

Welsh Language

Get it Right - RIGHT SKILLS

updated 2009

The Royal College of Nursing believes that people in Wales should be able to receive NHS care in the Welsh language. The seminal 2000 study Welsh in the Health Service (A. Misell: Welsh Consumer Council) clearly identified how the inability of the service and professionals to communicate in Welsh adversely affected patient care.

The Welsh Assembly Government Integrated Workforce Planning Process Guidance 2008-10 (NLIAH June 2008) is aimed at NHS health organisations. It states that:

“[Workforce] Plans need to demonstrate that sufficient consideration has been given to organisations’ Welsh language schemes and language choice as a factor in healthcare. This is particularly important in relation to services provided for and accessed by the following groups:

- Children and young people
- Older people
- People with learning disabilities
- Users of mental health services”

RCN Wales believes that the Welsh Assembly Government, NHS health organisations and higher education institutions need to work together to plan and provide for a bilingual workforce. The Welsh Assembly Government needs to take steps to ensure that places are made available for pre-registration and post-registration study through the medium of Welsh. These steps should include the use of a Welsh medium funding premium for nursing students in the same way that HEFCW currently provides to the HEI for all other higher education subjects. An initiative has been introduced by the Centre for Welsh Medium Education

whereby students who undertake a significant proportion of their studies through the medium of Welsh or bilingually can claim an additional annual bursary. However nursing students are not currently eligible for this funding.

The excellent work of the NHS Wales Welsh Language Unit must be safeguarded and developed. The Welsh Language in Healthcare Awards promotes and celebrates the achievements of healthcare staff in this area. The Unit (in conjunction with others such as Bangor University) has helped to develop technological lexicons, promoted awards for an increase in Welsh language use and have created and maintained networks of Champions and Contact Points who promote the Welsh language in LHBs and Trusts.

All patients should be able to receive care through the medium of the Welsh language if they so choose, currently the most vulnerable patients are sometimes faced with great difficulties because of the inability of NHS Wales to respond to their needs.



KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- The Welsh Assembly Government should develop the Welsh language provision of health care in NHS Wales.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should monitor the numbers, type and location of NHS staff who can practice professionally in the Welsh language through the inclusion of a specific question on the Electronic Staff Record.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should develop and promote Welsh language pre and post registration training places. These steps should include the use of a Welsh medium funding premium to HEIs for nursing students.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should promote the use of the Welsh language in clinical research to reinforce the appropriate evidence base for practice.