive the relevant support to improve their Welsh language skills. All Welsh language training opportunities are advertised on our intranet pages.

The Welsh Language Training Team continues to promote and advertise all Welsh language training opportunities via the health board's new intranet site, 'BetsiNet'. The new intranet site 'BetsiNet' is now operational across the organisation, and the Welsh Language Training Team updates the pages weekly. There is also a News carousel at the top of the first page to highlight any new information; this is a new tool where health board staff can access information on Welsh language training without having to search the intranet pages.

Summary of courses and opportunities for staff from the tutor:

* **Taster Courses / Use Your Welsh Campaign 2021**

On 1st February 2018, the Welsh Language Team launched a new and innovative ‘Use your Welsh’ campaign, which will be a permanent campaign within the health board.

The main focus of the campaign is to encourage staff to use whatever Welsh language skills they have at work, be that with colleagues, patients and/or visitors. To support the campaign, in 2021 it was decided that Welsh language taster lessons should be offered. The Tutor arranged a variety of different taster lessons for four different levels – from total beginners (ESR level 0-1) to higher level / confidence building (ESR level 4).

95 members of staff attended the taster classes as part of the campaign. Feedback from the courses indicated that 96% of learners were ‘very satisfied’ with the content of the

lessons, 76% of learners said they felt they had made progress with their Welsh language skills and 92% wanted to continue to learn Welsh.

100% of learners felt that they had received sufficient support from the tutor.

After the success of the taster lessons, the tutor created a new Welsh Language Training Programme. The programme was strategically designed, providing courses specifically developed for different areas of the health sector, and the tutor was able to tailor each course to suit each individual’s needs.

* **Weekly Courses, block of ten lessons virtually on Teams**

The tutor launches courses three times a year and they are available to health board members of staff. Courses are available at all levels of learning. The tutor follows the Textbooks of 'The National Centre for Learning Welsh’ to plan the lessons, but the content is adapted to match the requirements of the Health and Care sector. The tutor is free to tailor the content of lessons to meet the needs of the learners. At the end of the ten week block, learners receive a Certificate which is shared with their manager and Professional Development folder.

* **Language Skills Certificate Sessions**

The [Language Skills Certificate](http://www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk/cy/astudio/sgiliauiaith/tystysgrifsgiliau/) is a recognised and accredited qualification by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and WJEC developed to enable candidates to gain a certificate that improves their skills and ability to work through the medium of Welsh. The certificate also aims to promote the ability to communicate confidently and professionally in Welsh, in both written and verbal form in order to respond to the needs of the local population and service users. Following the success of the scheme in the past, the health board has been offered the opportunity to continue its collaboration with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, extending the agreement further. The tutor prepares and creates resources and lessons to support the candidate in preparing to sit the oral and written examination.

* **‘Welsh Language Skills for Reception Staff’ taster courses**

We celebrate ‘Welsh Language Week’ annually in October to coincide with ‘Shwmae Su’mae’ day. One of the objectives of the week is to remind our staff that the use of the Welsh language at work is very important in the health sector, as research shows that patients feel more comfortable speaking Welsh, and if staff use Welsh, patients will feel more confident and more likely to use their Welsh with staff. As part of the celebrations of Welsh Language Week in October 2021, a timetable of ‘Welsh Language Skills for Reception Staff’ 1:1 taster sessions was created. During the session the learner learns key vocabulary and phrases to use over the telephone with patients. The tutor creates a bespoke lesson for the needs of the individual, and emphasises that members of staff should not be afraid to use any Welsh that they have, and should never think that their Welsh language skills are not good enough.

* **Cinio Clebran**

The Cinio Clebran lunch sessions are an opportunity for learners to come together in an informal and comfortable setting. Cinio Clebran will be held every other Wednesday for an hour over lunch virtually on Teams. It was decided to create PowerPoint

presentations that had key vocabulary and phrases in Welsh with their translations to support learners and encourage them to participate in the Cinio Clebran discussions. Hearing learners chatting and contributing naturally is great and shows that the team is succeeding in encouraging staff to use their Welsh in informal situations.

* **Betsi Cadwaladr Learners Facebook Group**

‘Betsi Welsh Learners Friends’ is a private Facebook group for staff. The closed group is used to publicise events, courses and activities; the group also allows learners to interact, discuss and ask questions in an informal environment.

