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Welsh Language, Identity & Probation Practice: The Context For Change

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Welsh language, identity and probation practice: The context for change

Abstract This article draws upon the historical context of the oppression of the Welsh language within the UK, makes links with recent incidents in the public domain, and research on the experiences of Welsh speaking probation staff. The authors argue that linguistically sensitive practice is necessary, not just on the basis of equal opportunities, but also to effectively engage with offenders and protect the public. They then set out the reasons why the National Probation Service (and indeed the wider criminal justice system) must develop a fully bilingual service in Wales. Nine key principles are proposed to bring about a change in policy and practice.

Introduction

The Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000 created a single National Probation Service (NPS) for England and Wales. The Act amalgamated the fifty-two separate services into one national service with forty-two geographical areas administered centrally from the National Probation Directorate in London. This centralisation of government control was in contrast with other moves to devolve power, such as in the creation of a Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Welsh Assembly. It was justified on the grounds that it ensured the probation service had a strong, unified voice within the Home Office and was in a better position to work alongside the prison service and the police. This centralised co-ordination of the criminal justice system arguably placed the Home Office in a better position to fulfil Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which requires the Home Secretary to monitor and tackle unfair discrimination (e.g. on the grounds of race, class or gender).

This article argues, however, that the creation of a single National Probation Service (NPS), representing the two nations of Wales and England, has further marginalised the effectiveness of the probation service in Wales by paying insufficient attention to the linguistic needs of Welsh speakers. The article begins with a historically informed analysis of the position and status of the Welsh language in Wales. Drawing upon qualitative research on the experiences of Welsh speaking probation staff working in Wales, it then examines the nature of bilingualism and the way language influences communication and identity. It is then argued that bilingual probation practice is essential to the delivery of effective practice in Wales and that the existing provision is inadequate and discriminatory.

The oppression of the Welsh language

There is a general assumption in the UK that the first language in Wales is English. Many regard the Welsh language as the domain of a small minority of older people or nationalist extremists. When Bellin (1992) questioned people in south-east England, he found that the majority thought that the Welsh language was a little used quaint relic of a bygone age in Wales that would soon die out. The marginalisation and 'otherness' of the Welsh language within the UK has its roots in history – the word 'Welsh' is a derivative of the Anglo-Saxon term 'waelas' meaning 'foreigners' or 'strangers'. Personal experience of one of the authors who worked for the NPS in England while living in Wales also supports this view, with many English colleagues being somewhat bewildered to learn that he speaks Welsh at home or out with friends. However, figures from the 1991 and 2001 Census demonstrate that the Welsh language is an integral feature of Wales. According to the 2001 survey, one in five people in

Wales describe themselves as being able to speak Welsh. In some areas the figure is significantly higher – for example, in Ceredigion one in two people are Welsh speakers. The 2001 Census shows a clear increase over the previous ten years in the number of Welsh speakers, up from 18.5% of the population in 1991 to 20.5%. Taking into account population growth, there has been a 17% increase in the number of Welsh speakers, from 508,098 in 1991 to 595,115 in 2001. While it is encouraging that the Welsh language is thriving, these figures should not obscure the fact that for most of the twentieth century, it has been a language under threat.

This threat to the language, combined with general ignorance regarding the extent and position of Welsh, has its roots in the institutionalised marginalisation, invisibilisation and denigration of the Welsh language. Early British history indicates that a form of Welsh (Brythonic) was once the main language. By the 6th century AD, speakers of Brythonic had been corralled into the furthest corners of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons and later by Norman invaders from mainland Europe. Within the territory now called Wales, during the ensuing centuries of relative isolation from other Celtic nations, the Brythonic language evolved into the modern Welsh language. Despite the commonality of language and the Welsh unity engendered by the physical divide of Offa's Dyke, there were only ever short periods of unity of Welsh tribes and kingdoms in Wales. In 1282 Prince Llewelyn (Llywelyn ein lliw olaf) the last of the Welsh kings (interestingly Welsh kings were always referred to as 'princes'), was killed and most of Wales was ceded to Edward 1st of England. In 1536 and 1542 Henry VIII enacted the notorious 'Acts of Union' that decreed that Wales would be incorporated within England and that English was to become the only officially recognised language in Wales. Anyone speaking Welsh was prevented from holding public office, and from the sixteenth century onwards it became a language without official status, kept alive by Welsh language communities and chapels where the Bible was available in Welsh.

