Summary of the Welsh language in Health and Social Services Partnership
Board meeting 9 December 2016

The Welsh Government is committed to strengthening Welsh language services in health and social services, and ensuring the safety, dignity and respect of Welsh speakers is vitally important in the provision of Welsh language services.

The aim of the Government's strategic framework More than just words ....is to focus on the provision of care that meets the needs of the individual and encourages more service providers to recognise that the use of the Welsh language can be a matter of need as well as a matter of choice.

To help with the work of overseeing the implementation of More than just words.... the Cabinet Secretary for health, well-being and sport established a partnership board chaired by Simon Dean, Deputy Chief Executive of NHS Wales and Albert Heaney, Director of Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government

One of the first decisions made by the board was to agree its terms of reference before moving on to a presentation on the progress made with the recommendations by the primary care enquiry of the Welsh language Commissioner. It was noted that good progress was being made on 33 of the recommendations and that 20 had already been completed. There was also a discussion about the 64 clusters in primary care, and their need to support the Welsh language agenda and to raise awareness was noted.

To follow an update was given on the progress made on the action points identified in More than words....It was highlighted that some progress has been made but that certain challenges exists as well. One of those challenges is the lack of computer systems to record the language preference of individuals, and this affects the health and social service sectors alike.

The group then went on to discuss the engagement and communication plan for More than just words.... The proposed plans to create a health hub at the National Eisteddfod in Anglesey 2017 were outlined. Members of the Welsh language unit will meet with stakeholders to discuss the engagement plan further.

The Welsh language standards for the health sector and, in particular, the feedback on the consultation responses and the next steps were discussed. It was noted that the Chief Executives of the health boards were very supportive but that they recognised that complying with the standards would be challenging.

To conclude the meeting Dona Lewis and Helen Prosser from the Welsh National Learning Centre presented to the group about the proposed ‘Work Welsh’ courses. The Welsh Government will invest significantly to develop the Welsh language skills of the Welsh workforce and it was agreed that it was important that the health and social service sectors should take advantage of this opportunity. The ‘Work Welsh’ courses will begin early in 2017.
The group will next meet on the 7th of March, 2017.