* **Tutor’s YouTube Page**

As part of the ‘Welsh Language Week’ campaign in October 2021, it was decided that the Tutor would create a Welsh Phrase of the Week video. The Tutor creates a PowerPoint presentation and then uses the ScreenCastify app to record themselves pronouncing the vocabulary on the slides. This ensures that learners can hear the correct pronunciation as well as visually seeing the text on the screen.

After editing the video, it is shared on the Tutor’s YouTube page. The link from the YouTube page can then be shared through the Welsh Learners Facebook page and uploaded to the new intranet pages as well. A link to the video is shared weekly through the Chair and Chief Executive’s message to all users on a Friday afternoon. This ensures that all health board staff see the video and can learn a new Welsh phrase every week.

* **Learners of the Month**

Following the success of the Learner of the Year competition in March 2022, it was decided to celebrate and highlight all learners and to nominate a Learner of the Month each month. The scheme is also an opportunity for the health board to appreciate the dedication and efforts of its staff who are learning Welsh.

**Results to date**

Providing staff with the opportunity to develop their Welsh language skills is an organisational need, therefore, we had to ensure that the Study Leave Policy provided staff with the opportunity to attend Welsh sessions without obstacles.

‘Staff must have time to attend Welsh Language Training as outlined in section 1.2 of the WP52 Study Leave Policy where it states:

*‘It should be noted that all applications from individuals requesting study leave to undertake Welsh language training will be considered compulsory and therefore fully supported by the line manager’.*

After completing any Welsh learning course, the tutor circulates an anonymous feedback form, which allows learners to report back on their experiences of learning with the tutor. So far the feedback has been positive and affirmative:

* “Beth makes the class fun. I enjoy the chats and we laugh a lot. Thanks Beth’’

* “Beth makes the lessons very interesting and helps to give one confidence when speaking and trying to use the Welsh language. Beth helps me prepare for the TSI exam.’’
* “I really enjoyed the entry level Welsh courses. Beth combines a lovely welcoming personality with a sense of humour and great teaching skills. Beth makes lessons fun and inclusive and makes you feel really good about yourself, very positive lady! Beth is an asset to Betsi Cadwaladr. ”
* “The course is fantastic, I cannot fault the course content or the teaching style. 1 hours a week is ideal with the small homework tasks and the quizlets’’
* “I don’t have many people to practice on so would like to practice more conversational Welsh to consolidate my learning. Beth is very enthusiastic and always happy to explain things in more depth’’

**Evaluating success**

As part of our agreement with ‘Work Welsh’ the centre sets annual targets of numbers of learners to register and complete the different types of courses. We report to the Centre three times a year with an update on our numbers.

We use any feedback from our learners to improve and adapt our teaching resources. Listening to our learners’ feedback is vital to ensure that they make progress, benefit from attending lessons and want to continue to improve their Welsh language skills.

The main success of the training programme is that there are many opportunities for health board staff to learn Welsh, and as a result more staff are more willing to use those Welsh language skills they have with patients and their colleagues. There is much greater awareness and, as a result, more non-Welsh speaking staff are learning Welsh from scratch, and staff realise the importance of serving healthcare bilingually.

Contact details

Organisation: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

E-mail: beth.w.jones@wales.nhs.uk

 Meilyr.emrys@wales.nhs.uk

Contact officer: Beth Wyn Jones / Dr Meilyr Emrys

**The Welsh Language Commissioner’s View**

The Welsh Language Standards Regulations mean that a body who is under a duty must provide opportunities during working hours for its employees to receive basic Welsh language lessons, and for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their

role as managers. They also require the bodies to provide opportunities for employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training, free of charge, in order to develop their language skills, and for employees to be able to improve their Welsh language skills.

In the 2021-22 assurance report, [Welsh as a way of working](https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/media/xxbhiagi/welsh-as-a-way-of-working-wlc-assurance-report-2021-22-1.pdf), the Commissioner stated that organizations needed to improve their commitment to developing the skills of the current workforce in order to improve the levels of organizational compliance with the range of Welsh language standards generally. It is therefore encouraging to see that the health board is actively developing the skills of the current workforce, by identifying staff with language skills but who are not using them to their full potential, or where the confidence of individuals to use their Welsh with others needs to be developed.

Through BCUHB’s Welsh Language Tutor, the Health Board provides its staff with a wide range of opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills, taking into account work needs as well as the needs of the member of staff involved.