The process of industrialisation in the 19th century had a significant impact on Wales. The requirements for a more mobile workforce and specifically the influx of monoglot English speakers into the Welsh Klondike – that is the coal mining areas of South Wales – and the later influx of settlers and tourists into North Wales, had a significant effect on the cultural and linguistic landscape of the country. The colonisation and conversion of 'others' locally (Ireland, Wales and Scotland) and globally (India and Africa in particular), to the English language and the English way of life was an integral part of the Commonwealth identity in the nineteenth century. Although the anglicisation of Wales was pursued largely, though not totally, without physical violence, this should not obscure the subtle oppressive and destructive impact of the imperialist 'war' that was waged to rid Wales from the perceived limitations of Welsh language and culture. The damning 'Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales' (1847) known as the 'betrayal of the blue books', is illuminating:

> The Welsh Language is a vast drawback to Wales and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of its people. It is not easy to over-estimate its evil effects. (p. 66)

Not surprisingly, the 1870 Education Act made no provision for the teaching of Welsh in Wales. In some Welsh schools children caught in school speaking Welsh were required to wear a piece of wood with 'Welsh Not' inscribed upon it. The child left wearing at the end of the day would be punished, thereby ensuring the dominance of English while also creating an incentive for children to inform on each other to avoid punishment. Given that Wales was no longer an official language, employers such as the London and Northwest Railway Company operating in Wales found justification for their policies of refusing to hire Welsh speaking staff. There was then, little benefit attached to learning and using the Welsh language, and it became associated with immorality, barbarism and degradation. By the early twentieth century this hostile climate to the language not surprisingly resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Welsh speakers. The 1911 Census figures indicated that 43.5% of the population spoke Welsh, but by 1991 this figure had dropped significantly to 18.5%.

In 1991, Dafydd Iwan, a popular Welsh singer wrote a song that became something of an anthem for Welsh speakers called 'da ni yma o hyd' (We Are Still Here). The song celebrates the fact that despite the attack and lack of official status, the Welsh language had survived through the centuries. However, it was not until the Welsh Language Act 1967 that any

government was persuaded to legislate in any meaningful way to give equal status to the Welsh language within Wales. The 1967 Act followed the publication at the United Nations of the International Protocol on Civil and Political Rights. Article 27 stated:

> In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, these minorities must not be denied the right, in common with other members of their group, to enjoy their culture, preach and practice their religion and speak in their own language.

Despite the UN protocol it was not until the Welsh Language Act 1993 that the Welsh language bar of the 16th century 'Acts of Union' was properly repealed and the Welsh language was formally given equal status to the English language. The Act placed some requirements on public bodies to fulfil this commitment, but the private and voluntary sectors were exempt. A clause in the Act also stated that the provision of Welsh language resources was only necessary as far as this was 'appropriate under the circumstances and is reasonably practicable' (section 5 (2)). Whilst it could be argued that Welsh speakers are now better supported to conduct their affairs through the medium of Welsh, and an increasing number of agencies now have Welsh language policies, too often the Welsh language provision is patchy, tokenistic and residual. This is reflected in the provision made for Welsh language speakers by the probation service and will be explored later.

The dominance and oppression of the English culture has become an institutionalised problem. In 1997 the writer A.A. Gill commented in the Sunday Times

> We all know the Welsh are loquacious dissemblers, immoral liars, stunted, bigoted, dark, ugly, pugnacious little trolls. (*Sunday Times*, 14.9.1997)

In 2000 Jeremy Clarkson microwaved a map of Wales on his televised talk show 'Clarkson', arguing the country and its people were backward and of no value (BBC2, 26th and 29th October 2000). In 2000 Polly Toynbee described Welsh as 'that useless language' (Radio Times 23-29 September, 1995) and then had her reporter of the Year (emeritus) status confirmed. In 2001 Ann Robinson referring to the Welsh people asked 'What are they for?', before proceeding to question the nature and purpose of the Welsh language (BBC2, 'Room 101', 5 March 2001). It is revealing that such abuse of the Welsh culture, language and identity attracted little public outrage or censure. These stereotypical comments provide contemporary outward expression to the institutionalised oppressive ideologies that have been part of the systematic demise of the Welsh language, culture and identity.

