

Freedom of Information Request	FOI 21-105	17 th March 2021
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I'm working on a story about the availability of Welsh language mental health services. The case studies I have interviewed say that more needs to be done to make sure that treatments like counselling are easily accessible in the Welsh language across Wales, after having difficulties getting treatment in their first language through the NHS. They say that they find it easier to express their feelings in Welsh, and that treatment through the medium of Welsh is more beneficial to them, but that they have found it hard to request a Welsh language counsellor because of feeling that they're "being difficult" or "awkward" in requesting one, or have not known where to look for one.

Would it be possible to get a response detailing what provision there is for Welsh language mental health services, which includes the following:

Mental Health Services are delivered in a variety of settings and include in-patient units, community mental health teams, specialist community teams and the Primary Care Mental Health Support Service (PCMHSS). Counsellors are employed only within the PCMHSS and this service also commissions other counselling services.

What percentage of mental health care services are provided in Welsh?

The Health Board does not hold data about services provided in Welsh so we are unable to provide a percentage.

What's the percentage of Welsh speaking mental health care staff employed by the health board?

Currently, 32% of the Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Division have self-certified their Welsh language proficiency as follows:

- 13% are at Entry Level
- 4% are at Foundation Level
- 1% are at Intermediate Level
- 2% are at Higher Level, and
- 2% are at Proficiency Level

It is important to note that this is not a full data set for the Division. Furthermore, these levels are self-certified and therefore do not take into account staff who may have Welsh language skills but have not registered.

We recognise the importance of robustly addressing the current a lack of data around Welsh language capacity within the workforce. There are differing levels of understanding among staff regarding the Welsh language as a component of care and a valuable work skill. We know that there are hidden Welsh language

skills among the workforce and plans are in place to identify these and to support staff to increase their confidence to use their skills.

A welsh speaking Consultant Psychiatrist works in the field of Adult Mental Health and supports the mental health assessment of people in other areas of the Division whose preference is to engage in Welsh.

There remains a shortage of Consultant Psychiatrists and psychiatrists at junior grades across the UK.

Where our services are led by other professionals, and a patient's first or preferred language is Welsh we will endeavour to allocate their care to a Welsh-speaking professional but where the resource does not exist, we would arrange for a translator.

How long are the waiting times for Welsh and English counselling services? Is there a difference in wait times?

The information below relates to counselling across the PCMHSS only.

There is equity of wait regardless of language, and would depend on a variety of factors including, consent and the current waiting list period.

None of the counsellors employed in the Division are able to provide counselling in the Welsh language thus interpreters would be used for someone whose first/preferred language is Welsh. There is one member of staff in the service (Occupational Therapist) who is able to practice in Welsh and would deliver psychological therapies, but is not a counsellor.

The current wait on average is about 8-weeks.

Psychological therapies are also delivered by the secondary care mental health service, for people with more complex needs, but would not be delivered by counsellors. In this setting, therapies are delivered by a range of professionals for example, psychologists, nurses and occupational therapists. Where a patient's first or preferred language is Welsh we will endeavour to allocate their care to a Welsh-speaking professional but where the resource does not exist, we may need to arrange for a translator.

The current average waiting time for psychological therapies (excluding PCMHSS) is 24.7 weeks.

Work underway to strengthen the provision of an 'active offer' of Welsh

In line with Section 44 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, in particular Standard 110, the Health Board has published a 5 year plan setting out –

- (a) The extent to which we are able to offer to carry out a clinical consultation in Welsh;
- (b) The actions we intend to take to increase our ability to offer to carry out a clinical consultation in Welsh;
- (c) A timetable for the actions that we have detailed in (b).

The current revision of our Bilingual Skills Strategy will ensure a pro-active recruitment process that implements a comprehensive Welsh language skills assessment for all vacant posts.

The Health Board recognises the need to focus efforts to actively attract Welsh speakers into critical roles, parallel to the review of profiling of Welsh language skill levels and capacity across the workforce - matching Welsh language capacity available in the workforce with the language needs of service users. This will ensure we are in a better position to comply with the statutory requirements, and improve the quality of care, maintain professional standards and meet the linguistic needs of users. In addition, a Welsh Language Learning & Development Strategy has been drafted as a sub-strategy of the Bilingual Skills Strategy.