



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**

2025

Y Gwobrau The Accolades

Dathlu 20 mlynedd ● Celebrating 20 years

Awards programme

Thursday, 1 May 2025

Cardiff Holland House Hotel

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to plan and deliver
better health and
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Programme running order

12.15pm	Reception and buffet
1pm	Event starts
1.05pm	A message from Dawn Bowden MS Minister for Children and Social Care
1.10pm	A message from Alyson Thomas Chief Executive, Llais
1.15pm	Welcome from Mick Giannasi Chair, Social Care Wales
1.20pm	The awards, part 1 Hosted by Garry Owen and Sarah McCarty, Chief Executive of Social Care Wales
2.20pm	Break
2.40pm	The awards, part 2
3.45pm	End of the event

Times are subject to change

Welcome to the 2025 Accolades

A warm welcome to you all to the 2025 Accolades, our annual awards that celebrate the achievements of the social care and childcare, play and early years workforce and services.

The Accolades are a chance for us to shine a light on the people and projects who have gone above and beyond to make a hugely positive difference to people's lives.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Accolades and in that time we've recognised, celebrated and shared the work of dozens of remarkable projects and workers providing invaluable care and support to children, adults and families in communities across Wales.

The awards continue to go from strength to strength and this year, we were thrilled to receive 127 entries and nominations from across Wales – the second highest number in the awards' history. This brilliant response is an indication of the great services in Wales that are valued by individuals and families who use care and support.

Eleven teams and seven workers have made it to the final. It's wonderful to welcome them here today and we're very much looking forward to recognising, celebrating and sharing their incredible achievements.

We're grateful to all those who've entered and nominated teams or workers for this year's awards because it means we can continue this hugely important work of recognising, celebrating and sharing excellence in care.

Working in partnership is crucial to the success of the Accolades – we certainly couldn't do it on our own. We would like to thank our judges for the time, effort and expertise they have devoted to the judging process.

We're also grateful to our sponsors: Llais, BASW Cymru, Hugh James, Life Sciences Hub Wales and Practice Solutions. It's thanks to their support that we can celebrate the fantastic work that's happening across the sector today.

Many congratulations to all those who've reached the final stages of the Accolades. It's an excellent achievement of which you should be very proud.

We hope you enjoy today's celebration event.



Mick Giannasi
Chair
Social Care Wales



Sarah McCarty
Chief Executive
Social Care Wales

2025 judging panel

The judging panel for the 2025 Accolades was made up of representatives from our Board, representatives from our partner organisations, people working in the social care and early years and childcare sectors in Wales, as well as people with experience of using care and support in Wales.

Our grateful thanks to them all and to the following organisations for their support during the judging process:

- Anheddau Cyf
- Antur Waunfawr
- CARE – Centre for Adult Social Care Research
- Conwy County Borough Council
- CREDU Cymru
- Homecare Association
- National Commissioning Board
- Newport City Council
- Pineshield
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
- Welsh Government.

Our host – Garry Owen

Garry is an award-winning journalist, who has covered major news stories for the BBC from across Wales and the world.

As a presenter, he's well-known on television and radio. After many years as one of the main anchors of the BBC Welsh language news programme *Newyddion* on S4C and host of the daily lunchtime radio phone-in programme, *Taro'r Post*, he's now a special correspondent for BBC Radio Cymru.

He's also a member of the team of presenters on the BBC Wales news programme, *BBC Wales Today*.

As a compere, Garry is very much in demand and was delighted to have been compere at the Royal Albert Hall last year for the Massed Welsh male choir concert.

He has accepted an invitation to return as compere at the event, which will be held next year at the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool.

Garry's been presenting the Accolades awards ceremony for many years, and says it's an "honour" and an important event that he "very much looks forward to".





Categories and finalists

These are in the order in which they will be presented.

Building bright futures for children and families

HUGHJAMES

Sponsored by Hugh James

This category celebrates organisations, settings or projects working with children, young people and families to help them achieve what matters to them.

