



Eich cyf/Your ref MA/EM/2833/21

To: Chairs and Chief Executives of Health Boards / Trusts/ Special Health Authorities  
Leaders and Chief Executives of Local Authorities

31 August 2021

Dear All

I am writing to draw your attention to the recent publication of the evaluation of the *More than just words* framework and the next steps in strengthening Welsh language provision in health and social care.

The original framework was launched in 2012 and the follow-on framework, was launched in 2016. In late 2018, Welsh Government commissioned an evaluation of *More than just words*. The aim of the evaluation was to assess how and to what extent the follow-on framework achieved its intended aim to promote and support use of the Welsh language in health, social services and social care in Wales. It also aimed to identify the barriers and facilitators to implementing the follow-on framework's seven key objectives. The final report was published on 31 August and can be seen [here](#).

Language has always been important in health and care because responding to the individual needs of patients / service users always starts with communication. The Welsh Government recognises this by acknowledging that receiving services through the medium of Welsh is a key component of care, especially when discussing sensitive and emotional concerns. The focus of *More than just words* is on strengthening Welsh language provision in health and social care, and providing care that meets the needs of individuals. I know that health and social care professionals across Wales work hard to provide these high quality services every day.

### **Key findings and recommendations:**

The evaluation found that progress has been made towards each of the follow-on framework's seven objectives. However, none of the objectives can yet be considered to be fully met.

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The report indicates that *More than just words* has set a clear strategic direction and raised awareness of the need for a continued increase in the provision of Welsh language services. Key areas of progress identified include:

- an increase in the use of visual markers to identify Welsh speaking staff
- investment in Welsh language higher education courses in health and social care
- an increase in the focus placed on the importance of Welsh language provision and the Active Offer (offering a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it) within higher education and inductions for new staff members.

Key gaps identified include:

- buy in at the middle management or operational planning level
- understanding of how to improve Welsh language service provision, beyond recognising the importance of doing so
- targeting of training to the areas and staff for whom this would make the most difference to Welsh language service provision
- data collection systems and processes to record and share information on the Welsh language needs of services users and Welsh language capacity of the workforce.

The report concludes that there is a continued need for *More than just words*, although its role may need to change to focus on being an enabler. Below is a summary of the report's recommendations:

#### Future role

1. As *More than just words* is now a well-recognised and strong brand, there is a need for Welsh Government to continue to use it and the fundamental principles it represents.
2. The Welsh Government should ensure that *More than just words* evolves from a strategic framework for Welsh language provision into a three to five-year implementation framework that offers practical guidance.
3. The Welsh Government should ensure that *More than just words* takes on the role of an enabler, supporting the sector towards implementing practices that adhere to the Welsh Language Standards.

#### Key actions to address gaps

4. Service providers should document examples of their practices relating to the Welsh language. The Welsh Government should consider establishing a portal to collate these examples and make them widely accessible across the sector. Examples of successful implementation should be further recognised and celebrated.
5. The Welsh Government should continue efforts to win hearts and minds through its focus on the Active Offer and use of service-user focussed examples to illustrate the need for Welsh language provision.
6. Individual health boards and other sector representative bodies should appoint a member of their senior / executive team as a *More than just words* champion.
7. The Welsh Government should place particular emphasis on supporting primary care and any other areas of the sector where the Welsh Language Standards do not currently apply.
8. *More than just words* should guide the sector to gather consistent data relating to the Welsh language needs of service users and support the sector to use service user and workforce data to plan workforce development and service delivery.
9. Senior managers need to adopt a more strategic and targeted approach to Welsh language learning, with a focus on encouraging use of the Welsh language in the workplace, especially for those who can speak Welsh but lack the confidence to do so.
10. Digital Health and Care Wales needs to support the development of IT systems that incorporate bilingualism at the design and development stage.

11. Welsh language officers, champions and other sector representatives need to further promote the importance of Welsh language skills for careers within health and social care.

**Next steps:**

The Welsh Language in Health and Social Care Partnership Board oversees the delivery of *More than just words*. Members of the board have proposed the establishment of a small Task & Finish Group to work up a 5 year work plan for *More than just words* based on the recommendations of the evaluation and other evidence. I agree that this would be a sensible way forward.

The Task & Finish Group will meet on a regular basis starting in September and provide advice to me on the next steps by 5 November. In the meantime I would like you to consider the findings of the evaluation and how to take the agenda of strengthening Welsh language provision forward within your organisation. It is also important that health bodies appoint a board level executive as Welsh language champion if they have not already done so.

The successful implementation of actions relating to strengthening Welsh language provision is dependent on strong leadership at all levels within organisations. As the evaluation has shown, this is particularly relevant at the middle tier level where continued support is likely to be required to encourage an increase in practices that support the delivery of Welsh language services and the Active Offer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

**Eluned Morgan AS/MS**

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services