

Supporting Welsh Speaking Carers

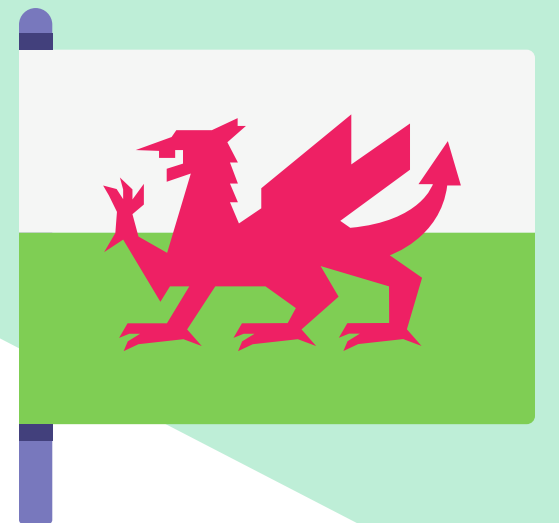
The Findings



Background



My name is Bethan Morris and I work for a charity called tide. Tide is a network throughout the United Kingdom and we are here for carers, and former carers, of people living with dementia. We are campaigning to ensure better recognition of the unique experience of caring for someone living with dementia and thereby getting better support and services for carers



I am interested in supporting Welsh speaking carers. The purpose of this survey is to find out if Welsh speakers living with dementia receive care and support through the medium of Welsh if they need it.



The Welsh Government has given a commitment to be a dementia friendly nation. For Welsh speakers, the Active Offer is used to provide services that meet their language needs as a natural part of their care. In 2018 the Welsh Language Commissioner and Alzheimer's Society Cymru worked on a project looking at the experiences of Welsh speakers of dementia care. There is a general recognition that offering services in Welsh is a clinical need for Welsh speakers with dementia. Although there are examples of good practise the report highlights failures in the care that Welsh speakers receive that can be detrimental to them.

The survey was sent out in both Welsh and English. The survey was shared with people who support, or have supported someone living with dementia in the last five years.



Procedure



The survey was sent out across Wales through the 3rd sector networks, Local Authorities, CADR, Universities, Carers Centres, Women's Institute etc.

34 responses in total

20

North Wales

4

Mid Wales

9

South Wales

1

Anonymous



Key Discoveries

The respondents were asked three basic questions:

- 1 If you have positive experiences of good practice then feel free to share your experiences with us
- 2 The last time I felt that the person I support had not had fair play because he/she was not offered a service through the medium of Welsh was.....Tell me what happened
- 3 If there is anything else you'd like to add please use the comments box below

If you have positive experiences of good practice then feel free to share your experiences with us

Telecare Service Gwynedd, they are fantastic, they always answer in Welsh and can offer comfort and assurance in Welsh.

I would say that a high percentage of the care home staff speak Welsh – this being extremely important to my father, and us as a family. It's essential that we can speak and discuss in our first language.

We've had Welsh speakers phoning us from the Alzheimer's Society.

Mum is in a nursing home and they make sure that a Welsh doctor sees her when the need arises, as they are aware that she responds better in Welsh.

I had an aunty that suffered from dementia and I saw a difference in her response, before her passing, to the care from the Welsh speaking nurses that spoke Welsh with her in the hospital and care home.

Fortunately, we got Welsh speaking carers for mum while she needed help living at home. This was critical as this was the language she felt most comfortable communicating in. After moving to a nursing home, we were fortunate again that a high percentage of the staff were communicating with her in Welsh, and I felt that that was an important factor in her settling there.

I cared for my mum with dementia. Best of luck with this long awaited and important work.

I haven't had any support from any dementia association through the medium of Welsh while caring for my mum who suffers from vascular dementia. Most of the carers from Gwynedd Council, who are caring for my mum, speak Welsh.

The woman's first language was Welsh, but this wasn't important to the other people and they didn't see why it was important to the woman.

Singing in Welsh had a profoundly positive effect on my father.

Our local GP surgery almost always had someone available who could communicate in Welsh. When they did not, they understood the importance for me to translate and allowed time for this. (This was particularly important as deafness also meant that the lip pattern was an essential aid to communication).

Day Care in Welsh is vital for my mother the service we receive is amazing

Working at a day service for Dementia Care being able to communicate with an individual who has Dementia in Welsh helps them settle better, gives the person a feeling of familiarity and reduces anxiety. Feelings matter most in Dementia Care

I think individuals understand that a caring Carer who can engage regardless of their language or background and the service user has a good relationship with them is more important. Language doesn't build a relationship with anyone.

The last time I felt that the person I support had not had fair play because he/she was not offered a service through the medium of Welsh was.....Tell me what happened

In Ysbyty Gwynedd, in January 2020, there wasn't a lot of support through the medium of Welsh.