Cylch Meithrin y Gurnos

Cylch Meithrin y Gurnos is a Welsh-medium childcare setting in Merthyr Tydfil. In its peaceful environment, children can focus on learning and play, social interaction, creativity and emotional well-being. They grow vegetables in the garden and discover the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in an area where safe green spaces can be hard to find. The service also champions the Welsh language in the community by hosting events and building relationships, showing parents that Welsh is an asset to their children's futures.

Families First, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

The Families First service provides preventative support to families with children under 18, or those under 25 with additional needs. Services include community engagement, mediation, school-based social workers and family therapists. The service's strengths-based, outcomes-focused approach means that support is built around what's important to families and young people. The people being supported are listened to and can take ownership of their support plans, which has led to an improvement in families achieving their goals.

Newport Family Support Services

Newport Family Support Service is a strategic partnership between Newport City Council and Barnardo's. Through its Rapid Response service and therapeutic team, the partnership uses innovative, trauma-informed intervention to safely reduce the number of children in care in Newport. The Rapid Response service meets the urgent needs of families on the brink of entering care, while the therapeutic team supports care-experienced families. This collaboration keeps support consistent and families don't need to tell their stories repeatedly.

Developing and inspiring the workforce

Sponsored by BASW Cymru



This category celebrates organisations, settings or projects that use effective, creative and innovative approaches to developing the workforce to meet current and future demands and expectations.

International Recruitment for Children's Social Workers, Bridgend County Borough Council

The 'International recruitment for children's social workers' project aims to achieve the best outcomes for children and families by getting the right balance of skills and experience in the local authority's children's social work teams. The project focuses on recruiting qualified and experienced international social workers to help reduce the teams' reliance on agency workers, retain staff and improve the experience of the workforce.

The project has so far recruited 13 social workers from across South Africa, Zimbabwe and the USA, which has brought stability to the teams.

Elm – Mental Health Care UK Limited in Denbighshire

Elm Mental Health Care UK sees its transformation of and investment in its staff culture as essential to providing excellent care to the people it supports.

By focusing on professional development, community engagement and staff well-being, staff are better able to provide high quality care as they feel supported in their roles. Training programmes are readily available to staff, including Welsh language training. These opportunities have led to promotions and significant professional development. Staff feel valued, heard and able to embody the setting's values of inclusion and collaborative working.

Inspirational Leadership Award

Sponsored by Practice Solutions



This category celebrates impactful and compassionate leadership in social care and early years and childcare in Wales.



Avril Bracey, Head of Service for Adult Social Care at Carmarthenshire County Council

Nominated by Corinne Everett-Guy, Senior Manager Social Work Teams at Carmarthenshire County Council

Avril began her career in social care 45 years ago as a trainee social worker in children's services. Corinne says Avril "has proved herself to be a strong leader and ambassador for adult social care".

Avril's supported "innovative approaches" in adult social care and was instrumental in developing the Twilight Sanctuary, an out-of-hours well-being service for those at risk of a mental health crisis. Avril's "kindness, selflessness, integrity and willingness to go above and beyond" means she shows "consistent respect and dignity towards everyone she meets".

Corinne says Avril is "a beacon of inspiration, setting a benchmark for excellence in social care leadership. Her ability to inspire and motivate her service has led to a culture of continuous improvement and high standards." One director describes Avril as "an inspirational leader in social care...she has transformed adult social care changing hundreds of vulnerable adults' lives." Avril has championed unpaid carers and developed initiatives to improve practice, too. She also went above and beyond to support her team during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ffion Cole, Principal Officer, Bridgend County Borough Council

Nominated by Alex Williams, Group Manager – Locality Hubs

Ffion has worked for Bridgend County Borough Council for 11 years and is the Team Manager of the North Team Locality Hub. Newly qualified or inexperienced social workers are often placed in her 'social work academy' for their first six months of work. Here, they're supported and nurtured by Ffion's team. Ffion offers formal mentoring and informal



support to managers wanting to learn how to develop the culture and leadership style of Ffion and her team.

Ffion leads on supporting internationally recruited social workers. Previously, more than 50 per cent of staff were agency workers, but the number of agency staff has greatly reduced in just 18 months and more than 50 per cent of social workers in the locality hubs are now international. One international social worker said: "Ffion made sure that the induction process was as smooth as possible, explained everything and helped me settle well both at home and within the team."

