High standard of Welsh language in healthcare wins praise

Health workers throughout Wales who are increasing the use of, and in many cases learning, Welsh to improve the delivery of healthcare were praised for helping make it a working language at an awards ceremony today (Thursday, 17 May).

A total of 13,000 health service staff had taken part in Welsh language awareness courses in the last three years, the Welsh Language in Healthcare conference was told.

Conference chairman Mr Meirion Hughes said:

"One of the most important developments I have seen over the last three years has been the introduction of Welsh Language Awareness Training for NHS staff.

"This training is important because patients and service users should increasingly find that language choice is regarded as a natural part of their care, and that they can see that efforts will be made to provide services in the patient’s language.

"So, as well as increasing awareness of the language, the number speaking Welsh is increasing and this can only have a positive effect. It enables the service to care for patients through their language of choice, and helps to make the vulnerable feel more at ease in different surroundings," added Mr Hughes, chairman of Denbighshire Local Health Board.

The scheme, 'Iechyd Da / Good Health', is now also being offered to GPs, Pharmacists, Dentists and Opticians

Welsh learners and innovators were among the people who received awards at the Welsh Language in Healthcare Awards ceremony where the theme was A Working Language.

The annual Awards, now in its fourth year, are organised by the Welsh Language Unit of the Department of Health and Social Services at the Welsh Assembly Government. Dr Richard Greville, Director of The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, the main sponsor of the awards since they started, presented some prizes at the ceremony in Llandudno.

A total of 16 individuals and organisations entries picked up a prize in the eight categories. The competition offers cash prizes amounting to £14,000 which aims to encourage wider use of the Welsh language. The money is re-invested into Welsh language services.

The judges were very pleased with the progress being made by healthcare workers and were particularly happy that so many people were now learning Welsh to provide better choice and an improved services for patients and their families.
The winners were:

**Category 1 Most Successful New Initiative**

**North Wales Winner:** £1,000 - Conwy Local Health Board (Wyn Thomas) - providing funding and time for staff to attend Welsh lessons.

**Mid and West Wales Winner:** £1,000 - West Wales Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust (Amanda Aldridge). Provide help in Welsh for pupils in schools to deal with issues such as stress.

**South East Wales Winner:** £1,000 - Welsh Language Steering Group, Gwent Healthcare Trust (Jill Evans) Introducing Welsh language lessons and use of Welsh in courses and signs

**All-Wales Winner:** £1,000 - West Wales Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust (Amanda Aldridge).

**Category 2 Welsh Learners of the Year**

**Winner learning Welsh for less than two years** - Bev Trinder, Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust - A play specialist who works with children at Nevill Hall Hospital.

**Winner learning Welsh for over two years** - Alyson Lovell, North East Wales NHS Trust - Radiographer who uses Welsh skills to help put patients at ease.

The judges considered that there were two other candidates who deserved special recognition: Canadian Mike Filek, Ceredigion & Mid Wales NHS Trust and Sue Richards-Price, North East Wales NHS Trust.

**Category 3 Innovative Practice in Primary Care**

**Winner:** £1,000 - Pendre Surgery, Clayton Road, Mold (Alison Davies) - Provide a wide range of the information in Welsh including a booklet, website, and links with the Menter Iaith and Transferring Welsh Within Families (TWF).

**Category 4 Bilingual Communication**

**Winner:** £1,000 - Welsh Unit of the North Wales Local Health Boards (Sharon Jones) - for its strategic contribution in assisting and supporting individual surgeries in North Wales to develop websites and other Welsh language services. It now assists around 40 practices in various ways, meaning that a Welsh language service is increasingly available in primary care across North Wales.

**Additional prize:** £500.00 - Wales Centre for Health, Cardiff (Rebecca Firks & Ann-Marie Brackpool) - for its excellent bilingual website 'Nutrition Network for Wales'. This includes all kinds of educational information on healthy eating, and the material is interesting and colourful.

The following are also to be highly commended:
a) Ysbyty Glan Clwyd for its audio-visual e-communication system

b) The National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare for its DVD pack and information leaflet for practitioners, 'Technology and Improving Health'

c) Ysbyty Gwynedd for providing progressive information to patients, which can be used by other providers

d) Cadwgan Surgery, Old Colwyn, for improve bilingual web site

Category 5 Education

Winner: £1,000 - School of Healthcare Sciences, University of Wales, Bangor (Bethan Llwyd Jones) - helping student nurses with problem solving through Welsh.

Category 6 Work with Priority Groups

Children and Young People: Winner: £1,000 - Children's Unit, North West Wales NHS Trust (Carys Ellis) - Panel has increased use of Welsh in children's unit decorations, including bilingual posters. Also provided an artist-in-residence.

Older People: No winner of the £1,000 prize, but £300 was awarded to Canllaw, Carmarthenshire Social Services, Mynydd Mawr Hospital (Huw Dylan Owen) for their work with the local health board and trust to ensure elderly people have a choice of language for services provided in their homes.

People with Mental Health Problems: Winner: £1,000 - Hafal for the quality of the materials and service provided to Welsh speakers.

Additional prize: £500 - Mental Health Department, Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust (Steve Cottrell) - for developing web site that includes Welsh commentary and animation.

People with Learning Disabilities: No winner of the £1,000 top award but £300 was awarded to North Wales Community Dental Service (Marie Smith) for providing service in Welsh.

Category 7 Speech and Language Therapy

Winner: £1,000 - Speech and Language Therapy Department, Bro Morgannwg Trust (Alexis Jones) for provision of therapy through the medium of Welsh where it was previously only available in English.

Category 8 Transferring Welsh Within Families (TWF)

Winner: £1,000 - Abergele-Conwy Health Visitors, Conwy and Denbighshire Trust. The team provided the greatest contribution to the development of the Twf project. As well as circulating TWF’s materials (CDs, leaflets and calendars), the Abergele Health Visitor Team gives one-to-one advice to parents on the benefits of raising their children bilingually. The team meets with
every new parent in the catchment, and as well as communicating Twf’s message it refers parents to cylchoedd meithrin, Welsh-medium education and the provision of Welsh lessons for adults. The team offers a Welsh-medium service to parents and encourages individuals within the team to develop their Welsh language skills.

Notes to Editors:

Speakers at the conference included:

- Barry Harrison, chairman of Flintshire Local Health Board
- Dr Olwen Williams, a Genito-Urinary specialist with North East Wales NHS Trust
- Dr Gareth Llewelyn, neurologist, Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust
- Sally Heaney, the winner of last year's Welsh Learner of the Year award
- Meri Huws, Chair of the Welsh Language Board
- Gwerfyl Roberts, of Bangor University

The conference has been held each year since 2003, and in 2004 the Welsh Language in Healthcare Awards were introduced.

The Welsh Language Unit is a unique section within the Department for Health and Social Services, which aims to improve the provision of Welsh language services by raising the awareness, status and importance of language issues within healthcare in Wales.

The Unit facilitates and encourages the sharing of good practice by Local Health Boards and National Health Service (NHS) Trusts, through national strategic and networking groups. These include the NHS Trust Welsh Language Champions, the Local Health Boards (LHBs) Welsh Language Champions, the Welsh Language Contact Points and the All Wales Task Group for Welsh Language Services.

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