In Ysbyty Gwynedd, there wasn't any explanation of her condition through the medium of Welsh. I had to explain what the doctor said to her in a more accessible way.

Pre-pandemic I was still working and needed to find agency support for my mum while I was at work - we live together so I was able to care for her the rest of the time. We were not eligible for local authority support so I went to agencies and told them that Welsh language was a priority. I was assured that they had Welsh speakers on their books but none materialised. The pandemic hit just a couple of months into these arrangements so I cancelled the care, finished work, and continue to care for my mum myself

It's not the language that's the problem, as my husband can still speak in English. It's the culture and norms of the Welsh language. When English carers come to care for my husband, they can't discuss topics that relate to Welsh, such as music or television shows and so on.

We could not communicate

About three or four years ago, it was an English speaking Officer from the Memory Team that came to see mum. It wasn't acceptable to say a few words in Welsh and then performing a memory assessment in English. It would be very easy to translate the assessment.

Fortunatey, my mum's English was good when she had a memory test in Alltwen.

At the beginning of March 2020, we had a meeting about dementia with 3 people/patient present, one of them a non-Welsh speaker. Most of the professional workers were bilingual. Most of the meeting was held in English. My husband made a statement about this, saying that he's used to speaking 3-4 languages, but since his memory declined, this was challenging. English was difficult for him and he would have liked more Welsh. He was angry, and that was unexpected.

It's always a non-Welsh speaking carer that supports her, for example, morning/night carers, crossroad employees, day care workers that visit the home for the morning and the nurses of the community. The local authorities in Carmarthenshire do not provide services through the medium of Welsh.

When he was in the Assessment Unit in Bodnant, Llandudno, it was only one nurse who could speak Welsh.

During the periods of sickness in Ysbyty Bestsi Cadwaladr Bangor.

My sister lived with dementia and she had to have 24/7 care in a nursing home in Colwyn Bay, but nothing was offered through the medium of Welsh within the social services or the NHS.

When the hospice staff didn't speak Welsh, they would walk away from her and say, we don't speak Welsh so we don't understand you .

If there is anything else you'd like to add please use the comments box below

I am a part of the Union of Welsh Independents campaign to make our churches dementia friendly.

It's very important to have Welsh speakers working in Health Care services in every part of Wales.

Welsh was my Mother's first language, though English became her main language through most of her adult years due to where she lived and being away from family. As her dementia progressed she began to communicate more in Welsh. This needs to be recognised and acknowledged and support provided by Welsh speakers when possible. With such difficulties with care and support in the current climate, obtaining care is difficult, never mind Welsh speakers. My Mother grew up in rural South Wales but moved to an area in North Wales that was not Welsh speaking. This is then difficult as most care and support and services in the area are provided by non Welsh speaking individuals.

The care that my mum receives through the Gwynedd Council carers is through the medium of Welsh. The direct support for dementia is very rare, not to mention through the medium of Welsh. We had phone calls every 3/6 months in English from England in the past, but we hardly get any calls now. The support for people with dementia in Gwynedd is disappointing and it's very difficult to get any sort of access. Apart from the carers, we have a social worker that speaks Welsh.

It's good that this vital part of the service is being prioritised. I have seen first hand what a huge difference it makes both to well-being and practical aspects of care.

We have staff who speak broken English and still learning however they are so caring and respectful, our service users love them for being who they are. I appreciate some individuals prefer speaking Welsh however with the crisis with staffing people are lucky to have care

My decision was to care for my husband at home, even though I was under a bit of pressure to send him to a care home. With numerous carers coming to the house day and night, it's possible to keep him home. The problem is that it costs over two thousand pounds a week. I can't keep this up for very long. I get about a £100 a week contribution through Direct Payments. Our social worker has retired and she told us that there won't be anyone to replace her. The Marie Curie dementia nurse and the Admiral nurse is trying to get a replacement for us. At the moment, there isn't any practical support nor any financial support for people caring from home.

Family life is fully Welsh, but in the hospital, when given the diagnosis, most of it was in English, but we appreciated that a few nurses spoke Welsh. When a visitor came to the home following the diagnosis, the meeting was held in English. I knew that activities, where Welsh is used, would have to be cancelled, but going for a walk would be easy.

Unfortunately, some of the people that are involved in mum's care belittle the Welsh language and the need for it. Some, whether they speak the language or not, respect her language needs.

It saddens me to understand that Welsh speaking home carers are very rare in South Meirionnydd.

We have experienced it within our family, through caring for mum in her last 2-3 years, how critical it was for her to speak her native language.

I'm a part of Dementia Active Gwynedd and we get exercises on zoom twice a week with some of them, but I don't know them.

I am a nurse, so I am aware that there is a shortage of staff in every area of health and social care. For people with dementia, they should be able to hear certain things, especially in Welsh.

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