Ffion has helped build a consistent and stable workforce, benefitting the children and families in the area, as workers can build lasting relationships with the people they support. Ffion also keeps the voices of children and families at the heart of her team's practice. Senior Social Worker Hannah Jones says: "[Ffion] deserves this so much. She takes everything in her stride and is always willing to help..."



Keri Warren, Head of Children and Young People's Services at Neath Port Talbot Council

Nominated by Nune Aleksanyan, Ruth Griffiths, Chris Frey Davies, Maria Selby and Victoria Smith, principal officers in Children and Young People's Services

Keri has been a dedicated part of the senior management team at Neath Port Talbot Council since 2012, when she joined as a Principal Officer before becoming Head of Children and Young People's Services in 2018. The principal officers say Keri has been "nothing short of extraordinary" in the way she's led Neath Port Talbot's children's services.

Keri prioritises staff well-being, as the team works towards "achieving positive outcomes for families". Keri reminds the team of the importance of good social work practice by creating a healthy and safe learning environment, encouraging open discussions and having a collective response to risk management.

Keri has made sure the right systems and processes are in place to make sure staff feel safe when they're dealing with difficult situations in the community. One staff member says: "Keri is supportive and encourages a work-life balance so we can deal with life outside of work without feeling guilty."

One senior manager says: "[Keri] sets a high standard by example and is always looking at ways to give workers opportunities to develop and grow as practitioners. The voice of the child and family is of the utmost importance to her." Keri's focus on staff well-being, professional development, and a child-centred approach has created a "supportive environment that fosters innovation and collaboration".

Working to the principles of strengths-based practice

This category celebrates workers and teams who help create longer term positive change by promoting a strengths-based practice approach.

Support Circles, Ategi

Based in Pontypridd, Ategi's Support Circles project is a model of strengths-based practice, empowering people with complex needs to use their skills within a supportive community. Support Circles focuses on what people can do and how they can contribute.

It creates an environment that allows people with mild learning disabilities, physical impairments and mental health challenges to build confidence, develop new abilities and make meaningful social connections. This approach shifts the focus from limitations to strengths, helping people define their paths and overcome challenges through their own capabilities.

Supporting People to Achieve What Matters, Flintshire County Council Progression Team

Flintshire County Council's 'Progression' model of support takes a strengths-based approach to help adults with learning disabilities in supported living become more independent. The progression team, the person being supported and their family work together to set achievable, strengths-based goals, putting the person receiving care at the centre of every decision. This means they receive the right amount of support to encourage independence.

By focusing on what they can do, skills are developed, not just maintained. This helps people achieve what matters to them and reduces their reliance on services.

West Glamorgan Dementia Care and Respite Service, Marie Curie

This preventative service provides support to people living with late stage dementia in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot by integrating healthcare, overseen by a registered nurse, and a volunteer-run companion programme. Domiciliary and respite care provides practical medical support to help people stay at home for longer.

Trained volunteers provide holistic care, helping the people they support maintain their social networks, enjoy their hobbies and reminisce, while also providing respite care for their family members. The service's strengths-based approach puts the supported person at the heart of every decision, helping them safely maintain their independence.

Working in partnership

Sponsored by Life Sciences Hub Wales



Hwb Gwyddorau Bywyd Cymru
Life Sciences Hub Wales

This category celebrates projects or organisations across social care and childcare, play and early years that work in partnership to improve well-being outcomes for children, families and adults.

Connecting Carmarthenshire

Connecting Carmarthenshire is a partnership project run by Carmarthenshire County Council that aims to help residents live and age well.

The partnership works with third sector organisations to make sure people receive the right services, at the right time. A range of services from local providers is available through Connecting Carmarthenshire's platform. These include suicide prevention, domestic abuse services and community engagement projects. Specialists from different organisations can coordinate a person-centred approach to help the people they support achieve the best possible outcomes.

Delta CONNECT

The Delta CONNECT project is a collaborative approach by local authorities, the local health board and community services across West Wales, with the aim of improving well-being outcomes for older adults with chronic conditions and those at risk of social isolation.

Delta CONNECT combines social care and healthcare services to make it easier for people to manage their health and well-being. It uses technology and personalised support, such as proactive calls and a 24/7 response service, to provide preventative and proactive care. Thanks to the service, patients are discharged from hospital, on average, five days earlier.

