



Eluned Morgan MS
Senedd
10 Market Street
Pontypridd
CF37 2ST

MoJ Ref: ADR85727
Your ref: MA/EM/0620/21

17 March 2021

Dear Eluned,

USE OF WELSH LANGUAGE AT HMP BERWYN

Thank you for your letter on 16 February regarding the concerns about the experiences of Welsh speakers at HMP Berwyn. I am aware that there has been a lot of interest in this issue recently, however, I believe most of the criticism is unfounded.

Reports that prisoners are discouraged from speaking Welsh are untrue. There was an incident in August 2019 where a member of staff threatened to issue an Incentives and Earned Privilege (IEP) warning to the prisoner for speaking in Welsh, however, the Governor investigated the issue before a warning was issued and the staff member in question was informed that the IEP scheme should not be used in this way. This is the issue that was raised in the Independent Monitoring Board's annual report published in 2020. I can confirm that no further complaints have been received by the prison regarding threats, warnings or penalties being made to Welsh speakers. The Governor of HMP Berwyn has written to the Welsh Language Commissioner about the incident and the Commissioner has expressed his satisfaction with the response and the action taken by the prison.

I can confirm that the recommendations that HMPPS accepted following the 2018 report on 'The Welsh Language in Prisons' are included in the new Welsh language scheme. HMPPS published the new Welsh Language Scheme for 2020-2023 in October 2020. The scheme covers both Wales and England and sets out how HMPPS will treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality. Compliance with the Scheme will be monitored throughout the life of the Scheme, with progress reports submitted to the Commissioner annually. The Welsh language has also been added to the revamped Equality Analysis process, meaning that all matters of policy and procedural change should be considering any impact on the Welsh language.

HMPPS Wales is fully committed to ensuring that the scheme is an intrinsic part of their work. The scheme has been promoted to staff and service users via a series of presentations and briefing sessions. In addition, an Intranet page has been created to provide resources to support implementation.

Every prison in Wales, including HMP Berwyn, has a Welsh Language Action plan which has been renewed in line with the new requirements and is owned by a member of the prison's Senior Management Team. In addition, HMP Berwyn has a dedicated Welsh Language Lead who provide updates to their Diversity & Inclusion Committee, chaired by the Governor.

In addition, HMP Berwyn has put the following processes and activities in place to ensure Welsh speaking prisoners are treated fairly and the incident of 2019 is not repeated, as well as to celebrate Wales and the Welsh language:

- The prison has established Welsh mentors in reception and induction to provide general Welsh language support.
- A booklet is given to Welsh residents upon arrival as part of their induction to explain their rights to the Welsh language at Berwyn and in addition bilingual booklets are issued to all residents.
- Welsh language awareness training has been rolled out to staff and is part of the staff induction programme.
- Lanyards and badges are provided to identify staff who speak Welsh as a first language.

I am satisfied that any allegations of discrimination against Welsh speakers at HMP Berwyn are thoroughly investigated and that appropriate action is taken to address any concerns.

I hope that this provides you with the assurance that the Welsh language is respected in HMPPS and that HMP Berwyn is fully committed to ensuring that the Welsh language is at the heart of the prison.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chalk'.

ALEX CHALK MP