



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Readers' panel: facilitating and increasing the use of Welsh language material

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Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board uses a group of volunteers (known as a 'readers' panel') to facilitate and increase the use of Welsh material, such as leaflets for patients. The health board realised that the Welsh language was not always clear when translating text or clinical information because the translation was too literal and the terminology was unfamiliar, and that this presented an obstacle. To prevent this, the Welsh Language Team within the health board implemented a protocol to ensure that Welsh material is understandable to users. One element of the protocol is to ask the opinion of a 'readers' panel'.

The intention of the panel is to read a piece of work that has been translated and answer a short series of questions about the text to assess to what extent is the material understandable. The health board considers that including this element in the process of assessing the quality of texts means that texts that are difficult to read can be identified before they are published, and means that changes can be made to the text in order to ensure that it is used and that it is suitable.

Background

In the past, the health board usually published translations that contained information that was clinical in nature, but there was no quality control element to seek the views of the target audience. This information could include aftercare instructions, instructions about taking medication or advice about how to recover following surgery, among other things. The health board was aware that the accuracy of such texts was crucial because mistakes in the language or in the information could adversely affect the patient's recovery and health. The Welsh Language Team therefore realised that a range of additional factors needed to be considered in order to ensure that the Welsh text was indeed understandable.

By using Cymraeg Clir (i.e. plain Welsh), asking for the opinion of a second translator each time and securing the target audience's opinion of the Welsh version,

the health board realised that it was possible to ensure that the text was suitable for its purpose.

The trigger therefore for stimulating change was an attempt and desire to offer first class services to the Welsh speaking population.

The steps put in place

The health board therefore went about recruiting members through the Mentrau Iaith and local networks, and by using social media. The board then carried out research to see how such panels work elsewhere. They saw that these panels were quite common in England and based on this, the health board prepared material to be used for the panel and the necessary information that members needed.

Before starting to use the panel, the health board set out to identify the whole process, from ensuring quality in a protocol to describing the process of ensuring the safety of clinical texts. The panel is one element among many to ensure the accuracy of clinical translation work.

There is support within the health board for the idea because, in its simplest form, it is a method of positive engagement with patients in order to improve services.

Every time a clinical text reaches the health board, it is translated following the principle that it must be as clear as possible. Then there will be a second check by another translator. Finally, the text will be sent to the panel with a short feedback form to be returned within two weeks. A qualified individual or individuals will then consider whether any further adjustments are necessary.

Results to date

The readers' panel is an important step in the process of ensuring that clinical texts are safe. It is also a good way of promoting good quality Welsh language services in general, and it can highlight any passages in the work that are unclear before they are published.

By explaining that the work is subject to a quality control process that also includes asking for the opinion of the target audience, staff tend to be more confident about the accuracy of the work. This is important because it can overcome the concern that translation will result in 'losing the meaning' which can become an obstacle to ensuring that clinical information is available bilingually.

How can this work for other organisations?

Any organisation can establish a panel of stakeholders for various aspects of its Welsh language services. The health board considers it important to use local

networks in order to attract enough people as it can be difficult to attract and retain members, and increasing the number of members can also be a challenge.

The Commissioner's opinion

One of the principles of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. Ensuring the quality and accuracy of Welsh text is a legal requirement under the Welsh language standards but this in itself does not mean, or ensure that people use the Welsh language. The Commissioner's [2021-22 Assurance Report](#) draws attention to the fact that research shows that more people would be likely to use the Welsh language if organisations improved the way they facilitate and guarantee Welsh language services. It is considered that all organisations have a responsibility not only to comply with statutory duties, but also to contribute more widely to promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language.

It is therefore important that organisations consider and recognise the importance of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language, and take proactive steps to do so. It is considered that asking users' opinions is a method of gathering valuable feedback on Welsh material and services, enabling organisations to identify any obstacles that prevent people from using the Welsh language. By collecting this feedback in a timely manner, organisations can adapt and tackle any obstacles in order to ensure that material or service is completely fit for purpose from the start, and increase the number of people who use the Welsh language.