Wellbeing Portal

Wrexham County Borough Council's Wellbeing Portal is a partnership with several local authority, health and third sector organisations. People who receive support only need to tell their story once to access information, advice and support from the different organisations that use the digital platform. Wellbeing Portal also provides information on how to access support for young people, housing and tenancies, and support for families.

The portal reduces the barriers to receiving support and was created in response to feedback from families who had experienced this issue.

WeCare Wales Award

Sponsored by WeCare Wales



This category celebrates social care and childcare, play and early years workers who've made a hugely positive difference to the lives of people and children.



Casey Baker, Social Care Worker at Bridgend County Borough Council Supported Living

Nominated by Ceri Williams, Provider Service Manager at Bridgend County Borough Council Supported Living

Casey's creative and person-centred approach to her role has made her "a beloved figure amongst the people she supports and her colleagues".

Casey's always looking for a way to bring a smile to the people she supports. She organises birthday and Christmas parties, spa days, craft nights, games nights and pizza making evenings for the people she supports.

But "these aren't just activities; they're carefully planned experiences that bring joy and a sense of community to everyone involved."

It's Casey's ability to connect with people on a personal level that makes her an exceptional social care worker. She's reliable, attentive and has created a nurturing environment where everyone feels valued and supported. Ceri says: "Casey's actions are driven by a genuine desire to make a positive difference."

Her dedication goes beyond her regular duties. While providing end of life care for one of the people she supports, Casey single-handedly decorated the person's room for her birthday to make sure she could still celebrate, despite being bed-bound. Casey provided "a source of comfort and joy during a difficult time".

Casey also supports and encourages her team. Leading by example, she's created a collaborative and compassionate atmosphere and inspires her colleagues with her willingness to go the extra mile. Ceri says: "Casey's actions exemplify the highest standards of care and dedication."

Gayle Jones, Care Coordinator at Habitat Homecare in Swansea

Nominated by Lisa Buchanan, Responsible Individual and Director at Habitat Homecare

Lisa describes Gayle as “a cornerstone of the team” who always goes above and beyond. One of the people Gayle supports says: “[Gayle] goes the extra mile and nothing is ever too much trouble for her. She works so hard and makes my daily living so much easier.” Gayle’s currently completing her Level 5 qualification in health and social care.



Gayle’s always looking for ways to improve her work and the quality of life of the people she supports. After hearing about Public Health Wales’s national oral health initiative, Gwên am Byth, Gayle got in touch with the Gwên am Byth trainers to organise sessions for her colleagues. Best practice in oral health is now part of the daily routine at Habitat Homecare.

Lisa says Gayle “embodies compassion and integrity” in every aspect of her work. Over Christmas, she prepares meals for clients who are at risk of loneliness. She’s “respected deeply by her colleagues and beloved by her clients”. Returning to her role after losing her partner, Gayle said: “I wanted to do my job for those who need me and have a focus.”

Habitat Homecare’s care manager says: “She’s always ready to lend a helping hand, provide guidance and support her colleagues through any challenges they might face. Gayle’s contributions to the team are invaluable and her unwavering dedication has made a lasting impact.”

Sarah Sharpe, Registered Childminder at Poppins Daycare in the Vale of Glamorgan

Nominated by Lee Walker-Metzelaar, Childminder

Sarah’s passion and dedication shines through in her work as a childminder. Lee says Sarah has “all the time in the world” for the children she cares for.

At her allotment in Barry, Sarah teaches children to plant, grow and harvest their own fruit and vegetables. With her Hygge Accreditation, she fosters a healthy relationship with food and nature.



Sarah has helped parents access vital support for their children. She's referred families to Flying Start to access parenting classes, extra health visits and play sessions at home. One parent says: "We couldn't be more thankful".

Another parent describes how Sarah's care has given their child "an amazing sense of play and confidence".

Sarah offers free childcare for an hour for parents so they can visit their GP for a smear test. Sarah also works with the local authority to support new childminders and promote training courses, and provides free mentoring evenings for childminders.