In twenty-first century Wales, although Welsh language has equal status, it is not unusual to have Welsh language cheques returned from Welsh Banks with instructions to 'translate'. When approaching Welsh agencies in the Welsh language it is not unusual to be told to 'speak English'. Most Welsh agencies write to people in English, unless a Welsh language service is specifically requested. These realities stem in part from the continued dominant belief by the UK monolingual majority of the inherent superiority of the English language. The lack of provision is often explained on the grounds that they have no Welsh language-speaking members of staff available, or no money available to translate materials into the Welsh language. The absence of such resources does not arise simply by default, but it arises from strategic decisions not to deploy finance into translating facilities and Welsh language resources, and from decisions not to require staff to be able to speak Welsh. In these circumstances the inaction is not passive or impartial; it actively perpetuates the discrimination against first language Welsh speakers.

The second reason why provision of Welsh language services, resources and information is patchy is the failure of the monolingual majority to appreciate the complexity of bilingualism. Despite the fact that bilingualism is the world norm (70% of the world's population are bilingual), most European travellers will know that the United Kingdom, and England in particular, has a poor history of promoting other languages amongst its population. It is estimated that between 95% and 98% of the population of the United Kingdom is monolingual in English (www.britishcouncil.org). As a result the complex nature and intricacies of bilingualism in Wales may easily be overlooked or misunderstood. It is rare to find a monoglot Welsh speaking adult in Wales. The Welsh speaking population is generally able to speak both Welsh and English. There is a danger then of disregarding the needs of first language

Welsh speakers based on the dismissive assumption that 'They all speak English anyway' (Davies, 1994).

The complexities of bilingualism

It needs to be recognised that bilingual ability in Wales varies greatly. The ambilingual person, that is a person who shows equal competence in two languages, is relatively rare. Bilingual speakers tend to have greater ability and comfort in one language (Davies 1994). For most first language Welsh speakers the greater ability will be in the Welsh language. For some however, the greater ability may now be in the English language. Between these two extremes are a wide range of people whose preferred language will differ depending on the medium of communication; written or spoken word. It may also be influenced by the environment, home, school, work, court, and neighbourhood. This latter group might describe themselves as having a general preference for one language but their capacity to use a language comfortably and competently may vary. They may have greater verbal ability in one language but written ability in another. They might describe themselves as more eloquent speaking in public in one language, but more able in private in another language. It cannot be assumed that just because a bilingual person has ability in a language that they are automatically able to engage on an equal footing with other speakers of that language in every, or indeed any, particular communication medium or domain.

These preferences partly arise from the historical attempts to exclude the Welsh language from public domain and the development of the language as an informal means of communication, rather than as a written form of communication. It also stems from the continuing lack of opportunities to use Welsh in formal administrative matters. The derision of the Welsh language in the UK and the difficulty in being 'accommodated' in Wales is particularly inhibiting and has been a successful deterrent ultimately making most Welsh speakers feel uncomfortable using their own language in formal public arenas.

Being bilingual is not just about having different linguistic abilities in two languages. It involves having a particular identity shaped by the very languages that are spoken. Studies in the field of linguistics (Whorf, 1956) have shown that the structure of particular languages influences the ways that speakers of a language know themselves and the way they understand the world around them. Crystal (1987) estimates there are between 3,000 and 10,000 languages in use in the world at present. He notes that the differences between them are not arbitrary or unimportant. The way different languages are constructed represent different meanings and conceptualisations of reality. Languages have embedded within them particular values, beliefs and ideas that reflect the social, economic, political and religious contexts in which the language has developed. Each language therefore has its own unique characteristics - what the Germans would call Sprachgefuhl or 'speech feeling', which directs its speakers towards a particular way of thinking about the world and their place within it. Each language shapes a particular identity for its speaker. Davies (1994) illustrates this point by quoting the experience of the writer John Barnie who learnt Danish

> I had the common experience that speaking another language alters the 'I' that is being expressed. I had not realised before that what you are is largely formed by what you speak. (Davies, 1994, p.3)

The meanings and worldview embodied within the Welsh language share many similarities to those within the English language by virtue of the two languages sharing the same westernised history and Judaeo-Christian philosophical foundations. The social, economic and political history of the Welsh language however, is generally one of exploitation, marginalisation and oppression. Lynn and Adlam (1998) state that there is a negative internal psychological state based on past experiences that has been passed through belief systems from one generation to the next. This has created a particular identity for Welsh speakers involving a strong sense of informal identification with each other based on the experience of shared oppression. While Welsh speakers have an affinity and many shared experience, it is important they are not seen as a homogenous group. A person's identity will also be shaped by many different factors as distinct from Welsh language alone, for example, issues of class,

race, sexuality, geographical location, gender and religious affiliation. For some people these factors may be more important than linguistic identity.

