

Draft Welsh Language Standards for the health sector laid

These regulations will apply to Local Health Boards, National Health Service Trusts in Wales, Community Health Councils, and the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales, who will have to proactively offer services through the medium of Welsh.

The standards will require health boards to plan their work to improve their offer including more clinical services through the medium of Welsh. They will build on the foundations laid by Mwy na Geiriau..., the Welsh Government's strategic framework for Welsh language services in health, social services and social care which has helped to improve Welsh language services in the sector.

The Minister said:

“It is really important that we increase the responsibility on health boards to provide more services through the medium of Welsh in future. This is particularly important when it comes to elderly patients and very young children who find it more comfortable to communicate in their mother tongue at a time of acute stress.

“We do however have to balance this against the fact that some of the bodies in this sector operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year offering a range of services from routine treatments to open heart surgery, accident and emergency treatment and end-of-life care.

“Mainstreaming Welsh language services into this sector is a huge challenge which will take time. I am confident that the pragmatic approach we have taken in these draft regulations acknowledges these difficulties whilst still moving the process of securing more opportunities for Welsh speakers to engage with the health sector in Welsh going forward.”

In addition to making sure that GP surgeries run by health boards will have to comply with the new standards, discussions will also start with contractor representative bodies to agree Welsh language obligations through their contractual arrangements/terms of service.

The Minister laid the regulations following a visit to Cardiff University's medical school, where she saw a lecture being delivered to 300 students through the medium of Welsh, with simultaneous translation for non Welsh speakers and met first language Welsh speaking students who are studying through their mother tongue.

She said:

“My visit to Cardiff’s medical school was an inspiration. While many of the students were not Welsh speakers, having a lecture delivered through the medium of Welsh demonstrated to them that Welsh is a living language that is part of every day life in Wales and is relevant in all situations. I hope for those who are Welsh speakers it provided them with the confidence to use their Welsh in their future careers.

“If the health sector is to fulfil its obligations under the Welsh language standards encouraging Welsh speakers to use their Welsh in their careers and others to learn Welsh will be vitally important. Initiatives such as the ‘Welsh Language Scholarship and Education Network’ at Cardiff University and the work of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh provide opportunities to empower students and staff to use their Welsh in a clinical environment as part of the NHS’ current and future workforce.”

[EU approval unlocks major funding boost for Carmarthenshire](#)

The Pendine Tourism Attractor Project in Carmarthenshire, will feature a new Sands of Speed state of the art museum dedicated to Pendine’s historic association with Land Speed; an external enhancement and events facility with exhibition esplanade, and a 42 bed hostel.

The developments at Pendine are part of the Welsh Government’s wider EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 13 must see destinations across Wales. The project is designed to address business investment and employment growth within the tourism sector in the regions, and put Wales on the world map as a holiday destination.

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis Thomas said:

“Our aim through the Tourism Attractor Destination programme is to focus efforts and investment on key projects in each region so we have a real impact on Wales’ profile in this globally competitive market. Projects such as this in Pendine will give people compelling reasons to visit Wales and I look forward to plans which I have seen today coming to fruition – this will be a major boost for Carmarthenshire and south west Wales.”

Cllr.Emlyn Dole, Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council, said:

“The Pendine Visitor Attractor Project, under the EU Attractor Destination Fund will support the development and promotion of Carmarthenshire as a distinctive, high quality year round visitor destination and will establish Pendine as a 12 month a year “day and stay” event destination.

Since 2010, Carmarthenshire County Council has been working on a regeneration master-plan to address the physical and commercial decline of the coastal resort of Pendine. Work has been completed to date to include the Pendine Gateway scheme which improved the aesthetics of the main routes into the village, Commercial Property Enhancement Scheme and the creation in 2013 of a new £800k Promenade. In 2017 the £1m Parry Thomas Centre opened comprising 5 commercially let units, public toilets and external showers.”

It is hoped this will deliver an additional economic boost to the regional economy of £3.3m a year.

This announcement follows another boost for the area with a recent announcement on funding for Celtic Routes project, backed by €1.6m of EU funds, aims to encourage visitors to explore new areas of Wales and Ireland on route to their final tourist destination.

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Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales determines an increase in councillors' allowances this year

The Panel has determined an increase of 1.49% to the basic salary for elected members of principal councils to begin to address the erosion of the salary in relation to average earnings. This will take the basic salary to £13,600.

The Panel banded Community and Town councils into three bandings according to the level of income or expenditure. This is to reflect the wide variation in

responsibilities of community and town councils across Wales.

The Panel have determined that the biggest community and town councils must pay £150 per year to every councillor as a contribution towards costs and expenses incurred by the councillor during the year.

They also propose that every community and town council reimburse the costs of care for all members where necessary. These measures are aimed at enabling councillors to effectively fulfil their role.

This final report and the Panel's previous reports and determinations can be viewed [here](#).

[Significant support for tenants' fees ban](#)

Last year, [the Welsh Government consulted on proposals to change the way fees are charged by letting agents, landlords and third parties to tenants in the private rented sector](#), following concerns raised by former Cabinet Secretary for Communities Carl Sargeant.

More than half of those who responded to the consultation, including a significant number of landlords, agreed that unnecessary fees should be banned.

The consultation found that there is a broad range in the level of fees that tenants are charged by agents – fees reported by tenants ranged between £50 and £1,700 just for entering into an agreement.

Key consultation findings include:

- 56% of all respondents agreed with an outright ban on unnecessary fees
- When fees are charged, tenants say that, on average, they are charged £249.47 to begin a tenancy, £108 to renew a tenancy and £142 at the end of a tenancy
- 62% of tenants said that fees have affected their ability to move into a rented property, while 86% say that fees have affected their decision to use an agent
- 61% of landlords did not know what their tenants were charged by their agent.

Rebecca Evans said:

“We received an extremely high number of responses to the consultation and I believe that this reflects the strength of feeling on this issue. Some of the fees tenants currently pay up-

front are eye-watering and are affecting their ability to move into or within the private rented sector.

“I am keen to work closely with tenants, landlords and letting agents to ensure that the costs people face are reasonable, enabling them easier access to private rented accommodation. I am also seeking opportunities to work with private landlords and agents to improve and modernise the sector for everyone involved.

“Private rented accommodation is a growing part of the housing sector in Wales accounting for around 15% of all dwellings, and I want it to be a secure and attractive option.

“I have already announced my intention to bring forward a Bill which bans fees in the private rented sector. The findings from this consultation add to the evidence that action is needed to address the fees currently charged to tenants. I will now finalise these legislative proposals and introduce a Bill to the Assembly later this year.”

More than 680 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation and a summary of those responses are being published today.