In 2024, Sarah won Cymru Kids Clubs's 'Playworker of the year' award for her commitment to learning. She also won the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years Cymru Award.

Lee says: "Sarah has the biggest, kindest heart of anyone I know."



Terri Steele, Selfemployed Registered Childminder from Ceredigion

Nominated by Claire Protheroe, Head of Contracts and Projects at the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years Pacey Cymru

Terri's "infectious energy, enthusiasm and appreciation of the children's needs" means she's very much trusted by the parents of the children she cares for, and the children have "freedom to explore [and] space to get frustrated".

Terri's passionate about learning. She has a Forest School qualification and teaches the children about gardening, the environment and Welsh culture. They also learn sign language.

One parent said: "Knowing how happy my son is with Terri made returning to work as pain free as possible. You can't put a price on that, but you can give her an award for it." Parents and carers nominated Terri for the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years Cymru's (PACEY) Wellbeing Champion award, where she was a joint winner.

Terri is also engaged in the early years and childcare sector. She attends childminder forums, where she helps identify the challenges facing the sector. She's also worked with the Ceredigion Childcare Unit to promote childminding as a career and was nominated for an award for this work.

Terri was nominated for the Accolades in part by a family she supported following the loss of their son, who say: "[Terri] has provided my daughter with security, compassion and a place where her little brother will always be remembered and loved ... I wouldn't want to send my child anywhere else."

Our sponsors

Llais

Main sponsor



Llais is the national, independent body set up by the Welsh Government to give the people of Wales a stronger voice in your health and social care services.

They replaced the former Community Health Councils. Their role is to make sure the public's views and experiences are used by decision-makers to plan and deliver better health and social care services.

They have seven regional offices that cover the whole of Wales. Your local Llais team gather your experiences – good and bad – of health and social care services.

Their four key duties are:

1. To engage with and listen to people and communities about your experiences of health and social care.
2. To represent those views to health and social care providers.
3. To provide a complaints advocacy service in each region for formal complaints about health and social care.
4. To promote public awareness of what they do. Under the Act, health and social care bodies also have a duty to promote their work with the public.

BASW Cymru

Sponsor of 'Developing and inspiring the workforce' category



The British Association of Social Work - Cymru is THE professional association for social workers in Wales.

As a membership organisation, our role is to support members in their day-to-day practice, campaign on key issues relating to social work and to influence key stakeholders and government policy and legislation across Wales. We are the professional association for social work and social workers working for and with all social workers.

Hugh James

HUGHJAMES

Sponsor of 'Building bright futures for children and families' category

Hugh James is a top 100, full-service law firm headquartered in Cardiff.

Our team has now grown to more than 700 lawyers and support staff and over 90 partners, covering a diverse range of legal specialisms, but we have maintained a very active presence in the care sector in Wales.

The firm's work in the sector includes: providing advice and representation to public authorities throughout Wales in Children Act and Court of Protection proceedings; advising public authorities, sports bodies and many other organisations on safeguarding; acting for care providers in property, corporate, commercial and regulatory matters; and acting for the sectors regulators, including Social Care Wales.

Life Sciences Hub Wales



Hwb Gwyddorau Bywyd Cymru
Life Sciences Hub Wales

Sponsor of 'Working in Partnership' category

At Life Sciences Hub Wales, we drive the development and adoption of life science innovation in health and social care in Wales.

We act as a dynamic interface, connecting life science innovators with research partners, funding opportunities and ultimately with the front-line health and social care, the end users. And because we're in continual dialogue with all of these groups, we're able to make sure that we make the biggest impact by supporting innovations that address the most vital needs.

Ultimately, our work helps not only with the mental and physical well-being of people living in Wales, propelling new innovations into mainstream use, but it also generates growth, jobs, and prosperity across our nation.

Practice Solutions



Sponsor of the 'Inspirational Leadership Award'

Practice Solutions provides values-driven consultancy to health, social care and the wider public sector across Wales and the UK. The company drives meaningful change by blending leadership, digital innovation and service improvement, while maintaining a commitment to people and communities.



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Y Gwobrau ²⁰²⁵ The Accolades

Dathlu **20** mlynedd • Celebrating **20** years



Let us know what you
thought about today's
ceremony

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