The probation service for England *and* Wales

Understanding, appreciating and responding to the linguistic needs and experiences of Welsh speakers in Wales is more than an issue of equal opportunities. Agencies operating in Wales with people in need or people posing a risk to others must have an understanding of Welsh language issues if they are to effectively engage and assess offenders.

The National Probation Service for England and Wales must be concerned to address bilingual service delivery as an urgent dimension of responding to diversity, and as a key mechanism for delivering the effective practice agenda with Welsh speakers in Wales. A core principle in effective practice is the use of linguistic communication between Probation Officer and offender. This is the basis of any successful 'therapeutic relationship'. Effectiveness will depend in a large part, to the language used, and a shared grasp of the meaning and understanding of that language is crucial. If opportunities are not provided for individuals to make genuine choices about the language they use, they will be disadvantaged relative to others and excluded from full participation in service provision. People who are required to express themselves in their second language are often prevented from expressing themselves fully. Many offenders don't find it easy to articulate their thoughts and feelings in any event, but a first language Welsh speaking offender may struggle further if they are forced to operate in their second language. Communicating effectively in a second language is especially acute when a person is feeling angry, confused, scared or ashamed of himself or herself. Such emotions arise routinely as part of probation practice. People using their second language will tend to use less complex words to describe more complex ideas related to thoughts and emotions. This leads to a consequent loss of cognitive and emotional complexity and increases the chances of being misunderstood, which can lead to anger, frustration and resentment. Clearly this raises serious concerns regarding accurate and appropriate assessment and intervention with offenders. One Welsh language speaker in a health care setting expressed the issue this way:

> Dwi'n gallu mynegu fy hunan yn well yn y Gymraeg na'r Saesneg-gallu dweud yn union sut dwi'n teimlo (I can express myself far better in Welsh than in English - I can explain exactly how I'm feeling) (Roberts, 1996, p. 40)

Davies (1994) offers a further example of what a service user who prefers to speak Welsh would be thinking in a situation where they were being required to speak English:

> Dyw'r geiriau yma ddim yn swnio'n iawn yn Saesneg. Alla i ddim a dweud beth rydw i eisiau ei ddweud. Dydw i ddim yn gallu ffeindio'r gair iawn yn Saesneg. Dydw i ddim yn teimlo'n gartrefol (These words don't sound right in English. I can't say what I want to say. I can't find the right word in English. I don't feel at home (Davies, 1994, p. 3)

Operating in a second language not only impairs the quality of communication but there can also be a loss of identity. First language Welsh speaking offenders who have to explain their personal lives to a probation officer in their second language may feel that their sense of identity and confidence is being undermined. It could be argued that forcing Welsh speaking offenders to engage with the probation service and wider criminal justice system through the medium of English is an unacceptable oppression of their identity as Welsh people in Wales. It is difficult to conceive that such a requirement would be 'pro-social', yet pro-social modelling has been shown to be crucial in service engagement with offenders (Trotter, 1990).

Language in effective practice

Cognitive behavioural approaches to addressing offending behaviour are heavily dependent on the careful and appropriate use of language. The core premise is that offending behaviour is the result of interplay between cognition and behaviour. One approach in cognitive

behavioural interventions with offenders has taken as its focus the content of thoughts and specifically how the cognitions employed by offenders support offending behaviour. Ellis (1973) and Beck (1976) were amongst the first to maintain that some degree of cognitive appraisal must precede all emotional experience and behaviour. In their approach, the content of cognitions – the thoughts people have – become the primary focus for intervention. Whilst connections between thoughts and language are complex, the idea that thoughts and language are linked in an important way is well established (Whorf, 1956). Meichenbaum (1977) has discussed at some length how actions are often guided by 'self-instructional talking'. The ability to access and analyse, and consider alternatives to the self instructional talk that underpins offending behaviour requires considerable skills to access the offender's primary language and language of thought. There is a real risk that the language used in self instructional talk could lose accuracy, context and meaning if it is subject to translation. A probation officer who is unable to engage with the offender in the language that they think and speak, is likely to be less effective in engendering cognitive change.

