



Mabon ap Gwynfor MS

30 January 2023

Dear Mabon,

During Plenary on the 10 January you raised a query during Business Questions on how the Welsh Government intends to ensure timely Welsh-medium assessments for children who require an autism assessment. As neurodivergence policy falls within my portfolio, I would like to respond.

The use of Welsh language in health and social care is about individual centred care, based on their emotional well-being and need of all individuals and the [More than Just Words Five Year Plan](#) outlines our plan for how we deliver on our vision on providing health and care services through the medium of Welsh.

One of the long term (by 2027) actions of the plan is to “Enable the development of standard Welsh language diagnostic assessments and resources to support Welsh speakers in identified priority areas such as mental health, learning disabilities, and the visually impaired, building on work already underway to develop a nationally available set of standard assessments for Welsh speakers with dementia.” This will be monitored by a written update on progress with actions on a yearly basis.

In July last year, we published the [Statutory Code of Practice for the Delivery of Autism Services in Wales](#) (The Code). The Code and accompanying [guidance](#) sets out what autistic people, their parents and carers can expect from public services in Wales. It is also for local health boards, NHS trusts, local authorities and their partners to ensure they understand their existing responsibilities with regard to providing needs based autism services.

Throughout this Code, when referring to information, assessments and support, it is indicated that these should be offered in both English and Welsh. The local authority, local health board and NHS Trusts must take all reasonable steps to secure and offer provision in Welsh. This means that local health boards, NHS trusts and local authorities must make sure Welsh language services are built into planning and delivery and that Welsh language services are offered to autistic Welsh speakers without them having to request it. This is because some children and people may choose to speak Welsh as their preferred language and this will impact on assessment outcomes undertaken through the medium of English.

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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.

This year we have commissioned an independent evaluation of the Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services. One of the areas this work will look at is how local health boards are meeting the requirements of the Code and, if there is a duty that is not being met - what are the issues preventing them from achieving this and how they can be overcome.

Last year a review was undertaken of the [demand, capacity and design of neurodevelopmental services for children, young people and adults in Wales](#). The aim of the review was to develop recommendations and evidence-informed options for improving services. One of the key issues identified is that most ND services struggle to provide an 'active offer' of Welsh, given deficits in Welsh language skills. The report sets out a number of steps that can be taken to address this issue but does explain 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.

In July last year, I announced that in addition to more than £11.5m already invested to improve autism services over the next three years, I will be making an additional £12m available to support a new national improvement programme for neurodevelopmental conditions to 2025.

The improvement programme will have three main workstreams, to address the recommendations made in the *Demand, Capacity and Design of Neurodevelopmental Services for Children, Young People and Adults in Wales* report and the feedback from neurodivergent families during our engagement events. As part of this work we will be looking at Welsh-medium autism assessments for both children and adults.

I want to re-assure you that we are working hard to achieve an 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