



Mabon ap Gwynfor MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

5 July 2023

Dear Mabon,

During Plenary on the 3 May you raised a query regarding the provision of Welsh-medium neurodivergent assessments in North Wales. As neurodivergence policy falls within my portfolio, I would like to respond.

I share your concerns around the need to ensure that neurodivergent assessments are carried out in the individuals' first language, the language of their choice. In a [review of neurodevelopmental services](#) undertaken last year, this was one of the issues identified. The review found that most ND services in Wales struggle to provide an 'active offer' of Welsh, given deficits in Welsh language skills.

However, the report explains that there are wider issues than just the ability to conduct ND assessments through the medium of English and Welsh and the ability to present written information in both languages. The assessments themselves need to be adapted with nuances to meet the cultural experiences of Welsh speakers. The communication issues around autism means that in an assessment the clinician needs to have very good language skills and cultural awareness (e.g. to read body language) and so it is not just a matter of providing Welsh lessons to staff.

Through our Neurodivergence Improvement Programme we want to understand the extent of the issue across the whole of Wales and we are undertaking the following pieces of work:

- We have commissioned an independent evaluation of the Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services. This work will include looking at how local health boards are meeting the requirements of the Code and, if there is a duty (including the Welsh language provision) that is not being met - what are the issues preventing them from achieving this and how they can be overcome.
- We have commissioned the NHS Delivery Unit to work with local health boards to find out how many ND assessments are currently carried out in Welsh.
- We have developed a questionnaire seeking the views on learning and development for staff working within the neurodivergence field. This questionnaire will also help us

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

understand the prevalence of Welsh speakers in this field and their confidence in using the language in their work.

- I have made an additional £12m available to support the Neurodivergence Improvement Programme for neurodevelopmental conditions from 2022 to 2025. £1.4m has already been provided to Regional Partnership Boards to support and enhance existing services. £4.5m is available in this financial year and £6m in the following year.
- We are working on the experiences of Bangor University who are establishing Welsh language assessments for Dementia, to drive forward our work.
- We are also working closely with ThinkSmartbox and Rookwood hospital to ensure Welsh Language communication tools are available across Wales for non-verbal neurodivergent people.

The More Than Just Words initiative complements the implementation of the standards and is set in the context that Cymraeg belongs to us all and should be embedded in health and social care services across Wales so that individuals receive care that meets their language needs without having to ask for it (this is called the Active Offer). More Than Just Words is a long term plan which aims to strengthen the delivery of Welsh language services. Supporting and developing the Welsh language skills of the current and future workforce is a key theme in the new More Than Just Words plan.

I want to re-assure you that we are working hard to achieve improved neurodivergent services for all. Language and care go hand in hand and we want to ensure that Welsh speakers can be treated and cared for safely, with dignity and respect.

Yours sincerely



Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services