Another approach to cognitive behavioural work has focussed not so much on the content of thought, as the process involved in thinking. Typically offenders are thought to have maladaptive or underdeveloped processes for problem solving, critical thinking, lateral thinking and/or a tendency towards a rigidity of thinking that becomes the focus for intervention. Research (Duncan and De Avila, 1979) suggests that the processing style of bilingual speakers is different from that of monolingual individuals. Bilingual people have been shown to have different processes for sorting, remembering, transforming and using information. It is suggested that differences occur because people who are bilingual have more than one word or association for an idea or object, leading to different pathways of cognitive processing (Baker and Jones, 1998). This raises doubts about the validity and propriety of monolingual speakers being able to properly deliver a cognitive processing model to a bilingual audience.

Linguistically sensitive practice

Frameworks for delivering linguistically sensitive services in Wales have been explored and advocated. Across Wales, probation areas assert that their practices are linguistically sensitive on the basis that offenders are offered a choice at the first point of contact as to their preferred language, and relevant materials are available in a bilingual format. Superficially this provision seems reasonable and consistent with the framework for linguistically sensitive practice advocated by Davies (1994). This framework Davies (1994, p. 60) asserts five key principles for anti-oppressive practice in Wales:

1. A service user has the right to choose which language to use with a worker;
2. Language is more than a means of communication: it is an essential part of a person's identity;
3. People are able to express themselves more effectively and comfortably in their language of choice;
4. Good practice means offering users real language choice;
5. A comprehensive and quality service in Wales means a bilingual service.

In order to explore this issue further and to clarify the extent to which bilingual provision and language choice is a practical reality, a small pilot study was conducted which sought the opinions and experiences of all known Welsh speaking trainee probation staff from two probation areas in Wales. Ten trainees responded to the invitation and commented on Welsh language provision. From this initial study it appears to be standard practice for offenders to be asked in court upon adjournment for a PSR, or in the first week of supervision, whether they preferred to converse in Welsh. However, Adlam and Lynn (1998) have noted how Welsh Language speakers are reluctant to ask for a service in the medium of Welsh when the choice is offered to them in English, for fear of being perceived as demanding, offensive or awkward. This is easy to understand given their history and wider contemporary social

discourses about language. The choice is offered in the social and political context of the language being perceived as inferior and largely insignificant in Wales. It is easy then for Welsh speakers to feel a nuisance to the dominant majority when requesting services in the Welsh language. Requesting Welsh language provision involves the Welsh-speaking offender having to embrace an identity that they are otherwise under constant pressure to relinquish. It requires offenders who are in a vulnerable position, whose self esteem may already be low, and who know their behaviour is under assessment, to risk the possibility of prejudice and discriminatory treatment which they will most likely have already experienced elsewhere. From the pilot study one person commented:

> Y gwirionedd yw y bod y cwestiwn 'pa iaith hoffech gael eich gwasanaeth'yn cael ei ofyn unwaith gan sais yn y llys (sic) ar ol i'r troseddwr fod yn y doc yn siarad saesneg. Mae'r cwestiwn ar ffurflen saesneg. Waeth iddyn nhw ddweud- da chi ddim isio gwasanaeth cymraeg nac ydach? ('What language do you prefer?' is usually one question on an English language form that is usually asked of offenders once in court by an English speaker as they leave the dock having usually been forced to speak English in court. They may as well say 'you don't want a Welsh language service do you?')

