

Alison Roberts - Welsh learner of the year 2023

Welsh learner Alison Roberts shares her journey of learning Welsh and explains the the language's importance in health and social care.

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Alison Roberts is originally from Perthshire in Scotland. She works in health and social care and lives on Anglesey with her husband Siôn and seven children.

In 2023, Alison won the Welsh learner of the year award at the National Eisteddfod. Here's her story about why she learned Welsh and why she thinks it's important that people who use health, care and support services are able to communicate in Welsh.

- [View transcript](#)

1

00:00:07,360 --> 00:00:11,000

I come from Scotland, and the
Gaelic language is almost dead.

2

00:00:11,000 --> 00:00:15,360

No one speaks Gaelic in the village I'm from

3

00:00:15,360 --> 00:00:19,880

and when I moved to Wales, to Anglesey,

4

00:00:19,880 --> 00:00:22,800

I didn't know the Welsh language existed.

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00:00:22,800 --> 00:00:27,320

So, I decided that it was important for me to

learn the language

6

00:00:27,320 --> 00:00:29,960

and keep the language going strong,

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00:00:29,960 --> 00:00:35,080

I don't want it to die out like the language in Scotland is going.

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00:00:35,080 --> 00:00:36,800

You only really hear Gaelic

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00:00:36,800 --> 00:00:39,240

spoken on the islands, really.

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00:00:39,240 --> 00:00:42,600

So I decided, right, I live in Wales,

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00:00:42,960 --> 00:00:45,960

they have their own language, and
this is the language

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00:00:45,960 --> 00:00:47,360

I want to learn.

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00:00:48,880 --> 00:00:53,360

I met my husband, Siôn,
and his first language is Welsh

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00:00:53,360 --> 00:00:56,320

and I could see
that it was difficult for him to talk

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00:00:56,320 --> 00:00:57,440

to me in English.

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00:00:57,440 --> 00:01:04,320

So I decided that I was going to learn
Welsh, and we made it fun

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00:01:04,320 --> 00:01:07,000

because I've never had a

Welsh lesson.

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00:01:07,000 --> 00:01:09,880

We just put sticky

notes around the house with the words

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00:01:09,880 --> 00:01:12,360

I used every day.

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00:01:12,360 --> 00:01:16,480

I learnt the alphabet, how to pronounce

the letters.

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00:01:16,480 --> 00:01:22,600

Watching S4C, trying to use the

subtitles with S4C.

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00:01:22,600 --> 00:01:25,440

And just talking to people,

just to try to have a little confidence

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00:01:25,440 --> 00:01:27,280

to have a conversation with them.

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00:01:28,040 --> 00:01:32,120

I've enjoyed learning the
language and I'm still learning now.

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00:01:35,000 --> 00:01:38,200

I've raised seven children
in Welsh.

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00:01:38,200 --> 00:01:41,440

The whole family is Welsh.

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00:01:41,440 --> 00:01:45,880

I just see it as really important, it's
the language of the country and it's

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00:01:45,880 --> 00:01:49,440

important to try to keep the
language going.

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00:01:49,440 --> 00:01:49,680

important to try to keep the
language going.

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00:01:49,760 --> 00:01:52,200

I find that when I go into work
in the morning,

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00:01:52,200 --> 00:01:56,360

I can sit down with people who are
first language Welsh speakers

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00:01:56,360 --> 00:01:58,720

and they open up more to you.

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00:01:58,720 --> 00:02:00,920

They're more relaxed with you.

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00:02:00,920 --> 00:02:05,760

They're able to have a more personal conversation
with you because they're not worried

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00:02:05,760 --> 00:02:09,880

about how they're going to switch from
Welsh to English

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00:02:09,880 --> 00:02:11,920

and I see this as very important.

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00:02:11,920 --> 00:02:16,920

If you go into someone's house
and their first language is Welsh,

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00:02:16,920 --> 00:02:21,040

why should they have to switch

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00:02:21,040 --> 00:02:24,280

to speaking English in their own house?

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00:02:24,360 --> 00:02:28,600

I've had a positive response from people and
they're so pleased I've

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00:02:28,600 --> 00:02:33,440

learnt Welsh and it's a big deal for them, you
can see their eyes

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00:02:33,440 --> 00:02:35,880

widen and they say, "what, really?"

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00:02:35,880 --> 00:02:39,040

Yes, people are just proud and happy.

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00:02:41,920 --> 00:02:43,800

I remember once I was working on shift for Betsi

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00:02:43,800 --> 00:02:50,040

Cadwaladr Health Board and a man was supposed
to be going home that day

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00:02:50,040 --> 00:02:53,320

but there was a problem
with transportation or something,

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00:02:53,320 --> 00:02:54,600

so an English speaking nurse

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00:02:54,600 --> 00:02:57,920

went to tell him "you're not going home today."

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00:02:57,920 --> 00:03:03,080

He was a Welsh speaker, and he didn't understand

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00:03:05,280 --> 00:03:08,520

why he wasn't able to go home.

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00:03:08,520 --> 00:03:11,600

So he became really angry in his room.

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00:03:11,600 --> 00:03:16,960

And then they asked me to go in and
explain to him why he wasn't going home,

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00:03:16,960 --> 00:03:21,200

and then he started to settle
down and understand why.

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00:03:21,200 --> 00:03:24,760

And just think, if someone who spoke his

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00:03:24,760 --> 00:03:27,040

first language had gone in initially

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00:03:27,040 --> 00:03:30,840

and told him why, and explained everything properly,

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00:03:30,840 --> 00:03:35,720

it would have been a completely different
situation, I think.

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00:03:37,840 --> 00:03:40,640

It doesn't matter if you make a mistake.

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00:03:40,640 --> 00:03:44,080

I think, just go for it.

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00:03:44,080 --> 00:03:45,840

As I say to people I meet,

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00:03:45,840 --> 00:03:49,400

I still have problems with mutations and things like that,

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00:03:49,400 --> 00:03:51,160

that I still can't get my head round.

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00:03:51,160 --> 00:03:54,280

But it doesn't matter, I'm still able to have
conversations with people every day.

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00:03:55,400 --> 00:03:59,640

I'd like to see myself still going back into the community,

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00:03:59,640 --> 00:04:01,480

because it's really important for me

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00:04:01,480 --> 00:04:05,400

to try and get more people in health and social care

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00:04:05,400 --> 00:04:07,040

to speak Welsh.

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00:04:07,040 --> 00:04:09,720

It's important for me to be an inspiration

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00:04:09,720 --> 00:04:12,760

for people and try and get more people

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00:04:12,760 --> 00:04:16,600

to see how I've learnt Welsh

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00:04:16,600 --> 00:04:20,400

and get more people to be like me and just

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00:04:20,400 --> 00:04:24,080

understand that the people they're looking after

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00:04:24,080 --> 00:04:29,960

their first language is Welsh and respect that.

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00:04:29,960 --> 00:04:35,640

I would just like to get more people speaking Welsh.