The single one-off question 'in what language would you prefer your service?' is further rendered inadequate by its failure to recognise the complexity of bilingualism. As noted previously, language ability can vary according to medium of communication and domain. A distinction needs to be made between the informal conversation in which the question is mostly asked, and the more advanced language competence that will be required to discuss thoughts, feelings and actions. An offender at the start of supervision is in no position to be aware of the range of communication mediums or domains wherein they may be called upon to use their chosen language. Whilst an offender may be comfortable using their second language to pass details to staff about themselves, they may be very much less comfortable having to engage in their second language in a groupwork encounter or in any in-depth cognitive and emotional analysis of their offending. One response highlighted this issue:

> Rwyn dod ar draws llawer o droseddwyr sydd wedi cael eu trosglwyddo i mi sydd well ganddynt siarad Cymraeg. Pan rwyn gofyn pan oeddant wedi mynegu blaenoriath am siardwr saesneg maent yn ymateb .Ges i gynnig pa iaith ond dwedais i saesneg- doeddwn i ddim yn disgwyl yna gorfod siarad saesneg trwy'r adeg. (I have had lots of offenders transferred to me who preferred to speak Welsh with me. When I ask them why they had [originally] said they preferred to speak English, they say they hadn't known that it meant they would have to speak English all the time.)

It is not uncommon to hear individuals within the probation service in Wales commenting that they have worked in Wales for years and never had need for a Welsh-speaking service. This is hardly surprising in the current climate when choice is not presented positively. The process of choice must be conducted in a manner that is empowering – one that positively affirms, respects and encourages the use of Welsh language. The way language choice is offered must recognise and take into account the wider social and historical discourses that have influenced language ability and language choice in Wales, and the relatively powerless position of offenders in the criminal justice system.

Welsh language needs to become incorporated into everyday probation practice throughout Wales and have the same 'taken for granted' status as the English language. It could then be integrated within all probation activities and would reflect the community it serves. Bilingual provision could then become a recurrent feature of all policy and practices. This would require there to be significant proportions of probation staff in every office in Wales able to speak the Welsh language. This does not appear to be currently the case as three people in the study commented:

> Maen't yn gofyn i droseddwyr nodi eu blaenioriaethau iaith, ond fi yw'r unig berson yn y rhan yma o'r sir sy'n siarad Cymraeg. (They keep asking offenders in which language they prefer to have their services but I am the only Welsh speaking member of staff this side of the county.)

> Mae gennom ni staff sy'n siaradwyr Cymraeg, ond prin iawn yw y niferoedd er fy mod i'n gweithio mewn ardal a chymuned Cymreag ei iaith. (There are Welsh speaking staff but even though I work in a predominantly Welsh speaking community, their numbers are very low.)

> Yn anaml iawn mae siaradwr cymraeg ar gael yn y llys. Gan amlaf rhaid i siaradwyr cymraeg gerdded y dau filltir i'r swyddfa i weld siaradwr cymraeg. (In my area there is rarely a Welsh speaking member of staff at court. If someone wants to speak to a Welsh speaker they have to walk two miles to the office.)

To have sufficient and representative numbers (2001 Census Figures estimate 20.5%) of Welsh language speaking staff in the probation service, more Welsh speakers will need to be encouraged to join the profession (assuming these qualitative experiences reflect the wider experiences across Wales). Since the creation of the DipPS qualification and the Wales Probation Training Consortium in 1997 there has been no provision for trainee probation officers (TPOs) in Wales to undertake their academic study through the medium of Welsh. It was not until 2001 when the University of Wales NEWI, Wrecsam (which only covers a third of the Wales TPOs) became involved, that modules and tutorial support were made available through the medium of Welsh. This lack of a DipPS Welsh language route not only publicly reflects the unacceptable secondary status of Welsh in Wales, but arguably it deters first language Welsh speakers from pursuing a career in the probation service. Many younger first language Welsh speakers who have successfully completed their education to 'A' levels studying through the medium of Welsh will be reluctant to continue to higher education if they are forced to study their course entirely in a second language. One person recalling her experience of the DipPS in Wales commented:

> Roedd darpariaeth ar gyfer y iaith cymraeg yn warthus- doedd yr un llaw ddeunydd na adnodd iw gael yn y Gymraeg. Cafodd materion Cymraeg ddim llawer o sylw o gwbl. (The provision of Welsh language resources was lamentable. Not one handout or Welsh language resource was used - the Welsh language barely got a mention on the course.)

If in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 the Welsh language had equal status, all resources used in probation practice should be bilingual and sensitive to the Welsh context. However, such resources are rare. Not one of the ten Welsh speaking trainees involved in this pilot study could identify an occasion where they had been encouraged to make contributions in meetings in the Welsh language or when minutes of meetings they had attended had been produced in their first language (Welsh). All commented that NPS policy documents and materials are distributed in English only, even though the Service covers England and Wales. Encouragingly the Home Office website has made a number of web pages and publications available in Welsh, though this commitment is not matched by the NPS website. Even the NPS Wales Area web pages are entirely in English. Ironically, and perhaps significantly, the Probation Diversity Bulletin that seeks to recognise and promote diversity and cultural sensitivity across the Service, is not available in Welsh.

The National Probation Service for England and Wales presents as a monolingual organisation and at present there appears limited commitment to Welsh speakers or the Welsh language. One person commented:

> Hyd y gwn i, does dim deunydd Cymraeg ar gael-dim byd ar gyfer adroddiadau cyn-ddedfrydu neu deunydd i weithio ar ymddygiad troseddol. Rhaid i mi gwblhau ffurfleni oruwchwiliaeth yn Saesneg gyda siaradwyr cymraeg. Gwarthus. (As far as I know there are no Welsh speaking materials around - no pre-sentence report templates or exercises from offending behaviour courses. I have to fill English language supervision forms with my Welsh speaking clients. Shameful.)

Another stated:

> Mae'r sefyllfa yn codi siom arnai. Da' ni'n dweud ein bod yn cynnig gwasanaeth dwyieithog ond ar y llaw arall does dim deunydd ar gael iw defnyddio ac mae cael cyfieithiad yn cymryd hydoedd. Gan amlef mae'r troseddwr yn rhoi fyny ac derbyn deunydd saesneg. (It actually gets very embarrassing. On the one hand offenders are told they can have their service in Welsh. On the other there is no material available to be used except in English and to get something translated you have to wait ages. Mostly offenders give up and take it in English.)

An element of probation service provision that has recently attracted heavy investment and commitment is accredited programmes. An increasing number of such programmes are being accredited by the NPS and rolled out for nationwide adoption. Whilst previously the some

areas have run occasional Welsh language offending behaviour groups, since accreditation was introduced it appears that not one accredited programme has been run through the medium of Welsh. At the time of writing the existing accredited programmes are only available in English.

Conclusion

The equal status of the Welsh and English languages officially recognised in Wales should be reflected by the NPS operating in Wales. An acceptance of the bilingual context of Wales has to result in much more than an intention or sentiment to pay more attention to Welsh language, it should result in robust policy that produces pro-active strategies that in practice will make equal opportunities a reality for Welsh speaking NPS staff and Welsh speaking offenders. The issue cannot be understood simply as an important matter of equality. Without proper provision and engagement through the medium of Welsh with Welsh speaking offenders the NPS in Wales will be seriously undermined in their ability to manage and confront offending behaviour. Effective communication between the NPS and the offender is crucial to assess risk. Without a fully bilingual service the Service will struggle to accurately assess, engage and reduce offending behaviour.

Based upon an adaptation of Davies' (1994) key principles for anti-oppressive practice in Wales nine principles are proposed for probation policy and practice in order to redress the marginalisation of Welsh in Wales:

i. Language is more than a means of communication: it is an essential part of an offender's culture and identity.

ii. Offenders are able to express themselves more effectively and comfortably, and engage in offence-focused work more successfully if they are able to communicate in their first language.

iii. All offenders in Wales have the right to engage with the probation service through the medium of Welsh.

iv. All first language Welsh speaking offenders should be allocated to a Welsh speaking staff member, unless an alternative is preferred.

v. A comprehensive and quality service in NPS Wales must involve the production of all written materials in Welsh, as well as English.

vi. All NPS staff in Wales should have a basic ability in the Welsh language and be provided with opportunities to further develop their Welsh language skills.

vii. All education/training for probation staff including the Higher Certificate in Community Justice, the DipPS and in-service courses should be fully bilingual.

viii. Public media (such as video, newspapers, leaflets, magazines and posters) in probation offices in Wales must reflect the bilingual nature and equal status given to English and Welsh.

ix. The NPS (England and Wales) should produce, publicise and enforce a Welsh language policy.

Although further in-depth research is required, the findings to date set the context for change. This is necessary, not just on the basis of equal opportunities, but also necessary if the NPS is to effectively engage with offenders and protect the public in Wales.

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